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MRS. ALICE McSLOY,

DRUMANEY,

COAGH,

CO. TYRONE.

(JULY 21st, 1967)

I was born in the townland of Eglis, Derrychrin, Coagh, Co. Tyrone, in the year 1900. My father's name was Bernard and my mother's name was Mary nee O'Neill. I had two brothers and three sisters - Michael, Bernard, Annie and Catherine. I am the widow of Bernard McSloy, and my family consists of: Brian, Jim, Mary, Carmel and Cora. Cora, formerly a teacher, is married to a man called Dorrity and lives in Lurgan; Carmel is a clerk in the Bank of Ireland, Mary is a nurse, Brian is a civil engineer and Jim is in the building trade at home.

My brother Bernard, died about 1960, and my other brother, Michael, died in U.S.A. My sister Annie, is in Philadelphia and she helped to rear the children of Michael, when he died. His son James came to Ireland as a young boy, and I reared him. He became a priest in the Rosminian Order, and is in that Order in the U.S.A. He was ordained in Rome in 1960.

I asked Mrs. McSloy to give me some idea of the early days around home, and she said that her father and two of her uncles were in the Fenian Movement. Her uncles were John O'Neill and Tom Mallon. She said her father told her that the Organisation in those early days was destroyed by informers, especially by one named Doyle. Her father did not go to Coalisland in 1916, but her brothers did go along with Volunteers from Newbridge and Bellagherty Volunteers. In 1916 she was at Magherafelt Technical School and she often carried dispatches to Magherafelt from Bellagherty. She carried these dispatches to Louis Smith's, to McGlone's Public House, Queen St., Magherafelt, and later when she was in the Cumann na Bhan and working in a solicitor's office in Cookstown - Mr. Mullen's, she often carried dispatches from Cookstown to Ardboe area, and on occasions also carried arms and ammunition. During the Truce she carried arms and ammunition which had been sent by her cousin, Patrick O'Neill, a teacher in Scotland. She thinks they came from Scotland by a Mr. Gillen.

Other members of the Cumann na Bhan in Ballinderry area, were: Annie and Catherine Mallon, her sisters; Mary and Catherine O'Neill, her cousins; Sarah Mullen, Mary Maynes, the Larkin girls, M. Breen, Mary Hinfey and Bella and Johanna Campbell.

In Cookstown some of the Cumann na Bhan were: Alice Donnelly, Mrs. John Devlin (Bar), Miss Martin, Miss McNally and the Misses McGurk. In Draperstown she knew that Miss Duggan was a member, and another lady whose name she does not now remember, but she thinks she got a job working in the Dublin Sweep office, later on. In Moneymore, the Misses Devlin of Doluskey and the Misses Hart, were also in the Movement.

Tom Morris had been raised near the Harts and was friendly with the whole family. She knew all the Dobbyn family very well, and also Miss Trea Gribben. The only occasion when she felt in danger was on one occasion she had been delivering dispatches to Eoin Devlin, Doluskey. It was late at night when she was to return to her lodgings in Mrs. Hagan's, Cookstown, and the Misses Hart wished her to stay the night. She said her landlady would be worried, so she set off on her bicycle for Cookstown. At Dunman Bridge she was held up by a patrol of 'B' men. They asked her why she was so late on the road, where she was coming from and going to. She said she was coming from Magherafelt, that her bicycle had been punctured and she was delayed in Moneymore until it was repaired. She said she was going to Jimmy Wright's, and when they heard this they said it was alright, as he was, as she knew when she gave his name, the head of the 'B' men. She was far from going to Jimmy Wright's, but the lie served its purpose and she got safely back to Cookstown.

She said that the Volunteers in the early days around Derrychrin were her cousins Patrick and Hugh O'Neill, Tom O'Kane, John McKeever, William and Patrick Mullen, Mick Quinn and Tommy Martin. She said that there were volunteers in Derrychrin long before there were volunteers in Ardboe area. She said the Ardboe men, like the Ballinderry men, were mostly Hibernians and no good. Indeed she said the Orangemen loaned the Hibernians their drums to celebrate the defeat of Sean Milroy in the Tyrone Election. She said these drums were kept by the Orangemen in the public house now owned by McVeighs at Ballinderry Bridge. She said her brothers, Paddy Crawford and Tom Morris were arrested in October 1920 and sentenced to two years imprisonment. She said they were sent to different prisons in England - to Newcastle-upon-Tyne, Durham and Ipswich. Tom Morris and P. Crawford had often been in her home. It was a sort of H.Q. for them. Others that she remembered in her home were: Christy Coyle from Balbriggan, Tom O'Sullivan from Cork, the Haggan brothers, Billy Donnelly and Johnnie Heggarty, all from Cookstown.

Near her old home there was a derelict house which was used on occasions by the volunteers, and she thinks that it was in this old building that there was a court martial of a Cookstown Volunteer who had been caught trying to embezzle some volunteer funds. She said she told Tom Morris about the matter as she had been told it by the Volunteer's girlfriend. He was arrested at Cookstown Station and tried in this house. She thinks his name was Jim Kelly.

