

W.S. 1,314  
**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,314

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,314.....

Witness

Patrick Ryan,  
Curtiswood,  
Ballymacarbery,  
Co. Waterford.

Identity.

Lieut. Ballymacarbery Company, 1st Batt'n.  
West Waterford Brigade.

Subject.

Ballymacarbery Company Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Waterford, 1917-1923.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S. 2623.....

Form B.S.M. 2

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRE MILEATA 1913/21 S. 1, 3/4

No. W.S. 1,314

STATEMENT BY PATRICK RYAN

Curtiswood, Ballymacarbery, Co. Waterford.

I was born here in Curtiswood. My people were small farmerx. They were native speakers of Irish too, as were many others in the Nire Valley district, nearby.

As a young lad I went to the local national school and when I got a bit older I joined the local branch of the Gaelic League.

There was a company of National Volunteers started here in 1913, I think. I joined up. There were about 60 of us altogether in the company. We drilled with wooden guns made locally.

When John Redmond offered the Volunteers to England in 1914, the company broke up here. A small Irish Volunteer unit was then formed, of which I was one. We had no guns at the time and we took no part in the 1916 Rising.

Early in the year 1917, the Volunteers were reorganised in the Ballymacarbery - Nire Valley district Michael O'Ryan (deceased) was made the company captain; Tom Whelan, Adjutant, and I was lieutenant. The company was part of the 1st Battalion West Waterford Brigade. The Brigade O/C. was Pax Whelan, Dungarvan, Co. Waterford. We had about 25 or 30 men in the company. A few of them were farmer's sons, but most of them were farm labourers. There were about a dozen or so shotguns and a few revolvers. I had a revolver of the type known as "the short bulldog". Drilling used to take place about twice a week in the fields.

When the British threatened to bring in conscription for Irishmen in 1918, a big number of recruits joined the Volunteers but when the conscription threat passed a lot of these recruits left us, leaving us with a strength of about 35 men all told.

During the General Election of December 1918, we helped the Sinn Fein candidate in our area; as a matter of fact, most of us were members of the local Sinn Fein Club. We did guard duty on the polling booths in the district and, although there were R.I.C. men about, they did not interfere with us. We were not armed on this guard duty.

At this time there was a police station in the village of Ballymacarbery. There was a sergeant and three constables in it. The place was evacuated later on - in 1919 sometime, I think - and the garrison sent in to one of the larger towns in the county.

At Easter 1917, and again in 1918, republican flags were fknwn from trees and poles to celebrate the anniversary of the 1916 Rising. The local police spent many an hour taking down the flags.

Before the General Election of December 1918, I put up a poster on the chapel gate at Fourmilewater (1½ miles from Ballymacarbery) on behalf of the Sinn Fein candidate. When I was coming out from Mass, Michael O'Ryan told me that the R.I.C. sergeant, along with Constable Phelan, was outside the gate and he suggested that we should stay around a bit to see if the police would try and take down the poster I had put up. When the congregation had cleared away, there was no one left only Michael O'Ryan, myself and two other Volunteers. The sergeant of the R.I.C. then came up with a penknife to cut off the election poster. Michael O'Ryan got hold of him and pushed the sergeant away. The latter then told Constable Phelan to take down the poster. When he approached it, I got a grip on him and prevented him from doing anything. After a lot of pushing and shoving, the R.I.C. gave up the job. The other two Volunteers present also came over and warned the R.I.C. not to interfere with the poster. This affair is not of much importance

but it was the first active opposition to the British Government in our district. It also made Michael O'Ryan and me marked men, so far as the local police were concerned, we we were wellknown to them. As a result, we had to go on the run. We only went out the country about a mile or two so that we were still able to keep in touch with the activities of the company of which we were officers.

Strangely enough, the police made no move to try and arrest us until a couple of months afterwards, that was in February 1919.

Many houses in the district were raided then, including my own home and that of Michael O'Ryan. As a result of these raids, a Volunteer named Larry Brien was arrested. He was brought to Cappoquin for trial and was released on 'recognising' the Court.

My home was again raided in March 1919, by police, and, to avoid arrest, I moved about six miles across the hills to the west, into the Melleray district.

About this time, the company made a house to house collection for money to buy arms and equipment. We got a good response from the people.

In the first half of the year 1919 we called around to the farmers who, we knew, had shotguns and asked them to hand them over to us before the police came along to collect them. We got a dozen or so guns as a result. There were other people who we knew were not on our side and who wouldn't hand over their guns if we asked them. We raided the houses of these persons at night and got the guns all right. About half a dozen of us took part in these raids. We wore disguise as we were known and we were armed. We met with no opposition,

Following these raids, which went on during the year 1919, we must have had upwards of 25 shotguns in the company. We made our own buckshot in a specially-made mould and we had a regular filling machine to fill empty shotgun cartridges.

It was, I think, early in the year 1920 when word reached us that a mansion belonging to Lord Ashtown was about to be occupied by military. This mansion is about a mile north of Ballymacarbery and would be a big danger to all the I.R.A. units in North West Waterford if used as a military post. One night about 20 or 30 of us from The Nire and Ballymacarbery went out to Lord Ashtown's place. We had plenty of straw and paraffin oil. There was a steward in charge. We broke our way into the house and set it on fire, making a right good job of it.

About the same period we burned evacuated barracks at Ballymacarbery and at Ballinamult, four miles to the south. As the result of these barracks being burned, the British had to operate from Cahir or Clonmel, Co. Tipperary, when carrying out raids in the Nire or Ballymacarbery areas, which meant that they were up to 8 or 10 miles from their bases.

