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COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1427.

Witness

Laurence Brady,
Lalor's Mills,
Portlaoise,
Laois.

Identity.

Adjutant, Laois Brigade.

Subject.

Activities of Portlaoise Company, Irish Volunteers,
Co. Laois, 1914-December, 1924.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil.

File No 2714.

Form B.S.M. 2

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DUPLICATE

NO. W.S. 1,427

STATEMENT BY LAURENCE BRADY,

Lalor's Mills, Port Laoise, Laois.

I joined the Ballyroan Company of the Irish Volunteers on the 1st June, 1914. In support of this statement I have in my possession my application form for admission and my membership card. I attended parades of the company on three evenings of the week during the summer of 1914 for military training. There were about 50 men in the company. At the time of the Redmondite split in the Volunteers I remained loyal to the original founders of the movement under the leadership of Eoin McNeill. I advocated this point of view amongst my comrades of the Ballyroan Company, and at a special meeting of the company held to decide this issue I carried the company in favour of the original founders by a majority of three to one. The Ballyroan Company was the only one in Laois that did not go to Port Laoise for John Redmond's review in September, 1914. Early in October, 1914, I reorganised a company of Volunteers in Port Laoise under the leadership of Eoin McNeill. I attended the first convention of the Irish Volunteers as a delegate from the Ballyroan Company. This convention was held in the Abbey Theatre and presided over by Eoin McNeill on the 25th October, 1914. I have my admission card to same. Due to the Volunteer split and the strength of the Redmondite influence in Laois County, it was extremely difficult to keep the Volunteers organised at this period. The Secretary of the Ballyroan Company, a "Redmondite", held up all correspondence from the Volunteer Headquarters, with the result that in a couple of months after the Volunteer Convention was held in Dublin, the Ballyroan Company ceased all activities, despite my best efforts to keep it functioning.

In January, 1915, a Circle of the Irish Republican Brotherhood was formed in Port Laoise. I was sworn in by Patrick Ramsbottom, who was Centre of the Circle. Other members of the Circle included my brother Tom, Paddy Muldowney, M.J. Sheridan, Mick Gray and Colm Houlihan. From the time I joined the I.R.B. I was linked up with the Port Laoise Company of Irish Volunteers up to and during the Rising of Easter Week, 1916. During 1915 and previous to the Easter Week Rising, explosives consigned to Wolfhill Collieries were captured by members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood in Laois and usually stored at my place and later conveyed to General Headquarters of the Irish Volunteers. One consignment from Kynocks of Arklow was captured at Kingsbridge on information from the Brotherhood here in Laois. I heard afterwards that it was discovered by the British in the General Post Office after the evacuation in 1916.

The following is a copy of a joint statement prepared by a committee of the Volunteers, whose names are included therein, concerning the activities of the Port Laoise Company from its formation in 1914 until the unit disbanded after the Rising in 1916:

"We were members of the Irish Volunteers in 1914, and at the "Split" in that year we sided with the founders of the Irish Volunteers and we did our best to seduce young men from the Redmondite Volunteers.

In Port Laoise, due to local Irish Parliamentary Party influence it was difficult to get recruits for the Irish Volunteers under the leadership of McNeill, but eventually at a meeting held on the 17th October, 1914, we succeeded in establishing a company. Officers were

elected and a delegate was appointed, namely Mr. Joseph Fitzpatrick, Main St., Port Laoise, to represent the company at the Irish Volunteer Convention held at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on Sunday the 25th October, 1914. In the spring of 1915 regular rifle practice was carried on Sunday after Sunday at Collier's Sandpit, Ballytegan. At this period a Circle of the I.R.B. was formed and we were sworn in as members. Instructions in drill, bayonet exercises etc. were given by Denis Dunne.

We attended a review of Irish Volunteers held by Liam Mellowes and Seán MacDiarmada at The Swan, Wolfhill, in the summer of 1915.

In September we organised an aeriocht at Port Laoise to raise funds to buy arms. This aeriocht was attended by Captain Tom McCarthy and Donal O'Hannigan.

The district was next visited by Liam Mellowes in his capacity as general organiser of the Irish Volunteers and he gave a lecture on army demolition work.

On the day of O'Donovan Rossa's funeral, gelignite and other explosives, obtained locally, were conveyed to Dublin by members of our company and handed over to Donal O'Hannigan and Seán Tobin (attached to headquarters of the Irish Volunteer Executive).

In the autumn of 1915 members of our company attended a lecture on the demolition of railways at 2, Dawson St., Dublin. In January, 1916, our company was visited by Piarais Beaslai and Lieut. Eamon O'Kelly, and at a meeting of our company in the Town Hall they delivered addresses impressing on the Volunteers the urgency of organising and training in view of the

imminence of a Rising. After the Volunteer meeting Messrs. Beaslai and O'Kelly dealt with the position of the I.R.B. organisation in the County and the possibility of its extension.

Subsequently Gregory Murphy came down from General Headquarters and gave a lecture on musketry and small arms.

The company was next visited by Eamon C. Fleming, who came with a special message from the Volunteer Executive to take all measures possible to be ready when the word to rise would come.

On Sunday, 16th April, 1916, Eamon Fleming met our company in St. Patrick's Hall, Port Laoise, and definitely informed us that the Rising would take place, that he would visit us again the following Thursday and give us the date, the hour, and detail our duties. He instructed us that notwithstanding any countermanding orders that might come from the Volunteer Executive those duties were to be carried out.

On Thursday evening, 20th April, 1916, he returned and again met us in St. Patrick's Hall with orders giving us the date of the Rising as Easter Sunday, 23rd April, 1916, and the hour as 7 p.m. The duties assigned to our company were the demolition of railway lines in our area on the branches from Waterford to Dublin, with the object of delaying the entrance of troops from Britain, via Rosslare or Waterford, to Dublin, and after the carrying out of these duties we were to link up with forces expected to be at Scollop Gap near Borris, County Carlow, where we were to receive further orders.

At this meeting in St. Patrick's Hall on Thursday, 20th April, all our plans for the carrying out of the demolition of the railways were carefully plotted out, and on the following Friday and Saturday nights all the necessary equipment for the operations was collected crowbars, hatchets, spanners, coldsets, etc.

