

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉITIA 1913-21
No. W.S. 610

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 610

Witness

Miss Una Daly,
12 Lower Leeson St.,
Dublin.

Identity.

Secretary to Liam Mellows, 1921-1922.

Subject.

Events of national interest, 1921-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

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No. W.S. 610

STATEMENT OF MISS UNA DALY.

13 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin.

I become secretary to Liam Mellows.

I began to work for Liam Mellows about June 1921. He was working on arms and had a lot of men acting for him in England. It was at Mrs. Woods' house in 131 Morehampton Road we had our office. She put a room at our disposal. In fact, most of her home was at our disposal. I did the typing for Liam.

He had a wide ledger with all kinds of headings for the different types of arms. It with all his papers and books were kept in a desk that he kept locked. The desk had not a very good lock, because I had a valuable book belonging to my brother which somebody took out of the desk and we never recovered it.

I was a member of Cumann na Ban for a short while. Liam gave orders I was to be released from all duties in connection with it. D.
Mrs. Woods' house, 131 Morehampton Road.

Mrs. Woods' house was an open house to everybody associated with the movement and there were people always coming in and out, sleeping and eating there at all hours. I don't know how she fed all the people that came. Officially I had digs, but I slept often at Woods' and I stayed up two whole nights typing work for Liam. At the time I started on this job things were not so dangerous as they had been previously and as they became afterwards during the Civil War.

Liam's association with my brother Paddy.

My three brothers were in the movement, being members of the Volunteers. One of them spent some time in Dartmoor and was released at the time of the general release around Christmas 1921. He is now in America and has a son in the American Navy. I was staying in Fleming's Hotel and my brother Paddy, whom we call Gabriel, introduced me to Liam for whom he had been

procuring arms in Liverpool and other places in England. He would have an interesting story to tell about those times. He is a doctor in the army. He was not qualified at the time I am describing. He studied afterwards. Liam asked Paddy whether I would do some work for him and that is how I became his secretary. That was the title given me.

My work for Liam.

My function was to enter in the ledger particulars of all transactions, receipts of arms, and to type correspondence for the O/Cs. throughout Ireland and England. There was a good deal of correspondence with Sean MacMahon who was, I think Q.M.G. at the time.

Liam's sense of humour.

Liam was very witty and had a great sense of humour. All sorts of things that might turn in useful were supplied to Liam and once I remember saddles were among them. Liam made a joke about them and either Sean or Liam wrote to the other: "Oh, for a steed!" Liam was very entertaining and we had some very pleasant social evenings at Mrs. Woods'. Liam played the violin and Barney Mellows the piano, and the two Woods girls were talented musicians.

Liam's visitors.

Liam had all kinds of men coming over from England and Scotland. I did not know them. I can't quite remember how he kept his accounts, but I had nothing to do with money entries. He had an imprest to pay for the arms, and I imagine he was scrupulous about accounting for it to whoever gave it to him. I don't know if it was Cathal Brugha. His own pay used to come in a little envelope and he always handed it to Barney to give to his mother.

I find it very hard to remember what happened between the beginning of the Truce and the Treaty, but I know that

Liam had an office in Middle Abbey St. over the Clothing Company. Bob Briscoe used to come in there a good deal and a man called Charlie McGuinness. The latter had something to do with a boat about which there was an awful lot of trouble afterwards. I remember two detectives called long after at my flat in Hatch St. to ask me did I know anything about the boat or did I think McGuinness owned it. I could not enlighten them. McGuinness called on me a couple of times too, but not about the boat. I think he was down and out at the time. He was drowned tragically afterwards. He was a very brave man. He used to ^{go} ~~backwards~~ and forth to Hamburg in that boat. A doctor in ~~Wex~~^{Water}ford - I think his name was White - had something to do with the boat too.

Some German visitors about arms.

I think it was during the Truce but before the Treaty that the Germans came over about arms and it must have been for this that the boat was bought. I can't say for certain that any arms were landed by the boat. Briscoe would know that as he was mixed up in the business as was also a man called Dick Kenny, a merchant in Ballinasloe. He used to travel a lot to Germany on his own business and I often saw him in Liam's office too. As far as I remember there were six of these Germans. Two of them stayed, I think, in Seamus O'Connor's, the solicitor, two with Mrs. Mellows, and I don't know where the others stayed. Four of them used to come to Woods' at night time. They used to sing the German songs. One of them seemed to be very nervous and anxious to get back to Germany, although everybody was doing their best to make them feel at home. I remember we took boxes for them at the Gaiety one night to see a Shakespearean play. The Germans were very courteous; some of them knew a little English.

