

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 723

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 723

Witness

Dr. Alice Barry,
25 Upper Pembroke Street,
Dublin.

Identity.

Close friend of I.R.A. leaders,
1921.

Subject.

Raid by Auxiliaries
on Michael Collins' Office, Mespil Road,
Spring 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2038

Form B S M. 2

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Statement by Dr. Alice Barry,

^{Up}
25, Pembroke St., Dublin.

About October 1920 when the British forces were raiding the Mater Hospital for Dan Breen and the danger of his capture was getting greater, he was brought in a car or cab by Rory O'Connor and Gearóid O'Sullivan to the house in No. 8 Herbert Place where I lived with my mother. My married sister and her little daughter happened to be staying with us. Collins who knew we were sympathisers to the cause had previously asked us to dissociate ourselves with Sinn Féin public politics and to keep our house as a refuge for dangerously wounded I.R.A. men. Our house was quiet and in a quiet street.

In October 1920 Dan Breen was badly wounded in the legs by the glass in the roof of the conservatory of Fernside as he was escaping from the Black and Tans. I do not think he had any bullet wounds. He told me that after his escape from Fernside he had wandered round looking for refuge and eventually found it in the house of a Jew who provided him with dry clothing. From there he went to the house of some friends where arrangements were made probably by Collins to bring him to the private nursing home of the Mater Hospital. He had to leave there, as the raids by the British forces were becoming too persistent.

I attended to his wounds the first night he was with us, but Surgeon Barn^hville who had probably been attending him in the Mater came to see him next day and possibly once or twice after that. His wounds healed in a few weeks. He got clothes through Phil Shanahan who was his

only visitor and then arrangements were made to transfer him to Dún Laoghaire to the house of another Mrs. Barry.

Mrs. Barry's daughter had a very fashionable and expensive hat shop in St. Stephen's Green where all the society people bought their hats and thus the house in Dún Laoghaire would be a safe one. Afterwards Miss Barry transferred her business to Bond St., London, where she prospered.

On February 14th 1921 after the escape of Ernie O'Malley, Frank Teeling and Simon Donnelly from Kilmainham the first two arrived about half an hour before curfew at the house of the Malones in Grantham St. The Malones thought that their house would be one of the first to be raided, so they would not keep them. They brought Ernie O'Malley and Teeling to our house for the night. I don't know where Donnelly went. The brave girls returned home during curfew hours. The next morning about 9 o'clock Oscar Traynor, the present Minister for Defence, arrived with a suit of dungarees and a kit of workman's tools for Teeling. All he brought for O'Malley was a revolver which Ernie put in his pocket and he walked off alone without any sort of disguise. Teeling was a tall, well set-up young man with a fine open face, and he looked very well in the dungarees. He went off with Oscar Traynor.

Late in the Spring of 1921 Collins had his principal office in a house No. 5 Mespil Road which was occupied by Mrs. Hoey and her daughter, Patricia, who earned her living by journalism. One night about 3 a.m. an auxiliary and Miss Hoey called to our house, stating that her mother was very ill and would I come and visit her. I dressed quickly and the three of us walked along the canal as far as Miss Hoey's house which was a cottage type house with a semi-basement and one floor above it.

The door was opened by another Auxiliary and it was evident that a "sitting" raid was on. I was brought downstairs by Miss Hoey to her mother's bedroom. None of the Auxiliaries accompanied us, as they evidently thought it was a case of serious illness. When I went to examine Mrs. Hoey, she said there was no need "We merely wanted to get a message to Mick Collins who is due to arrive here at 9 o'clock in the morning". The Auxies who had arrived after curfew evidently had definite information that this house was one of Collins' offices and they had decided to remain there until he turned up. From outside there was no sign of a raid and Collins or any of his officers could easily have walked into the well-laid trap. Miss Hoey had been puzzling her brains as to how she could get a warning to Collins and had hit upon this plan of sending for me on the plea of her mother's illness which she told the Auxies was aggravated by the shock of the raid. The mother who was old and feeble played her part remarkably well. The same Auxie accompanied me back but when we came near Baggot St. a lorry passed at the other side of the canal and the Auxie who evidently was as anxious to get home safe as I was, turned back saying "You couldn't trust that lot at all". They barely gave me time to examine the mother while explaining the dilemma they were in.

To stop Collins from coming to the house at the usual hour, I was asked to go to Lower Leeson St. to the premises of the Land Bank where the porter McCluskey lived. He would know how to get in touch with Collins. I heard after that there were any amount of scouts sent out that morning and that Ginger O'Connell eventually met him in, I think, Merrion Square shortly before nine and gave him the warning which saved him from arrest. I had to wait

an hour or two till the end of curfew of course before I was able to go out to give the message to McCluskey. I had warned my mother to wake me at 5.45 which she did punctually.

In the course of the morning I had a visit from Collins who was in a state of distress because there were files of important papers secreted in the house in Mespil Road in a secret cupboard which had been constructed by Batt O'Connor. The cupboard was camouflaged by shelves constructed in front of it. He asked me to call at the house and get the papers for him. I got on my bicycle and was admitted again by the Auxies who thought it quite natural that I should wish to pay another visit to my patient. Patricia who was evidently a secretary to Collins opened the cupboard quietly and handed me the files which he had given me particulars about, and which would have disclosed all the I.R.A. plans and names to the authorities. I stuck them inside my jumper and put on my coat. The Auxies were in the hall and let me pass without question. They must have been an innocent, unsuspecting crowd to allow anyone in or out of the house in those circumstances without searching them. The Free State soldiers would not have been so remiss at a later stage. I got on my bike again. I was rather afraid the papers would slip down but they did not. Joe O'Reilly was waiting for me in my house and he took charge of the papers. Collins had told me to ask Patricia Hoey to give a certain signal by lowering or raising a blind to show when the Auxies had left. I must also have arranged with Patricia Hoey, if the raiders were ^{gone} on the Sunday, to meet her in the gallery of University Church at 10.30 Mass which she did, and she confirmed that

they had left after curfew on the Saturday night. The raid must therefore have started on Friday night at curfew or shortly after. She told me that they had found nothing of any importance. Yet she was afterwards arrested and taken to Mountjoy but as they had no definite evidence against her they had to let her out without trial.

These are the only incidents during the Black and Tan war that I was associated with.

Signed:

Alice Barry
Alice Barry

Date:

13 9 52
13.9.52

Witness:

S. M. Cousins
(S. N1 Chiosain)