Arms already in possession of the company were supplemented by some purchased by Eamon Fleming from Mr. James Moloney, then manager at Messrs. J.J. Aird & Sons, hardware establishment, Port Laoise.

Arms and the equipment referred to above were transferred by Volunteers Laurence Brady and Thomas F. Brady to their farm at Lalor's Mills. On Easter Saturday night and Easter Sunday afternoon all the necessary equipment was shifted by them to a place of concealment at Colt Wood, the site selected for demolition work on the Waterford-Port Laoise railway line.

At a meeting of the company held in St. Patrick's Hall on Easter Saturday night final dispositions were decided upon and Eamon Fleming was unanimously elected to take charge. The Volunteers detailed to carry out the operation at Colt Wood were as follows: -

Patrick J. Ramsbottom,	Port Laoise.		
Laurence Brady,	Lalor's Mills,	Port Laoise.	
Thomas F. Brady,	"	"	"
Patrick Muldowney	"	"	"
John Muldowney	"	"	"
Colm Houlihan	"	"	"
Michael J. Sheridan	"	"	"

Volunteers Michael Walsh and Michael Gray were detailed for service with Eamon Fleming and Seán McGuire on the Kilkenny-Kildare section of the railway.

The Colt Wood party started the work of demolition punctually at 7 p.m. on Sunday evening and carried it out successfully. (Documentary evidence as to the damage done to the railway line is attached hereto, viz. a report from the "Nationalist Leinster Times" newspaper of proceedings at Quarter Session in connection with the Railway Company's claim for compensation for the damage done and the court record of the claim; also copy of the report of the County Inspector of the Royal Irish Constabulary on the matter made to the judge at the subsequent July Assizes.

People who came along the railway line during the course of the operations were held as prisoners and were later escorted to their homes and warned not to stir out again for the night or give any information in the event of subsequent inquiries being made.

Heavy rain had set in while the operations were in progress and as it continued, the party who remained on guard at the spot took shelter in Colt Wood, close beside the railway. Later a man came along the line carrying a lamp - presumably a railway servant, making an inspection of the line in consequence of the failure of the block signal system between Port Laoise and Abbeylaais Stations to work owing to the cutting of the telegraph wires. This man was called on to halt and, as he failed to do so, he was fired on. The lamp was extinguished and the man escaped in the darkness. After some hours the party, every member drenched to the skin, retired to the home of Laurence and Tom Brady at Lalor's Mills, where later in the morning Eamon Fleming and Volunteers Walsh and Gray arrived, accompanied by a Dublin boy named Seán McGuire

who had been working for some time previously at Wolfhill Collieries, he having been 'on the run'.

On Easter Monday morning we sent a special messenger to Port Laoise to find out if the Rising was general and learned with regret that, so far as could be ascertained, no move had been made in any part of Ireland except in Laois. Reading that day's newspapers we learned for the first time of the disaster in Kerry - the failure to land arms from Germany - and as we had expected foreign aid we thought the Rising had been postponed. On Easter Monday evening we again sent a special messenger into Port Laoise who brought back the news that the Rising had taken place in Dublin. On Easter Monday night it was decided, for the purpose of throwing suspicion off the home of the Bradys, and concealing the whereabouts of the men who had left their homes, to participate in the Rising, that Laurence and Thomas Brady should continue to do their usual work and appear in public. On the following Tuesday morning Constable Hogan, R.I.C., called at Lalor's Mills and interviewed Laurence Brady. A day or two afterwards Constable McCarthy visited the place and found Laurence and Thomas Brady engaged at their usual work on the farm and at the Mill respectively. As no raid or search followed the police visits, our plan for throwing off suspicion had, apparently, the desired effect.

As there had been a postponement of the Rising until Easter Monday and an upsetting of the plans originally made we waited until Tuesday night in the hope of receiving definite news of the Rising or fresh orders regarding it. On Tuesday Patrick J. Fleming, The Swan, (brother of Eamon

Fleming) and Terence Byrne, Knocklaide, Timahoe, joined our party at Lalor's Mills.

On Tuesday night it was decided that an effort should be made to get in touch with the Kilkenny-Carlow Volunteers. For that purpose our leader Eamon Fleming and Volunteer M. Walsh proceeded on bicycles to Borris, Co. Carlow, district. They ascertained that there had been no turn out of Volunteers in that area, and they were unable to get in touch with anyone who could supply any information as to future activities. We made a further effort to obtain information by dispatching James Ramsbottom of Fossey, Timahoe, to interview Mr. Patrick Corcoran, Kilkenny. On his arrival in Kilkenny, James Ramsbottom learned that Mr. Corcoran had been arrested and, consequently, he was unable to get the required information.

For some days afterwards we made use of persons friendly disposed towards the Rising to gather what information they could for us, but without success.

At our meeting on Easter Saturday night we were warned not to be misled by anything appearing in the Press. As a result we disregarded various rumours that were in circulation as to the collapse of the Rising and still held hopes of a success in arms. For these reasons we remained together in the expectation of the fighting becoming general throughout the country and that opportunity would be given us later of linking up with some other body to continue the struggle. On Monday, 1st May, 1916, Eamon Fleming went to Dublin to seek information. He succeeded in interviewing a Mr. McEvoy, known to him as an old I.R.B. man, but he was unable to

give him any definite information. He learned that all the leaders had been arrested. Not having received orders to surrender we held together under arms for about two weeks longer. Our leader, Eamon Fleming, went to Dublin again, and in an interview with the Rev. Father Augustine, O.F.M., Cap., learned that the Rising was definitely crushed. When he returned with this news and whilst we were considering the best steps to take for our personal safety, Rev. J.J. Kearney, C.C., Port Laoise (who died recently P.P. of Edenderry) came out to Lalor's Hills, met Laurence Brady and asked him where he had "those fellows" round the place. Seeing that Fr. Kearney was positive as to their being about the place, Laurence Brady said that he would interview the men and if they were satisfied to see him he would take him to them; if not, he would not. We were satisfied. Fr. Kearney interviewed us, the purpose of his interview being to get us to surrender peaceably to the County Inspector of the R.I.C. at Port Laoise, he (Fr. Kearney) undertaking to use his influence to have us treated leniently. We refused to accept these terms. At a meeting subsequent to Fr. Kearney's interview it was definitely decided that we should go 'on the run', each one to do the best he could".

