

W. S. 1,112

**ORIGINAL**

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BUREAU STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21

No. W.S. 1112

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,112.....

**Witness**

Patrick Reidy,  
Carrigerry,  
Newmarket-on-Fergus,  
Co. Clare.

**Identity.**

Adjutant 'B' Company, 1st Battalion,  
East Clare Brigade, 1917-1921.

**Subject.**

Activities of 'B' Company 1st Battalion  
East Clare Brigade, 1917-1921.

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

Nil

File No. S. 2411.....

Form B.S.M. 2

# ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BUREAU STAIRS MILEAGE 1913-21  
No. W.S. 1112

STATEMENT BY PATRICK REIDY,

Carrigerry, Newmarket-on-Fergus, Co. Clare,

(formerly Adjutant, B/Company, 1st Battalion, Mid-Clare Brigade.

I was born on 24th January 1896, at Carrigerry, Newmarket-on-Fergus. I am married and, with my wife and ~~three~~ <sup>two</sup> children, reside on a farm of about 30 acres. I also have regular employment as a Co. Council road overseer.

When the Irish Volunteers were first established in my own district I became a member. That occurred about July, 1917, and from the beginning I held the post of adjutant to the company which was known as 'B' (Carrigerry) Company, 1st Battalion, East Clare Brigade.

I was associated with all the minor activities in which my company was involved such as drilling, collecting arms, road-blocking and dispatch carrying, and also took part in the capture of Newmarket-on-Fergus R.I.C. Barracks on 5th August 1919, the ambush of a party of R.I.C. and Black and Tans at Cratloe on 13th January 1921, and the shooting as a spy of John Reilly, Newmarket, on 20th April 1921.

The capture of Newmarket-on-Fergus R.I.C. Barracks was really something in the nature of a gift from one of the garrison - Constable Buckley, a native of North Kerry, who was afterwards killed in that county during the Civil War. His sympathies were with the Sinn Fein movement and he had made up his mind to resign from the R.I.C. but, before doing so, wanted to do something tangible to help in the struggle for national independence. Some time before the raid on the Newmarket-on-Fergus Barracks I met him one evening while he was out on patrol in my district and we began talking. During the course of conversation he mentioned how easy it would be to capture the barracks and secure possession of

the arms of the garrison. I passed on this information to the company captain, Jim Brennan, and, whether or not it was as a result of it that the Brigade O/C., Michael Brennan, made contact with Constable Buckley, I'm not able to say. I am certain, however, that they did meet subsequently and arranged plans which eventually ended in the capture of the barracks.

Actually, two attempts were made before the barracks was taken. On the first occasion it had to be abandoned as a misunderstanding arose as to window which was to be left open by Constable Buckley so that the attackers could effect an entrance without alarming the garrison. On the second attempt everything went like clockwork. With the exception of the Brigade O/C. and a couple of men whom he had brought with him, all the Volunteers who took part belonged to the 1st Battalion. Scouts were posted on all the roads leading from Newmarket- to guard against surprise while the men selected to form the party to go to the barracks met at the Convent Cross on the Limerick road about half a mile from the village. I was with this party and I cannot now remember whether I was armed or not, but I have a notion that, like most of the rest of them, I had some kind of a revolver. We assembled around 12 midnight and I was detailed to do guard at the barrack door while the rest went inside. My instructions were to warn them if word came from any of the scouts that enemy cars or lorries were coming. Having removed our boots we made a noiseless approach headed by the Brigade O/C.

By prior arrangement with Constable Buckley, the front door of the barracks was on the latch and, lifting it cautiously, all the party were inside the building and up the stairs in a couple of seconds. I stayed at the door and, as far as I now remember, they were back again with the rifles, revolvers and ammunition in a matter of minutes. Before

leaving some official papers were also seized, but no injury was done to any of the police and no damage was caused to the building. I'm not certain whether we got five or six carbines in this raid, but I do know that the booty included a goodly quantity of rifle ammunition, and also all the police belts and batons.

Some of the police carbines captured in the Newmarket-on-Fergus raid were given by the Brigade O/C. to the Carrigerry Company, as I had one of them myself at the ambush which took place in Cratloe. Sean Murnane, Battalion O/C., Jimmy Brennan, Florence O'Neill, Jim Hassett and Paddy Quin were among the men from the 1st Battalion who took part in this operation.

