

W.S. 747

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 747

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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 747

Witness

Mrs. Margaret O'Callaghan,  
(Peg Flanagan)  
Lewinstown,  
Killucan,  
Co. Westmeath.

Identity.

Member of Cumann na mBan, Dublin,  
1917 - .

Subject.

- (a) Her work as member of Cumann na mBan;
- (a) National activities of her husband  
"Dinny O'Callaghan".

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1983

Form B.S.M. 2

# ORIGINAL

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Statement by Mrs. O'Callaghan (Peg Flanagan)

Lewinstown, Killucan, Co. Westmeath.

I joined Cumann na mBan Central Branch, 26 Parnell Square, in 1917, and took part in all the activities that I was asked to do.

I was very near being arrested one morning in 1918 near St. Agatha's Church, William Street, where I was collecting for the National Aid. A policeman came up behind me and wanted to take the box off me but I ran into the Church and thus escaped. There were six or seven girls arrested that morning.

I was working as a waitress in the Red Bank Restaurant and in that way came in contact with all the I.R.A. leaders who used to have meals there. I was able to do a lot of work for them, handing out parcels and delivering messages. Seán Ó Muirthile, Joe Derham, Swords, Mick Collins, Alec McCabe, Liam Tobin, Tom Cullen, Baby Duggan, Frank Thornton, Pearas Béaslaí, Joe O'Reilly, Mick Knightly, Joe Griffin, Harry Boland, Joe Kearns were the chief people that I knew in this connection.

While I was in the Red Bank it was never raided but it was raided shortly after I left. My tables were known as the republican tables. At one time the price of lunch was limited to 1/3d. and my clients used to take pleasure in breaking the law.(D.O.R.A.) by exceeding the limit.

I knew Sean McDermott too. He was a life-long friend of my husband, Dinny O'Callaghan, who was a member of the I.R.B. Dinny took part in the Howth gun-running, meeting the boat with the two Mellows,

Cathal Brugha and Tom Slator when it came in. He often told me that he handed up to the Volunteers every rifle that was in the boat that day. He also helped at the Kilcoole gun-running, of which Sean T. O'Kelly was in charge. On that occasion a couple of policemen turned up and would have made trouble but Dinny held them up. He pretended he had a gun in his pocket - actually it was a bottle of stout - and said he would blow their brains out if they attempted to move.

When the guns were safely loaded on the lorries, he handed the policemen the 'gun' and told them to drink his health. Dinny was from Kenmare. He died of diabetes in 1945. We married in 1921 and had four children, one boy and three girls who are all alive.

Dinny joined the national movement when he came to Dublin in 1900 and the Volunteers at their inception. I have a short statement written in pencil in his own hand which he prepared for the Military Service Pensions Board and which I am giving you to copy (Appendix A). He had the rank of Lieutenant in 'A' Company, 1st Battalion, and was in the 1916 fighting promoted on the field to be Commandant of Barricades for the whole area from Phibsboro down to the Quays. I consider, - and he did, especially when he lost his health - that he was badly treated in not being given his rank for pension purposes. In his statement he forgot to mention that he was at the removal of the Dungannon oats. It was in a store in the Smithfield vicinity when the Volunteers got information about a raid and he worked hard the whole night through shifting it to safety. I am sure there have been statements made about that already by the men of the 1st Battalion.

During January, 1921, there was a barbed wire entanglement erected around the area where his shop was from Parnell Street to the Quays. The whole area was surrounded by the British forces. Dinny had a quantity of equipment made for the Volunteers, ready to be called for by a man called McGurk. He failed to turn up for the stuff and in order to save it from falling into the hands of the enemy, the only thing that could be done in the circumstances was to burn it in the cellar of his premises. About £100 worth he had to destroy that night and in order to save himself and others he made a claim afterwards for compensation but never got any recompense as the loss was called self-destruction. That same incident was the means of putting him out of business as he had to pay for the stuff and he was never able to get on his feet again.

