

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURÓ STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 556

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COSANTA:

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 556.....

Witness

Mrs. Mary Walsh,
Killountain,
Bandon,
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Captain, South Bandon area, Cumann na mBan,
1917-1921.

Subject.

- (a) Cumann na mBan, South Bandon district,
1917-1921;
- (b) Military activities, South Bandon area,
1919-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1780.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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No. W.S. 556

STATEMENT OF MRS. MARY WALSH,
KILLOUNTAIN, BANDON, CO. CORK.1917 - 1921.CORK III BRIGADE, CUMANN NA mBAN.BANDON SOUTH DISTRICT COUNCIL.

PRESIDENT: Mary O'Neill (now Mrs. Walsh).
 ADJT. or SEC. Nora Crowley.
 TREASURER: Hannah O'Brien (now Mrs. O'Mahony).

BRANCHES OR SQUADS.

Kilbriittain Branch. Strength - 26.

Captain: Mary O'Neill (now Mrs. Walsh).
 Adj. or Sec. Nora Crowley.
 Treasurer: Hannah O'Brien (now Mrs. O'Mahony).

Timoleague Branch. Strength - 12.

Captain Margaret Foley (now Mrs. Harte).
 Adj. or Sec. Mary Kelly.
 Treasurer: Maureen O'Driscoll.

Gaggin Branch. Strength - 12.

Captain Catherine Walsh (now Mrs. Lombard)
 Adj. or Sec. Josephine Flynn.
 Treasurer: Kate McCarthy.

Barryroe Branch. Strength - 29.

Captain: Nellie Coleman (Mrs. Santry - deceased).
 Adj. or Sec. ? (now Mrs. O'Donovan.)
 Treasurer: Nora Whelton.

Clogagh Branch: Strength - 15.

Captain. Margaret O'Donovan (now Mrs. Burke).
 Adj. or Sec. Janie O'Donovan.
 Treasurer: Kathleen Murphy. (now Mrs. O'Donovan).

BALLINSPITTIE BRANCH.

Strength 13.

Captain	Hannah Hannon	(Now Mrs. Curran)
Adj. or Sec.	Mary Ryan	(Now Mrs. O'Sullivan).
Treasurer:	Kate ?	(Now Mrs. McCarthy).

1916.

My brothers were attached to the Kilbrittain Volunteer Company. Two of them were ordered to a Parade on Easter Sunday the destination was Macroom. The sisters of the Volunteers were called on to help in their absence, which made us very interested in the Movement.

After the Parade mentioned our home was raided, time after time, by the local R.I.C. Those raids only made us more anxious to help out those boys.

At this period, Miss Walsh, Kilbrogan Hill, Bandon, whose brother took part in the Dublin Rising, was trying to get Cumann na mBan Branches started in the area, having got instructions from Headquarters, Dublin. She approached me about forming a branch in the Kilbrittain area. Each branch was to have ten members and to get affiliated with Headquarters Cumann na mBan, Dublin. Miss Walsh got instructions from Dublin and passed them on to the Branches.

1917.

At this period the Kilbrittain Branch was in working order. I was appointed Captain, Miss Nora Crowley - Secretary, and Miss H. O'Brien, Treasurer. All the members joined an Irish Class which was held weekly in Kilbrittain. After Class each Sunday we held our Cumann na mBan Meeting and practised bandaging. Nurse Lordan gave First Aid Lectures, Dr. Cullinane, Clonakilty, also gave instructions near Kilbrittain, and later Dr. Stopford gave a First Aid Course which was attended by members from many outside Branches.

From our weekly subscription each girl was supplied with a small First Aid Outfit, containing scissors, lint, gauze, bandages, pins, etc.,

Our Branch was so useful and successful we were asked by other districts to assist them in forming Branches, having Bandon as District Council, where the Officers of the Battalion Branches met periodically to report on activities.

1919.

A Cumann na mBan organiser came to the Brigade Area from Dublin - Miss Price. She advised that the 1st Battalion area be divided owing to the difficulty of working from a Central District Council. One area was to be north and the other south of the Bandon river. The latter consisted of Branches in Kilbrittain, to which Ballinadee attached its

branch - Ballinspittle, Gaggin, Clogagh, Timoleague and Barryroe.

Miss Price called a meeting to which the Officers of those branches came. It was held at Callanans, Ballycatten - the date I do not remember. From that period our District Council was formed.

I was unanimously appointed senior Officer and Ciss Crowley was appointed Secretary. Our duties were to visit each Branch in our area monthly and to report progress, under a covering envelope, to Headquarters, Dublin. That order was faithfully carried out until the Truce came.

Miss Price remained in the 3rd Brigade Area and from her we got instructions while on active service.

Activities.

Dispatches, raising funds, Flag Days, concerts, cooking, knitting socks for Column, etc., etc., Each member was always ready to do anything required by the different Companies, such as, scouting, and at times taking charge of arms and ammunition.

