

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILÉITV 1913-21
NO. W.S. 273

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 273.....

Witness

Mrs. Margaret Keogh (nee Quinn)
32-33, 44th Street,
Astoria, Long Island,
New York, U S A.

Identity

Treasurer Inghini na h-Eireann 1900 -;
Member of Cumann na mBan, Dublin.

Subject

National Associations
1900 - 1916.

Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness

Nil

File No. .S. 1384.....

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Statement by Mrs. Margaret Keogh
Formerly Maggie Quinn (who first married Brian Callender),

32-33 44th St., Astoria, Long Island,
New York, U.S.A.

I took part as a very young girl in the 1898 procession at which the tablet was dedicated in Cornmarket. I was present at the founding of Inghiní na hÉireann which originated from the Committee formed to give children of Dublin a treat on the occasion of the visit of Queen Victoria in 1900. The idea was to reward the children who had not consented to go to the Phoenix Park to cheer and wave to Queen Victoria. The treat was given in Clonturk Park. We got that through the aid of Mr. Tom Byrne, a carrier, who did trojan work in helping to make the event a success, and a wonderful success it was from every point of view. Maud Gonne was responsible for the whole affair. Her teaching and inspiration acted like magic on all of us. We would have done anything she wanted us to. She kept us out of many dangers. Her superior experience and intelligence saved us from many traps which we in our youth and inexperience would have fallen into. She had insight which showed her the implications of many associations which we would have been inclined to make but which she kept us out of.

I was the Treasurer practically all the time I resided here. We had very little to pay for, although the treat was on a very large scale; there were about 10,000 children. Our appeals for subscriptions brought in huge contributions in the form of money and food. All the bakers, confectioners and mineral water manufacturers supplied almost unlimited food and drink. I was a young girl at the time and this was my first undertaking. I was amazed at the quantity of stuff we got. We spent days and nights getting ready the rations for the children. We had two empty

stores near Alfie Byrne's place in Talbot Street, procured for us by Tom Byrne.

The treat which was called Maud Gonne's treat was the subject of comment in the Press and in the streets. We were weeks beforehand registering the names of all the children; some mothers came with babies in their arms. We had music leading the van and the children singing patriotic songs. The Inghini and other patriotic organisations kept order and the public were amazed at the orderly nature of the procession. The children were marshalled in the forenoon and it was dark when we got home, footsore and weary, but happy that everything had turned out so well. We had some of the clergy at our back. Fr. Anderson of John's Lane was one of our best backers. Fr. York in the U.S.A. was a great friend. The majority of the clergy, however, would not touch us with a forty foot pole.

I think it was some time after this that the incident occurred in which Arthur Griffith was involved. A man called Collis had an article in a would-be society paper - I think 'Figaro' was the name of it - it had an office in Lower Grafton Street - making allegations against Maud Gonne; nowadays you could sue him for damages, but she only laughed at it. He, Arthur, took it seriously as a point of honour on her behalf and gave him a trouncing with a zambok that he had brought from South Africa. He was asked to apologise or the matter would be taken to court. He refused and was brought to court on a charge of common assault and got a period of imprisonment. While he was in prison the Inghini planned to give him a presentation on his release. It took the form of a silver mounted blackthorn stick with a suitable inscription.

At that period the Inghini were in their infancy. We were the first women's Irish National Association - the Ladies' Land League was political. It was through the Celtic Literary Society

to which our brothers and friends belonged, that we became so national. Once a month they had a ladies' night at which they read a manuscript journal called the 'Shanachie', to which the members contributed. I think Willie Rooney was the editor. He killed himself working at his job in the London North Western in the daytime and at Irish affairs in the night. I think that all those things laid the foundation of 1916. Major McBride was a member of the Celtic Literary Society before he went out to the Transvaal.

We used to go into the public houses with our anti-recruiting leaflets and had things thrown at us and very vile language sometimes. We tried to get the soldiers off the streets. We did not succeed fully in this. We got them, however, confined to certain areas. They could only walk at one side of O'Connell Street. Our main object was to save the young Irish girls from falling into their hands. A decent girl could not walk down the Post Office side without being molested. Then such girls got the name of a 'soldier's totty'.

We started classes - Irish and history - for the children. We retained a lot of those who had been to the treat. Their constant cry was: "When is the lady going to give us another party?". Bridgie Maher was very successful as a teacher both of Irish and singing. The children just loved her. Maud Gonne got married about 1903 and from that on spent a lot of her time abroad. After some time we affiliated with the Cumann na nGael who were founded about the same time and had the same objects as we had.

When Maud-Maebh we used to call her, as we all adopted the old Irish names - separated from her husband, it caused a good deal of excitement, but we all were loyal to her; in fact I fell out with my own brother, Mick Quinn, over it. He was a member of the Celtic Literary Society. I still have the verbatim copy of

the legal proceedings in the court case.

