

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BUIO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21
No. W.S. 1,046

ROINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,046.....

Witness

Patrick J. Ramsbottom
129 Blackhorse Ave.,
North Circular Road,
Dublin.

Identity.

Captain Portlaoise Coy. Irish Vol's. 1914 - ;
O/C. Laois Battalion, 1918-19;
O/C. Laois Brigade, 1919-20.

Subject.

National organisations and activities,
Portlaoise, ~~1906~~ 1906 to 1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.2371.....

Form B.S.M. 2

N.S. 1,046

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,046

STATEMENT BY MR. PATRICK J. RAMSBOTTOM,
129, Blackhorse Avenue, N.C.Rd., Dublin.

I became a member of the Sinn Féin movement on the 6th May, 1906. In September of the same year I joined the Gaelic League in Portlaoise. I took an active part in the work of Sinn Féin and the Gaelic League and assisted in the organising of Feiseanna and Aeridheachta in the County of Laois. I left home and went to Athlone in August 1910, and I became associated with the Gaelic League there. About October or November I was sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood by Seamus O'Brien, Athlone.

I met Liam Mellows when he came to Athlone on his first visit to organise na Fianna Éireann. With him I organised the first branch of the Fianna in Athlone. Mellows's visit to Athlone coincided with a recruiting campaign for the British Army. With Mellows and a few others who were known locally as 'Irish Irelanders' and armed with hurleys we attacked two bands - a pipe and a brass band - of the 5th Leinster Regiment which were parading the town in connection with the recruiting campaign. The bands broke up and fled to the Military Barracks.

After clearing the bands off the street we held an anti-recruiting meeting outside the barrack. Owen Sweeney (since deceased) presided at the meeting, and Liam Mellows was the principal speaker. Later, questions were asked in the British House of Commons about this incident. We received messages of congratulation from many parts of Ireland on our action. On many occasions while I was in Athlone I took part in the distribution of anti-recruiting leaflets.

I left Athlone in 1914 at about the time the first World War broke out, and I came to live in Dunlaoghaire. I joined "B" Company, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, Irish Volunteers. At that time Eamon Daly was Captain of the Company. He was executed on 4th May, 1916, for his part in the Rising. I purchased a Martini-Henry rifle which was the first one I had. I got it from Tom Clarke whom I met many times while I was in Dublin. About October, 1914 I decided to return home to Portlaoise. There was no Circle of the I.R.B. in Laois then, and only about a dozen Irish Volunteers in the whole county. The vast majority of the people were followers of Redmond.

When Tom Clarke heard that I was returning to Portlaoise, he sent for me and asked me to organise the I.R.B. in Laois County. He gave me authority to enrol and swear in new members. He impressed on me to be very careful who I should enrol, and the importance of taking only men who had a proper national outlook.

I called a meeting to be held in Portlaoise on the 17th October, 1914, and succeeded in establishing a Company of the Irish Volunteers. I was elected Company Captain, and Mr. Joseph Fitzpatrick, Main Street, Portlaoise, was appointed a delegate to represent the Company at the Volunteer Convention held at the Abbey Theatre, Dublin, on Sunday 20th October, 1914. We had only about a dozen members. There was a strong pro-British element in Portlaoise at that time, and due to local Parliamentary Party influence it was very difficult to get recruits for the Volunteers under the leadership of MacNeill.

Soon after starting the Volunteers I formed a Circle of the I.R.B. Among those whom I enrolled and swore in

were the following who were also Volunteers:

Laurence Brady, Lalors Mills, Portlaoise.
 Thomas: " (since decd.) Lalors Mills, Portlaoise.
 Patrick Muldowney, Portlaoise.
 John " "
 Colm Houlihan "
 Michael J. Sheridan (since decd.), Portlaoise.
 Michael Walsh, Portlaoise
 Michael Gray, ".

I was Centre of the Circle. It is interesting to note that all the above were out with me in the Rising.

