

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 432

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 432.....

Witness

Mrs. Pauline Keating,
28 Castlewood Avenue,
Rathmines,
Dublin.
Identity

Member of Cumann na mBan,
Dublin, 1915 - .

Subject

Four Courts, Dublin,
Easter Week, 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. ... S. 967.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

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No. W.S. 432

STATEMENT OF MRS. PAULINE KEATING (MORKAN),
28 Castlewood Avenue, Rathmines.

My brother, Eddie, was in the Volunteers and it was through him I got to know about the movement. He was in the 1st Battalion, and I joined the Cumann na mBan - I think early in 1915. I was in the Ard-Craobh in No. 25 Parnell Square. I attended regularly - I believe on Friday evenings.

We did drill, a very little rifle practice and first aid. I can't remember who taught us how to shoot with the rifle or who gave us first aid instruction. We had various parades in uniform. I remember going out to Rathfarnham and on the return march word went round at Terenure that the police were on the watch and we were disbanded there. The police did not interfere with us however.

We marched in various funerals. I remember the O'Donovan Rossa funeral well. We never got into the grave-side at all because the public had got in and when we reached the gates they were closed and we were all left outside with the result that we never heard the oration, which was a great pity. My experience was that the people who marched in those parades saw very little of what was happening.

I don't remember much more of interest except selling flags. We used to fight for that privilege, which was an easy job.

I never took part in carrying arms. I was anxious to be left out of any activity of that sort for fear I would give anything away. There was a good deal of arms business going on in the house. My brother was concerned in that, but I was always afraid I might be cross-examined about it and I did not want to know anything about it.

On Good Friday I mobilised a certain number of Cumann na mBan on the instructions of Miss McMahon. That is the chief person I remember. She was a grand worker. We were to meet on Easter Sunday off Primrose St. near Berkeley Road somewhere. I have an idea - but I can't say it for certain - that I cancelled the orders on Sunday, because we certainly did not turn up at the appointed place on Sunday, though some others may have done.

I turned up there on Monday, but I can't remember who instructed us to do so. I may have met somebody who told me we were to meet there. I think it was roughly midday when I arrived there. I think my sister-in-law, Mrs. Morkan, and probably some others were there. She was only half a year married at the time.

We hung around there all day until about 6 o'clock and then we were dismissed. We were told to come back in the morning to see if there was anything for us to do. We did not go back to our own home. I think we spent the night at Maire Lawless' in Phibsboro.

On Tuesday morning I came down to O'Connell St. and met a number of Cumann na mBan girls. We went into the Hibernian Bank where we heard the Volunteers were organising a Red Cross hospital. I only stayed there till the afternoon, because I heard Volunteers were required up in Arran Quay district, which was where I lived.

With Molly O'Sullivan and her sister, Dolly, and some others I travelled up by Abbey St. and Mary's Lane to the Fr. Mathew Hall and on the way we had to submit to abuse from the 'separation' women who noticed the armbands we were wearing. Somebody suggested that we should take these off as they were making our journey too difficult and attracting too much attention.

When we reached the Hall, somebody said volunteers were required for the Four Courts; many of the girls were unwilling to go there as they were afraid they would be starved out. The O'Sullivan's and myself went into the Four Courts and remained there until the surrender. We busied ourselves mainly with the washing up and the cooking. Brigid Lyons, May Carron, Nellie Ennis and Flossie Meade were there also.

I met some of the Cumann na mBan at the reunions and they were discussing the work being done by the Bureau and many of them surprised me by their attitude towards it. They seemed to think that the inquiries being made by the Bureau were stimulated by mere curiosity and some of them said they would rather burn anything they had than give it to the Bureau. Six or seven of them were arguing in that sense and I could not understand their point of view. I suggested that the information might be of interest to future generations, but I did not succeed in convincing them.

We had plenty of food in the Four Courts. A man used to go out early every morning, bring in bread, meat and other food for the day. We knew him as "Looter" Flood. We spent all our time in the kitchen, except that we once visited the living quarters where we saw clothes &c. I don't know whose quarters they were. There was no first aid to be done; the hospitals were too near. I am not aware that anyone was wounded in the Four Courts.

One day two Volunteers marched a group of D.M.P. men through our kitchen to the Bridewell. It was very funny to see the contrast between the stalwart policemen and the two Volunteers who were exceptionally small men. The police, seeing the stacks of food in the kitchen, said laughingly: "There is no fear you'll starve anyway". Lord Dunsany was a prisoner there too, although I never saw him. The first

day we laid an ordinary tray for him, but the next day the girl who did it decked it out in great style to show what we could do. We thought it good fun. I think she was able to produce some silver implements to make a splash. There may have been other prisoners, but I did not know of them.