It was on the advice of Michael Collins that I took over a restaurant called the West End at 40 Parkgate Street, a few months after the arrival of the Black and Tans. He thought it would put me in a position to be of great use to the Volunteers as it was just beside Kingsbridge and on the direct road in from Kildare, and he knew that it was frequented by the British forces. Mick Collins asked me did I need any financial help but I said I did not. I got money from home and had saved some myself. I had been on the look out for a place of the kind for some time.

I installed myself there and things turned out as expected. I had a Cumann na mBan assistant, Máire Gleeson, who is now dead, and another girl, Katie Tracy. They were both very reliable.

The Black and Tans who were our customers were strict tee-totalers and they were glad to have a place where they could have a substantial meal. They were confined to that area and could not come into town when they liked. Curfew was imposed about that time.

I was able to get a lot of information from these men for the Volunteers. I also got quite a lot of guns (revolvers) and ammunition. They sometimes had no money and would leave their guns which I handed over to the Volunteers. P.J. Ryan, Baby Duggan, Ted Ryan who was a sister of Mrs. O Conaill (Eilís Ní Riain) and a student in Maguire's College, used to come for the guns. I remember giving one to Joe Melinn of Tralee. He had been in Dublin for a week looking for guns but had not succeeded in getting any. Dinny, who happened to be in our shop - I was not then married to him - went with him to Kingsbridge to see him off.

We were often able to get information from the soldiers on guard at the Military Barracks, Arbour Hill and the Royal - about where Volunteer prisoners were located and passed it on to Mick Collins' men.

On the day of the burning of the Custom House a Volunteer, I think his name was Ryan - Mick Ryan, I think - who had taken part in it, ran into Rourke's Bakery right opposite the Custom House and covered himself with flour. The place was raided in a short time but nobody gave him away and he escaped arrest. He came straight to our restaurant to get a wash before he appeared again on the street.

Brian Houlihan who was a member of the Intelligence Branch, used to take messages for us down to Phil

Shanahan's in Foley Street, Jim Kirwan's in Parnell Street and Vaughan's Hotel in Parnell Square. Barney Mellows used to come to us too. He used to get information from someone in the Castle about people who were to be arrested and he would ask me to pass the information on through my channels. We would give him any information we happened to have.

Frank Thornton and Liam Tobin used to meet the British Intelligence Officers at my place. The appointments were made by me.

Seán Ó Conaill who used sometimes to be on duty in the Post Office at Kingsbridge Railway Station used to bring me messages from Mick Collins' Intelligence Department.

There was a telephonist from Kerry, whom Dinny knew, in the Vice Regal Lodge and she was able to give him a lot of information which we passed on to Mick's agents. For instance, she knew about Lord French's departure from Roscommon on the day of the ambush in December 1919. Dinny had a place of business in Capel Street at that time and she would come down and give him whatever information she had.

On the morning of Bloody Sunday after the killing of the British Intelligence Officers, the Tans came into our restaurant and told us that the men who had shot their men dead that morning were at Croke Park and they were going to get everyone of them. I told this to Seán Ó Conaill so that he could warn the fellows. Máire Gleeson, myself, and a couple of other Cumann na mBan girls went ourselves to Croke Park with the idea of warning anyone we knew. When we arrived the aeroplanes were hovering over the field and

the players were moving out after they had been fired on from the planes. There was dreadful commotion after the first volley. The Tans gave the order "Women and children get out, men stand to". The men were searched, but they had either thrown away their guns or handed them over to the women.

The Tans told us afterwards that they had found 33 guns in the field. They did not give us any of those as they had to be handed over and checked.

The people who came to our restaurant were the rank and file of the Black and Tans; the Auxiliaries, who were the officers were in Beggars Bush, and never came to us.

I cannot at the moment remember anything else of interest or importance, but if I do I shall tell it to you when I come up again, as I shall have some business to do in Dublin in the course of a few weeks.