After we moved to Abbey St. we were still getting in arms, but I am very hazy about that whole time.

The Treaty Debate.

I have, however, a distinct recollection of the Treaty Debate in Earlsfort Terrace. Liam got me a seat at the reporters' table, but Desmond Fitzgerald put me out on the night of the voting. When Liam came out he saw me and asked me why I was not inside. I told him and he said: "Come in with me." I did.

Maurice Fenlon.

I never went on messages for Liam except on one occasion when he sent me to Maurice Fenlon, Mary's Abbey. It was like a Jew's scrap-iron place. Fenlon did a lot for Liam, supplying him with all sorts of scrap metal which, I suppose, was used for making bombs and things. I can't remember whether the message was verbal or written.

I don't remember any sailor or sea captain in Synott Place that worked for Liam.

I remained working with Liam all during the Truce and during the Civil War up to his arrest.

Buildings occupied by the I.R.A.

He, with Rory O'Connor and the other leaders, took over a building in Parnell Square where we worked. Often it was quite late when we went home and on one occasion Rory sent the two Plunketts to see me home to Fleming's Hotel where I lived. We did not stay long in Parnell Square. Then we went into the Four Courts where we had a very posh office. We had to have passes to get in there. I still have mine. It is signed by Sean Lemass. I did not sleep in the building and, therefore, I was not there for the bombing. I was the first woman into the Four Courts. After that there was quite a big staff. Mrs. Terry McSwiney used to be there.

After the surrender of the Four Courts, Barry's Hotel was

taken over, but I did not work there, although I went there often.

I work for Seamus Donovan and Sean Russell.

When Liam was arrested I got a message to go out to work for Harry Boland. I think - I am very vague about this - that I had a short interview with him; but before I took up work with him he was shot in Skerries. Then Sean Russell or Seamus Donovan was appointed to carry on Liam's work and I worked with Sean Russell in Convent House, Clontarf, which was Maurice Fenlon's private house. Sean, like Liam, was an idealist. He never took a penny in payment for his work. I am not sure whether it was Seamus Donovan or Sean Russell I worked for first, but it may have been Seamus. Fleming's gave Seamus a room in the hotel for an office. I found him a very humane man. The messenger came one day with broken boots and Seamus bought him a decent pair. Of course, I don't know whether that was out of army funds or his own pocket.

We had several raids on Fleming's. During one of these Seamus walked down the stairs in his bowler hat and the Free Staters thought he was a visitor to the hotel. I passed as the cashier of the hotel under the name of Rita Bourke and I was never arrested, although one day when I returned from the convent in Eccles St. after one of the raids on Fleming's the maid warned me from the area not to come in, that the raiders had returned after my departure to inquire about the "so-called" cashier. I passed on up the street.

After Seamus Donovan's arrest - if, in fact, I worked with him before Sean Russell - I was going round then from place to place with Sean. The Fenlons were very good and they fed us - Sean and me - in their house every day. I used to fetch the letters from Suffolk St. for Sean, who escaped arrest for a long time.

Sean was a very good-living fellow, a non-smoker and non-drinker. He used to have his hair, which was very remarkable, dyed by Mr. Williams.

Sean carried a pipe to help his disguise and he always went on top of the tram and occasionally knocked out his pipe. Sean sent me on several messages, such as Suffolk St., Fenlon's, &c.

I went out with someone, probably Sean Russell, to Mrs. Humphreys' in Ailesbury Road, to see Ernie O'Malley. I never saw anybody as cool as Ernie. As far as I remember, he sat there with a revolver on the desk in front of him.

Liam Pedlar.

When Sean Russell was arrested, Liam Pedlar was next on the scene. We used to call him 'Gosh' as that word was always in his mouth. It was in 500 N.C. Road that I worked with him. That was where Sean McDermott used to dig and the woman of the house, whose name I cannot remember, was always talking of him.

While I was working for all these men, I used to go to Healy's in Phibsboro' Road, with money to pay all the men who were working at munitions &c. Healy was some kind of contractor and the munitions were made at Summer St., among other places.

How Seamus Donovan lost his hand.

I should have mentioned that Seamus Donovan lost his hand in the Four Courts some time before the attack on the building. He was testing a bomb which exploded in his hand. Sean Russell ran to me in awful distress to tell me about it.

At a certain stage I made up my mind to give up the work as I was not very happy about it and my health became

affected. I wrote - I think it was to Joe O'Connor,
one of the few left outside prison gates - to resign
and then I was out of a job for some time. That would
be the end of 1923.

Signed: Una Daly (Una Daly)
Date: 10. Novr. 1951.

Witness: S. Ni Chiosain
(S. Ni Chiosain).

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