

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 346

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 346.....

**Witness**

Mr. Stephen Jordan,  
Athenry,

Co. Galway.

**Identity**

Member of I.R.B. Athenry, Co. Galway, 1906 - ;  
Adjutant Athenry Batt'n I.V's. 1920-1921;

Ex- T.D.

**Subject**

- (a) National activities 1906-16;
- (b) Preparations for Rising 1916;
- (c) Occupation of Department of Agriculture College near Athenry, Easter Week 1916.

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

Nil

File No. S.102.....

Form B.S.M. 2.

**ORIGINAL**STATEMENT BY STEPHEN JORDAN,Athenry, Co. Galway.

I joined the I.R.B. in Athenry in 1906. The Centre was Richard Murphy. Larry Lardiner was Secretary. Meetings were held regularly every month. The principal matter discussed at the meetings was the spreading of the organisation in Athenry and the surrounding districts, and the suitability of persons proposed for membership. Seán McDermott used to attend the meetings every two or three months.

In or about 1908 a strong branch of the Town Tenants' Organisation was formed in Athenry. Although it was against I.R.B. rules to join it, all members did so. This organisation by agitation and agrarian outrages, as the British Authorities called them, succeeded in forcing the sale of the houses to the tenants and also the division of the adjoining lands in what was then called accommodation plots to each tenant purchaser. This led to a series of activities for the division of lands in all areas bordering Athenry.

As the R.I.C. failed to get any information that would lead to the arrest and conviction of anyone, they turned very nasty and in several cases framed charges against men of disorderly conduct, drunkenness, etc., and on occasions carried out baton charges without provocation. In an effort to retaliate the Athenry branch of the I.R.B. met and decided on certain

actions to be taken which would make the R.I.C. the laughing-stock of the countryside. The Police transport horse was taken from its stable and hidden for three weeks, while hundreds of police searched the countryside without success. After three weeks the horse was returned to its stable with a straw man on its back. A card was attached to the figure with the words, "a new mount for spring heel Jack" on it. This was a slap at the over-officious Head Constable Nealon who was doing all in his power for promotion to the rank of District Inspector.

On another occasion the tricolour was flown from the chimney of the R.I.C. Barracks and the ladder removed from the Barrack yard. The flag remained flying all day before the police were able to remove it. The crown was removed from over the Barrack door, and later the board to which the crown had been attached, was suspended from the telegraph wires in the town with the inscription "£5.0.0. reward" printed on it. Practically all the credit for these and other similar incidents was due to that energetic worker, the late T.V. Cleary, who was mainly responsible for the planning and execution of all these incidents.

As a result of all these activities the I.R.B. became numerically very strong and remained so up to the year 1913 when the Volunteer organisation was founded. The national spirit was so strong at this particular time owing to the activities I have already mentioned, that the foundation of a sound Volunteer organisation was a foregone conclusion.

Very early in 1914 a Company of the Volunteers was started in Athenry. I became a member at the initial meeting. Larry Lardiner was elected Captain of the Company which was about seventy strong. Each man subscribed 3d. per week. The Company was paraded regularly every week and was drilled by ex N.C.Os. of the British Army. A number of Volunteers, including myself, attended practically every night for instruction so as to become efficient as soon as possible in order to assist at the training of country units where ex British Army men were not available for the purpose. A review of the Volunteers took place in Athenry on the 29th June, 1914, at which Colonel Maurice Moore took the salute. About 2,000 Volunteers took part in this parade. The military bearing of the various units was favourably commented upon and the strength of the Volunteers was an alarming revelation to the British Authorities. The split in the Volunteers following John Redmond's speech at Woodenbridge had little or no effect as practically all the Company stood behind McNeill.

Early in 1915 Liam Mellows was appointed chief organiser for the County of Galway. He established his Headquarters in Athenry. I accompanied him on a good deal of his work organising the Volunteers. Shortly after his arrival he organised Galway on a Brigade and Battalion basis. Larry Lardiner was appointed Brigade Commandant and Eamon Corbett, Brigade Vice-Commandant. Following Larry Lardiner's appointment as Brigade Commandant, Frank Hynes was elected Captain of the Athenry Company.

In June, 1915, I was charged under the Defence of the Realm Act and sentenced to six months' imprisonment.

At a Company parade held during Holy Week we were advised to go to Confession and receive Holy Communion on Easter Sunday, and to parade at, I think, 6 p.m. that evening, with arms and equipment and twenty-four hours' rations. Shortly after Mass on Easter Sunday this order was cancelled. I was with Commandant Larry Lardiner at his own house at about 12 noon on Easter Monday when a man on a motor cycle arrived from Dublin with a dispatch for Commandant Lardiner. After reading the dispatch, Commandant Lardiner instructed me to get ready to go to Galway City immediately and to tell the late George Nicols that "Dublin was out since 12 o'clock" and to instruct him to mobilise the City and Connemara Units.

