

W. S. 936

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 936

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 936.....

Witness

Miss Dulcibella Barton,
Hazelbrook,
Terenure Road West,
Dublin.

Identity.

Sister of Robert Barton,
signatory of the Anglo-Irish Treaty
of 6th December, 1921.

Subject.

Her family and
the national movement for independence,
1913-1922.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 1243.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
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STATEMENT BY MISS DULCIBELLA BARTON,

Hazelbrook, Terenure Road ~~East~~ West, (stat)

DUBLIN.

I am 74 years of age, one year and three months older than my brother Bob. Two of my brothers, Erskine and Thomas Barton younger than Bob and I, are buried in Franc e, having been in the British Army during the second war. Tom the younger of the two, the youngest of the family, was in the first war and served in Gallipoli and Suvla Bay. Erskine was in both wars. Neither of them had anything to do with the Irish War of Independence. There was also a sister, who was in this respect too a great contrast to Bob and me. She lived most of her life in England. She has a flat in Bath and has no interest in Ireland.

How we two got to know about Sinn F ein was that we took in the Sinn F ein paper in the early days. Our parents were very conservative and would be absolutely opposed to the ideas expressed in that paper. Our mother, who was English, would be reading the London Times and we two would be devouring Sinn F ein.

I happened to arrive in Dublin the day the Rising started. I had been to the North and came in on the last train from the North. Every platform in Amiens Street was filled with military. I was going to stay with my friend, Mary Boland, at Earlsfort Terrace. She was a sister of John Boland, M.P. I asked a policeman at the bottom of the stairs to get a cab for me. He said they were all off the streets, so I got a little boy to carry my luggage. He was half dead when we reached Earlsfort Terrace.

I was very interested in the fact that there was a rebellion in progress. I spent about a week in the city. I think it must have been at the end of the week that I met Father Sherwin of University Church and he asked me where I was going. I said I was going into town to buy an Irish Times. He asked me to get one for him.

When I got to the Times office there was a great crowd and as I hate standing in a queue I got a little boy to get the papers for me. He did and I gave him something for himself. The paper was a single sheet and I brought one back to Father Sherwin. Before I went home to Glandalough House I went to some office - I think it was Sinn Féin office - to hand in some money as a contribution towards the fighting. I also called to the Alexandra Club which was a women's club near the College of Surgeons, and of which I was a member, to see if there were any letters for me. It had been occupied by the Volunteers during the Rising and I thought I would search the place to see whether there was anything left there by them that would incriminate anybody. There were a lot of overcoats there and I searched the pockets but they were all empty. Upstairs on a table, however, I found a piece of paper - a sort of mobilisation order signed 'James Connolly'. I took it and put it in my pocket. Sometime later I sent it by post to Nora Connolly thinking she might be glad to have it.

I wondered how I would get home. I knew that the Spring Show was coming on and that we had some stock to show there. The animals were in Harcourt Street station waiting to be taken to the Show. I managed to find the Steward and I told him I would go home with him in the car the following day. He said I couldn't as the roads had cordons everywhere. I asked him how he got in. He said he had got a pass in Roundwood Barracks from the R.I.C. I went to the Castle and asked for a pass to go home. Having got it from some British officer I told him I wanted a pass to come in and out of Dublin whenever I wanted. He said he could not give it to me, that the only one who could give that was Major Edgeworth-Johnson. He was in another room and I went there. He absolutely refused to give it. I said "All right, I'll stay here till I get it". I remained sitting in the straight-back chair until he finally got worn down and handed

out the pass to me. The pass is now in the National Library, I think, in a book of newspaper cuttings that I gave to it.

I left for home the next day. A policeman held me up at Roundwood and asked me what was the news. I told him he could get in and out of Dublin as well as I could and that I had no news.. I at last got home.

Next day I went out fishing in the brook beside the house. I was surprised to see my brother Bob walking up to me. I thought he was still in London where I knew he had joined the British Army. I asked him did he not know what was going on in Dublin. He said that he did but that being in the Army he had to do what he was told. He had been in training somewhere near London and had been sent to Ireland to join a certain unit. I said "You can't go to join the Army without a uniform". He said "I'll go to Dublin and get one". We both went and he also went to see the Commanding Officer of the unit he was to join. He turned out to be Larry Esmonde from Wexford, a great friend of ours. He asked Bob if he wanted to fight. Bob said "No". "I have got a job for you" said Colonel Larry Esmonde. He made him O/C., Prisoners' effects. One of the things he did while in that office was to take a watch from a high-ranking British Officer, which had been stolen from a publican in Camden Street.

While Bob was in Dublin I was able to see him occasionally and get his help and advice in regard to the farm.

Although I had been always interested in farming, I did not know as much about it as he did. He had spent at least a year studying it at the Agricultural College in Cirencester. He had also spent a year in Elgin, Scotland, studying sheep farming with an old Scotch farmer. We have a lot of sheep at home in Co. Wicklow.

He came home sometime in 1918 - I can't remember the date - and we had some peace and quietness for a while. It did not last long because the general election campaign began. The people of County Wicklow proposed that he should stand as a Sinn Féin candidate for West Wicklow.