Many raids on the postal mails were also carried out in 1920, in the hope of getting something which might be of use to our Intelligence officer. I do not know whether anything worth while was got from these raids.

Sinn Fein Courts were set up in Touraneena and Ballymacarbery in 1920, and were held regularly up to the Truce period (and after). Our job was to act as armed guard while these Courts were being held. Scouts were also posted on the neighbouring hills covering the roads leading to these places. The Courts were successfully carried on without any interference from the enemy.

Late in the year 1920, Henry O'Keefe was appointed captain of the Ballymacarbery Company instead of Michael O'Ryan and separate companies were formed in the Nire valley and in Ballymacarbery. Previous to this, these companies were amalgamated. Jim Power was made captain in The Nire.

Attack on Kilmanahan Barracks.

I cannot remember the date of the attack on Kilmanahan Barracks. I think it was early in 1921, but I am not at all certain of this. This barracks was situated about 4 miles north of Ballymacarbery. It was a strongly-built two-storey house of stone with a slated roof. The windows were fitted with steel shutters which had loopholes in them for firing. The garrison was, so far as I can remember, an R.I.C. sergeant and five constables. On the night of the attack, about six or eight of us from the Ballymacarbery Company went towards Kilmanahan. I carried a revolver, the others had shotguns. We met up with another party from the Kilbrien Company. The total number in the attack was from 15 to 20 men under the command of Jack Morrissey, Kilbrien.

Approaching Kilmanahan, Tom Whelan and I were told to cut the telephone wires leading to Clonmel, about six miles to the north-west. When we had the job done we reported back to Jack Morrissey. I was placed in a position on a road about 50 yards from the barracks. My job was to hold up any policeman out on patrol who might be returning to barracks. It would be about 10 o'clock at night when our lads opened fire with rifles and shotguns. The police immediately sent up Verey lights and replied to our fire with a machine gun, bombs and rifles. This went on for about half an hour, when the order to withdraw was given, as there was no hope of taking the barracks by assault due to our lack of ammunition and the impossibility of getting into the building because of

enemy fire which was very heavy. There was also the danger that we might be trapped by troops from Clonmel who would be on the move immediately they saw the Verey lights go up. We pulled out, therefore, and returned safely across country to our own areas. I cannot say whether we hit any of the garrison in the barracks that night, but I do know that our lads suffered no casualties.

In February or March 1921, a party of us lay in ambush in the Newcastle, Ballinamult, Ballymacarbery districts on up to a dozen occasions in the hope of contacting an enemy raiding party. On no occasion were we successful. The enemy were particularly wary about coming into the area which is mountainous and offers good scope for ambushing,

It was, so far as I can remember, in the month of April 1921, when word was received from brigade headquarters asking for three men from our company to join the West Waterford Flying Column. Jack Phelan, Willie Dalton, our company adjutant, and I volunteered to go.

The West Waterford column, at this time, was in the district of Kilbrien which is at the foot of the Comeragh Mountains and about eight miles east of Ballymacarbery. We contacted the column, which was under the command of George Lennon, Dungarvan. There were about 60 men altogether there, but this included a number from East Waterford under Paddy Paul of Waterford city. All the men appeared to have rifles, so far as I can remember. Phelan, Dalton and I were given rifles when we arrived at Kilbrien.

We were billeted in farmhouses in the neighbourhood and had to be on parade each morning at 8 a.m. and again, after a break, at 10 a.m. Dinner was at 1 p.m. We paraded again at 4 p.m. and finally at 7 p.m. Our training consisted, mainly, in field manoeuvres, advancing and retiring under cover and

general tactics in guerilla fighting.

Towards the month of June 1921, the column moved westwards across country towards a hilly district known as Ballymallala, about 8 miles south west of Dungarvan, Co. Waterford.

It was, I think, about the middle of June 1921, when we moved northwards across country to Cappagh, Co. Waterford, ten miles south of Ballymacarbery on the main Dungarvan-Clonmel road. We reached Cappagh village very early in the morning and were informed that it was intended to attack a troop train coming from Fermoy and due to pass Cappagh level crossing at about 8 a.m. My job that particular morning was to help to cut a tree in order to block the road from Clashmore to Cappagh. I had finished the job and had got into position for attack when the train came along from Fermoy. Some of our lads had closed the level crossing gates before the train arrived. I do not know whether the signals were put against the train, but what actually happened was that rifle fire was opened by the column on the train which dashed through the crossing gates. The train pulled up further on up the line, but, so far as I know, there were no military on the train at all. I am not quite sure of this, but I am certain that I didn't see any.

After the Cappagh affair, the column moved north west to Ballygulki and then west to the Melleray district. We were in the latter place when the Truce of July 1921 came.

I came home after the Truce and it was at this period that a new battalion, known as the 7th Battalion, West Waterford Brigade, was formed. It covered the districts Knockboy, Kilbrien, The Nire, Ballymacarbery, Beary's Cross



and Touraneena. Jack Morrissey of Kilbrien was O/C.

I reported to Battalion Headquarters at Cheanley's Lodge, Knockboy, where I did duty as armed guard. I was in Touraneena when the civil war broke out. I took the republican side and had engagements with Free State troops at Windgap, Co. Kilkenny, and at Tipperary town.

I returned home to Ballymacarbery at the 'Cease Fire' in June 1923.

Signed: Patrick Ryan

(Patrick Ryan)

Date: 29<sup>th</sup> November 1955

29th November, 1955.

Witness: T. O'Gorman

(T. O'Gorman)

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