The Company held a parade one night weekly. Denis Dunne acted as instructor. The training included drilling, bayonet exercises and instruction in the use of arms. In the spring of 1915 rifle practice was carried out regularly Sunday after Sunday at Collier's Sandpit, Ballytegan.

On several occasions between 1914 and the Rising we procured gelignite and fuse from the Wolfhill coal mines, which we brought to Dublin and handed in at Volunteer Headquarters. During this period also we organised functions of various kinds for the purpose of raising funds for the purchase of arms.

In the summer of 1915 the Company attended a review of the Irish Volunteers by Liam Mellows and Seán MacDiarmuid at The Swan.

In September 1915 we organised an Aeridheacht at Portlaoise to raise funds to buy arms. This Aeridheacht was attended by Captain Tom McCarthy and Donal Hannigan. The Company was next visited by Liam Mellows in his capacity as General Organiser of the Irish Volunteers. He gave us a lecture on Army demolition work. The Company marched in the funeral procession of O'Donovan Rossa in Dublin. On that occasion we brought gelignite and other explosives which

we handed over to Donal Hannigan and Seán Tobin, both of whom were attached to the Executive of the Irish Volunteers.

In the autumn of 1915, with other members of the Company, I attended a lecture on the demolition of railways at Volunteer Headquarters, 2 Dawson Street, Dublin. I do not remember who gave the lecture.

In January 1916 the Company was visited by Piarais Beaslai and Lieutenant Eamon O'Kelly. At a meeting of the Company held in the Town Hall, Portlaoise, they delivered addresses impressing on the Volunteers the urgency of organising and of more intensive 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. and the possibility of its being extended in the county.

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

On Sunday, 16th April 1916, Eamon Fleming came down from headquarters and met our Company in St. Patrick's Hall, Portlaoise, and informed the Company that a Rising would definitely take place, and that he would visit us again and give us the date and the hour, and detail our duties. He impressed on us that notwithstanding any countermanding orders that might come from the Volunteer Executive those duties were to be carried out. After the meeting Fleming told me confidentially that it had been decided to Rise at 7 p.m. on Easter Sunday. He instructed me to call a meeting of the Company for St. Patrick's Hall on Holy Thursday night and that he would attend and tell the Company of the decision to Rise.

At this time the arms in the Company were one Martini-Henry rifle and 100 rounds of ammunition, my property; one Howth Mauser and 100 rounds of ammunition, the property of Tom Brady. There were five .25 automatic pistols and 25 rounds for each of these. In addition, we had about a stone of blasting powder and some fuses and detonators. Towards the end of Holy Week Eamon Fleming and I purchased about a dozen single-barrel shotguns from Mr. James Maloney, then Manager at Messrs. J.J. Aird & Sons, Hardware Establishment, Portlaoise.

On Holy Thursday night, 20th April 1916, Eamon Fleming returned as promised and met the Company in St. Patrick's Hall. He informed the Company that the Rising was to start at 7 p.m. on Easter Sunday, 23rd April 1916. He told us that the duties assigned to our Company were the demolition in our area of the railway lines from Waterford to Dublin with the object of holding up and delaying the advance of enemy troops that might be sent to Dublin that way from Britain via Rosslare or Waterford. After carrying out those duties we were to proceed to the Scollop Gap near Borris, County Carlow, where we would link up with other forces and receive further orders.

At this meeting in St. Patrick's Hall on Holy Thursday night all arrangements for the carrying out of the demolition work was carefully planned. It was decided to cut the Waterford-Portlaoise line at Colt Wood which is between Portlaoise and Abbeyleix. There was a curve in the line at this particular place. It was also decided to cut the Kilkenny-Kildare section of the line, but the exact spot was not decided on.

On the following Friday night and Saturday afternoon,

all the necessary tools for the operation were collected - cross-cuts, hatchets, wire-cutters, crowbars, cold sets, wrenches, spanners etc. Colm Houlihan, who was an employee of the Railway Company, procured most of the tools from the Railway Workshops.