After the meeting on Holy Thursday night, my brother, Tom, and I collected tools required for the operation and brought them to Colt Wood and dumped them securely convenient to the place selected for the operation.

At the meeting on Saturday night it was considered advisable that members of the unit should leave town (Port Laoise) early the following day. After this meeting

Tom and I conveyed more material to Colt Wood.

Early on Easter Sunday Paddy Ramsbottom and M.J. Sheridan came to my home at Lalor's Hills and stayed with us until it was time to leave to commence operations.

Paddy and John Muldowney and Colm Houlihan also left town early and went to a friend's house in Clonad. The unit met a few minutes before seven o'clock at Colt Wood.

The special messenger who went to Port Laoise on Easter Monday to collect information concerning the Rising was my sister Kathleen Brady.

When the Laois unit of Volunteers decided to disband after the Rising, the arms were collected - 12 shotguns, two rifles and a supply of ammunition, carefully stored in a waterproof tar barrel and dumped in a field by M.J. Sheridan of Port Laoise, P.J. Ramsbottom and myself.

Before the unit disbanded all the cash we had was pooled and divided among those who were going 'on the run'. Tom and I did not go 'on the run', but the arms and ammunition were carefully looked after by us and when the Volunteers became active again the arms, which were in perfect condition, were distributed among them. Due to the military defeat of the Volunteers in 1916 and the fact that most of our active members were 'on the run', to whom I gave financial assistance, it was difficult to carry on any military training or activities during the remainder of the year 1916. Our national efforts were chiefly confined to raising funds for the dependants of Volunteers who were killed, Volunteers in jail and 'on the run'. For this purpose aeriochts, concerts and tournaments were organised. One of the Laois

Volunteers who took part in the Rising, Michael J. Sheridan of Port Laoise, was finding it extremely difficult to get a "stop" after he had been 'on the run' for a month or so, and as there was no particular watch on my place by the R.I.C. at this time I invited him to my house and kept him there from early June, 1916, until February, 1917, when releases from camps and jails became fairly general.

During this period we maintained contact with the men 'on the run' and continued to secure gelignite from the Wolfhill Collieries.

The following is a copy of a report published in the 'Nationalist and Leinster Times' dated 28th October, 1916, of proceedings at Queen's County Quarter Sessions in connection with the demolition of the railway at Colt Wood on Easter Sunday, 1916:

"ECHO OF EASTER WEEK

Derailing of Engine and Carriage.

His Honor, Judge Fitzgerald continued the business of the Quarter Sessions at Maryborough on Monday.

The G.S.W.R. Company applied for £328 - 9 - 6d compensation for the alleged malicious destruction of 60 yards of the permanent way, 12 30 ft. rails, 66 sleepers, 208 bolts and one locomotive engine and one bogey brake carriage early in the morning of the 24th April last on the lands of Clonadadoran.

Mr. W.I. White appeared for the Railway Company and Mr. de Renzy, K.C. (instructed by Mr. O'Connell Fitzsimon, Solicitor) appeared for the Abbeyleix District Council.

Mr. White said the Application was originally for £3,000 because at the time the Company could not ascertain the damage that was done, but since then they had reduced the claim to £328 - 9 - 6d. The facts in connection with the application were: - Owing to a special train on Easter Sunday being blocked at the Conaberry Junction owing to the signal failing to act between Abbeyleix and the Conaberry Junction, a pilot man was sent on foot along the line from Maryborough to Abbeyleix, and a similar pilot man came from Abbeyleix towards Maryborough. William Dalton was the pilot who left Maryborough, starting between 9 and 9.30 on that night, and when he arrived about three-quarters of a mile from Maryborough, near the middle of Colt Wood he saw a telegraph pole cut. He examined the pole by the light of a hand lamp which he carried and he could see that it had been cut across with a saw. While so engaged he heard voices calling out "Halt, or I will shoot". That was said by more than one person. A further order was given to fire and three shots were fired while he was examining the pole. Dalton then put out the lamp and went on towards Lee's cottage, further on towards Abbeyleix, at a level crossing, and there met the pilot man from Abbeyleix. They then left for Maryborough, not by rail but by road. The shots came from the middle of Colt Wood, just opposite the place where the occurrence took place. When they arrived back at Maryborough they told the Station Master and the police were sent for, and an engine with a bogey brake carriage attached containing five of the Company's men and four police proceeded along the line, when, suddenly, the engine and carriage became derailed and turned over on the left side of the

bank. This was due to rails being taken up out of the permanent way, leaving a space. The engine driver and fireman were thrown out but escaped injury. The engine remained there for some time and the Company had to do a considerable amount of repair to it and the line.

Mr. de Renzy said Mr. White had stated enough for him to call attention to the Act that was recently passed in relation to malicious injuries. The Act was passed to amend the Law and procedure of Civil Courts in Ireland in relation to events arising out of the recent disturbances in this country, and provided that no claim for compensation shall lie against a local authority in respect of any injury to person or property sustained in the course of the recent disturbances. Mr. White had mentioned the date of this occurrence and His Honor had judicial knowledge that the rebellion was in full swing on the Monday, and this was perpetrated by armed men who threatened to fire and did fire at this man.

Mr. White said there was no definition in the Act of what the recent disturbances were. They might, for all he knew, be disturbances in connection with an earthquake or a magnetic storm (laughter). The Rebellion was stated to have started in Dublin on Easter Monday about midday when policemen were shot at Dublin Castle and the Irish Republic proclaimed. His Honor - Proclaimed but suspended until next year. Mr. White - This occurrence took place the night before. Mr. de Renzy - If that is so your Notice is wrong because it says "early on the morning of the 24th April". Mr. White -

The early morning is part of the night. Mr. de Renzy said there were a number of claims in Dublin for malicious injury and they were adjourned until after the passing of the Act and then struck out.

Mr. White said that it was plain that it was not portion of the recent disturbances. If the rebellion had not taken place this would never be called a disturbance but an outrage. His Honor - I would call it a disturbance of the rails (laughter).

