

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURU STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 485



BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 485.....

**Witness**

Miss Brighid O'Mullane,  
50 B. Leinster Road,  
Rathmines, Dublin.

**Identity**

Organiser, Cumann na mBan, 1917 - ;  
Member of Executive of Cumann na mBan, 1918 - ;  
Director of Propaganda 1923.

**Subject**

- (a) The Anglo-Irish Treaty, December 1921;
- (b) The Civil War 1922-23.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

File No. S.1594.....

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Second Instalment of Statement of Miss Brighid Ó Mullane50<sup>B</sup> Leinster Road, Rathmines, Dublin.

I was organising in County Louth when the Truce came and some time afterwards I was called to Headquarters in Dublin and attended all the meetings of the Executive. In addition I supplied the Director of Organisation with material for her annual report which she was preparing for the Convention which was to be held in October.

At the Convention I was re-elected on the Executive, and we kept a keen watch on the progress of the negotiations that were taking place in London. While there was a general relaxation of activities, the Branches were all instructed to be on the alert and to be ready for any emergency that might arise, in particular to be ready for the resumption of hostilities.

I was in constant touch with the Ranelagh Branch, Dublin, to which I was attached. This Branch had a membership of over one hundred at the time of the Truce, and included Lily O'Brennan, Mrs. Austin Stack, Sheila Humphreys, Mrs. Piatt, Una O'Connor, Phyllis Ryan (Mrs. Seán T. O'Kelly) and many other prominent women. A complete list of the members compiled by Phyllis Ryan, Lily O'Brennan and myself is attached to my statement (Appendix "A").

When the Articles of Agreement for a Treaty were published, the Executive of Cumann na mBan at its next meeting discussed the matter, and we were all - with three exceptions - opposed to accepting them. The exceptions were Mrs. Wyse-Power, her daughter Nancy and Mrs. Dick Mulcahy.

When Dáil Éireann was deliberating on the Articles of

Agreement at University College, members of the Dublin Branches of Cumann na mBan, including myself, demonstrated outside the building encouraging and asking the deputies not to let down the Republic by accepting the Articles of Agreement, and we gave great ovations to those members who we knew to be opposed to them. That was all we could do, until we found out whether the Dáil was going to accept the Articles of Agreement or not. Of course we continued our military training and enrolled new members.

When, some time after Christmas, the Articles of Agreement for a Treaty were accepted by a narrow majority of An Dáil, we held a meeting of the Executive and decided we should take action at once. We proposed a resolution which was carried with three dissentients. It was in the following terms: "That the Organisation of Cumann na mBan affirms its allegiance to the Republic and refuses to accept the Articles of Agreement as signed in London on the 6th December 1921". We decided to convene a Convention Extraordinary to be held in the Mansion House to ratify this resolution. Before the Convention members of the Executive were sent to various parts of the country to counteract pro-Treaty influences that were at work. I was sent to County Clare, where many of the senior officers of the I.R.A. showed pro-Treaty tendencies.

On my return I joined with the other members of the Executive in making preparations for the Convention, which kept us fully occupied. It was held early in February and was attended by a few hundred delegates from all parts of the country. Many of these delegates would be representing District Councils which would comprise six or more Branches. The resolution as passed by the Executive reaffirming allegiance to the Republic and refusing to accept the Articles of Agreement was put to the Convention. Members of the Executive including the President, Countess Markievicz,

myself, Eileen McGrane (later Mrs. P. McCarville), Josephine Aherne (later Mrs. James McNeill), Kate Breen and others whose names I cannot recall, spoke at length in favour of the resolution. Mrs. Wyse-Power and Mrs. Richard Mulcahy spoke against it. The resolution was fully discussed also by the delegates present and after the general discussion the vote was taken, the result being that all members voted in favour of the resolution except seven who voted against it.

We followed with great anxiety the split that was taking place in Volunteer and political circles, while we had practically a united front.

When the Provisional Government was set up it began to hold public meetings and inaugurated its campaign by organising a big meeting in College Green, at which W.T. Cosgrave, Richard Mulcahy, Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins and other prominent pro-Treaty people were to speak. About a dozen members of Cumann na mBan, including myself, attended the meeting in uniform, and at a given signal we rushed the platform, removed the Republican flag and got safely away with it, to the consternation of the people on the platform.

