

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 852

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 852

**Witness**

Thomas Wallace,  
Caherdavin,  
Ennis Road,  
Co. Limerick.

**Identity.**

Lieutenant Pallaskenry (Co.Limerick) Irish Volunteers,  
1913 - ;

Member of A.S.U. West Limerick Brigade.

**Subject.**

National activities, West Limerick,  
1913-1921.

**Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.**

Nil

File No. S.2086

Form B.S.M. 2

# Bureau of Military History, 1913-1921.

## STATEMENT BY

.....THOMAS WALLACE.....

Address.....Caherdavin, Ennis Road,.....

.....County Limerick.....

Date.....27th May, 1953.....

### ORGANISATIONS WITH WHICH ASSOCIATED.

Irish Volunteers.

Irish Republican Army.

### POSTS OR RANKS HELD.

Lieutenant, Pallaskenry Coy., I.N.V. and I.V.

Lieutenant, Pallaskenry Coy., 4th (Rathkeale) Bn., West Limerick Bde.


Member, A.S.U., West Limerick Brigade.

### PERIOD COVERED BY STATEMENT.

1913 - 1921.

### COMMENTS OF INVESTIGATING OFFICER.

The witness is a well set up man, still in his fifties. He is married and has a prosperous business, grocery, provision, tobacco, confectionery, etc., on the Ennis Road outside Limerick City. He formerly had a farm at Washpool on the Shannon in West Limerick and disposed of it some years ago to go into business. He dictated his statement to me but, under questioning, and subsequently when additional points were raised confessed to a poor memory for details. Nevertheless, he was anxious to be as helpful to the Bureau as possible.

.......... LT.-COLONEL.  
Signature of Investigating Officer.

Date.....28th May, 1953.....

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BÚRO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 852

STATEMENT

BY

THOMAS WALLACE, CAHERDAVIN,

ENNIS ROAD, CO. LIMERICK.

FORMERLY

WASHPOOL, PALLASKENRY, CO. LIMERICK.

1ST LIEUTENANT, PALLASKENRY COMPANY, 4TH (RATHKEALE)

BATTALION, WEST LIMERICK BRIGADE AND

MEMBER, BRIGADE ACTIVE SERVICE UNIT.

I joined the Pallaskenry Company in 1913 when the Volunteers were first organised there, and was 1st Lieut. from the beginning. The usual training - drilling and parading - was carried out through the couple of years up to Easter Week, 1916. The training went on again on reorganisation after 1916 and through 1917. It was only on reorganisation that the Company belonged to a Battalion - the Rathkeale Battalion - which later became the 4th Battalion of the West Limerick Brigade.

I was arrested in June, 1918, for illegal drilling and got five months as a sentence, which I served in Limerick and Belfast Gaols. I served most of it in Belfast where I took part in the big prison strike led by Austin Stack.

I succeeded in breaking down the cell door and assisted my next door neighbour to do the same, and with the legs which we wrenched off the tables we held the staircase against police reinforcements which had been rushed to the gaol. We were overpowered at length and

were three days with our hands handcuffed behind our backs. Through the intervention of a visiting priest my handcuffs were taken off and I found myself powerless for awhile to raise my arms. This did not prevent me, however, giving a warder, known as Dick, a very smart kick. He did not retaliate, however. The strike was over now and we all got what the Governor called concessions, but referred to by Austin Stack in a telling speech to him as our rights.

After this, when the 'flu was raging I was removed to the prison hospital. This was at the end of October. Shaw, a Dublin lad, and myself were carried from there to the Workhouse on stretchers. I was 106° temperature, but contrived to walk in.

The nurse in the prison infirmary was Miss Mary McCartan and I would like to record that she could not do enough for us prisoners.

On recovery we were sent back to Belfast Gaol again and released on 11th November - Armistice Day - a wild day in Belfast. After a couple of days in the Grosvenor Hotel, James Halpin, my Company O.C. who had been released a couple of days after me, and myself returned home.

In 1919 we kept on with our usual parades though under cover now. After the rescue at Knocklong, Seán Tracy, Dan Breen, Seamus Robinson and J.J. Hogan stayed in our house at Washpool. After a few days we removed them to the house of John Somers, known locally as 'The Neighbours'. This was at Ballysteen. For safety then they were moved further -

to East Clare, which meant crossing the Shannon. The boat was manned by Tom Blackwell and Paddy Blackwell, brothers. They were from Askeaton and are both dead now. The party was accompanied by me into East Clare and they were brought to Thomas Hogan of Cahertigue, Newmarket-on-Fergus.

On 28th May, 1920, I took part in the attack on Kilmallock R.I.C. Barracks. Tom Malone, better known as Seán Forde, was in charge. Miceál Brennan brought a few rifles and ammunition.

