

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BUIO STAIRI MILITARI 1913-21  
No. W.S. 343

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.  
STATEMENT BY WITNESS  
DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 343.....

**Witness**  
Mr. James Barrett,  
Athenry,  
Co. Galway.

**Identity**  
Member of I.R.B. Athenry 1913. - ;  
Staff Officer, Athenry Battalion 1920-1921.

- Subject**
- (a) National activities 1913-1916;
  - (b) Mobilisation and plans to form line of communication between Athlone and Athenry, Easter Week 1916.

**Conditions, if any, stipulated by Witness**

Nil

File No. ... S. 1321.....

**ORIGINAL**STATEMENT BY JAMES BARRETT.Athenry, Co. Galway.

I joined the Athenry Branch of the Irish Republican Brotherhood about 1913. I was sworn in by the late Dick Murphy who was Centre at that time. Meetings were held regularly every month. The principal matters discussed at the meetings were the suitability of persons proposed for membership and the spreading of the organisation. I joined the Athenry Company of the Volunteers at the inaugural meeting which was held very early in 1914. Larry Lardiner was elected Captain. Training parades were held twice weekly. At first we were trained by reserve N.C.Os. of the British Army; at the outbreak of the first World War they were called up and from that on we were trained by our own officers. The training included drill, musketry, pike drill, scouting, first aid.

At the split in the Volunteers caused by John Redmond's speech at Woodenbridge, a special meeting of the Company was held to decide which side the Volunteers would take. The position was explained by Captain L. Lardiner who said that anyone who did not stand behind McNeill was free to leave; no one left.

Early in 1915, Liam Mellows was appointed Chief Organiser for the County Galway. Immediately after his arrival the Volunteers were put on a stricter military basis and re-organised as a Brigade. Larry Lardiner

was appointed Brigade Commandant. Following Lardiner's promotion, Frank Hynes was elected Captain of the Athenry Company. Training was also intensified. Mellows gave a series of lectures on tactics. We also had field exercises and at week-ends inter-Company manoeuvres. He also concentrated on bayonet training; we also had a good deal of rifle practice; we fired both .22 and service rifles in the woods near Athenry.

Shortly before the Rising we were told that the R.I.C. might attempt to disarm the Volunteers, and if so, we were to resist by force of arms if necessary. At a Company parade held during Holy Week, orders were issued for the Company to parade at either 3 or 4 o'clock on Easter Sunday evening, and to bring all arms, equipment and rations. We were also advised to receive the Sacraments which the vast majority of the Company did.

Shortly after Mass on Easter Sunday, McNeill's countermanding order was received in Athenry, and as a result the mobilisation for that afternoon was cancelled, but we were told to hold ourselves ready for a further mobilisation. At 12 noon on Easter Monday I met Commandant Larry Lardiner. He told me that the Volunteers were out in Dublin. He gave me a dispatch to deliver to Liam Mellows who was at Killeeneen. I think the dispatch was that the Rising had started in Dublin. I went to Fleming's House in Clarinbridge and gave the dispatch to one of the Flemings who was also a Volunteer, to deliver to Mellows. I waited at Fleming's house until he came back and he gave me a dispatch from Mellows for Larry Lardiner. Mellows dispatch to Lardiner was to

mobilise all Companies immediately and to form a line of communication between Athlone and Galway. I delivered the dispatch to Lardiner who told me that he wanted me to go to Ballinasloe with dispatches for Fr. Connolly, the College, Ballinasloe, and Professor Gaffney, Ballinasloe, and to bring two men with me. I brought John Walsh and John Cleary.

It was then late on Monday night; we cycled to Ballinasloe and arrived there early on Tuesday morning. I delivered the dispatches to both Fr. Connolly and Professor Gaffney. The dispatches were instructions to form a line of communication between Athlone and Galway. Fr. Connolly said he would endeavour to get in touch with the Athlone Volunteers, but he understood they had left Athlone and had gone in the direction of Shannonbridge. I returned to Athenry arriving there at about 1 a.m. on Wednesday and went to the Agricultural Farm and reported to Commandant Larry Lardiner. While at the Farm a reconnaissance party of R.I.C. approached the Farm. We opened fire on them; they replied to our fire and retreated.

On Wednesday evening we marched in military formation by road to Moyode Castle, arriving there about 7 or 8 o'clock on Thursday morning. While at Moyode Castle I went out with a couple of foraging parties. On one occasion I was sent out to get some cattle for slaughtering. I brought back twenty-one of the finest bullocks to be got anywhere. They were the property of the Dalys of Dunsandle; however, none of them was slaughtered. I went on another occasion to Mr. Ward, Publican & Grocer, of Kiltullagh, for tea, sugar and

tobacco. I gave him a receipt for the goods which we took. I told him if we won we would pay for them, but if we lost he would lose very little. When commandeering provisions, etc., we went only to wealthy shopkeepers and big farmers.

Late on Friday night we left Moyode Castle and went to Lime Park. On the march there I was acting as rearguard scout. I was overtaken by Rev. T. Fahy. He advised me to go home, and said that there were 1,200 marines ready in Galway to come out and attack us. I told him I would not go home without an order from my superior officer.

On arrival at Lime Park I went to the kitchen with Charlie White to prepare some food. Some hours later John Walsh came and told us that the Volunteers had been disbanded and had already left Lime Park. I told the six or seven R.I.C. prisoners who were in a room off the kitchen that they could have the food that was prepared.

At the entrance gate to Lime Park I overtook Liam Mellows, Alf Monahan and Frank Hynes. I offered to go with them but Mellows would not agree. He told me to knock round for a while and everything would blow over, but it would be different with them. I noticed that Mellows was still in uniform but had no great coat. I offered to give him mine; at first he declined the offer but eventually after assuring him that I could get another one he reluctantly agreed to take it. Some years later when I met him he recalled this incident.

I went "on the run" and about three weeks later I was captured and brought to Galway Jail. After a few

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days I was transferred to Richmond Barracks, Dublin.  
From there I was sent to Kautsford Jail. After a  
short time there I was sent to Frongoch. I was  
released about August 1916.

SIGNED Seamus Barrett

DATE 24-1-1950

WITNESS Sean Brennan. Comdt.

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