After the February Convention of Cumann na mBan the Executive appointed its three Directors, i.e., Director of Organisation, Director of Propaganda and Director of Training. I was elected Director of Propaganda, which kept me in Dublin all the time. It was, of course, voluntary work for the organisation, so I looked out for a livelihood and got a post as secretary to the National Examining Institute.

I started a monthly paper called "Cumann na mBan" which was sold through the Branches throughout the country and had a wide circulation. This little paper was divided into three sections; editorial section, written by myself, a training section containing training notes for the members,

and a section dealing with current events relating to the organisation. I also was able to procure appropriate articles for women from prominent persons such as Madame Markievicz, Mrs. Sheehy-Skeffington, Mrs. Piatt and others.

In June 1922 I went home to Sligo on my annual holidays and was scarcely a week there when the Four Courts were attacked and the Civil War started. Just as I was thinking what part I could take in it, a Volunteer arrived with a message from the military barracks which had been occupied by the I.R.A. to say there were three officers of Cumann na mBan there who were personal friends of my own. I rushed up immediately to the barracks and found there Sheila Humphreys, Una O'Connor and Peg Cuddihy of my own Ranelagh Branch. These had come down under orders to take part in the projected invasion of the North which had been agreed upon between Richard Mulcahy and the Republican Army, and when they arrived they learned that the Republican Army in Dublin had been attacked by the Free State Army, which thus violated the agreement arrived at regarding the attack on the North.

We held a consultation in the barracks in Sligo, and as a result decided to offer our services to the I.R.A. Sligo, if they were prepared to defend the Barracks when they were attacked, as we knew they would be. The Brigade Officer, Séamus Devins (afterwards murdered by the Free State soldiers on Benbulbin) told us that he had received orders from his superior officer to evacuate the barracks, an order which he was reluctantly going to carry out, as he would have preferred to fight.

When we saw that they were not going to defend the barracks but were evacuating and taking to the hills, we thought the best thing to do was to try to get back to Dublin. I set out to look for a hackney car, as all trains were

stopped. At last I succeeded.

Two other girls, Nora Brick and M. Doyle, who had come down with despatches, joined us and we started for Dublin immediately. We had an I.R.A. pass which brought us safely through until we came to the Shannon (Carrick-on-Shannon) where we encountered Free State troops. As we were carrying medical supplies and some guns we had to be very careful. So when questioned, we told the soldiers that we were returning from a holiday in Bundoran and were anxious to get back to our homes in Maynooth. This conversation took place at the barracks, where we had been brought by the guard who had held us up. The Free State officers seemed to believe our story and allowed us off. Having made such progress with them and knowing that the principal roads were all blocked and the driver did not know the way, we vamped a couple of the younger officers and finally cajoled them into preceding us in a car to show us the safe by-roads. On the way we had a puncture and the Free State officers came back to help our driver to put it right, and we continued our journey until we came to Mullingar, where, to our consternation, we were driven straight into the military Headquarters. We thought it was all up and that they had recognised some of us and set a trap for us. We were, however, agreeably surprised to discover that they were getting their O.C. to procure a spare wheel for us. The O.C. came out to chat with us as we could not leave the car where our dangerous luggage was. Some of the girls disapproved of our methods and were for shooting the officers with the guns we had, but our arguments got the better of them and they came to see the wisdom of our ruse. We very graciously thanked the officers and parted with them. We had gone only a few hundred yards when we ran into another Free State guard of several soldiers who held us up and ordered us out of the car. It was then I realised that we

should have got a Free State pass from the credulous Free State officers. I spoke very quietly to the soldiers, stated that we had just been with their Commanding Officer in the barracks, that they would get into serious trouble if they forcibly removed us from the car, and that we were not getting out. This seemed to have a restraining effect, but they obviously disbelieved us. So we told them to send back to the Barracks and find out if what we told them was true. They sent one of their men back and after an interval we heard the voice of the O.C. whom we had just left, haranguing the men for interfering with us. He had come down himself with the Army messenger. Now my chance had arrived to get the pass, so I told him it would be very annoying for us to be held up in this way, and I asked him to kindly give us a pass. He gladly gave it and off we set with our two passes. Of course, as the remainder of our journey was through Free State occupied territory, we had no further occasion to show our Republican pass.

We arrived safely in Lucan on Sunday morning, but our driver, on hearing the noise of the guns, refused to bring us any further. So we said goodbye to him, gave him £13, the amount he asked for, and started to hike to Dublin, carrying our precious baggage as best we could. By great good luck a workman's tram came along at Hermitage Golf Club, where we had halted to get a much-needed meal. Before we had time to consume it we rushed for the tram and begged them to give us a lift, which they did, bringing us as far as Kingsbridge.