Mr. de Renzy said his clients were protected by the Act quoted, but he should point out that the Company were negligent in the running of this train and ought not to recover any of the damage to the engine or tender, or the repairing of the line which they tore up by negligence in sending the train after they found the damage.

Mr. White said when the engine was sent out they were not aware of the line having been cut up.

W. Dalton, porter at Maryborough, gave evidence that he came on duty at 9 o'clock on Easter Sunday night. About ten minutes after the Station Master told him about the staff failure, and witness was sent from the Conaberry Junction as pilot along the line to meet the man from Abbeyleix. When he had gone to about the 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ mile post near the centre of Colt Wood he saw a telegraph post cut with a hand saw. While he was examining the pole with the lamp he heard voices shout from the Wood "Halt, or I will shoot you". That was said by more than one person.

His Honor - Do you know who they were? No.

A further command was given: "Fire, fire", and I heard

three shots fired in a couple of seconds.

His Honor - I suppose they fired over your head. Did any of the bullets strike near you? One hit the telegraph pole that was cut down. Witness, continuing, said he put out the lamp and then went to the level crossing at Lee's cottage near Abbeyleix, and stopped there for about a quarter of an hour or twenty minutes until he saw the other man coming. When walking towards Lee's cottage he did not notice anything wrong with the permanent way as the lamp was out and he could not see anything. He started back for Maryborough by road and arrived at the Connaberry about 12.45. He told the Station Master who sent the signaller for the police. The engine and bogey was made up and left Maryborough about 2.30 or 2.34 with five railway men, including witness, and four police. It went on to the place where the occurrence took place, and it suddenly stopped and the engine and carriage were derailed. The rails were found in a gripe in the wood.

Cross-examined by Mr. de Renzy - He could not say how many people were in the wood, but heard two voices. He could not say whether it was a military order that was given or not. He did not find any cartridges, but he understood the police did. Lee's cottage was about three quarters of a mile from where he was fired at. He did not examine the rails to see if any injury was done. Coleman, the Abbeyleix pilot, travelled on the engine. He did not observe any communication cord between the engine and the carriage, but it was usually there.

J. Leahy, engine driver, stated in consequence

of what he was told by the guard he proceeded along the line, and the first that happened was that the communication with the brake connection was pulling the carriage; witness at once applied his brake and the engine and carriage became derailed. Witness and the fireman were thrown out and the engine toppled over on the left side.

Cross-examined by Mr. de Renzy - Witness was given instructions to go on until he would be stopped by the pulling of the communication cord.

His Honor said he would not trouble Mr. de Renzy. He was quite satisfied that there were local disturbances in various parts of the country preparatory to, or in anticipation of, the disturbances in Dublin, and that the affair in the present instance was one of these.

Mr. White - It may not have anything to do with it. Up to the present there is no evidence given by anyone to connect it with the disturbances in Dublin.

His Honor - Don't be too sure of that. I will hear some of the police about it.

Head-Constable Bane, Maryborough, asked by the Judge if it was his opinion that this was part of the Rebellion replied "There was no insurrection in Queen's County".

His Honor - What about the disturbances? There was no disturbance in this county.

His Honor - Was not this a disturbance?

Mr. White - That takes place often, and may have something to do with the Railway line. It was apparently done by expert hands, namely: - people connected with the Railway, or people with a knowledge of Railway work.

His Honor - Do you think the thing was malice against the Railway Company or against the foreign Government?

Witness - I have no evidence to enable me to answer that. It was maliciously done anyway.

Mr. White - said the date in that Act was the 23rd August and the Preliminary Notice was served the preceding April, and the subsequent Notice in June, so that the claims had arisen before the Act passed, and there was nothing in the Act to make it retrospective.

His Honor - It is quite general and no claims can be entertained. It is too clear. I'd like to give you compensation but I cannot.

D.I. Dobbyn, examined by Mr. de Renzy said he had been carrying on investigations in this matter.

His Honor - Was not this row on the Railway part of the disturbances?

Witness - There is no evidence in our possession that it was.

His Honor - What else? - It must be?

Witness - That is a matter of opinion, but we have no evidence connecting it in any way.

His Honor - Is there any alternative suggestion.

Witness - Well, I heard rumours and things at the time which were not to that effect, but I am not prepared to say whether any credence should be placed on them.

Mr. White - I may say that there is another suggestion, that some recruits did not want to be brought up from Waterford direction to be examined in Dublin and they cut the line.

His Honor - I won't accept that.

Mr. White - I don't put that forward, but I say there is no evidence which connects it with the disturbances.

His Honor - You could not have a more elastic or vague term than "disturbances". It does not say "Rebellion", and the Government said, in fact, there was no rebellion except riots. I remember that quite well. In my opinion the disturbances began here in this Queen's County as well as other places simultaneously, perhaps, on Friday.

Mr. White - If you go on that, you may as well go back some months. There were disturbances in Tullamore in which some buildings were damaged, and His Honor, Judge Drummond, gave compensation the other day. As a matter of fact prisoners were brought before a Court Martial in Dublin, and notwithstanding that, compensation was given.

His Honor - You will get compensation from the Government.

Mr. White - I cannot say that.

His Honor said he held that the recent disturbances in Ireland began, as far as the Queen's County was concerned, on the Sunday night and this damage was caused in the course of those disturbances. He would dismiss the case accordingly without costs."

I assisted in reorganising the Irish Volunteers in the spring of 1917. As well as assisting at the reorganising of the company in Port Laoise, my brother Thomas and I had organised a section of Volunteers in Lalor's Mills in October, 1916. Throughout the year 1917, route marches, squad drill, ^{AND} revolver practice ~~was~~ carried on⁷. Miniature rifle practice of the Lalor's Mills section was carried on at my place - a country corn mill. In July, 1917, I helped to organise the Sinn Féin Club in Port Laoise and was elected its first Chairman. Afterwards I organised several Sinn Féin Clubs throughout Laois. I was elected Chairman of the first Comhairle Ceanntair of Sinn Féin set up in Laois. I represented the Port Laoise Cumann at the Sinn Féin Árd Fheis of 1917. In December, 1917, on the instructions from the Sinn Féin Headquarters, with the assistance of Patrick Keyes of Lalor's Mills I collected for a general election fund a sum of £12 odd in my own locality. Throughout January, 1918, and onwards I was actively engaged in training the Lalor's Mills Company of Volunteers and in addition helping to organise resistance to the conscription menace.