There would have been about 100 in the attack, armed with rifles and shot-guns. We had a number of bombs, too, with streamers tied on, and when we threw those to fall upon the roof, instead of the heads hitting the slates they fell sideways and rolled down the steep slope of the roof without going off. Then the men in the house next door, which was a storey higher than the barracks, broke through the slates and heaved half-hundred weights on to the barrack roof and broke open the slates there. They ran paraffin down a chute in through the broken barracks' roof and set fire to it. This set the main portion of the building on fire, but the garrison, which numbered about 20, retreated into a wing which formed a L-shape to the building. I was across the road with Miceál Brennan and Seán Finn, covering the front of the Barracks with our fire. The fight was broken off coming on to daylight, Liam Scully, the Kerryman, was wounded before the finish of the fight and was taken into a house where Father Woulfe, C.C. administered to him.

We started off with Scully for West Limerick in one of

the three cars in which we had come. In the car with him were Nurse Sullivan, J. Moon, the driver, and Con Cregan (both now in U.S.A.), the late P. Clancy and myself. Passing Bruree, however, somewhere about O'Rourke's Cross, Liam Scully died. We brought his body to Mossie Hartnett's in Tournafulla, and we buried him in Templeglantine, quite near. Jim Ryan, the driver of one of the other cars, brought Miceál Brennan and myself on to Ballyhahill to tell Scully's people. Miceál Brennan and myself cycled back to Pallaskenry and he got the boat to cross the Shannon into East Clare.

I was in the Column all the time from its organisation in 1920. Then there were only six in it. Seán Finn, then Brigadier, was first in charge of the Column, and Garrett McAuliffe was Vice Commandant. When Finn was shot on 31st March, 1921, McAuliffe became O.C. Column. There were so many men in the Column then that it was divided into two. Michael Colbert became Vice-Commandant then. Jim Liston was in charge of the second half of the Column. There were about 25 to 30 men in each half column. This way it was much easier to manoeuvre them, for the purpose of billeting.

There were ambushes in Abbeyfeale, Lohill and Robertstown (a train ambush); there were individual shootings of R.I.C. men who had set themselves out to be a nuisance to us.

The Abbeyfeale ambush was in 1921. There were Tans and R.I.C. involved in this. This was a patrol going into Abbeyfeale from the cross at the Protestant Church. One of our party fired a shot too soon and the enemy cleared off. We opened fire on them and, as far as we could make out, a

couple were wounded before they reached the safety of the barracks.

At Lohill the country was very open and it was difficult to get near the police patrol here unobserved. Still we fired on them here and one was wounded. The enemy only fired a few shots and cleared off.

At Robertstown, on the railway line between Askeaton and Foynes we lay in wait to ambush a train with Tans. There was a cutting here and we had arranged for the train to stop here. It did and we threw bombs into the carriages where the Tans were, with what result we never found out. One Tan got out of the train on the side opposite to us and went along the line unobserved and getting into the engine made the driver carry on. The Tans had replied to our fire but without doing us any damage.

An R.I.C. man named George Neaser, a regular policeman, was shot dead in Ward's Hotel in Rathkeale. He had made himself obnoxious in Tralee and word was sent on for him to be dealt with and this was done.

Another R.I.C. man was shot dead on the road a couple of miles outside Newcastle West. He was also a wanted man.

I was with the Column at Barna when we were lying in wait along with the North Cork Column for a big British convoy which used the road regularly between Newcastle West and Abbeyfeale. However, this convoy did not turn up for a couple of days. When it did it was the 11th July, 1921, and the Truce had started. We had about twelve mines down along

the road. I was in charge of this particular part of the job. We had left our positions when the convoy came and some of the British had a few words with some of our men, but everything passed off peaceably, as there was nothing unfriendly in their attitude.

In 1920 we were raided by the British regularly at our home at Washpool. Actually one day five different sections came and raided the house. They were on foot, on bicycles, in lorries and even cavalry came. In the Summer of that year, after a series of disappointments, never finding anything incriminating or any man about the place to be arrested, they set fire to the hay and the out-offices. All these were burnt out. They cleared off immediately and there was sufficient water near by to save the dwelling house from catching fire. My father was the only man there and was about 74 or 75 then, but he saved the situation, with help from the neighbours.

I recollect that after the capture of General Lucas near Fermoy, he was brought under escort into Templeglantine to Sheehan's house and was kept there a couple of days and then moved to Michael Dore's at Ballisten, Shanagolden. He was kept a few more days there and we brought him on then to Washpool and across the Shannon to Corbetts' of Bunratty Castle. We handed him over to the East Clare men there.

I found him a very decent man, a real military man. He discussed matters with us and would hold his point in an argument. We had a few good singers in our crowd and they



used to entertain him during his stay with us. When he was getting into the boat at Mellon Point to cross the Shannon, he thanked us for our treatment of him and said if ever he got into power again and any of us happened to be prisoners, he would do his best if he knew of it to see we got a fair deal, though he could not guarantee we would be treated as well as we treated him.

Signed: Thomas Wallace  
(Thomas Wallace)

Witnessed: [Signature] LT.-COLONEL.  
(C. Saurin)

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> May 1953

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No. W.S. <u>852</u>