We made our way from there by a circuitous route, keeping out of the line of fire. We had got safely as far as South William Street and going down there a burst of firing came up the street towards us, but none of us was hit. We looked down and saw a company of Free State soldiers lined across the street at the other end. We then realised that they were

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firing at an I.R.A. outpost and that we were directly in the line of fire. I pulled my companions with me into a large doorway to get some kind of cover. To our amazement the door behind us opened and we recognised Mrs. Freeman, the mother of two Cumann na mBan girls of our Ranelagh Branch. She recognised Sheila Humphreys and myself and insisted on us coming into the shelter of her home. She also insisted on entertaining us to rashers and eggs and tea and bread and butter, which were very welcome, as we were starving. Her two girls were out in the fight. From there we made our way to Republican Headquarters in Suffolk Street, where we got full information of the I.R.A. outposts and the positions of Cumann na mBan stations. I was given verbal despatches immediately, by Miss Lily O'Brennan, who seemed to be in charge of Army despatches. The first one was to the United Services Club in Stephen's Green, ordering them to evacuate the position at once.

The work allocated to me all during the fighting was that of despatch carrier, and there are incidents I would like to recall in connection with this work. The despatch carrying was all done by bicycle. On one occasion Sheila Humphreys and myself were cycling from Tara Hall, which was the Cumann na mBan Headquarters attached to the Gresham Hotel. Most of the despatches were verbal, but on this occasion Countess Markievicz had given me a big leather wallet containing important papers which Cathal Brugha had given her and which I was to hide and guard safely. We started off from Tara Hall and had only got as far as Lower Gardiner Street, when we were held up by a posse of Free State troops under the command of Paddy Daly. They called on us to halt, but we refused and cycled furiously away. They fired, and as we turned a corner we ran straight into another group of them, who seized us and pulled us off our bicycles. Paddy Daly came up then with his



men and tried to force us into a house. We resisted, for I knew that he would bring women searchers and the precious wallet would be found. He then went over and spoke to a few of the soldiers, and after an interval along came an armoured car. Daly tried to force us into it, but we again resisted creating a furious scene, which brought the inhabitants of the street to their windows. Eventually he had a couple of women brought and instructed to search us on the street. Sheila and I fought a bitter battle with the women, who, after a while, gave up the struggle, and we got away on our bicycles with our precious wallet.

I continued my despatch carrying to the different outposts. These were mostly orders concerning evacuation, extra medical supplies, and - when evacuation had taken place - the removal of arms from those outposts, which I carried out myself with other Cumann na mBan girls, e.g., I removed a machine gun and a number of rifles from the Swan outpost opposite the Carmelite Church, Whitefriars Street.

Another memorable incident was a verbal despatch I got for Erskine Childers. I was told to hasten to a house in Fleet Street, which was his headquarters, and tell him to get away at once as there was a cordon of Free State soldiers closing in on his area with instructions to shoot him at sight. I got down to Fleet Street in time, before the cordon had closed in on the area. They were actually raiding the house next to the one in which Childers was. I got into the house and was told by the woman that he was upstairs working in a top room. I dashed up, and, rushing into the room, found him working with his staff of two or three. I gave him my message and he calmly replied, "And why would they shoot me?" I told him that the message had come from Harry Boland and asked him to get away as quickly as possible, as they were searching for him in the house next door. He said he was

worried about all his papers and plans, as they were more important than his life. I told him that I would take charge of all the papers and plans, but he was to get off immediately and go to the house of Mrs. Conor Maguire in Warwick Terrace, and that I would bring all his papers and plans there. The men bundled him out and, I think it was through the skylight, he got away, but naturally I am not sure, as I was busy collecting the papers and plans, which I hid on my person and conveyed safely to the above-mentioned address. In this connection I should add that I had great difficulty in getting safely through the military cordon on Leeson Street Bridge.

On arriving at Warwick Terrace I found Erskine Childers had got there safely too. He continued his work there and asked Headquarters to send any necessary despatches through me.

I continued my despatch work right up to the surrender of the hotels. I then got an order to get my uniform and report to the Tara Hall. On going there I was told I was to act as one of the Guard of Honour to the body of Cathal Brugha who had died in the Mater as the result of wounds received during his heroic fight at the Gresham Hotel.