In the first week of May, 1918, I was compelled to go 'on the run' as a result of a raid on my house by a large force of British military and R.I.C. I remained 'on the run' until the general elections of 1918.

In November, 1917, the companies in Port Laoise and the surrounding districts were formed into a battalion. This became known as the 1st Battalion. In April, 1918, THE other battalions in the county were formed into a brigade. It was known as the Laois Brigade. The first brigade officers were:

Patrick Ramsbottom - O/C

Thomas Brady (my brother) - Vice O/C

Edward McEvoy, Abbeylaois - Adjt.

Michael Gray,
- Q/M.

In April, 1918, I was elected Vice Commandant of the 1st Battalion. Michael Walsh of Port Laoise was O/C. Michael Walsh left Laois in or about August, 1918, and I was then appointed O/C of the battalion. I attended to the duties of O/C until my arrest on the 29th July, 1919. I assisted in securing the return of the Sinn Féin candidate - Mr. Kevin O'Higgins - at the general elections of 1918. Kevin O'Higgins stayed at my place in June, 1919, and I acted as scout when he was coming to and leaving the place.

I was arrested on 29th July, 1919, for being in possession of an automatic pistol, ammunition and explosives. I was tried by military courtmartial and sentenced to 12 months with hard labour. I have all the Press reports in connection with this phase of my military activities. During my incarceration, with the co-operation of my fellow prisoners, we kept up a continuous struggle against the prison authorities to secure treatment as political prisoners. Our demands being refused, the prisoners undertook a general smash up of Mountjoy Prison about 14th October, 1919. On the instructions of Ted O'Kelly, the prisoners' O/C, each prisoner was directed to barricade his

cell-door and to offer the greatest resistance possible to the Prison Authorities before surrendering. I carried out my instructions and kept the officers of the prison, under the leadership of the Governor, Monroe, at bay for over a period of two hours. During the struggle, the prison water hose was used against me, and at one period over two feet of water was in my cell. Finally, I surrendered on the instructions of my O/C after a set-to of fisticuffs with about half a dozen warders. After the surrender the prisoners were put in handcuffs and had to eat their meals under this handicap. The prisoners decided to go on hunger strike, still wearing their handcuffs, and after being a week without food, all of us were released. The terms of our release were that the prisoners were to return to Mountjoy as soon as the state of their health permitted. I was released under the Cat and Mouse Act in October, 1919. I never afterwards considered my health sufficiently robust to return. Therefore, from November, 1919, I was on my keeping and actively engaged on Volunteer work until the Truce in July, 1921.

Early in the spring of 1920 I was appointed Brigade Organiser with the rank of Battalion Commandant, and during most of this year I was actively engaged organising I.R.A. companies all over Laois. In the following centres I organised and re-organised I.R.A. companies: - Ballinakill (section in Knock), Durrow, Cullohill, Clough, Rathdowney, Clonmeen, Ballybrophy, Ballacolla, Shanahoe, Raheen, Castletown, Borris-in-Ossory, Camross, Killinure, Ballyroan, Clonaslee, Ballickmoyler, Luggacurran, Kilcruise. The work of organisation consisted of establishing companies, holding election of company and battalion staffs, administering the Volunteer oath of allegiance to the Republic

to the members, giving lectures on the duties of Volunteers and filling vacancies caused by continuous arrests, by promotion or election in company and battalion units. In May, 1920, I was elected County Centre of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and from that period, in addition to my Volunteer duties, I was busy extending the Irish Republican Brotherhood, organising and establishing about twelve Centres. When the Republican Courts were set up in Laois in July, 1920, I was elected District Justice. Although 'on the run', I attended courts in Ballyfin, Camross and Ballickmoyler. I do not remember the dates. I took charge of the raid on the Income Tax office in Mountmellick on Easter Saturday night of 1920 when all official documents were destroyed. A fortnight afterwards I was in charge of the unit of the I.R.A. which destroyed the R.I.C. barracks in Clonaslee.

In March or April, 1920, Mr. Kevin O'Higgins informed me that he was unable to get any collection for the Dáil Loan in the parish of Raheen and he appealed to me for assistance, stating it was the only parish in the Laois County which had not subscribed any money towards the loan. I promised to help, and through the co-operation of local Volunteers succeeded in holding a couple of meetings in connection with the project and arranged two further meetings which Mr. O'Higgins and I attended the night after the burning of Clonaslee Barracks. These meetings were held in the house of Mr. William Fennelly of Raheen and Michael Fitzpatrick of Shanahoe. As a result of our efforts the people of Raheen subscribed £365.

I took charge of the burning of Luggacurran Barracks in May, 1920. In June, 1920, Patrick Ramsbottom, Brigade O/C, resigned. At a meeting of the Brigade Staff, at which

two representatives from each of the six battalions were present, Michael Gray was elected Brigade O/C. In July, 1920, whilst I was in the 4th Battalion area (Wolfhill) it was reported to me by the 4th Battalion I/O (Thomas Dunne of Crossard) that the R.I.C. had received instructions to evacuate the local barracks. On the night of the day on which I received this report, accompanied by the I/O I inspected the barrack building. On the following day I submitted a detailed plan of same to Michael Gray, Brigade O/C, with a request to be furnished with arms to attack the barracks. On the evening of the day on which I furnished this report to the Brigade O/C, I received additional information that a number of the R.I.C. had left the barracks leaving only a few men behind. On receipt of this information I forwarded an urgent dispatch by special courier, Thomas Dunne, to the Brigade O/C explaining the position fully with regard to the barracks, pointing out that the possibility of capture was feasible and to send on the arms without delay. The Brigade O/C considered that the notice of my intention to attack the barracks too short and postponed the attempt to the following night. In the meantime, the few remaining R.I.C. had left. I took charge of the burning of the Wolfhill Barracks on the 29th July, 1920.