Shortly after he was elected he spoke at a meeting, I think in Shillelagh, and expressed his opinions strongly against the British Government, even threatening Lord French. When he came home that night he said to me "I'll think very little of the British Government if I am not arrested after that speech". I said "They would never come here to arrest you". "No", he said, "but I am billed to speak in the Mansion House at a meeting". I tried to dissuade him from going to the meeting but he would go and he was arrested coming out from the meeting. He escaped from Mountjoy within a month and was on the 'run' staying with Áine Ceannt.

I was a great friend of Con Markievicz and whenever I wanted a bed in Dublin I had one in her house in Leinster Road. I used to enter by the area steps. I met a lot of Fianna boys there. At one time she was sheltering Eamon Murray, a Fianna boy who had killed a policeman with a hurley at a meeting in Beresford Place where Cathal Brugha and Count Plunkett were arrested. She asked me if I would look after him in case she was arrested. And she was arrested. Eamon then came to our house in Annamoe and slept in a summer house in the Garden, as the house was full. He got appendicitis and we had to get a doctor who sent him to hospital in Dublin in our car. When he got better he went to America. He was one of Con Markievicz's real pets. Whenever Con Markievicz went to gaol her dog, a brown spaniel, always came to me.

I had many Volunteers on the 'run' staying in Annamoe. Many of them came from Cork, via Rockwell College. Kevin Barry's brother who lives at Backetstown used to drive them over in a pony trap. They stayed as long as they liked. In many cases they were on their way

to Dublin and I was able to get them there by old roads which were only known to Wicklow people.

I have here a photograph of four men who stayed in our house for a month. Then the Truce came and they dashed back to their units. They were on the 'run', poor boys. I can't remember their names

except that one of them was ^{John} Butler. *Now I remember one was Sean Hyde, another Maurice O'Grath and Bob says the fourth was Carew.*

I had Dan Breen for three or four nights. He was brought from the hospital in Dunlaoghaire where he was sent after the fight in Drumcondra. I suppose he came by car but he was carried up the avenue to our house by Eamon Fleming and another Volunteer whose name I can't remember. He was very nice and quiet, not at all the rough type that some people think him. When he wanted to leave our problem was how to get transport for him. I had taken our car to pieces so that the British would not confiscate it. The only car I knew of in the neighbourhood was Roger Sweetman's, but he was not sympathetic to the cause and probably would not lend it. When I explained this to Dan Breen, he was not a bit put out. He said they would get Sweetman's car. The car was commandeered, Dan taken to his destination and the car was returned next day.

I had one mysterious visitor during the Civil War period. He came dressed in clerical garb and said his name was Father Murphy from Wexford. He said he was on the 'run' but did not say who sent him to our house. In most other cases people came on the recommendation of someone who was known to me. He did nothing all day. He said he was going to write some treatise about the construction of roads. I showed him the books in the library that might be of use to him for that purpose. There was something about him that I did not like and I would have liked to get rid of him. So when, after about a fortnight, Paddy Rutledge came I asked him to send him away and he just went up to his room where he was in bed and very shortly after he went away on his

bicycle. I felt uncomfortable the whole time he was there, as I had the idea that he might be a spy.

Liam Lynch was another man who stayed at our house. He was a very good-looking man and so quiet and gentle. I had never known him. Like others who came up from Cork he stopped a few days for a rest. Some short time after I read in the paper about the Black & Tans shooting somebody called Lynch in a Dublin hotel and I got a great shock. It turned out to be someone else.

During the Civil War one morning two priests - genuine ones this time - came to the door and said I could expect the Taoiseach, Mr. De Valera, the following day to stay in the house, if I could have him. I said I could. They asked me to provide an escort to bring him back to Dublin. That was not so simple. Dev. came very early and spent certainly a night. I sent somebody with him to bring him to a house on the way to Dublin and from this he was brought safely into the city.

The last person to come to our house on the 'run' and the only one who was captured was Erskine Childers.

He was closely related to us - in fact he was my double first-cousin. My mother was a Childers and his aunt and Erskine's mother, Anna Barton, was a sister of my father. Both Erskine's parents who lived in London died when he was only 12 or 13. Erskine, his brother Henry and his three sisters came to live with us, as my father was their guardian. In that way they were brought up as members of our family. My mother took good care of that. She had now ten children, five girls and five boys to bring up instead of five, but she did not mind that; she was devoted to them. They were a little older than we. A governess took care of the girls' education and none of us went to school. One of my sisters went to College to Oxford. The boys went

to school. Bob first went to a preparatory school run by a cousin and then went to Rugby and Oxford. He got well educated. The other two brothers went to Fettes' College in Edinburgh. I can't remember what school Erskine went to, but I know he went to Cambridge where he rowed for his college - Christchurch I think - and got his degree. After that he was a clerk in the House of Commons.

I spent a holiday in France with a friend in the summer of 1914. I had another friend in a convent in Lourdes and I went to see her and while I was there I heard the tocsin ringing out. That was a sign that war was declared.

