

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRS MILITARIA 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1512

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1512.

**Witness**

James Ramsbottom,  
O'Moore St.,  
Mountmellick,  
Laois.

**Identity.**

Adjt., 4th Battn., Laois Bde.  
Brigade I/O, Laois Brigade.

**Subject.**

I.Vol, I.R.B. and I.R.A. activities  
Laois, 1914-Truce.

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

Nil.

File No .. S.2848. ....

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ORIGINAL

IRISH HISTORY 1913-21  
BUREAU STAIRS 1913-21  
P.O. W.S. 1512

STATEMENT BY MR. JAMES RAMSBOTTOM

O'Moore Street, Mountmellick, Laois

formerly of

Fossey, Timahoe, Laois.

My first association with the national movement was in or about 1908 when my eldest brother, who at that time was Catholic Curate in Ballyfin Parish, gave me a supply of anti-recruiting leaflets for posting up in my area. They were about postcard size and were printed with green ink. I cannot remember the exact text, but the gist of it was: "Any Irishman who joins the English army, navy, or the R.I.C. joins the enemies of his country". These leaflets were posted up all over the country on the same night.

Early in 1914, a company of the Irish Volunteers was formed in Timahoe. Rev. Father P. O'Hara, <sup>LATER</sup> ~~not~~ C.C. Baltinglass was President. Denis Dunne and William Bolton were officers. I was secretary. There were over 40 men in the company and we were drilled by an ex-British soldier named Murphy.

About October 1914, a split took place in the Volunteer movement, following appeals which were made to them by John Redmond to join the British army. A meeting of the company was held to decide which side we would take. The company, with the exception of myself and two others, voted confidence in John Redmond. I ceased to be a member of the company as it became affiliated with the Irish National Volunteers, or the Redmondite Volunteers, as they were called.

I then joined the Portlaoighise company of the Irish Volunteers which had remained loyal to the founders of the Volunteer movement under the leadership of Eoin MacNeill. Paddy Ramsbottom was company O/C. and there were about 30 men

in the company. On many occasions I conveyed gelignite from Wolfhill to Brady's of Lalor's Mills, and to Ramsbottom's, Portlaoighise, for transfer to G.H.Q. Dublin.

The following is a copy of an account compiled by a committee of the Volunteers concerning the activities of the Portlaoighise Company from its formation in October 1914, until it disbanded after Easter Week 1916:

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

In Portlaoighise, due to Local Parliamentary Party influences, 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 Street, Portlaoighise, to represent the Company at the Irish Volunteer convention held at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on Sunday, 20th 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 Centre of the I.R.B. was formed, and I was sworn in as a member.

Instruction in drill, bayonet exercises, etc., was given by Denis Dunne. We attended a review of Irish Volunteers by Sean MacDiarmuid at The Swan, Wolfhill, in the Summer of 1915.

In September we organised an aeridheacht at Portlaoighise to raise funds to buy arms. This aeridheacht 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 Sean Tobin (attached to Headquarters of the Irish Volunteers 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 Piaras 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 G.H.Q. 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, Portlaoighise and definitely informed us that the Rising would take place, that he would visit us again to give us the date and the hour and detail our duties, and 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 advance of troops from Britain entering via Rosslare or Waterford, on Dublin, and, after carrying out these duties, we were to link up with forces expected to be at Scollop Gap, near Borris, Co. 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, viz: crosscuts, axes, wire-cutters, wrenches, crowbars, hatchets, spanners, cold sets, &c.

Arms already in the 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, Portlaoighise. Arms and equipment referred to above were transferred by Volunteers Laurence Brady and Thomas F. Brady to their farm at Lalor's Mills, and on Easter Saturday night and Easter Sunday afternoon they shifted a large portion of the equipment to a place of concealment at Colt Wood, the site selected for demolition work on the Waterford-Portlaoighise railway line. The remainder of the equipment was conveyed to the site on Easter Sunday evening by Volunteers Patrick Muldowney, John Muldowney and Colum Holohan.