In October, 1920, I was ordered by General Headquarters of I.R.A. to attend engineering lectures in Dublin. I attended these lectures and have still in my possession the notes taken at them. The lectures were given by Rory O'Connor, Plunkett Brothers and Ginger O'Connell. There were other lecturers but I have forgotten their names. When I returned to my brigade area I gave a course of lectures on engineering and its application to military activities.

In October or November, 1920, Michael Gray, Brigade O/C, was arrested by British forces and was sentenced to, I think, six months imprisonment. During his absence my brother, Tom, who was Vice O/C, became Acting O/C of the brigade and continued to act in that capacity until Gray resumed command when he was released in April, 1921.

In November, 1920, with a section of I.R.A. I enforced a decision of the Republican Courts in connection with a land dispute in Cloosecullen, Raheen, Laois. About this period also, I took charge of a raiding party of I.R.A. who raided Granston Manor, the home of Lord Castletown, for arms and ammunition. I do not remember the date, but the Captain of Clough Company of I.R.A., Mr. Edward Fitzpatrick of Rahandrick, Ballacolla, one of the raiding party, will probably remember. On the 31st December, 1920, or 1st January, 1921, I was a member of a party of I.R.A. who lay in ambush at Lamberton, Port Laoise, for the purpose of attacking a patrol of British Army who were expected to pass. As no enemy forces passed by the I.R.A. section had to withdraw from the position. All during the spring of 1921 I was kept busy attending meetings (company and battalion) all over the brigade area and, in addition, I piloted several men from General Headquarters on a tour of inspection through the county. Of these, I only remember the name of Simon Donnelly of Dublin.

We got information from Edward Deegan, Captain of Abbeylaois Company, that a patrol of armed R.I.C. and Black and Tans, usually about twelve in number, left Abbeylaois Barrack every night to patrol the town. He gave the approximate time they left the barrack and the

approximate time of their return.

A meeting of the Brigade Staff was held to consider the report and it was decided to attack the patrol. Abbeylaois R.I.C. Barrack was Divisional Headquarters. It had a garrison of about fifty, including Black and Tans. It was a detached building about one hundred and fifty yards from the street. Between the barrack and the street was a lawn field about eighty to one hundred yards wide. The lawn drive or avenue leading from the street to the barrack was in the approximate centre of the lawn. On the south side of the lawn (the right-hand side as one looks from the street towards the barrack) was a wooded hill sloping down to the edge of the lawn.

In his report Captain Deegan stated that he had the movements of the patrol under observation for some time and that it always returned to the barrack by the lawn drive. It was decided that we would occupy positions on the wooded hill and attack the patrol on the lawn drive as it returned to barracks. In addition to members of the Brigade Staff, officers and men from the 1st, 3rd and 4th Battalions were selected for the job and rifles were drawn from the brigade area.

The men from the 1st and 4th Battalions were to meet at a point on Bland's farm, Bland's Fort, Ballyroan, on the 29th March, 1921, the night selected for the attack. We were met there by John Whelan, O/C of the Ballyroan Company, and Volunteer Edward Corcoran of the same company. They guided us to a point adjacent to the barrack where we were met by Edward Deegan, O/C Abbeylaois Company. He confirmed the report he had given us that the patrol had already left the barrack and were patrolling the town.

The men from the 3rd Battalion approached from the opposite direction and were at the meeting place at the appointed time. We took up positions behind trees on the hill about forty to fifty yards from the lawn drive. Each man was armed with a rifle and about 20 rounds of ammunition.

We remained in position for some time awaiting the return of the patrol, but this night, instead of coming up the drive, they entered by a wicket gate on the opposite side of the lawn and approached the barrack behind a row of beech trees and were not observed by the I.R.A. unit until the leading pair had almost reached the barrack door. I was the first to see them and I opened fire. The remainder of the unit opened fire immediately but the patrol succeeded in getting into the barrack. We then fired into the barrack through the windows and continued doing so for some time. The garrison was rather slow in replying with rifle fire and it took them some time longer before they got their machine-guns into action. We withdrew without suffering any casualties. My brother, Tom, who was Acting O/C Brigade, was in charge. The following is a list of those who took part in the attack:

Frank Gowing	-	Brigade Q/M
James Ramsbottom	-	" I/O
Lar. Brady (myself)	"	Organiser
Tom O'Neill	-	O/C 1st Battalion
P. Fingleton	-	Vice O/C 1st Battalion.
Den. Drennan	-	Capt. Ratheniske Company.
Vol. Peter Mahon	-	" "
" Wm. Dunne	-	" "
" Patk. Quinn	-	Ballyroan "
Tom Finlay	-	O/C 3rd Battalion
Larry Cummins	-	Vice O/C 3rd Battalion
John Dunphy	-	Adjnt. " "
Edward Fitzpatrick	-	Capt. Clough Company
Terry Byrne	-	O/C 4th Battalion
Denis Dunne	-	Vice O/C 4th Battalion
Paddy Rowe	-	Capt. Timahoe Company
Patk. Burke	-	Knocklaide Company.

In addition to the above an armed outpost was placed a short distance outside the town on the Abbeylaois-Port Laoise road.

Michael Gray was released from prison about April, 1921, and resumed his appointment as Brigade O/C.

In April, 1921, I received information from Tom Dunne, I/O 4th Battalion, that a party of R.I.C. and Black and Tans left the Divisional Headquarters Barrack, Abbeylaois, at 11 a.m. on the fourth day of each month to deliver the pay to the R.I.C. in Modubeagh, Ballylinan and other barracks in that area. I reported the matter to Brigade H.Q. Having carefully investigated the information, the Brigade Staff decided to attack the party at Ballypickas Cross on the Abbeylaois-Modubeagh road on the 4th of the following month - May, 1921.

The party usually travelled in three tenders on which were mounted Lewis guns. It was estimated that a total of 30 men would be travelling on the tenders. In view of the strength and armament of the enemy party it was considered essential to the success of the job to use road mines. The 4th Battalion was instructed to supply the road mines and to bring them to the spot selected for the ambush.