When a resolution was proposed at a meeting of the Executive of Cumann na nGael in the Mansion House to call on her to resign, I opposed it in another resolution, being Treasurer of the Inghiní at the time. One of the members, recently deceased, called me a little old grandmother. The discussion was heated. The result was that the Inghiní disaffiliated from Cumann na nGael though they acknowledged the work we had done and were doing. She never tried to influence us in any way, leaving it to ourselves what we would like to do. There was no visible hostility between us and Cumann na nGael. Seán was baptised in Terenure Church. This was some months after his birth. He was a delicate child and Maebh was very ill herself and conditional baptism had been given in Paris. Quite a number of the Inghiní were present at the ceremony in Terenure.

We still kept on our activities. I can't remember any other incident of importance except on the occasion of the King's visit (Edward's) when a black flag was hoisted in Maud Gonne's house in Coulson Avenue and two black flags in my sister's house - Mary Quinn, afterwards Mrs. Dudley Digges - in Rathmines Road. Word was sent to each of us that the house in Coulson Avenue was surrounded. As a matter of fact we found a cordon of police there when we arrived and they tried to keep us from advancing. We were accompanied by the Michael Dwyer Hurling Club, the Fianna Hurling Club with their camáns, and many other sympathisers in their hundreds. They moved into the two gardens - Maebh's and George Russell's - took up their positions and defied anyone to come near. There were, of course, also a lot of spectators who thought us crazy and beyond the pale. The police made all sorts of efforts to get the flag down. Maebh had already informed them that she would not let them interfere with the flag that she had put up in honour of the Pope who had just died. There were plenty of reports about the matter in the papers the following

morning, so there must have been press reporters there. We were all given refreshments and the boys stood guard all night.

Some time after my marriage, about 1907, my husband and I started a restaurant - An Poinnteach - in No. 4 Johnson's Court. We rented the premises from the Carmelite Fathers. It was a rendezvous for all the people who were interested in national matters. A pipers' band was started there. When my second baby was born we went to live in Templeogue and came in to the restaurant every morning.

Inghiní na hÉireann were the first to introduce Tableaux relating to Irish History. We showed them in the Antient Concert Rooms in Brunswick Street. Sínead Flanagan (Mrs. De Valera), Máire Ní Chillín, Alice Milligan, Anna Johnson (Eithne Carbery), Máire Ní Shiúbhlaigh, Susan Varian, Helen Laird, Susan Mitchell, and, I think, Ella Young and her sister May co-operated to make them a success as did all the boys of our acquaintance. My sister Mary was with us too and Dudley Digges whom she afterwards (1907) married in New York. Helena Molony took minor parts afterwards in the plays. Out of these tableaux grew the idea of the Irish Players. Frank Fay was, I think, the Director, and Willie the Producer. They decided to produce A. E.'s "Déirdre" which had only just been written, and Yeats' "Kathleen Ní Houlihan" in which Maebh took the principal part. These were performed in St. Teresa's Temperance Hall in Clarendon Street and created a sensation. To present such plays at such a time was a great achievement, but everybody was so co-operative that it was a labour of love. All this would be around 1903 before certain members, my sister, Dudley Digges, P. J. Kelly, Charles Caulfield and Elizabeth Young were invited to the U.S.A. by the Committee of the World's Fair held in St. Louis in 1904. After that these players who remained successfully produced plays in various places. The rehearsals took place in 34 Lower Camden Street. Before that year my sister Mary was asked to act in the "Well of the Saints" (Synge) but she

refused as it was not, in our view, orthodox. Up to then the type of plays produced was on a higher level. We thought and, I think, still that this play of Synge could be done without.

After that Miss Horniman came along and formed the Abbey Theatre, but our own group - now called the National Players - continued to produce plays in different halls, Molesworth Hall, the Antient Concert Rooms, Trim, Kells, Clonmel, etc. Edward Martyn made us a present of scenery he possessed which was a great thing as he thought a lot of it. They produced for the first, and I think the only, time, "Robert Emmet" by Henry Mangan, who is still I believe on the pay roll of the Corporation. Seán Connolly who was afterwards killed in the City Hall, took the part of Robert Emmet, and took it with the highest honours. The group was composed of Fianna Éireann and Inghini, including Helena Molony and Marie Perolz. The Countess Markievicz became prominent at a later date. At the time she was organising the Fianna, 1910 or 1911. I used to give her the key of my place as she had meetings and business to transact there.

I was a member of Cumann na mBan. I was living in Bray when the Rising broke out. I walked in as far as Rathmines but could not get through the lines and had to walk back again. I got no mobilisation order and when I asked Miss French-Mullen why, she said she would not bring me in on account of my three small children. I felt very disappointed over it as I had gone through all the first-aid and drill training.

After the Rising I led a quiet life. My husband died in 1916 and I went to America in 1919 and my children followed. I still consider myself a member of Inghini na hÉireann. I have never had notification that it was disbanded. I am of opinion that we did what we set out to do, which was to educate the younger people nationally. The majority of them took part in the Rising of 1916. Many of them gave their lives and many went to gaol for their activities in the interest of their country.

Signed

Margaret Keogh

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