When four of us Cumann na mBan arrived in uniform late that night at the Mater Hospital, we were told by the Sister-in-Charge that we could not be allowed to act as guard during the night, but the Reverend Mother promised that we would be admitted as early as we liked the following morning, and that in the meantime she would ensure that every attention and respect would be given to his remains. As we knew from previous experience that the good Sisters there had been giving every assistance to our wounded men, and, in addition, had allowed us before the Tan. War into their surgery to get practical experience in the cleaning and dressing of wounds,

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we made no fuss but went home and returned early next morning to take up duty at the bier of Cathal Brugha. We and other members of Cumann na mBan marched in his funeral procession and only came off duty when he was buried.

As the fighting in Dublin was now over, I thought I would get a rest, but, instead, next morning I received a despatch from General Headquarters that I was to meet the Adjutant General (Tom Derrig) at 86 St. Stephen's Green. I was to ask for Mr. O'Sullivan, which was his assumed name. I went immediately and he told me that the army wished to set up a publicity department for military news and they would like me to take charge of it. I would have to find a safe dump and equip it with the necessary machines and staff. The Adjutant General told me that they would pay for the machines, but I considered that this would be wasting valuable money while there were enemy posts that could be raided for the necessary equipment.

I consented to undertake the work and immediately set off to look for a safe dump. Through a fellow member of the Cumann na mBan, Máirín McGavock (now Mrs. Beaumont) I got a room in Clare Street. Having got the room I collected some of my Cumann na mBan pals and we set out with a gun in the early hours of several mornings to commandeer typewriters and a Roneo. I then collected my staff, who were Máire McKee (sister of the late Dick McKee) Nellie Hoyne and a courier whose name I cannot recall. We started work immediately and issued a weekly bulletin of military news.

We were only there about a fortnight when the top floor of the building was raided during the night by the Free Staters, but our secret room was not discovered. When I arrived next morning I found the top flat in disorder and vacant, as the occupants were arrested. I decided, therefore,

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that the place was no longer safe as the Free Staters might pay a return visit, so my staff and myself got the equipment safely dumped somewhere and I set off to look for a safer place. Miss Scully of Percy Place put her house at our disposal, free, and went herself to live in a house she owned in Rathfarnham. We got the stuff conveyed to No. 23 Percy Place, and started working again.

When the Free State secret service were carrying out the arrest and killing of I.R.A., part of my work was to procure legal aid for the next of kin of the victims and to collect depositions for the inquests. The Adjutant General asked me to call on Mr. Alec Lynn, B.L., to enquire if he would act as counsel in these cases, and he consented. He continued to do this work, and always without accepting a fee, stating, when I was asked by the Army to get his account, that it would be time enough when we got the Republic. Therefore all his work was voluntary.

My main activities in this connection were arranging appointments with the next-of-kin of I.R.A. victims for Mr. Lynn, and accompanying him to the interviews at which the depositions were taken; further, receiving despatches daily from I.R.A. Headquarters containing information of military engagements throughout the country. Having perused these I issued a weekly bulletin of war news called "The War Bulletin". We also published pamphlets dealing with the Civil War situation, and I was able to secure articles from writers, one of them a cleric, a great scholar and a very saintly man, whose pamphlets, based mainly on theological truths, did much to counteract the depressing effect of the condemnatory pronouncements of Irish bishops against the I.R.A. I cannot divulge his name as he wished to remain anonymous.

I also had to go through the daily Press and find out

any information that would be of interest to I.R.A. Headquarters cut same out, and forward it to them. I also was given some very extraordinary commissions from I.R.A. Headquarters, for example, I was asked to deliver an important despatch to the editor of a prominent Dublin daily paper. This editor had written a strong attack on the I.R.A. The despatch I was asked to deliver contained an official reply to the editor's charges and was accompanied by a letter ordering this editor to publish the reply in his paper, the alternative being death. I was told a great risk was involved, as the despatch had to be handed to the editor in person, so that I could report that he had got it.