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 operations at Colt

Wood were as follows:

Patrick J. Ramsbottom,	Portlaoighise
Laurence Brady,	Lalor's Mills, Portlaoighise.
Thomas F. Brady,	do.
Patrick Muldowney,	Portlaoighise
John Muldowney	do.
Colum Holohan	do.
Mr. J. Sheridan	do.

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

The Colt Wood party started the work of demolition punctually at 7 p.m. on Easter Sunday evening and carried it out successfully. (Documentary evidence of the damage done to the railway line is attached hereto, viz: A report from the "Nationalist and Leinster Times" newspaper of proceedings at Quarter Sessions in connection with the Railway Company's claim for compensation for damage done to the line and rolling stock; the Court record of the claim and the report of the County Inspector of Royal Irish Constabulary on the matter to the Judge and Grand Jury 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 nor give any information in the event of subsequent inquiries being made. Heavy rain set in while the operations were in progress and as it continued the party, having 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 consequent on the failure of the "block" system between Portlaoighise and Abbeyleix railway stations to work owing to the cutting of the telegraph wires. This man was ordered to halt and, as he failed to do so, he was fired on. The shot was fired by Volunteer Patrick J. Ramsbottom and we claim that

this was the first shot actually fired under orders in the Easter Week operations. The lamp which the man carried was extinguished and he escaped in the darkness.

After some hours, the party, every member drenched to the skin, retired to Lalor's Mills where, later in the morning, Eamon Fleming and Volunteers Walsh and Gray arrived, accompanied by a Dublin boy named Sean McGuire, who had been working at Wolfhill Collieries for some time previously, having taken refuge there while on the run.

On Easter Monday morning we sent a special messenger to Portlaoighise 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 Laoighis. 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 Portlaoighise 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 at 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 Brady and Thomas Brady engaged at their 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 Wednesday, 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, but they were unable to get in touch with anyone who could supply information as to future activities. We made a further effort to obtain information by dispatching James Ramsbottom of Fossey, Timahoe, Co. Kilkenny, to interview Mr. Patrick Corcoran. 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 to 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 had hopes of a success in arms. For those reasons we remained together in the expectation of the fighting becoming general 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 Mr. McEvoy 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 Rev. Father Augustine, 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., Portlaoighise (who died recently, P.P. of Edenderry), came out to Lalor's Mills, met Laurence Brady and asked him where he had "those fellows" round the place. Seeing that Father 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. Father 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 Portlaoighise, he (Father Kearney) undertaking to use his influence to have us treated leniently. We refused to accept those terms. At a meeting subsequent to Father Kearney's interview, it was definitely decided that we should go on the run, each one to do the best he could.

Throughout the period of our location at Lalor's Mills the four sisters of Volunteers Laurence and Thomas Brady gave us invaluable assistance, carrying messages, keeping watch for enemy activities, as well as cooking our food, often at late hours of the night when circumstances compelled us to remain abroad. They entered fully into the spirit of the occasion and were undeterred by the possibility of an attack being made on their home in the event of our presence there

having been detected. One of them - the eldest, Miss May Brady, who was married later - has since died; three survive, viz: Mrs. Daniel Conroy (then Miss Brigid Brady), Round Hill, Clarahill, Clonaslee, Leix; Miss Kathleen Brady, now in Paris, and Miss Nora Brady, still residing at Lalor's Mills, Portlaoighise.

Copy of Report in "Nationalist & Leinster Times" 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 evening, 1916.

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" ECHO OF EASTER WEEK  
DERAILING OF ENGINE AND CARRIAGE

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

The G.S.W.R. Company applied for £328.9.6. 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.X. 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 £328.9.6. 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 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.