We had great difficulty in getting back, because all the trains were taken up with the transport of soldiers. The people around us thought we were English and rather scowled at us. I bought a piece of green ribbon and wore it on my coat and advised my Irish friend to do the same. The attitude of our neighbours changed at once. We succeeded in getting back through London which did not seem much upset by the war. Paris had seemed like a city of the dead. Before we left there we heard about the Angels of Mons.

When I came back to Ireland that August I found that Erskine Childers had arrived. He was living with his wife and two children at our house. He had joined the Volunteers and became Secretary to Colonel Moore. It was then he told me that he had decided to work for Ireland. It was while I was in France that he had run in the guns at Howth in his yacht the 'Asgard' with his wife.

When the war broke out Erskine went back to England and was in the air arm of the Navy or something like that because I know he was an observer in aeroplanes and had quantities of photographs which he took while flying in the planes.

When Lloyd George set up the Convention in 1917 Erskine came over - I don't know whether he was a secretary or not, or whether he came in

any official capacity, but I well remember him sitting up on those benches in Trinity College writing, writing. One day I went there at the time conscription was on the mat. He said to me, "I may go back now. This conscription will end the Convention", or words to that effect.

I should mention that he had been in the Boer War. One day while he was in the Transvaal someone said to him "There is a fellow called Childers in a hospital here. Would he be any relative of yours?" "I am quite sure he is" said Erskine. It turned out to be his brother Henry who had joined up Strathcona's Horse in Canada where he was living. Erskine wrote a book about the Boer War. He went back to his job. He joined a unit called 'The City of London Volunteers' and with them he went to America where he met his wife who is an American. She is still alive but is crippled. She was always an invalid.

After the war was over they came to live in Ireland taking a house in Wellington Road and later in Bushy Park Road. The remainder of his career in Ireland is well known. He was down in Cork during the Civil War and it was from there he came to me and was captured. I can't tell you what the relationship was between my mother and the Childers who was Chancellor of the British Exchequer but all those Childers were related. Bob might know.

Our house in Annamoe suffered many raids first by the British Army. I was in bed one morning and was woken up by an aeroplane flying back and forth over our heads. At 6.30 I got up and went out into the garden to see what it was about. This continued for some time and there were lights flashing from the tail of the plane. I went back to bed. Shortly afterwards the front door bell rang. I got up and went down to the hall and opened the door. First I saw no one, but soon a soldier dashed from behind the pillar of the porch and said he was going to search me. He felt me all over looking for a gun. I had nothing on but my pyjamas and my dressing-gown. Then I noticed the

place was full of khaki soldiers. The shutters were all closed and I had not seen them before. A very polite Colonel asked me to open the shutters, but I told him he had lots of men to do that. He went into the smoke-room and sat down at my brother's desk while the soldiers raced through the house searching.

A soldier then came in and said "I found two ^{dances} ~~spears~~ and I rubbed them up to see if they had a number". "What do you want them for?" asked the Colonel. I said they belonged to an uncle of mine who was killed in the Zulu war. The Colonel was rather taken aback at that. Then another soldier came in and he had a British uniform in his hand. The Colonel asked me what I was doing with that. I said "That belonged to a brother of mine who is buried in France". Then another soldier came in with a periscope in his hand. He asked me about that and I explained that it belonged to another brother who had served in France. Then a soldier found in the grandfather clock in the hall a .22 rifle that we used for shooting rooks. They took that away. When I next came to Dublin I told Mick Collins about that and he got me another which I wrapped up and took home with me in the train. For that raid about 600 soldiers had been brought with ambulances and all sorts of equipment. They were evidently prepared for a big battle. I was quite sorry for the poor Colonel who was really a very polite man and who must have got a great disappointment at finding only me. They had soldiers in the two villages at the ends of the farm, Roundwood and Laragh. Evidently they had received information that I was harbouring General Lucas. The soldiers ate all the grapes and peaches in the greenhouse.

We had the Black & Tans several times - going through the house roaring. Any door that they found locked they burst in by putting their shoulders to it.

I founded Sinn Féin clubs in Laragh and one on our own farm about 1917. My brother founded one in Roundwood after he came home.

Our farm men were wonderful. If any stranger came to inquire for me, they would say they had not seen me for days.

We had raids by the Free State Army. Once when I had the two Childers boys with me, Hugh McNeill smashed a window in the back passage off the side-hall and searched the house. I got into the habit, when there was a raid and any of the doors were locked, of taking the keys with me, so that the doors would not be smashed in.

I was never arrested I am glad to say. I could not have endured being in gaol, used as I was to open air life. Yet I have been lying in bed here for the last twelve years suffering from arthritis. I am even unable to use my hands now.

(Signed) _____

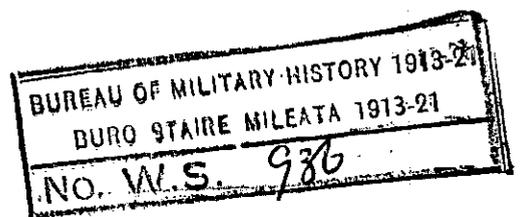
Date

31st March 1954

31st March 1954.

Witness: _____

(J. Kissane)



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NO. W.S. 986