All the arms, tools and equipment were transferred by Volunteers Laurence and Thomas Brady to their farm at Lalors Mills. On Easter Saturday night and Easter Sunday afternoon they brought all arms, tools etc. to Colt Wood and concealed them convenient to the site selected for the cutting of the line.

At a meeting of the Company held in St. Patrick's Hall on Easter Saturday night final dispositions were decided upon. It was unanimously agreed that Eamon Fleming should take charge. The following Volunteers were detailed to carry out the operation at Colt Wood:

| | |
|--------------------|---------------------------|
| Laurence Brady, | Lalors Mills, Portlaoise. |
| Thomas F. Brady, | " " " |
| Patrick Muldowney, | Portlaoise. |
| John Muldowney, | " |
| Colm Houlihan, | " |
| Michael Sheridan, | " |

I was to take charge of this party. Volunteers Michael Walsh and Michael Gray were detailed for service with Eamon Fleming on the Kilkenny-Kildare Section of the railway.

My party assembled on Easter Sunday afternoon and proceeded to Colt Wood where, punctually at 7 p.m., we commenced operations. We cut down telegraph poles and the telegraph wires. We removed several lengths of rail, and some sleepers. We carried the rails into the wood and dumped them in a gripe. While the operation was in progress two girls named Sheeran and a man named Cahill

came along. We held them prisoner until the job was completed. They were then escorted to their homes and warned not to stir out again that night, and not to give any information in the event of subsequent inquiries being made.

Heavy rain had set in while the operations were being carried out, and continued afterwards. When the job was finished the party took shelter in Colt Wood close beside the railway. After some time a man came along the line carrying a lamp. We presumed at the time, and it was later confirmed, that he was a railway employee making an inspection of the line in consequence of the failure of the block signal system, between Portlaoise and Abbeyleix, to work owing to the cutting of the telegraph wires. When the man approached to within a reasonable distance I called on him to halt. This he failed to do, so I fired at him. (This was in all probability the first shot fired in the Rising). He extinguished the lamp and escaped in the darkness. After some hours every member of the party, drenched to the skin, returned to Brady's, Lalors Mills.

In the early hours of Monday morning Eamon Fleming and Volunteers Walsh and Gray also returned there. They were accompanied by a Dublin boy named Seán McGuire who for some time before had been working at the Wolfhill Collieries as he had been 'on the run'. For some reason or another the Kilkenny-Kildare section of the railway had not been cut.

The order from McNeill countermanding the Rising arrived late on Easter Sunday evening after we had left for Colt Wood. The cutting of the line at Colt Wood was a complete success as will be seen from the following which

is a copy of a report published in the "Nationalist and Leinster Times" dated 28th October, 1918, of proceedings at Queen's County Quarter Sessions in connection with the demolition of the railway at Colt Wood:

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 mid-day 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 signalman 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 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.

Dr. 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.

On Easter Monday morning we sent a special messenger (Miss May Brady, a sister of Tom and Ear Brady) 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 in 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 (Miss Kathleen Brady, another sister of Tom and Lar Brady) 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 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, Eamonn 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 any information as to future activities.

We made a further effort to obtain information despatching James Ramsbottom, of Fossey, Timahoe, to interview Mr. Patrick Corcoran, Kilkenny. On his arrival in Kilkenny James Ramsbottom learned that Mr. Corcoran, who had been arrested had died suddenly, 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 had hopes of a success in arms. For those reasons we remained together in the expectation of the fighting becoming general throughout the country, and that an opportunity would be given us later of linking up with some other body to continue the struggle.

On Monday, 1st May, 1916, Eamonn 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.

At both meetings held during Holy Week - Holy Thursday night and Easter Saturday night - Eamon Fleming stressed the fact that Pearse had given instructions that we

were not to interfere with the Royal Irish Constabulary unless they interfered with us. Because of those instructions we did not take action on R.I.C. patrols, although we had many opportunities for doing so. As an instance of this, on one occasion we observed a Constable on patrol. He was walking with his bicycle near the house which we occupied. Our party were alerted and covered him with their rifles until he left the vicinity.