In Kilbritten a Chapel gate collection was made each Sunday at both Masses during 1920-1921 period, and food parcels were regularly sent to the interned men of the area, the posting of which was often carried out under very difficult conditions, which we always found a means to overcome.

Memories - First Shots.

1917-1918.

One evening, a military raid took place. My brother, Mick, and Dan Manning were at Supper. They had been sowing corn all day. Not wishing to chance arrest they got out and ran through the fields. They were fired on but got away from that party only to run into another raiding party over the hill which also fired on them. They had to "put them up" and were interned for some months.

Arms were scarce: the boys secured lead and several boxes of buck-shot were made at our house and packed in cartridge cases. This was later used in the attacks on the surrounding R.I.C. Barracks. Also, in an out-house on our farm, a Timoleague Blacksmith (Con Leahane) spent several weeks making rifle bayonets. He was helped by the local Volunteers. They were supplied with all their requirements from O'Mahonys, Cloundreen, and our house.

1919.

The first policeman shot was in Kilbritten. That night a party of the boys assembled at our house and it was decided then to go "on the run", so from that date to the Truce

they were never at home for any length of time. Previous to that Charlie Hurley often spent hours with us writing. (Not being able to correctly place dates, I leave that to be adjusted).

During the Elections in those troubled years the Cumann na mBan helped in many ways - assisted in bringing people to vote and also supplied refreshments and meals in the schools.

Our first experience of an ambush was when a party of military was successfully disarmed at Rathclarin. Previous to the attack I was asked to sew some masks which consisted of horse hair and cloth. It was next morning I learned what they were used for, when my brother Mick was brought home, having got a bad head wound in the attack. I learned later he let go his man to assist another companion who was being overcome. That was how he came by his wound - a blow of a rifle. The rifles and ammunition were all secured and dumped and the patrol set free. Another brother removed Mick and some others several miles away in a horse and trap and he was home again about 8 a.m. In the meantime our house was raided by R.I.C. and military.

Dr. Stopford was brought to our Battalion area to give lessons in First Aid. Classes were arranged and a number of girls from each Company attended and were billeted in the district. The first class took place at Ardacrow. Nurse Lordan, Brigade, also assisted. Later, an examination was carried out by Dr. Con Lucey, Brigade M.D. and several girls received certificates. Dr. Stopford remained with the Active Service Column until Truce came.

Week after week military attacks took place on R.I.C. Barracks and Coastguard Stations. The Column, also, were very active. Military enemy raids became a weekly and, sometimes, a daily occurrence. Still scarcely a day passed but someone called from Kilbrittain, Bandon, Timoleague or Clogagh, and we were nearly always in touch with the Battalion activities and were able to report on where the different men were to be found. The same applied to their billeting; word was nearly always passed on, so that we were able to give warning of raids or get the required person.

I am glad to remember that full military honours were paid to two of the Company Volunteers - W. Hurley and M. O'Brien - who died. The coffins were covered with the flag and each Company in the area was represented and marched, as also did the Cumann na mBan.

After the Kilmichael Ambush a number of the Column came into our area to rest. ~~Mick~~ Hennessy had a scalp bullet wound which was not dressed for two days. I cleaned and dressed the wound and he remained until it was healed. A Doctor said, later, only for the care he might have been blood poisoned.

Later, I nursed a shoulder bullet wound for Denis Lordan. He, too, was soon as well as ever.

4th February, 1921.

Volunteer P. Crowley remained at this time in our district. He was awaiting an appendix operation. A dump was prepared by us for him. (He had his meals in our house after being told there was no raiding). Unfortunately, the place was surrounded this morning by military in single formation which closed in on the suspected houses. When word came, Paddy and my brother ran by a fence to cover, only to run in to Percival himself. They retraced their steps, Percival following and firing. My sister and I ran after the two boys hoping to save them from the firing as we felt sure he would not fire on us. My brother then gave up hoping that Paddy could get out as he had to be held prisoner, but another soldier was called on to cover him. Then my sister caught Percival by the legs (he was on a gate) and held him fast, even though he beat her knuckles with a gun. When he could not release himself he pointed the gun at our brother, and said he would shoot him dead if she did not let him go. We had hoped by this time that Paddy had got well away. He was followed by Percival and was found stretched dead about a quarter of a mile from our home by a Cumann na mBan girl that was crossing to let us know of the raid. My sister and I, with a few others, brought the body back to our house before the military had time to collect it. They came along with a local R.I.C. man to identify the body, but did not interfere again. He was waked and buried from our house in Clogagh and was given full military honours; also, Charlie Hurley spoke at the grave after his burial.

1921.