Dr. De Renzy said Mr. White 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 disturbance. 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  $3\frac{3}{4}$ -mile post, near the centre of Colt Wood, he saw a telegraph post cut with a 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 shot 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 Conaberry about 12.45. He told the Station Master, who sent the signaller for the police. The engine and bogey was made up and left Maryboro' about 2.30 or 2.34 with five railwaymen, 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 he 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 Abbeylax 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 was pulling the carriage. Witness 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 that 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 the Act was the 23rd of 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 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 the 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 way. As a matter of fact, prisoners were brought before a Courtmartial 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 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."



Extract from Malicious Injury Book of the Clerk of the Crown and Peace for Queen's County:-  
 Applications for Compensation for Criminal Injuries under Section 5 of the Local Government  
 (Ireland) Act, 1898, at the Sitting of the Queen's County Court held at Maryborough, in  
 the Division of Maryborough, on the 23rd day of October, 1916.

Adjourned from last Sittings

Name and address of Applicant	Particulars of application	Witnesses' Names	Ruling of Judge
<p>Great Southern and Western Railway Company</p> <p>Mr. White for applicants</p> <p>Mr. De Renzy, K.C. with Mr. Fitzsimon for Abbyleix R.D.C.</p>	<p>Application for £3,000 compensation for alleged malicious injury to and destruction of 60 yds permanent way, 13 30-ft. rails, 60 sleepers, 208 bolts, one locomotive engine and one bogey brake carriage early in the morning of the 24th April 1916, on the lands of Clonadadoran in the parish of Clonehagh and County District of Cullenagh.</p> <p>Claim reduced at the hearing to £328.9.6. by the Railway Company</p>	<p>Wm. Dalton,          John Leahy          Alexander          Dobbyn, D.I.</p> <p>Called by          Court:</p> <p>Head Const.          Bane, R.I.C.</p>	<p>Application refused as it arose in the course of recent disturbances in Ireland, without costs as at the time claim was made the Railway Company had good grounds for proceedings which were by legislation rendered unnecessary.</p>

EXTRACT FROM REPORT AND SUMMARY OF OFFENCES MADE  
BY THE COUNTY INSPECTOR OF ROYAL IRISH CONSTABULARY  
AT SUMMER ASSIZES FOR QUEEN'S COUNTY - JULY 1916

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Nature of Offence: Destruction of Railways

Name of Person injured: G.S.W. Railway Co.

Date of Offence: 24.4.16.

Place where Committed (town or townland): Clonadadoran.

If Informations have been lodged, when? If not why not? 6-----

Names of persons arrested or summoned, or for whose arrest  
warrant was issued? -----

Where rendered amenable to justice, result in each case:-----

Names of persons returned for trial to Assizes or Quarter  
Sessions: -----

Observations (Give precis of the case, the steps taken by the  
police; the result thereof; also results of proceedings:

"At 1½ a.m. on the 24.4.16 a Railway employe reported to the police that telegraph wires were cut and two sections of the line removed at the place stated. He was proceeding at the time to take over the staff from one of the employes at Abbeyleix in order to enable an excursion train to leave from Maryborough to Kilkenny. On examining the line this Railway employe was fired on by some persons who were concealed in the immediate vicinity. The outrage appears to be systematically committed by a party of men. The police made careful inquiries but so far have not traced the perpetrators. A claim for £3,000 will be made at the next Quarter Sessions. The hearing has been adjourned from June Quarter Sessions".

When Eamon Fleming and Michael Walsh returned to Brady's, Lalor's Mills, from Borris where they were unable to get any information as to what we should do, it was decided that I should go to Kilkenny and get in touch with Pat Corcoran, who was a leading I.R.B. man, and find out what instructions they had received. I cycled to Kilkenny, a distance of nearly 30 miles, left my bike at the outskirts and walked into the town. Being a stranger, I adopted a miner's walk so as not to arouse any suspicion. The miners in Castlecomer and Wolfhill, when walking, swing their arms across the body and not front to rear like the average person. When I arrived in the town I discovered that Pat Corcoran had been arrested and, therefore, was unable to get any information.