I set off, and, arriving at the particular Press office, I found the building occupied by an armed guard of Free State troops. I pretended I was a news reporter, and being familiar with the news room I boldly started to climb the stairs to it, giving the impression that I was a reporter about my ordinary affairs. I succeeded in locating the editor at the very top of the house - where he had retreated evidently for security reasons - in a room marked "Private". Without knocking, I pushed in the door, and I can still recall the shocked expression on his face. I handed my letter, which he took, and turning I left the room. I knew that I had to walk calmly down the stairs in order not to arouse suspicion, but I expected every moment that the editor would raise a hue and cry after me. He must have been too numb with fright to do so, for I got safely to the street, where I immediately bolted and got safely away. Next day the I.R.A. letter appeared in its entirety in the paper concerned. I have an impression that letters previously sent by the I.R.A. had been refused publication by this paper, hence the necessity for personal delivery of this letter when it was accompanied by the death warning. This took place in the autumn of 1923.

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We carried on the work successfully, issuing our "Weekly Bulletins" and collecting information for the I.R.A., until the night of 9th November, 1923, when a lorry-load of Free State troops surrounded the house where we had our office, namely 23 Percy Place. Máire McKee and I were the only people there, apart from the housekeeper who lived on the premises. I had let the other members of the staff away at six o'clock, but the two of us were working late. We refused to open the door when the Free State troops knocked, because we wanted to get time to hide our important papers, typewriters and roneo. They started to hammer the door, but Maire and myself, helped by the housekeeper and her niece, who happened to be calling on her aunt, succeeded in getting all the important stuff into the coal hole and shovelling a quantity of coal on top of all. There were three officers in charge of the raid, one of whom was the O.C., Portobello Barracks. We were immediately put under arrest and ordered to go with them. I asked them to show me their warrant for our arrest, and stated that I would not go until I saw it. The O.C. Portobello said that he had not one, but that as he would be signing it, one was not necessary. I still insisted, and finally, after using some strong language, he went off to Portobello, leaving the other two officers and a heavily armed guard in charge of us. I was very uneasy in my mind, as I had an important address-book on my person and I was striving to devise a plan to have it conveyed safely to I.R.A. Headquarters, so that the work could be carried on after my arrest. I also knew that the people whose names and addresses were in the book would be raided and possibly arrested if the book fell into Free State hands. I had to act quickly, so availed of the absence of the O.C., saying I wished to go to the toilet, which was upstairs. The officer consented, but sent the soldier with me. I stood outside the door in a protesting attitude, and finally

shamed the officer into withdrawing the soldier, who went downstairs. I hid the book carefully under the bath, and having succeeded in contacting the housekeeper, I whispered to her where I had hidden it and gave her the name and address of Annie O'Farrelly, a Cumann na mBan girl who was working in the Adjutant General's office, I.R.A., and who eventually recovered the address book.

The O.C., Dolan, returned with the warrant signed by himself and Máire McKee and I were driven in a taxi accompanied by the officers to Portobello Barracks. The lorry with the remainder of the troops moved off also. On arriving at Portobello we were told by the officers that we were to appear before their Adjutant General, Gearóid O'Sullivan. We refused to leave the taxi, saying that it was Gearóid's place to come out to us and we would not go in to him. The officers appealed to us, but we were adamant. Finally, the officers went in to him and apparently told him the position, because they came out with the committal order and getting into the taxi again drove us to Mountjoy Gaol. They handed us over to the military governor, who at this time was Paddy O'Keeffe.

I would like here to pay a tribute to Máire McKee whom I found to be a person of great courage and ability. For instance, knowing that I was the person in charge of this department I informed the officers of this and stated that I was taking full responsibility for it, Máire, seeing that I was endeavouring to save her, stepped boldly forward and said, "I am responsible too", and would not hear of my efforts to prevent her from being arrested.

I would like to mention that both of us refused to give our names, though, of course, one of the officers knew me well from the Black and Tan fight, but none of them knew

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Máire McKee. Afterwards in Mountjoy Gaol I heard that the Free State Adjutant General, Gearóid O'Sullivan, who had been a close personal friend of the late Dick McKee, was very perturbed when he discovered that he had committed Dick's sister to prison. She was released some time after on health grounds.

When I arrived in Mountjoy the only other similar prisoners there were Mrs. Humphreys, her daughter Sheila, Madame O'Rahilly - the latter, however, was released in a short time - and Mary MacSwiney, who was on hunger-strike. On arriving at Mountjoy with Máire McKee we heard that a few other political prisoners had just arrived too, amongst them Rita O'Farrelly, now Mrs. P.J. Fleming. At short intervals after, other girl prisoners started to come in, including a batch from Kerry.