Both the Column and the enemy were very active. One morning, hearing shots I went back the fields to learn the cause. On the hill in our farm is a cottage owned by an old man, who worked out. When I got to it I was seen by the raiding party in Cloundreen - Black and Tans from Dunmanway. They rushed in a lorry to where I was. I stood my ground - running would have been fatal. I was severely questioned and they maintained I had given word to someone in the cottage. One of them caught up an old pike and pressed it against me. They passed around stout they found there and then set fire to the bed and left it burning. I was glad to be allowed slip home.

The same day a scout girl came to me with word that four men had lost their lives at Crois na Leanbh, all from Kilbrittain Company, being surrounded while trenching a road. The Quartermaster asked that I see to the arranging of burial. (Previous to this I had been instructed what to do in such a case). I cycled to the house of Mr. M. Crowley to where the bodies were taken. We were in touch with the O.C. all the time. We spent the night at this house and at dawn I went to Bandon and ordered coffins which were got at M. O'Reillys and he had them sent out in time for the burial that evening. In the course of the day Percival called at the house but took no action. The dead were: Jeremiah O'Neill, Tim Connolly, John McGrath and Con McCarthy. During the Truce, the bodies of those four were re-interred in the Parish Church Yard by permission of the Bishop - Rev. Dr. Cohalan of Cork. Soon after, my brother

Mick was laid to rest beside them, R.I.P.

In December, 1920, an ambush took place near Gaggin. A military car got away and got reinforcements in Bandon, so the Column had to change their plans of retreat. Provision was made in Clanbogue, beyond Kilbrittain, for their arrival, which could not be carried out.

Word was brought to us to prepare for the column to camp at our place and to provide provisions, without leaving home or going to any village. They arrived that night and put up with us for two nights. We made bread and butter and provided for all their wants while they remained. We also provided hot baths for several who needed them badly - roughly from 50 to 80 were there. As many despatches were brought in during the Camp. That short notice shows what confidence they placed in the Cumann na mBan.

Of the Crossbarry Ambush much is said. We lost our friend - Charlie Hurley - and three others. Those three were buried in the Republican Plot, Bandon, but Charlie wished to be buried with his family in Clogagh. The Battalion O.C. sent a message to me to get his body removed to the Kilbrittain area. When I went to get this done the Cumann na mBan had already sent the body to Clogagh Church. I was one of many who kept vigil in the Church that night and Cumann na mBan and Volunteers marched at his funeral at the dawn of the morning, when the bagpipes played "Wrap the Green Flag round me boys" and his comrades in arms fired three volleys over his grave, R.I.P.

A supply of meat was taken from the military near Kinsale intended for military stationed at the Old Head by the Ballinspittle Company. It was sent to our house awaiting instructions. It was cooked there and passed on to the Column who were billeted in the vicinity of Clogagh, and greatly appreciated.

1921.

A Brigade meeting took place near our house and scouts were sent out. A number spent the night in our house and got food. Some had travelled a long distance. After the meeting many came along for their horses and got away in the early morning, including Con Murphy of Timoleague Company. While awaiting a message from the scouts a military party came along to the house of call in Cloundreen: some got away but Con was shot dead, The Officer of that raiding party was Silver from Courtmacsherry. Our house was surrounded at the same hour by Percival, with his men in shorts. We were not allowed leave the house that morning until the military had removed in a pony and trap the body, which was taken to Kinsale across the country. Old James O'Mahony was also taken in the trap as they thought the dead man was his son. The military were never told who prisoners or dead were. It was customary to return bodies to the workhouse in Bandon after identification.

Word was brought to us to get the body to Clogagh -

Timoleague Cumann na mBan girls, and myself were provided with a pony and trap and, to our disappointment, the body had not been returned to Bandon. Travelling at this time was difficult, many roads being cut up. Next day I was sent with Mary O'Mahony to secure the body if possible - word came he was in Bandon. We cycled to town, got some men and got the coffin placed in a farm cart with some bran bags loaded around it and the driver and Mary O'Mahoney sitting on the load. They travelled a roundabout road and arrived in the evening in Clogagh. Meanwhile, I gave word to our lads, at different points, of our progress.

The funeral, like Charlie Hurley's, was carried out at the dawn of next morning, with many of his companions present. Military honours were accorded. I wish to state that the Workhouse was guarded by military to find out who would claim the bodies, but for a short time that day they were called off to surround Kilbrogan graveyard, as Captain F. Hurley - shot in Bandon Park - was buried that day also. We were told that when the soldiers returned and found the body gone they were furious and threatened to burn down the place. Nobody saw the coffin leaving and the nurses were very good.

1921.

