

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 540

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 540.....

Witness

Mrs. Anna Hurley-O'Mahony,  
Laragh,  
Bandon,  
Co. Cork.

Identity.

President

Mount Pleasant Branch, Bandon, Cumann na mBan  
1917 - .

Subject.

- (a) Cumann na mBan, Bandon, 1917 - ;
- (b) Death of her brother, Frank Hurley, 9/5/1921;
- (c) Cork III Brigade, 1920-1921;
- (d) Death of Bradfield (loyalist) 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1811.....

Form B.S.M. 2

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 540

STATEMENT OF MRS. ANNA HURLEY-O'MAHONY,  
LARAGH, BANDON, CO. CORK.

1917-1921.

MOUNT PLEASANT BRANCH - CUMANN NA mBAN,  
1ST BATTALION, III CORK BRIGADE.

Mount Pleasant Branch - Bandon.

Formed in February, 1917.

Organisers: Miss Plunkett, Dublin, and Miss Daisy Walsh,  
Bandon. (deceased).

Officers: President - Anna Hurley, Laragh, Bandon. (now  
Mrs. Hurley-O'Mahony).  
Captain - Ciss Barrett, Mallowpaton, (now  
Mrs. O'Sullivan, Ballinhassig).  
Secretary - Margaret Corcoran, Laragh, Bandon.  
(Mrs. O'Donovan, Ballinadee,  
deceased).

20 Members.

Area: 1st Battalion - Bandon North.

Activities: Meetings: Drill: First Aid: Making haversacks,  
socks, underwear. Collecting funds for same. Distributing same  
to men "on the run". Appointing dispatch bearers, arranging of  
houses for men "on the run", travelling with them, storing arms,  
receiving ammunition from members of Bandon Cumann got from  
British soldiers. Catering for and scouting for Officers and  
men while holding Brigade or Battalion Meetings. This home at  
Laragh was Headquarters for the Brigade at the North side and  
always in communication, that is, it was used as Headquarters for  
Cork III Brigade on the north side of the Bandon river, and was  
used as meeting place for Staff Councils, Brigade and Battalion,  
and also as communications centre where despatches were received  
from General Headquarters, via Miss Wallace, St. Augustine St.,  
Cork, and where inward despatches were received and passed on  
to General Headquarters.

As a rule, local despatches came by hand, mostly conveyed  
by girls, recognised despatch bearers, usually the younger  
members selected in each Cumann na mBan Company. Despatches  
from Dublin usually came by post, being quite safe in passing  
through Bandon Post Office. One in particular arrived one  
Autumn evening in 1920 and pending Tom Hales, O.C. Cork III at  
the time, coming on a particular Monday (he said on his previous  
visit the day he would return), I hid it under a cushion on a  
bench in the kitchen. Presumably Tom Hales expected this  
despatch when he said what day he would come.

The day before, which was a Sunday, a R.I.C. Sergeant  
had been shot in Bandon almost at the church door, and, fearing  
reprisals by the British that night, particularly on Seán  
Buckley's house, the Volunteers were assembled at various points

to prevent such things happening. The British were out alright and in an exchange of shots with the Volunteers a soldier was shot dead. At 3 o'clock the following morning, my brother, Frank, who had been in Bandon on duty, awakened me by calling softly from outside. I went to the window and could see him below with his rifle slung on his shoulder. I asked him about the shooting I had heard earlier in the night and he told me and said all the Volunteers were safe, except Paddy O'Brien, and he was anxious to account for him. I asked him to go to a neighbouring house and get a few hours' sleep first. He promised to do so and went off. As I was alone in the house, a girl from the neighbours to whose house I advised my brother to go was keeping me company. We did not sleep very well and about 4.30 I heard the sound of a lorry and made out it was on the road and just stopping at the turn leading up to our house. I expected a raid, not alone on this house, but on others near by and urged my companion to go over to her own house and warn Frank. She dashed away in her nightgown and ran across a couple of fields in her bare feet. Frank had heard lorries, too, and was coming out as she reached the door. He managed to get away just in time as another lorry had gone round a different road and when he had put a field between himself and the house he had just left he could make out the forms of the military closing in on it. The son of the house who had no association with the Volunteers got a bad mauling from the soldiers, even though he professed to be an innocent carpenter working there and no enemy of theirs. Our house was raided but the British left dissatisfied not finding my brother at home. I should mention that Paddy O'Brien, the Volunteer, missing after the shooting in Bandon the night before was found to be alright afterwards.

Bandon town and district at that time was a swarm of loyalists who spied on all they suspected to be associated actively with the national movement. I have no doubt but we were well watched all the time. Anyway, on this Monday when I was alone in the house in the afternoon, the place was surrounded by a British raiding party. I was put under guard in the sitting-room and the house was very thoroughly and systematically searched for the second time that day, inside and out. The hidden despatch was discovered. Not alone that, but a girl despatch bearer, who had just arrived in the yard, was arrested and a despatch taken from her bicycle. She escaped, however, for I, being eventually released from close supervision, managed to talk to her and get her to casually follow me across the yard and through an outhouse as far as the haggard when I told her to run and she did. I had first talked to her through a window and asked her what she was doing there and she said "I've been arrested and I'd sooner have been shot." Her absence was not noticed at the time as the British were then completely engrossed in tying up Tom Hales and Pat Harte whom they had surprised while they were hiding papers in an arms dump in the haggard. Then they started asking "Where is the young lady?" but by that time it was too late. Tom Hales and Pat Harte were taken away prisoners in a lorry. The general belief was that the British came to burn the place as a reprisal for the events in Bandon the day before and because they did not catch my brother, because they piled all the furniture, bedding and curtains in the centre of each room upstairs as if to start fires, but securing such important prisoners and observing Volunteers approaching in the distance

they hurried away with their capture. The Volunteers whom the British may have suspected as being a rescue party were signallers coming by arrangement to meet Tom Hales. Tom Hales was not released until during the Truce and everyone knows the fate of Pat Harte, who ended his days in a madhouse, supposed to be as a result of the treatment he got from the British in Bandon.