I went to Galway on the 1.15 p.m. train and delivered the message to Nichols. I returned from Galway on the night mail reaching Athenry at 12 midnight. I was met at the station by two members of the Athenry Company who had been sent by Commandant Lardiner to escort me to the Town Hall where the Company was mobilised.

In the early hours of Tuesday morning we were instructed by Commandant Lardiner to go to our homes, bring our arms with us and to hold ourselves in readiness for further orders. On Tuesday afternoon we were re-mobilised at the Town Hall and marched to the Agricultural College near Athenry where we were joined by Commandant Liam Mellows and Companies from other areas, and took possession of the College. We remained there

overnight, having placed sentries at various points.

On Wednesday afternoon a reconnaissance party of R.I.C. approached the College; fire was opened on them; they returned the fire but retreated to Atherry. Late that evening we moved to Moyode Castle.

Early on Thursday morning Mellows brought J. Cleary, myself and a couple of others to reconnoitre the surrounding district. He called at several houses making enquiries as to the movements of police and military. When we were a short distance from New Inn Police Barrack, we left the car and cautiously approached the Barrack. Mellows said, "we'll have a shot at this place". When we got near the Barrack we found it had been evacuated by the R.I.C. On entering we were met by two women. Mellows asked if there were any R.I.C. men in the Barrack. One of the women said, "no". Mellows said he would search the place, and as he attempted to go upstairs, the woman tried to stop him; she seemed very excited. She then admitted that her husband, the Sergeant of the Barrack, was seriously ill in bed upstairs. Mellows then requested her to go to the room and tell her husband that he wanted to ask him some questions, and to tell him not to be anxious as no harm would come to him. I accompanied Mellows into the Sergeant's room. Mellows asked him the strength of the garrison, when they had left, and where they had gone to. The Sergeant answered all the questions. He said they got an order to go to Loughrea and to bring everything possible with them and that they had left about midnight or very early that morning. The Sergeant seemed very relieved on account of Mellows' gentlemanly manner. We returned to Moyode without further incident.

Shortly after returning to Moyode, Mellows sent me in charge of a party to get potatoes. We went to a big farmer named Joseph King at Rahard, and took two cartloads from the pit. While loading the potatoes a strong force of police from Athenry on bicycles came along the Loughrea road in the direction of Moyode. We opened fire on them and they replied. A pitched battle raged for some time. The firing was heard at Moyode. Mellows immediately mobilised two or three car-loads of men and came to our assistance. By the time Mellows arrived the police had retreated a considerable distance. He asked me what happened. I gave him a brief account. He then said, "come along, lads". They got into the cars and pursued the police who retreated to Athenry as quickly as they could and arrived there before Mellows and his party could overtake them.

On Friday, priests from Esker came to Moyode and heard Confessions. Fr. Feeney, C.G., Castlegar, who was with us during the whole week also heard Confessions and on several occasions when the men were going out on scouting expeditions, etc. he gave them General Absolution. Fr. Tom Fahy, M.A. and Fr. O'Farrell also visited us that day. Several meetings of the officers were held during the day, following the receipt of information from various sources that the enemy were preparing to attack Moyode. One report stated that the British were about to launch a large scale attack with British military from Loughrea, R.I.C. from Athenry, and marines from Galway City. It was decided to evacuate Moyode as it would be a difficult place to defend. Late that afternoon we marched to Lime Park. When we had almost reached Lime Park we were

overtaken by Fr. Fahy and Fr. O'Farrell who came into Lime Park with the main body. Later that night I was told that it had been decided to disband. There were about seven hundred men altogether. We had only thirty-six service rifles and a small amount of ammunition for them, perhaps fifteen to twenty rounds for each rifle. We had also twenty-five single-shot Martini Enfields and about three hundred shotguns and a good supply of cartridges for them, a few .22 rifles and a large number of pikes.

After the disbanding I went "on the run" with Dick Murphy, staying in various parts of the county. We were arrested in Tusa in early June and conveyed to Galway Jail. After some days I was transferred to Richmond Barracks, Dublin, where I was notified that I was to be tried by courtmartial. On the eve of the day fixed for my trial Asquith's wire to cease trials and deport all prisoners arrived in Dublin. I was deported to Knutsford and later transferred to Frongoch. I was released at Christmas 1916.

SIGNED

*Stephen Jordan*

DATE

24-1-1950

WITNESS

*Sean Brennan. Comdt.*

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