SIGNED

Margaret O'Callaghan  
(Margaret O'Callaghan)

DATE

8/9/52

8/9/52.

WITNESS

S. Ni Chiosain  
(S. Ni Chiosain)

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No. W.S.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21  
NO. W.S. 151

Curistown

Kinnear

with the

8/11/52

Dear Mrs. Kinnear

I am returning the statement and very  
sorry for causing you so much trouble. I thought that I would  
be able to get to the City before this but was prevented then  
wishing that more that I can think of. I must say that since the  
time I went to Parkgate Street that I was relieved from  
attending any outdoor activities such as parades, public journals  
etc. As I was too busy to go to the evening... I refer to  
to my statement to explain to you that when the Seventeenth  
proceedings were in Kinnear hall (Gaelic <sup>1916</sup> execution) I  
was in the next cell to Ned Kelly and they were able to  
chat each other through a partitioned wall. The morning prior  
Ned was called out for to go before the firing squad. He  
knocked at my door and said (Good bye, Darling)  
he was the last Ned we spoke to and by a strange coincidence  
on Easter Sunday 1945 there was a Committee on radio with  
or Radio Mirror he was all listening in and some of  
the neighbors around came in to hear it - to. When



LEWINSTOWN,  
KILLUCAN,  
W'MEATH

8.11.'52.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 747

Dear Miss Kissane,

I am returning the statement and very sorry for causing you so much trouble. I thought that I would be able to get to the city before this but never was successful. There is nothing much more that I can think of unless that from the time I went to Parkgate Street that I was exempt from attending any outdoor activities such as parades, public funerals, etc., as I was too well known to the enemy.

In regard to Dinny's statement, he often told us that when the sentenced prisoners were in Kilmainham Jail awaiting execution, 1916, he was in the next cell to Ned Daly and they were able to chat each other through a partitioned wall. The morning poor Ned was called out for to go before the firing squad he knocked at Dinny's door and said (Goodbye Dinny). He was the last Ned spoke to and by a strange coincidence on Easter Sunday 1945, there was a commentary on Easter Week on Radio Eireann. We were listening in and some of the neighbours around came in to hear it too. When they came to the part after the guns blowing up the G.P.O. from the Liffey, the next part was calling out the prisoners for execution. When it came to Ned Daly's turn to go out Dinny jumped up from the fire white in the face and, without ever speaking to any of us or saying goodnight as he always did, he went straight to his bedroom, and he never came down again. He was dead on 15th April. It brought back all the old memories of his dearest friends. He died on the 15th April 1945.

You will be able to put this together better than I can and you can sign it. If you have time sometime you can send me a copy just for the children.

I hope you are keeping well this cold miserable weather.

Yours sincerely,

(Signed) M. O'Callaghan.

To the Military Pensions Board :

A True Sketch of My Personal Record.

A Cháirde,

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I joined the G.A.A. and Gaelic League in the year 1900 and worked hard studying Irish, so much so that I came under the notice of the I.R.B. and was taken into that organisation in 1901. From that on I worked with enthusiasm and earnestness in every forward movement in the cause of freedom and recognised by the leaders at the time as one of their best workers.

I was one of the chief Sinn Féin Election Agents for the Municipal Council 1905-06-07-08 and chief Election Agent for Charlie Dolan in North Leitrim (the first Parliamentary Sinn Féin Election) and congratulated by the leaders Alderman Kelly, T. D., Arthur Griffith and many others, my object being to recruit and organise for the I. R. B.

In 1908 I worked at my trade all over the Midlands for the sole purpose of starting centres of the I. R. B., which I did in Mullingar, Athlone, Birr, Longford and Ballinasloe, without fee or reward. After coming back to Dublin I started to drill and learn the art of war in the National Gymnasium under the hidden cloak of the I. R. B. in Tara St. Baths.