The sitting-room of our house was always given up for meetings. I remember one being held there in 1919 preparatory to the training camp at Glandore. Gearoid O'Sullivan and Diarmuid O'Hegarty came specially from Dublin for this and were accompanied to here by Liam Deasy and Tom Hales. My brother, Frank, was an active Volunteer and participated in the Glandore Camp, returning early one morning to tell me of its break up by the British. He was O.C. Mount Pleasant Company and also a member of the Brigade Column, taking part in many fights, notably Crossbarry. He was killed on the 9th May, 1921, being captured while in possession of a revolver. When crossing a small bridge in Castle Bernard Park he made a run for it and might have got away had not one foot got caught in a rabbit hole and he stumbled and so lost his life, being shot down. The story of his end was told by another Volunteer captured at the same time, but unarmed. My brother would have been shot anyway, no doubt, following a Drumhead Courtmartial, for having a gun.

In March, 1920, Liam Deasy and Jim O'Mahony came to our house. This was following the attack on Mount Pleasant R.I.C. Barracks, which happened that very night. They brought in bombs and powder from the dump in the haggard because they thought they might be deteriorating through dampness. They had their boots off before the fire preparatory to going upstairs to bed when suddenly there was a loud knock at the door. My brother slipped out to the hall and drew the bolt. This gave me time to take bombs which he had been trying to hide on his person and slip them into the pockets of the heavy coat I was wearing. I urged Liam Deasy and Jim O'Mahony, who had gone up to the landing, to hide under the bed of my father, then seriously ill. After that the hall-door was burst in and military entered, putting my brother under arrest and commenced to search the place. I said to one of the Officers as they approached my father's bedroom, "My father is dying in there; search quietly". They tip-toed in, opened the wardrobe, looked around and tip-toed out. They then went off with my brother to Bandon. He was brought to Wormwood Scrubbs with others taken around Bandon that night, but Liam Deasy and Jim O'Mahony were free. Following the hunger-strike in Scrubbs my brother was released in May of that year. I arranged to pay him a visit there shortly before his release, but it was hard enough to get that and then only through the intercession of Art O'Brien, President of the Irish Self Determination League.

I remember prisoners, suspects and spies, being brought blindfolded to the house in June, 1920, for courtmartial. They were taken prisoner by the 1st Battalion, then under the command of Sean Hales. There were other meetings, both Brigade and Battalion, when the staffs of Battalions would attend the Brigade meetings and Company representatives would attend the Battalion meetings. We often catered for from

twenty to thirty men at a time.

In the early Spring of 1921 there had been an ambush in the area and that night, having heard that the Column was camped in the locality, I resolved to find it out and deliver a despatch which had arrived at our house some time previously. With another girl I set out in the dark in the direction where the Column was supposed to be and after cycling some miles we were stopped when a dark figure rose up and called softly "Halt! Who goes there?". It was one of the Column scouts. Having declared our identity we were conducted along and eventually brought before Tom Barry and Liam Deasy. All over the field we were in, despite the darkness, we could see darker groups of the members of the Column resting on the grass. Our business finished we watched the Column prepare to move. An order was given and in no time they were assembled and in close formation marched off. We walked beside Liam Deasy at the head until we came to a crossroads. This was where we parted and we went our own road after getting our bicycles. When some distance away, we heard a single shot back in the direction we had come from, but no further sound after that.

The next day we heard that the body of a loyalist named Bradfield was found stretched at the crossroads where we had parted from the Column the night before. What had happened was this. When the Column came into the area it dispersed to different houses to secure food and shelter and some of its Officers entered Bradfield's home and asked for a meal. Contrary to the reception they expected they were welcomed heartily by the owner and invited to partake of whiskey. For some little time they were puzzled and then discovered that due to their appearance - trench coats and bandoliers and semi-uniform look, and also to the accent of Peter Monahan, an Irish Scot, they were mistaken for Auxiliaries. Bradfield unbosomed himself to them and gave all the information he could of rebels and rebel houses in the district. He asked them why they did not get Frank Hurley (my brother). He was told they had him already and one of the 'Auxiliaries' stepped outside and arranged for Frank to be brought along. He was duly escorted in without trench coat, arms or equipment and, to all appearances, a prisoner. The delighted Bradfield immediately identified him as an important rebel, deserving of all he obviously hoped was coming to him. It was not long, however, till he was undeceived as to whom his guests were and was told of what his fate was to be. When later on I was in the field where the Column had re-assembled, the informer must have been there too, and when I accompanied the marching Column part of the way Bradfield must have been in its midst walking to his death.

Shortly after the date of the Truce, a lady called to the house to see me. It was the Hon. Albina Broderick, a strong friend of the National movement. She was the sister of the Earl of Midleton and first cousin of the Earl of Bandon. The latter had been captured at Castle Bernard some time before the Truce and was still a prisoner. I brought the little lady in and gave her a cup of tea and she explained that she had walked the whole way out from Bandon to ask me to put her in touch with the Column as she wished to intercede.

for the safety of her cousin. She had been directed to me by the Cumann na mBan in the town and that was good enough for me, so while the Hon. Albina was having her tea I arranged for a pony and trap and driver to bring her on her way to Coomhola where the Column was at the time. She set off and eventually, travelling by relays of traps, she got to her destination away beyond Bantry and there interviewed the Brigade Staff.

(Signed) Anna Hurley & Mary

Witnessed : [Signature]

20th June, 1951.