Some incidents that I can recall vividly during my time in Mountjoy are the following: the morning of December 8th, 1922, when we heard the volleys that ended the lives of Rory O'Connor, Liam Mellows, Joe McKelvey and Dick Barrett. On our way back from the early Mass we heard one of the criminal prisoners who was always calling out to us, shouting something about executions, and when we returned to our cells the breakfast - bread, butter and tea - had not arrived as usual, and I, from my previous prison experience, knew that this foreboded nothing good, as whenever executions were taking place no outsiders, not even the milkmen, were allowed in. Then in a short time we heard a volley of rifle fire from what seemed to be a number of guns, and then the coup de grace from revolvers. Sheila and I scrambled up as best we could to the cell window, clinging to the bars, and all we could see was a number of soldiers with rifles, evidently coming back from the scene of the execution. The sentries shouted at us to get down, and began to fire, so we had to



get down. Mrs. Humphreys called us all together, and, going down on our knees, we said a rosary for the men who had been murdered. We found out the names of the men. The next time Paddy O'Keefe arrived he was gloating, and when we protested at the deed that had been done, he laughed and, to use his exact words, replied, "Four more men will go for the milk in the morning".

Another incident: as prisoners kept coming in, the place was getting overcrowded, and in the meantime Mary MacSwiney was released after approximately twenty-one days' hunger-strike. Some of us decided that we would do our utmost to prevent this overcrowding, and, accordingly, as there were four of us already in one cell, that is, Mrs. Humphreys, her daughter Sheila, Rita O'Farrelly and myself, we decided to put up a protest. One winter's night we heard the governor, Páidín O'Keefe, and some soldiers coming into the building with a prisoner. We barricaded our cell door with the furniture, wedging it so that it would be impossible to open the door. We awaited developments. The party came along with a wardress, who discovered on unlocking the cell that the door would not open. The governor and the soldiers did their best to force the door, but without success. Páidín ordered us several times in strong language to open the door. We refused. He inserted the butt of his revolver through the ventilator and smashed the gas globe and mantle, leaving us in complete darkness. He then ordered us again to open the door to admit the prisoner. We had already told him that we objected to the overcrowding and that this was our protest. We were lying up against the barricade of furniture when we suddenly heard the prisoner outside - Máire Comerford - shouting to take cover. We had barely time to drop to the floor when the shot came right through the spy-hole, the bullet lodging in the opposite wall

of the cell. After firing, he said, "I hope there will be three dead bodies there in the morning." We still refused to take down the barricades and he had to go away with the soldiers. We remained crouched on the floor most of the night, fearing that they would climb to the window by means of a ladder. This state of affairs went on for several days.

Mrs. Humphreys had anthrim trouble which developed so rapidly in prison that an operation became necessary. We informed the matron through the door, and asked her to send for Surgeon Kennedy, who had been treating her. After some time we were told that the Surgeon was coming, and that Mrs. Humphreys would be taken to a cell on the landing where the surgeon would perform the operation. We consented to remove the barricades to let Mrs. Humphreys out, and put them up again immediately. We had been getting food surreptitiously from other women prisoners on the landing. That evening Mrs. Humphreys came back to us after the operation. She had tremendous spirit and said she would prefer to be with us than to remain in the more comfortable cell, but I do think it was an uncalled for brutality not to have transferred her to a nursing home or hospital, where she would have got proper treatment during and after the operation. We nursed her back to health.

No further effort was made to increase the number of prisoners in our cell, and I am of opinion that Canon McMahon had something to do with this, as he called to see Mrs. Humphreys after her operation and mentioned that he had heard there was some shooting into our cell, but he was given to understand it was blank shot. Mrs. Humphreys told him to examine the bullet in the wall opposite the door. He did this and appeared mystified. After this we had no further trouble and so took down our barricade.

The next excitement was that we objected to the early

locking-up of our cells, which was not prisoner-of-war treatment. I decided we would take down the cell door. I had learnt from British prison experience how to do this without being detected. The Kerry girls in the next cell agreed to let us take theirs down too, so Sheila, Rita and myself had a busy day loosening the doors. When the wardresses came to lock up that night, the moment they inserted the key in the lock, the two doors fell in. The governor was sent for immediately, and he arrived with his party of soldiers. They took away all our beds, leaving us the mattresses on the floor, on which we spent several nights.

There were many other similar incidents, too numerous to mention. We were satisfied that we always got the better of our jailers, and our protests were always successful.