On another occasion a Sinn Fein court was held in her home, but her father and the rest of the family went out of the house and left the Volunteers to carry on their work. As far as she remembers, Sinn Fein justices of the area may have been a Patrick Devlin and a James Doris. After her brother's release from prison, the Specials came and put up a Union Jack on a tree near their home. They could get no man to take it down, so her father and sister cut down the tree and her sister burned the flag. The Specials came to the house soon after, and on that occasion her brother Barney was in the house, though he was 'on the run'. Her sister, seeing the police come, ran upstairs and blew a whistle. The Specials stopped, thinking it was a signal to the I.R.A. to surround them, and while they were stopped, her brother Barney got out of the house and ran in his bare feet for a considerable distance. The Specials then broke in the door and savagely beat her father. They knocked out all his teeth and inflicted other injuries. His wounds were attended by a Dr. Thompson of Bellaghy, and though he was a Unionist doctor, his father preferred him to Dr. Kerlin of Magherafelt, who was an Hibernian. He said that the Hibernians were worse than the Unionists. Dr. Thompson was a native of Windmill, Coagh, and he and the doctor had been boys together. In a subsequent court in an appeal for compensation, Dr. Thompson gave evidence in favour of her father, and her sister said that it was the police who did it because she had burnt a Union Jack. When the Judge asked her would she burn it again, she said she would. However, in spite of this, the father was awarded some compensation.

Mrs. McSloy was arrested in the Autumn of 1922, in Mullen's office, Cookstown, where she worked. She was brought in a military lorry to Armagh Prison where during her internment she was well treated by the Prison Authorities. She said the Governor was a Miss Wilson who was a perfect lady. Other prisoners interned in Armagh, were: Miss N. Aikin and the Misses Black, Belfast; Creighton, Co. Down and a Miss McWilliams. They were treated as political prisoners and did not have to do any hard labour. She was released in July 1923, and was then served with an Extradition Order to leave the Six Counties. She disobeyed this first order and was later served with a second one. This one was served on her by the local police sergeant in her bedroom.

She was in her bedroom at home, along with a Miss Conway, who was a teacher in Derrychrin School. She left the Six Counties and went to Dublin where she was given employment by a Jewish Oculist in O'Connell Street. She remained in employment here until she got a position in the Army Office in Castlebar as clerk to Commandant John Haughey. She got this position through Mick Quinn who was then an Army Officer in Castlebar. She was in the Army Office until about 1924, when she then returned home to her father. Her mother had died in 1922, before her arrest. She remembered when her mother was dying, the house was raided by police who searched the bed, even that her mother was dying on. She said their home was raided very frequently by police. She remembered the occasion in December 1921, when a Special Constable called Spring, was shot at Magherafelt Town Hall. On that night, December 8th, she was going to a ceillidh with girls called Anderson from Pomeroy, and she was asked to bring arms and grenades to Magherafelt.

She said her brothers carried out operations in connection with the Belfast Boycott and burned a bread cart after they had taken out the bread, near her home. The driver of the horse drawn bread cart was a man called McClarnon. She said she was told about a raid on a house owned by a postman called Buick, and she said Tom Morris had found a revolver underneath a bench on which Mr. Buick had sat during the course of the raid. She was also told about Volunteers being repulsed on several occasions when they were raiding for arms at Ballyloughan and Carnan. Regarding the Ballyronan shooting of policemen, she thinks it was men called Hugh O'Neill, who died in Philadelphia; David McVeigh, formerly of Ballygruby, and Patsy Hinfey, now in Philadelphia, who had been in that ambush. They were all wounded and her sisters helped to dress their wounds. Hugh O'Neill was a cousin of hers. Her brothers Barney and Mick, joined the National Army after the Truce, and when they were demobilised they went to the U.S.A.

Her brothers told her that there was a man called John Quinn who lived near them, who was suspected of being an informer, and Tom Morris suggested that the best way to find out was for the I.R.A. to send him a letter. They wished the local postman, a man called Crooks, to have occasion to deliver letter, if any, to this John Quinn, and the best plan was to have the postman bring their letter on this occasion. If there were any other letters from the police to John Quinn, the postman would deliver both. They posted the letter to John Quinn and the following morning held up this postman and searched the mail, but they only found their own letter to John Quinn. After that the postman always had a police guard when he was delivering his mail.

She did not get employment in Mullen's office when she was released from prison, as he and his clerk, Mr. Maynes, were interned on the "Argenta" and later went to Dublin to live. She said that friendly people to the I.R.A. were Father Donnelly, P.P., Ballinderry, Fathers Rogers and Sheridan, Ardboe, Messrs. Haggan of Cookstown who drove cars for Eastwoods of Cookstown, a family called Quinn (Fathies) who lived at the Lough Shore.

Her sisters told her that they had attended a Volunteer called Quinn from Moortown, who was wounded in a raid, but luckily did not die.

In raids for poteen even, a cousin of her own was raided and his "still" destroyed. His name was Barney Mallon, and he lived in the same townland in which her father lived.

She showed me a letter that had been sent to her father in 1922. It was written in a very fine hand and had an address:

Cookstown and Coagh District No.42,
Ulster Black and Tan Association.

Bernard Mallon, Esq.,
Derrychrin,
Coagh,
Co. Tyrone.

"This is to warn you that if any harm befalls any of His Majesty's police now serving, or who have served in your district; you and your family and relatives will be held personally responsible.

We remain, Sir, for retribution,

ULSTER BLACK AND TAN ASSOCIATION."

It is the only souvenir of that existing period that Mrs. McSloy has been able to keep. She has not copies of her Extradition Order nor any other souvenirs. She said that the police raided her home so often that they took away all papers and often stole money and valuables in the raids. She has her Service Medal and small I.R.A. pension of £32 per annum.

(July 21st, 1967)

(Mrs. McSloy's memory has faded, but I have copies of prison postcards that she sent to Miss Alice Donnelly, Cookstown. They are contained in another file. L.O'K.)