Early in 1917, I organised a company of Irish Volunteers in Timahoe. We had about 20 members and I was elected company O/C. I organised a Sinn Fein Club in Timahoe and was appointed secretary.

I also organised Sinn Fein Clubs in the Lurracurran and Stradbally areas. On the date of the formation of the Stradbally Club I enrolled the late Kevin C. O'Higgins as a Volunteer. It was on this occasion he made his first speech in the Sinn Fein cause.

During the conscription period a large number of young men came into the Volunteers. The Timahoe company increased until we had about 60 members, but when the danger of conscription passed, they gradually dwindled away until we had about 30 left. The training consisted mainly of drilling and field exercises. I had a .22 rifle and we carried out a considerable amount of target practice with it.

About May 1918, the 4th Battalion, Laois Brigade, was organised and the following staff was appointed:-

Terry Byrne	Battalion O/C.
William Kelly	Vice/ do..
James Ramsbottom (myself)	Battalion adjutant
Michael Conway	Battalion Q.M.

The companies forming the battalion were:-

A/Company	Knocklaide
B/ "	Timahoe
C/ "	Luggacurren
D/ "	Kilcruise

A good while later on, another company was formed at Wolfhill and it was known as E/Company. The brigade staff at this period was:-

Patrick Ramsbottom	O/C.
Thomas Brady, Lalor's Mills	Vice O/C.
Edward McEvoy, Abbeylaois	Adjutant
Michael Gray	Q.M.

I took an active part in organising, training and equipping the battalion.

During the 1918 General Election I worked under the direct instructions of the late Kevin C. O'Higgins, who was the Sinn Fein candidate for the constituency.

During 1919 and the first few months of 1920, in addition to my duties as battalion adjutant, I was responsible for the collection of the Dáil Loan in the Luggacurren and Timahoe areas. I still have in my possession a personal letter from the late Kevin O'Higgins in connection with this. On the 30th March 1920, I handed £316 to the Rev. Fr. Fenelon, now P.P., Mountrath.

I was made responsible for the personal safety of Kevin O'Higgins while in the area. In this connection I supplied armed guards for him all night when he slept in the area, and armed escorts for him when he moved through the area.

About Easter 1920, I was appointed by the Laois Brigade to take charge of the destruction of R.I.C. Barracks in the

4th Battalion area. Subsequently, we destroyed Luggacurren and Timahoe Barracks after they had been evacuated by the R.I.C.

In May 1920, I was elected county secretary of the I.R.B. and, with other officers, I organised Centres throughout the brigade area.

In June 1920, the brigade O/C., Patrick Ramsbottom, resigned. At a meeting of the Brigade Council, which was composed of the brigade staff and two representatives from each of the battalions, Michael Gray was elected brigade O/C. Sometime in November the same year Gray was arrested and Thomas Brady, brigade vice O/C. became acting brigade O/C.

About 20th February 1921, I organised an ambush position on Stradbally-Timahoe road. We had information that the enemy would travel that road. I was in charge of the party and, although we remained in position for several hours, the enemy did not come.

During March 1921, I was appointed brigade intelligence officer.

In March 1921, Captain Edward Deegan, O/C. Abbeylaois Company, reported to the brigade staff that he had the movements of the R.I.C. in Abbeylaois Barracks under observation for some time and discovered that an armed patrol of about 10 to 12 R.I.C. men and Black and Tans left the barracks at a fixed time each night to patrol the town. They left the barracks and returned to it by the main avenue, and marched in pairs with several yards interval between each pair. The brigade staff considered Captain Deegan's report and decided to attack the patrol on the avenue on their return to the barracks after patrolling the town.