In the spring of 1923 we were transferred to Kilmainham Gaol, where I was appointed O.C. of "A" Wing. The chief incidents that I wish to record of that prison were the following:

I decided that, as O.C. of the wing, I would protest against being locked in our cells at night, so I told the other prisoners a plan of campaign that I had, namely, that the locks would be removed from each cell on a certain day, if they agreed. The girls were delighted and I showed them how it could be done. The prisoners were two in a cell. I showed them how, with their prison knife, to loosen the screws and take off the padlock. We all got to work one day, each pair in their own cell, and I told them when the lock was off to put it out through the ventilator in the cell window on to the sill. This was duly done, and when the wardresses came to lock up they found all the cells -

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about eighty of them - incapable of being locked. They reported the matter to the governor, Commandant T. O'Neill, who next morning had an exhaustive search for the locks carried out while we were at exercise, but not a single lock was found. That evening he sent for me, for as O.C. of the wing I was acting for the prisoners. As I was going out there was an extraordinary scene made by the other prisoners, who had gathered in the compound around the exit gates through which I had to pass. They tried to prevail on me not to go out, as they thought I was going to be shot, for feeling was pretty high at the time. I quietened them and said I was going to the governor. I passed out through the gates where the military were. I was brought to a room where the governor and his staff officers were assembled. When questioned, I informed them that it was on my order the locks had been removed from the cells and that I was taking full responsibility for the action, and that I considered it was a violation of prisoner-of-war treatment to have us locked in our cells. He informed me that this was a very serious situation, that he would have to report it to the Adjutant General if I did not tell him where the locks were. Naturally I refused to tell him, and told him to go ahead and make his report. To give him his due he seemed very perturbed, and after an interval he implied that our action was a theft of prison property for which he was responsible. I got indignant and replied that I had no desire to hold on to his locks and would return them all next day, if he gave me a guarantee that the cells would not be locked again. After some time he consented, but told me in reply to my request that he could not give me a written guarantee, but promised me on his word of honour not to lock us up again if the locks were returned to him. I accepted his word, as I thought him reliable.

I was then allowed back to where the girls were

anxiously awaiting me, and informed them of the result of my interview. They were delighted and I told them that next day at ten minutes to noon they were to bring me all the locks. This they did, and I sent word to the governor, who had them all removed. He kept his word, as I had anticipated and we were never locked in again.

Approaching Easter of that year, for some action on our part which I cannot recall, I was served with a notice from the governor that all letters, newspapers, parcels, etc., were being stopped, and I considered this a denial of political treatment. I called a meeting of the prisoners, informed them of the position, and pointed out to them that there was no suitable action we could take except to go on hunger-strike for political treatment. I was supported by the majority of the prisoners when the vote was taken, but I stipulated that no prisoner in ill-health was to go on hunger-strike, and that in the case of the others it was to be entirely voluntary, as I was not giving an order. About ninety - which was the great majority of the prisoners - joined me in the hunger-strike. I had already informed the governor of what we were going to do unless he rescinded his order. He said he could not do this, but did his best to induce me not to proceed with the hunger-strike. I informed him that I was giving him twenty-four hours to reconsider his decision and failing his agreement to our demands we would start at the expiration of that time. I received no word, and so the hunger-strike started. The prisoners were very steadfast, and all loyally kept the hunger-strike. After the first three days some of the prisoners began to show signs of weakness and illness, and a batch of military nurses arrived from St. Bricin's Hospital. About the fourth or fifth day I had to take to my bed, as did my cell colleague. The governor came to me, accompanied by a wardress, and told

me how upset he was. He asked could nothing be done to end the strike. I replied that the only method was to give us political treatment. He went off and the strike continued. Next day one of the prisoners, Miss Nellia Hoyne, became dangerously ill and was removed on a stretcher to hospital. Again, on the next day, I had another visit from the governor, who certainly seemed to be very worried. I still held out for our principles and he went off. That night he arrived again with a wardress and told me he was losing his health and his peace of mind over this affair. He practically offered everything we were asking for, except the number of letters we were permitted to write each week. Knowing myself that this was political treatment, I agreed, provided that the number of letters would be only reduced by one. He demurred at first, but finally agreed, and I called off the strike, as we had won our victory. In fairness to Commandant O'Neill, I would like to say that his conduct throughout was unimpeachable, and he never broke his word.