About twenty men as well as the Brigade Staff assembled at the place and time appointed, but the road mines were not delivered^{EDL} and the Brigade Staff decided, therefore, to postpone the attack until the following month. The men were instructed to return to their areas. As a check on the information supplied by the I/O, the Brigade Staff remained convenient to the point selected

for the attack. The information we had received proved to be absolutely correct. The enemy left Abbeylaois Barrack that day and at the hour given in the I.O.'s report.

The Brigade Staff returned to its headquarters at Carney's, Ballyhyland, Port Laois, where it was decided that I should go and interview Kieran Begadon, Aughmacart, Cullohill, to find out if he could manufacture a couple of good mines for the attack the following month. I travelled to Kieran's home and found he was "on his keeping" in County Kilkenny. His younger brother was at home and volunteered to act as my guide and bring me to see Kieran. When I informed Kieran of what I wanted, he told me there would be no trouble about the problem as he was the owner of traction threshing sets and had a couple of old piston heads which he would have no trouble in converting into suitable road mines. He said he would have them ready for us in time for the attack.

I was delighted with this information and returned to headquarters in high spirits. I had been away from H.Q. for a couple of days on this mission as, at that time, things were fairly hot and we had to travel by night. The Brigade O/C informed me that while I was away the Divisional O/C, Michael McCormack, and the Divisional Q/M, Austin McCurtain, had called at Brigade H.Q. and gave instructions to suspend any operations which we had planned and intended to carry out. The 3rd Southern Division had just been formed, comprising the brigades of North Tipperary, Offaly and Laois. The Divisional O/C also stated that it was his intention to put a strong Divisional Column in the field and first strike the enemy in North Tipperary, then swing into Offaly and hit him again,

and thence into Laois, making use of the local I.R.A. organisation in the divisional area for billeting, protection, information, road blocking etc.

At this time the brigade was composed of six battalions which were organised as follows:

1st Battalion

A	Company	-	Ballyroan
B	"	-	Clonkeen
C	"	-	The Heath
D	"	-	Lalor's Mills
E	"	-	Port Laois
F	"	-	Ratheniske
G	"	-	Raheen
H	"	-	Straboe
I	"	-	Pallas.

2nd Battalion

A	Company	-	Clonaslee
B	"	-	Rosenallis
C	"	-	Hountmellick (with a section in Garryhinch).
D	"	-	Clonaghadoo
E	"	-	Ballyfinn.

3rd Battalion

A	Company	-	Abbeylaois
B	"	-	Ballacolla
C	"	-	Clough
D	"	-	Durrow
E	"	-	Shanahoe
F	"	-	Rathdowney
G	"	-	Ballinakil (with a section in Knod)
H	"	-	Cullahill
I	"	-	Ballybrophy
J	"	-	Clonmeen.

4th Battalion

A	Company	-	
B	"	-	Timahoe (with a section in Knocklaide)
C	"	-	Kilcruise
D	"	-	Luggacurran
E	"	-	Ballickmoyler
F	"	-	Wolfhill.

5th Battalion

A Company - Killenard
B " - Portarlinton
C " - Courtwood
D " - Emo
E " - Vicarstown.

6th Battalion

A Company - Mountrath
B " - Castletown
C " - Camross
D " - Borris-in-Ossory
E " - Coolrain
F " - Killenure
G " - Kyle.

I was appointed Brigade Adjutant about the end of April or beginning of May, 1921, and I held this appointment when the truce came on 11th July, 1921.

About October, 1920, a station for receiving dispatches from G.H.Q. was established at the premises of Jack Dunne, Victualler, Main St., Port Laoise. My sister, Nora, who was attending school at the time, used to call there and bring the dispatches to our home at Lalor's Mills, where they were collected by James Brennan, 1st Lieutenant, Lalor's Mills Company. He delivered them to Brigade Headquarters. We used the same carriers and stations for dispatches going from the brigade to G.H.Q. This system continued up to the truce.

My home was raided by enemy forces in October or November, 1920, on 15th February, 1921, and again in May, 1921. During the latter raid a dispatch from G.H.Q. to the brigade was captured by the raiding party. As a result my sister, Birdie, (now Mrs. Conroy, Roundhill, Clarahill, Mountmellack, Laois) was arrested and sentenced to a term of imprisonment.

The brigade officers at the truce were:

Michael Gray -	Brigade	O/C
Thomas Brady -	"	Vice O/C
Lar. Brady (myself)°		Adjutant
Frank Goving -	"	Q/H
James Ramsbottom - *		I/O.

After the truce I attended the 3rd Southern Division Officers' Training Camp held in Camross towards the end of July, 1921. This camp was under the command of Comdt. McCormack, O/C of the Division. When I returned to my brigade area from the Divisional Training Camp I took charge of the Officers' Training Camp in the 6th Battalion area held in Baccagh House, Killinure, Mountrath, and the Officers' Training Camp of the 3rd Battalion held at Cunningham's farmhouse, Ballygeehan, Ballacolla. It was also my duty as Brigade Adjutant to visit training camps of the other battalion areas and I attended to this work. I gave lectures to the Battalion Adjutants on the duties attached to their position and with their co-operation set up new dispatch routes and stations throughout Laois. From the month of August, 1921, until the outbreak of hostilities in Laois in June, 1922, I attended Republican Courts for Borris-in-Ossory district monthly. I also attended special courts in Port Laoise, Durrrow, Ballickmoyler and Clonaslee and other centres.

In December, 1922, I took the anti-treaty side, and when this split in the Republican ranks reached the I.R.A. I took an active part in holding the I.R.A. in allegiance to the Republic. I was elected to represent the Laois Brigade of the I.R.A. to all army conventions held in Dublin in the spring and early summer of 1922. I have my admission cards. I attended the Irish Republican Brotherhood Convention in March, 1922. The principal business of this convention was to deal with the

position of the country created by the majority vote in Dáil Éireann in favour of the treaty. At this convention I strongly advocated the non-acceptance of Britain's terms. In March, 1922, I was appointed director of elections in the Republican interests for Laois-Offaly. For a couple of months at this period I was engaged in setting up an election machine to support the Republican candidates in preparation for the general elections. The parliamentary representatives for Laois-Offaly voted for the treaty but in view of the Sinn Féin Pact of May, 1922, no opposition Republican candidates were nominated in the general elections of June, 1922.

