

W. 8. 937
ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRE MILITAIRA 1913-21
No. W.S. 937

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 937.....

Witness

Mrs. Cathleen McCarthy (nee Ryan),
74 Castle Avenue,
Clontarf,
Dublin.

Identity.

Sister of Pádraic Ó Riain, one of the
founders of the Fianna.

Subject.

Anecdotes of national interest,
1913-1916.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2244.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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8.937

STATEMENT BY Mrs. CATHLEEN McCARTHY (Née RYAN),

74, Castle Avenue, Clontarf, Dublin.

At our house in 48 Clonliffe Road I got to know many of the Fianna such as Liam Mellows, Con Colbert and Eamonn Martin, as my brother Padraic with Madame Markievicz had founded the Fianna in Dublin.

These and many others, including Casement, Eimar O'Duffy and Bulmer Hobson, were constant visitors to our house and turned up to meals often. We had always a full house. At that time food was cheap and meals were plentiful.

You would go up to bed at night and when you came down in the morning you would see the hallstand full of the coats of these young men who came in at all hours of the night. They often slept three in a bed.

At the time of the Howth gun-running these Volunteers who came down the Malahide Road turned into Clonliffe Road bringing guns and cases of ammunition to our house. A couple of months before the gun-running my father started to do up the kitchen and he found that one of the walls was hollow. He broke it in and found a door which led into a tunnel that went a long distance underground. Daddy would not let us go far into it, he was afraid, but it turned out very useful for hiding the guns and ammunition at that time and afterwards for hiding men on the 'run' during the Black & Tan period. There was a big, old-fashioned dresser in the kitchen that just fitted the opening and the Black & Tans and the R.I.C. who raided the house never thought of removing the dresser.

Padraic was a member of the Gaelic League and learned Irish from Mrs. De Valera, then Sinéad Flanagan. He was working in the Gaelic League office at No. 25 Rutland Square (now Parnell Square). He was assisting Seán T. O'Kelly who was editor of the Claidheamh Soluis. He used to go

to the Aran Islands in the summer with Liam Mellows and Bulmer Hobson to acquire the proper Irish brogue.

Leo Henderson was another who was constantly at our house and was a keen Volunteer, although his mother was not sympathetic to the cause.

Eimar O'Duffy called at Leo's house one day and Leo's mother shut the door in his face. He rang the bell again and when she re-opened the door he told her in his best Oxford accent he was not in the habit of being left on the door mat. We roared when we heard the story.

Padraic formed what was called a 'John Mitchell Debating Society' that met in our house. It was, I think, just a cover for their Volunteer activities. The 'G' men, including Johnny Barton, used to be stationed at the front of the house watching who was coming in and out. I was coming into the house one night and I saw Barton peeping under the blind into the dining room where the meeting was going on with his big feet in the flowers. It was on Tuesday nights they held these meetings.

On Easter Sunday night 1916, I remember Eamonn Martin coming to the house. He asked two of us to go out to the Magazine Fort at 11.30 at night to count the number of soldiers that went into the fort. My sisters Margaret and Julia went on their bikes and hid at the back of the fort and waited till the soldiers went in and the others came out. There were six soldiers that went in and the same number came out.

I did not go with the girls because I was going north the next morning. I cannot now remember who came to inform me about my trip north but I was ready and all on Monday morning to start by the 9 o'clock train from Amiens Street. Leo Henderson met me at the station with a huge case of ammunition. He had bought my ticket and he put me in the train for Omagh, pushing the heavy suitcase of ammunition under the seat.

I was told to go to Baxter's Hotel and if anyone questioned me I was to say I was going north to be a priest's housekeeper. I was about 15 at the time and generally wore my hair in two long plaits. My mother had fixed my hair with hairpins around my ears and it was nearly covered by my hat.

When I arrived at Omagh station, I got into a horse-drawn brake that brought me to the centre of the town where Baxter's Hotel was. There Pádraic, Elmar O'Duffy and Liam Boyd were waiting for me and immediately took over the suitcase. We went upstairs and a meal was sent up to us immediately. While we were eating it we heard a crier on the street ringing a bell and shouting something. We could not understand a word he was saying but we got the wind up, and when we saw a brakeful of R.I.C. men coming along the street after and stopping at the hotel we were sure they were looking for us. They jumped off the brake and rushed into the hotel. We waited breathless expecting them to rush upstairs, but they didn't and we did not move for fear of attracting their attention. There must have been a bar in the hotel and they just came in for a drink. We breathed a sigh of relief when they went off after about ten minutes. I returned to Dublin by the next train and found the rebellion had started.

I should have mentioned that on Good Friday Bulmer was in our house as he often was. I was there when a knock came to the door and I opened it to let in Jack Tobin. He asked was Bulmer there and I said yes and brought Jack in. He told Bulmer he was wanted for a meeting. Bulmer went with him and they went to some house, I think in Phibsboro', where Bulmer was put under arrest and kept for some days.

I can't tell you why Pádraic and the other two went to the north instead of waiting here for the fight. They had to go there, they were sent. All the boys during Holy Week were busy getting ready

their guns and ammunition and these three must have gone north either on Sunday or by the first mail train on Monday morning.

All this business about the fight and the split was threshed out at a convention after the Rising. Pádraic came down for the convention but I don't know anything about it. He would tell you all about it. His address is Mr. P.J. Ryan, 18 Waverley Drive, Bangor, Co. Down. He was in hospital recently, but he is back home now. After that one visit he went back to the north. He went under a false name as he was in 'The Hue and Cry'. He got a job in a bookie's office.

When I came back from the north, the rebellion had started. It was afternoon and there was great confusion. Young men kept coming in, asking had the rebellion started and should they go out. I took it on myself to send them all out who inquired. Seán Lester was one of these and I was certain he went into the fight. He left our house to go. He seemed in a great state of indecision. I sent all these fellows, who came into our house making inquiries, to Croydon Park near Fairview. There was a priest there who was giving them all absolution on the quiet. I can't remember what his name was. Many of the people in our road and neighbourhood would not talk to us after the Rising because they thought we sent their sons out to fight. And in the fight afterwards when houses were raided on the road, they used to tell the military and Black & Tans to go up to 48 Clonliffe Road. That was where we lived. Bulmer Hobson's fiancée, Claire Cregan, spent the couple of nights before the Rising at our house, but she had left when I arrived back home.

My husband Paddy McCarthy is in the Post Office and was during the time of the trouble. He used to bring out messages that came in code through the office for the Castle and give them to the Volunteers. Liam Archer was another who did the same sort of work. He afterwards got a big job in the Army, but my husband's the sort that would not look

for anything for himself. He was one of the two people in the Post Office service that refused to take the oath of allegiance to the British. On one occasion when he was bringing out a message he was in a group held up by the military for searching. He put the piece of paper in his mouth and swallowed it.

(Signed) C.N. McCarthy
 C.N. McCarthy
 Date: 31st March 1954
 31st March 1954.

Witness: B. McCarthy
 B. McCarthy