During Curfew hours one evening, Con Lehane, Timoleague Company, came hurriedly to our house, very much beaten up. He had been arrested by a military patrol. He was put in the charge of an armed soldier. When alone with him Con attacked him and disarmed him. He then came across the ground to our house. We dressed him and Bird Crowley and my sister, Maud, scouted him to safety and dumped the captured rifle. Later they had to travel several miles to report the occurrence to Battalion Headquarters, as Con told them it may save several more from running into the same patrol. This was all done during Curfew hours and I had to give word to some lads who were staying in our area. When I returned our house was surrounded and being searched by Percival, having found some cigarettes which I claimed as mine. He made me smoke one, though I never smoked. They had to leave very disappointed after questioning me about the absence of my sister.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 556

(Signed)

Mary Walsh (Mrs)

Witnessed :

C. Quinn, M.P.

EXTRACT FROM "THE CATHOLIC HERALD", DATED JUNE 25TH, 1921.

IRISH WOMEN IN THE TERROR.

Uniformed Ruffians.

Officer who laughed at Savage
Assaults on Young Ladies.

"These young and inexperienced soldiers have been plunged into circumstances infinitely trying to nerves and temper, and not in one single instance have they acted unworthily."

This is an extract from a paragraph appearing in the "Daily Mail" of June 3rd, on the conduct of the Regular Army in Ireland, which the "Irish Bulletin" states has been inserted "in orders" and circulated amongst the troops in Ireland. The following statement by Miss M. O'Neill of Kilbrittain, Co. Cork, is a sufficient commentary :-

Victim's Statement.

"On Monday morning, May 9th, about 7 a.m., fifty soldiers, under an Officer, surrounded our house. A number of these rushed upstairs, entering the bedrooms of my father and sister, who were both in bed. The Officer asked them to get up, but my father was unable to do so. They then searched the rooms.

"My mother and I were having our breakfast in the kitchen, and one soldier seized my cup of tea and drank it off immediately. The other soldiers were moving about, and my mother noticed one taking eggs from a box in the dairy. We went towards the dairy door and saw some of them drink and spill cream, and they also took about six pounds of butter. My sister called the attention of the Officer in charge to the looting, and he denied it. Just then a soldier came along with a capful of eggs; the cap dropped from him as he was passing the Officer, and the eggs got broken. That was sufficient proof; and the Officer said: "If you will keep your b..... mouth shut I will pay for them".

"THE OFFICER THEN TOLD ME TO GO UPSTAIRS AND GET MY CLOTHES ON AS I WAS UNDER ARREST. I DID THIS, AND WAS FOLLOWED BY TWO SOLDIERS AND FOR THAT REASON I CAME DOWNSTAIRS AGAIN WITHOUT CHANGING MY CLOTHES.

"My sister and I were then ordered outside the door, but we refused to go, as our mother was feeling unwell, and the soldiers were at large in the house. They then locked all the doors and put the keys in their pockets.

A BRITISH OFFICER !

"My sister went to work as usual outside, and when feeding the pigs was held up by two soldiers, who twisted her hands behind her back. They told her they wanted her up the road for some time; but she said they should take her, as she refused to go willingly with them. The Officer said: 'I will bury your b..... head in the manure heap !' They then pushed her to the gate, about forty yards away, and kept her hands twisted all the time. My mother protested against such treatment of her daughter, and so got roughly knocked about. She asked what was the charge against them, and got no answer. She stood between me and the soldiers, as the Officer gave the order to pull me out. They tried to do so, but she kept between us and clung to me. She said she would not let the girls go, as they were all she had now to help her; and the Officer replied: 'You won't have them long, either!'

"I told the Officer-in-charge he should be responsible if anything happened my mother, as the doctor had told me that any shock or excitement would prove fatal, as she was subject to paralysis and has a weak heart. They struck her had with the butts of their rifles, and she fell prostrate. The soldiers tried to drag me out, and, being unable to do so, one of them caught me by the throat, put his knee to my back, and knocked me down. He said he would choke the b..... life out of me.

A RUSSIAN AMUSED.

"WHEN MY SISTER SAW MY MOTHER UNCONSCIOUS IN THE YARD SHE RAN TO HER ASSISTANCE. SHE ALSO SAW ME BEING CHOKED BY A SOLDIER: SHE CAUGHT HIS ARM BUT WAS BEATEN BY ANOTHER WITH SOMETHING HARD WHICH CUT HER KNUCKLES.

"While all this was taking place, the Officer in charge was looking on and laughing. My father, hearing the commotion, crawled out of bed and asked the soldiers not to kill us, They fired a jam-pot at him, and it smashed on the wall near his head. They continued to beat us with their fists and rifles. They had two prisoners in the yard, and my sister called for their assistance to raise up my mother. The Officer refused; and she then asked if one of them would go for a doctor, and that, too, was refused. Apparently they thought my mother was dying, so they let us go. I then got a pony, to get a priest and a doctor, and the officer and another soldier did their best to prevent me; but eventually I went.

"The foregoing is a correct statement, and I am prepared to stand by it."

(Signed) M. O'NEILL.