On the 29th June, 1922, a Brigade Council meeting was held in Abbeylaois to decide what military action should be taken by the I.R.A. in Laois in view of the shelling of the I.R.A. Headquarters by the Free State Forces. It was the opinion of the meeting that the fighting in Dublin would spread to the country and we decided to strengthen our headquarters in Abbeylaois to withstand an attack. At this meeting I was appointed Vice Brigadier and O/C Operations. On Saturday night, 1st July, 1922, I was in charge of a demolition party proceeding out the Durrow Road, Abbeylaois, when we were surprised by a party of Free State troops returning from Kilkenny. In an exchange of fire, one of the Free State soldiers was killed. The I.R.A. section suffered no casualties. On Wednesday morning, 5th July, 1922, our headquarters at Abbeylaois was attacked by a large force of Free State troops. When two of our outposts were captured, a council of war was held and in view of the scarcity of arms in the hands of the I.R.A. - 17 Lee-Enfields and 5 German Mauser rifles - it would be impossible to hold our positions

and we decided to evacuate, leaving a small force behind to hold the position as long as possible. With Edward Deegan, Battalion Comdt., and Volunteer Joseph Crennan I remained behind to defend the I.R.A. Headquarters in Abbeylaois. From 3 o'clock in the afternoon until 9.30 the same evening we were under fire from three machine-guns and a hundred rifles. At 9.30 a storming party of Free State troops smashed in a ~~passage~~ door leading into the barrack yard with a view to capturing our position by assault. We counter-attacked with bombs and rifle fire and compelled the attackers to retreat. No further attack was made on our position. At 12.30 the same night we decided to rejoin our comrades who had retreated to Ballyking, Abbeylaois. When leaving the barrack premises we found three rifles and a bag of hand grenades. The fighting in Abbeylaois continued from 3 o'clock in the early morning until 9.30 the same night. In the fighting four or five Free State soldiers were killed and a number of others wounded. No I.R.A. soldiers were killed but about six of them received wounds.

On the morning of July 12th, 1922, our headquarters at Cappard, Rosenallis, was attacked and after about four hours heavy fighting the Free State forces withdrew. In this engagement Volunteer Denis Dwyer of the I.R.A. was killed and Comdt. Patrick Mulcahy of the Free State Army was wounded. I took part in this battle and was in charge.

On the 29th July, 1922, I took part in the Tunduff ambush, Abbeylaois. In the fighting two of the Free State forces were killed. Later the same day at Coole, Raheen, hostilities were renewed and in the fighting Comdt. Jack Collison and Comdt. McCurtain of the Free State Army were

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ABSTRACTION OF PART(S) PURSUANT TO REGULATION 8

**Form to be completed and inserted in the original record
in place of each part abstracted**

- (i) Reference number of the separate cover under which the abstracted part has been filed: WS 1427/A
- (ii) How many documents have been abstracted: 2 pp
- (iii) The date of each such document: 30/5/56
- (iv) The description of each document:
WS 1427 Witness Statement Lawrence Brady p34 & 35
name of individual

(Where appropriate, a composite description may be entered in respect of two or more related documents).

- (v) Reason(s) why the part has been abstracted for retention:
(c) **Would or might cause distress or danger to living persons on the ground that they contain information about individuals, or would or might be likely to lead to an action for damages for defamation.**

(These will be the reasons given on the certificate under Section 8(4).)

Name: (J. Moloney.)

Grade: Col.

Department/Office/Court:

Date: 7 March 2003.

killed. A few of the I.R.A. unit were wounded and a number of them captured also, but I managed to make my escape.

After the arrest of my brother, Thomas Brady, the Brigade O/C, on September 25th 1922, I was appointed to this command. In November, 1922, I mobilised, under arms, the Laois Active Service Unit to co-operate with I.R.A. units from Offaly for an attack on Clonaslee Free State Barracks. After a number of concentrations and postponements it was eventually decided to launch the attack, but information of our intentions must have reached the person in charge of the barracks because when our troops were moving into position for operations we were ambushed and scattered right and left. One of the Offaly Volunteers received a bullet wound in the calf of the leg and with other I.R.A. men I assisted him to a cottage nearby. Early in December, 1922, I planned an attack on the Free State Military Barracks at Port Laoise, but due to my orders re road blocking and wire-cutting being prematurely carried out my plans for the attack were upset and I was obliged to call off the attempt.

In December, 1922, I received the plans of the Port Laoise Prison prepared by a prisoner within, Michael Sheehy. With these plans in my possession and with the assistance of a number of Laois men who had succeeded in making their escape out of Kilkenny Jail, I arranged to meet lads who escaped from Kilkenny with a view to proceeding with the tunnelling operations into Port Laoise Jail. I prepared plans for tunnelling into the prison to release the prisoners held there. For this project I appointed of Shanahoe Company, 3rd Battalion, to take charge. was in charge of the tunnelling operations in Kilkenny Jail, but "the best laid plans of men and mice

aft gang awry". betrayed the plans to the enemy forces, joined the Free State Army and did his damndest to secure the capture of his former comrades.

In the first week of January, 1923, I was billeted at the house of Patrick Kearney, Skerries, Rosenallis, with a number of comrades when we were surrounded by a party of Free State troops. In fighting for our escape, one of the Free State soldiers named Acton was killed.

On January 10th 1923, Volunteer Joseph Gorman of Clonaheen, Rosenallis, and I were surrounded by a large force of Free State troops at the house of Thomas Kearney, Ballyhyland, Port Laoise. Gorman and I, while fighting our way to freedom, were both wounded; Gorman got a wound in the hip and I received a bullet wound through the right foot. As a result of this injury, I was laid up for a period of six or eight weeks. Dr. Maher of Abbeylaois attended me.

On the 17th March, 1923, I resumed my duties as Brigade O/C and continued actively to fill this position until the "Cease Fire Order" was given, when the Laois Brigade was as well organised and as fully equipped as when the fighting began on the 1st July, 1922.

I was obliged to remain "on the run" until December, 1924. The foregoing is a brief summary of my military activities during the period covered by this statement.

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Witness: _____

(Investigator)

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