Not having received orders to surrender we continued to hold together under arms. Eamon Fleming went again to Dublin to try to find out what the exact position was. I accompanied him on this occasion. Eamon met a man whom I believed to be Peadar Kearney who told Eamon that everything was finished. We then saw Rev. Father Augustine, O.F.M. Cap., who told us that the Rising had been definitely crushed. We then went to Father Costello who was a curate in SS. Michael and John's Church, Lower Exchange Street. As there was considerable military activity at the time Father Costello insisted on us staying with him in the presbytery that night. We left next morning and went back to Laois. We reported the position to the Company.

Whilst we were considering the best steps to take for our personal safety, Rev. J.J. Kearney, C.C., Portlaoighise (afterwards P.P. of Edenderry), came out to Lalor's Mills, met Laurence Brady and asked him where he had "those fellows" around 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.

We dumped our guns in Brady's farm. While 'on the run' I kept in touch with the other men, some of whom had gone to Dublin, and others to different parts of the country. I remained 'on the run' for about eleven months during which time I collected some gelignite and detonators.

Sometime early in 1917 I came off 'the run' and reorganised the Portlaoise Company. I represented the Portlaoise Company at the Convention held in Croke Park in 1917. I organised Companies of Volunteers throughout the country and gave lectures on military matters to the best of my ability. When we had a number of Companies organised, Michael Collins, Adjutant General, instructed me to form these Companies into a Battalion. This I did and I was elected Battalion Commandant. The other officers, as far as I can remember, were Tom Brady, Vice Commandant, and Mick Gray, Quartermaster. Michael Walsh succeeded me as Captain of the Portlaoise Company.

During the Conscription scare in 1918 I continued organising new Companies and supervising training etc. I was also engaged on Sinn Féin work. During the General Election of 1918 the Volunteers took an active part working on behalf of the Sinn Féin candidates. When I had about 25 Companies organised in my Battalion I was instructed to form them into a Brigade of five Battalions.

I was elected Brigade Commandant. It was known as the Laois Brigade.

During the Dáil Éireann Loan campaign I was notified by G.H.Q. that the late Mr. Kevin O'Higgins, T.D., would visit the country in connection with the Loan campaign. I was instructed to provide an escort for him, as he was "on the run" at the time, and to assist him in every possible way.

I helped to arrange private meetings in various parts of the county inviting people whom we knew to be sympathetic to our cause and who were in a position to subscribe to the Loan to attend. I provided an armed escort for Mr. O'Higgins and took charge of it myself. I also arranged for protection for the meetings which, of course, were held in secret. The meetings were addressed by Mr. O'Higgins who appealed for support for the Dáil Loan. The campaign was most successful. Over £13,000 was collected in Laois county which was the largest amount subscribed in any county in Leinster except Dublin. I brought a good deal of this money on a bicycle to Dublin, and handed it over to Michael Collins who was Minister for Finance at the time.

On the 1st August, 1920, instructions were issued by G.H.Q. to hold a new election of Brigade officers. Michael Gray was elected to succeed me as Brigade Commandant.

During the 2½ years that I was Brigade and Battalion O/C., I was "on the run". There were numerous raids for me in different parts of the county, but I never left my area except on duty.

I was arrested some time in November 1920.
 I was brought to Harepark Internment Camp, Curragh,
 Co. Kildare, and from there to Arbour Hill Detention
 Barracks, Dublin. I was transferred to Ballykinlar
 Internment Camp, Co. Down.

I was released from Ballykinlar in December 1921.

Signed: Patrick Joseph Ramsbottom
 Date: 13th December 1954

(Patrick J. Ramsbottom)
 13th December 1954.

Witness: Sean Brennan. Lieut.-Col.
 (Sean Brennan)
 Investigator.

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| BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21 |
| BURO STAIRÉ MILÉ '14 1913-21 |
| NO. W.S. 1046 |