The last incident I am recalling is our transfer the following summer to the North Dublin Union. Mary MacSwiney was on hunger-strike, and we refused to go until she was released, so we were forcibly removed by the C.I.D., who were sent in late at night to Kilmainham to drag us to the waiting lorries. They were in civvies and their faces were blackened so that they would not be recognised by the prisoners. We were dragged from the top landing down the stairway, all of us resisting violently, but eventually having to yield to superior force, and were dragged into a room downstairs to be searched. I had a poker and some other weapons hidden on me, and I created such a racket that I was not searched, and so arrived safely at the North Dublin Union with my weapons.

SIGNED

Brigid O'Hullane

DATE

12 Feb 68 1958

WITNESS

Sh. Cosain

APPENDIX "A"Members of Ranelagh Branch Cumann na mBan  
during the Black and Tan war.

Mrs. Eamonn Ceannt	Annie Anderson (Mrs. Quinn)
Lily O'Brennan	Sighle Humphries
Min Ryan (Mrs. Mulcahy	Maeve Delamere
Mrs. P. O'Keefe	A. Delamere
Miss Gavan Duffy	? Delamere
Annie McHugh (Mrs. Blythe)	Mrs. Piatt
Mdme. O'Rahilly	Miss Doughan
Maire Irvine	Nurse O'Flaherty
Chrissie Doyle	Nurse Danagher
Miss Kennedy (Mrs. Jim Burke)	Eileen Tubbert
Phyllis Ryan (Mrs. S.T.O'Kelly)	Fanny O'Dolan
Francis Sullivan	Mrs. Heron
Brid Whelan	Attie O'Brien
E. Whelan	Tecla McGrath
? Whelan	Rita Condon
Eileen O'Connor	Brid Condon (Mrs. Byrne)
Kathleen O'Connor	Miss Colm
Mrs. Joe McDonagh	Miss Durcan
Mrs. Bennett	Kathleen O'Donoghue
Estelle Solomons	Miss McElroy
Miss Goodfellow	May O'Doherty
Nora Morrissey	Teresa O'Doherty
Maire Hanley	Sadhbh Mulligan
Mrs. Woods	Sinead Robinson
Eily Ryan	Eilis Robinson
Miss Barton	Maggie Fagan
Nancy Power	Maire Coghlan
Lizzie McKeogh (Mrs. Burke)	Miss Coghlan
May Burke	Miss Coghlan (niece of former)
Chrissie Burke	Brid Keating (Mrs. Robinson)
Martha Burke	? Keating
Molly McDonald (Mrs. Walsh)	Mrs. Weddall
Eily McDonald	Miss Burke
Nell Byrne	Maire McCarthy
Mrs. A. Stack	May Coghlan
Minnie O'Brien	Miss Keogh
Miss Costello	Maire O'Byrne
Roisin Ryan (Mrs. Colbert)	Carmel Mulvaney
Gertrude Culhane (Mrs. Doran)	Maire Reamonn

Una O'Connor  
 Nora O'Connor  
 Molly Hyland  
 Kathleen Hyland  
 Maeve Phelan  
 Melina Phelan  
 May Phelan  
 Kathleen McCann  
 Mary Coyle (Mrs. Andrews)  
 Eileen D'Arcy  
 Miss Flanagan  
 Eilis McDonnell  
 Mairead Dunne  
 Kathleen D'Arcy  
 Doreen Donnelly  
 Josephine McGrath  
 Maire Redick  
 Grainne O'Malley  
 Kathleen McGlynn  
 Mrs. Roche  
 Nan Dillon (Mrs. Cashman)  
 Kathleen Kenny  
 Susan Daly  
 Mairín McDonald  
 Nelly McDonald (Mrs. Johnston)

Eileen O'Neill  
 Mrs. Mackey  
 Kathleen Freeman  
 Dolly Freeman (Mrs. McDonnell)  
 Mrs. Hyland  
 Bríd O'Mullane  
 Kitty Geraghty  
 ? Coles  
 Mrs. P.S. O'Hegarty  
 Molly Dillon (Mrs. Cullen)  
 May Mordaunt (Mrs. O'Keefe)  
 Maureen Woods  
 Linda Kearns  
 Mrs. Coghlan  
 Ita O'Connor  
 Miss O'Rahilly  
 Margaret Brown (Mrs. MacEntee)  
 Mrs. Ryan (Máirín Cregan)  
 Babs Hogan  
 Sheila Bowen  
 Maire Byrne (Mrs. Newman)  
 Ita O'Gorman (Mrs. Draper)  
 Miss Judge  
 Miss Murray