As the kitchen was in the back facing the Bridewell we did not hear much of the fighting. In fact it was difficult to believe there was a fight going on. I think the Volunteers came down for the food and carried it round to the snipers at their different posts.

Frank Fahy was in charge. Joe McGuinness was there Frank was not well for part of the time. His wife was with us helping in the kitchen.

There were all sorts of wild rumours going round. The one I remember best was that the Germans were coming up the Naas Road and that one of the priests at Inchicore - I have forgotten his name - had seen them.

On the Friday we heard that the G.P.O. was on fire but we did not hear it was evacuated until after the surrender on Saturday. A Franciscan priest came and said: "Girls, girls, you don't know what you have done; you have blown up the whole of Dublin". He was not sympathetic to us, although some of the others were. I can't remember his name. We thought we were heroines, but when he had finished with us, we thought we were all criminals. This must have been late in the evening. The Volunteers were all taken away, but we were asked to stay on because of the sniping. I think it was this priest that asked us would we not wait till morning.

Some of the men took the surrender very badly. They buried their guns out in the back of the Four Courts. The

others came and told them it was no use to resist.

The next morning a lorry came for us and any snipers that were left. Diarmuid O'Hegarty was one of these. Among the officers who came was one I knew called Wilson. They belonged to an Irish regiment. The priests thought we should be glad to be escorted by Irish soldiers instead of British, but that was not how we felt.

We were first brought to Richmond Barracks and remained there for some time. Some of the soldiers gave us a few army biscuits which we thought were awful. They all behaved very nicely to us. The whole lot of us were then marched through the streets to Kilmainham. At this time Madame Markievicz and many other women prisoners from other posts were with us. As we came out of the gates of Richmond barracks there was a hostile crowd - mostly women - awaiting us. They started shouting at us, but Madame told us not to mind them, shouting: "Keep your heads up, girls" and a few other phrases like that. She was smoking cheroots.

When we arrived at Kilmainham there was an old jailer waiting for us. He brought us to a doorway and pointed to an inscription above it: "Sin no more, lest a worse thing come to thee". There was a violent protest from us girls. We shouted at him that we had not sinned. He retorted that if we had not come out to kill, we certainly had not come to cure. We thought it a funny incident. He brought one of the girls to a cell and told her to make a bed. She said she could not. He said: "You call yourself a Red Cross nurse and you can't make a bed". She said she had never seen a bed like that. We saw him no more.

We were distributed throughout the cells and the military took over apparently after that. I was with three friends in one cell which was only meant for one prisoner.

There was an inspection the next day. An officer came and ordered out two. Dolly O'Sullivan and I stayed and the other two left. We got a tin of porridge and a quarter loaf of bread for breakfast, a tin of soup for dinner and shell cocoa for tea. At first the bread was not available and we had to do with the army biscuits. The food was served to us in round biscuit tins and we got no cutlery whatsoever. But hunger is a wonderful thing and I managed to eat what I got. The others said I must have been there before.

We remained in Kilmainham from Sunday the 30th April till the Monday week - 9 days. An officer interviewed us one by one, nothing very important, our names and why we joined the movement &c.

Father Albert came up to see us a few times. On the Monday night, I think, he came in and said we would be released. He asked us would we remain till morning as it was not safe to go through the streets. We said we would go at once and he said he would escort us. He only brought us to the first barrier and from there a soldier accompanied us. I wanted our group of about six girls to come to my house in Arran Quay. When we got there I found the house occupied by military who had looted the shop and taken everything in it. Then Brigid Lyons said she would bring us to her uncle's at the corner of Gardiner St. Some of the girls dropped off at their own houses on the way. The English soldier who was with us was very good; he offered to get us put up with a friend of his and, if that failed, he would pay for us in some lodging house. When we got to McGuinness's house, he knocked and the door was opened slightly. When the person inside saw the soldier, she shut the door in his face and then Brigid Lyons must have knocked again and explained the position, because we were admitted. The soldier went off and we never saw him again.

We got a wonderful supper and breakfast at McGuinness's and we slept in lovely soft beds, taking off our clothes for the first time in a fortnight.

I had not much to do with the movement after that, except selling flags and such things. I joined the Gaelic League then. I lost my job in Brown Thomas as a result of my part in the Rising, and applied for one at Roberts. I thought I was fixed up, as the manager was very nice to me and told me to come back in a short time. I waited about outside and saw him crossing over to Brown Thomas. When I went back to Roberts there was a great change in the manager. He said he was sorry he could not take me on. I afterwards got a job at Todds' and got married from there in April 1920.

I lent my scrapbook to the Bureau and I am taking it back now, as it contains a lot of mementoes of the Rising and the subsequent period that I would like to keep. I am leaving you the leaflet containing the agenda of Count Plunkett's Convention and the list of delegates.

Signed: Pauline Keating
Date: 6. 10. 1950.

Witness: Sam Cooney