Abbeylaais was Divisional Headquarters of the R.I.C. The garrison numbered between 40 and 50 including Black and Tans. The barrack was a solidly constructed detached building and was strongly fortified with sandbags, steel shuttered windows, barbed wire entanglements etc. It stood about 150 yards from the street with a frontage of about 80 yards. Between the barrack and the street was a field or lawn on the right side of which (as one looks from the street towards the barrack) was the avenue leading to the barrack. On the right of the avenue was an earthen fence and behind it a ridge with trees at irregular intervals, It was decided to attack the patrol from the earthen fence and ridge. On the left side of the lawn, as one looks from the street, was a narrow path leading to the barrack. Entrance to this path from the street was by a wicket gate.

It was decided to carry out the attack on 29th March (1921). As it was a brigade operation, rifles were collected from the brigade area, and some officers of the brigade staff, - the 1st, 3rd and 4th Battalion staffs, some company officers and a few Volunteers were detailed to take part in the actual attack. In addition, outposts were instructed to occupy positions on roads leading to Abbeylaais.

Those from the 1st and 4th Battalions were instructed to be at a spot on Bland's farm, Bland's Fort, Ballyroan, where they would meet the brigade staff. Those from the 3rd Battalion were to approach the attack position from a different direction.

When we assembled at Bland's Farm we were told that the patrol had left the barrack. We moved off and approached the attack position through the grounds of Glenbawn House and the Fever Hospital and took up the position allotted to us.

With three others I took up position on the earthen fence about halfway between the entrance gate and the barrack; the remainder of the party positioned themselves behind trees on the ridge. As my party was in the forward position I was instructed that we were to act as rearguard and cover the retreat of the main body.

We were in position some time and watching the main gate for the patrol to return, when some of our men opened fire. We then realised that the patrol had returned by the wicket gate and path on the opposite side of the lawn and had almost reached the barrack before they were seen by some of our men who opened fire. We all joined in, but the patrol reached the barrack. We then opened fire on the barrack; the garrison soon replied with rifles and machine guns and sent up Verey lights. After some time the main party withdrew and we continued firing until they had gone out of range of the enemy although the enemy kept up continuous and heavy fire we withdrew without suffering any casualties.

The following were among those who took part in the attack:-

Thomas Brady	Acting Bde. O/C. in charge
Frank Gowing	Brigade Q.M.
Laurence Brady	" Organiser
James Ramsbottom (myself)	" I.O.
Thomas O'Neill	O/C. 1st Battalion
Paddy Fingleton	Vice O/C. 1st Battn.
Tom Finlay	O/C. 3rd Battalion
Larry Cummins	V/O/C. do.
John Dunphy	Adjt. do.
Terry Byrne	O/C. 4th Battalion
Denis Dunne	V.O/C. do.
Denis Drennan	Captain, Ratheniska Coy.
Paddy Rowe	" Timahoe "
Edward Fitzpatrick	" Clough "
Vol. Peter Mahon	Ratheniska Coy.
" William Dunne	do.
" Patrick Quinn	Ballyroan "
" Patrick Burke	Knocklaide "

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

The brigade staff planned to attack an enemy convoy at

Ballypickas Cross on the Modubeagh-Abbeylaais road. Arrangements for the ambush were completed and about 20 men as well as the brigade staff assembled at the ambush position, but the road mines which we were to use and which were considered to be absolutely necessary for the success of the operation were not brought to the position. The Brigade staff had no alternative but to postpone the attack.

About May 1921, I was instructed by the brigade O/C. to visit North Kilkenny and make investigations concerning a man who was suspected of giving information to the enemy. I was also to arrange for better co-operation between the North Kilkenny A.S.U. and our brigade.

In June 1921, the 3rd Southern Division was formed. It comprised the North Tipperary Brigade, Offaly No. 1 and No. 2 Brigades and the Laois Brigade. The Divisional O/C. was Michael McCormack. I was called to Divisional Headquarters and instructed not to carry out any armed attacks on the enemy until further notice.

On July 10th 1921, I was ordered to find the O/C. North Kilkenny A.S.U. and deliver to him the official notification of the Truce.

Signed: *James P. Ryan*  
Date: *Oct. 9<sup>th</sup> 1956*

Witness: *Deán Brennan Lieut.-col.*