I still kept on recruiting from the Gaelic League (our best ground) and the G.A.A., and was made a Centre in 1912, and carried on recruiting and drilling until Seán McDermott and Tom Clarke and a few of us started the

Volunteers same as Carson had already done in the North. At those meetings held in the offices of "Irish Freedom", No. 5 Findlater's Place, now Cathal Brugha Street, it was decided to invite all shades of nationalist public opinion, Redmondites, Hibernians, Gaelic Leaguers, G. A. A., Labour, etc., and am glad to say they all fell for it. A public meeting was held in the Rotunda, addressed by, as well as I remember, Eoin McNeill, L. Kettle, J. D. Nugent, etc., and the Volunteers were started openly.

The following Monday night "A" Company, 1st Battalion, was started, and on the following Monday Robert Monteith was elected Captain; McGarry and McCormack, Lieutenants, with roughly 200 recruits composed principally of the general public and 6 - 7 I. R. B. men.

I was elected Section Leader and commenced recruiting within the Company for the I. R. B., which policy was sound at the time for it held the Company later on (at the Redmondite split) for the Irish Republic. After the split I was elected 2nd Lieutenant, a rank I held until promoted on the field to the rank of Commandant, a rank, which was thoroughly understood that I should hold when the fighting would start.

On Sunday, 26th July, '14, I was selected with Cathal Brugha, Barney Mellows, Tom and Mick Slator, to proceed by motor boat nine miles north-east of Ireland's Eye to meet Erskine Childers with his cargo of guns from Germany. In the event of calm weather we were to tow her to Howth Harbour and use arms if necessary against coastguards.

Some time later on Captain Monteith was deported at 24 hours' notice and I was the man deputed by Seán McDermott to find him accommodation, which I found with an old friend of mine, the late P. O'Growney, Athboy.

On Whit Sunday, 1915, "A" Company, 1st Battalion, organised an excursion to Limerick which the whole Dublin Brigade took part in, also Cork, Galway, Tipperary, etc. We paraded in Limerick and received a very hostile reception from a large section of the people with the result that a number of our men lost their rifles, and I was ordered to remain in Limerick with the late Commandant Daly for the purpose of recovering the rifles, which we did.

From that time on I carried on drilling and arming men, going into military barracks under different assumed names, buying rifles, ammunition, equipment, etc. (a very risky job) until Easter Week, 1916, when I was mentioned twice in despatches for bravery and knowledge of street fighting. On Tuesday during that week I drove over 100 enemy forces from Broadstone Station with 14 men, and on that day or the day after I took Linenhall Barracks and burned it to the ground, an action for which I was specially thanked by the leaders, P.H. Pearse, etc. Having bored holes from house to house we were able to change our positions under cover. Sir John Maxwell admitted it took the British Army 24 hours to advance 100 yards with great loss.

For my part in that eventful week I was sentenced to death and commuted to 10 years' penal servitude. I spent until Christmas 1916 in Portland and until

March 1917 in Lewes, and sent back again to Portland for not obeying prison rules. I was released about the middle of June, 1917.

After my release from prison I was sent to Clare and put in charge of the Killaloe Electoral Division of East Clare, and through expert knowledge of elections and hard work I succeeded in having polled 298 votes out of a possible 3. After the election I took a holiday at the expense of the National Aid Society, the only money I ever received up to that time for services rendered to the cause.

At the end of August, 1917, I was appointed Army Director of Organisation in Kerry and held that position until the elections 1918. I was in charge of I. R. A. in Crossmaglen 1918. At that period I was commissioned with Seán Hyde, now somewhere in Cork, and E. J. Duggan, (now Senator) to start the Intelligence Department within the Army, the first meeting held at 21 Victoria Terrace, Donnybrook, from which its activities reached every unit of the I. R. A. in Ireland. After the Election 1919, I was appointed with Rory O'Connor, Director of Munitions, a position I held until after the Truce, July 11th, 1921, my duty being that of equipment. I designed an equipment something after an Austrian design which proved to be very good and had it distributed to most parts of Ireland. I also procured motor cars, American roller saws and other Army tools necessary for guerilla warfare.

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