About 10 o'clock on the previous night, 12th January 1921, we were rowed in a boat provided by the McInerney's of Saint Isle from Hastings Land in Tullyvarga to Cratloe which we reached around 11 o'clock, and were billeted for the night in Ned <sup>Punch's</sup> ~~Purcell's~~ house in Cratloe. Early next morning we were joined by 20 or 25 more Volunteers under the Brigade O/C., Michael Brennan. While a good many of them were armed with rifles, I can also recollect seeing some of them carrying shotguns. At about 6 o'clock we had breakfast and then marched a mile or so to the place chosen for the attack. I was assigned to the section which was detailed to occupy a house owned by a man called McInerney and, with Paddy Quin and Florence O'Neill, took up position at the centre window upstairs. I cannot now give any information regarding the other positions which were occupied on that morning.

A lorry of police was expected to travel that day from Limerick to Ennis but, as it had not put in an appearance before 11 o'clock, the Brigade O/C. gave orders about that hour to fire on any enemy lorry which came in either direction, from Limerick to Ennis, or vice versa. Around noon a

lorry came very unexpectedly from Ennis containing nine or ten police and they were fired on. The driver escaped and by accelerated speed he took his vehicle clear and dashed into Limerick which was only about seven miles away and was then heavily garrisoned by military and police liberally equipped with fast transport. The O/C. decided to get away from the scene of the attack as quickly as possible and, choosing a route across the Cratloe mountains, the party got safely into the Sixmilebridge district where we remained until well after nightfall. We were then disbanded and, along with the other men from the 1st Battalion, I got back into my own locality about 10 o'clock that night.

I believe there were two of the enemy killed in Cratloe at least. One of them, an R.I.C. sergeant, fell off the lorry and was dead on the road as we were vacating the position.

The shooting of John Reilly was carried out by order of the Brigade O/C. On the night of 18th April 1921, he was leading a detachment of 35 or 40 men from his own brigade to assist the West Clare Brigade in an attack on the British forces in Kilrush. The detachment covered part of the journey to Kilrush by boat, disembarking at Rynanna. A number of the local I.R.A. were doing scout duty and assisting in getting the boats ready under the supervision of ~~th~~ some of the officers of the Carrigerry Company who included the 1st Lieutenant, John Moroney, and myself. The Brigade O/C. (Michael Brennan), before going into the waiting boat, sent for the two of us and said that John Reilly, Newmarket, was to be executed as a spy and that he wanted the execution to be carried out before his return from Kilrush. He further told us to try and arrange to get a priest to attend Reilly before the

execution, and when it was completed, to have a notice pinned or tied to the body worded as follows:-

"SPY - EXECUTED BY THE I.R.A.

GETTING THEM AT LAST. BEWARE".

On the following day we notified about 15 men to report at Ballycar outside Newmarket that night at 9 o'clock. Arrangements were also made to keep Reilly's movements under observation, and Father William Kennedy, then C.C. in Newmarket, was asked to be ready to give him spiritual attention before he was shot. About 11 o'clock that night, myself and five or six others were admitted into Reilly's house by his wife. He was in bed at the time and he was ordered to dress. He was then led out along the Ballycar road and into a byroad leading to Monafola. A quarter of a mile up this byroad he was met by Father Kennedy into whose care he was delivered, while the escort retired some distance. A firing party of seven or eight men had already been selected and they were all armed with revolvers. I was not one of the firing party but with a couple of other Volunteers was put on guard on the byroad about 20 yards from where we had left our prisoner with the priest who, when he had performed his duty, handed the prisoner over to the firing party. I saw the prisoner going on his knees and then heard the shots which caused him to fall backwards on the ground. The notice was then affixed to the body which we left lying on the roadside until it was removed next day by the police.

Reilly was not a native of Newmarket-on-Fergus. He had no family and was a man who drank a good deal. He was also known to be an ex-British soldier who mixed a good deal in the company of the Black and Tans stationed in Newmarket. As a matter of fact, on the night on which he was shot, he had spent some time drinking with a few of them in a local publichouse. I have no knowledge whatever of the evidence which the higher officers of the I.R.A. had which caused orders to be issued for his execution and my part in it was

in compliance with the instructions given to me personally by the Brigade Commandant. In fairness to all concerned, I should like to say that the unfortunate man faced the end in a brave and quiet manner and that as I was walking by his side along the Ballycar road, he asked me what we were going to do to him, but I did not make him anything the wiser. I can also remember before he was shot some talk going around that he was under suspicion and that he was warned on a few occasions to cease his association with the Black and Tans.

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_

*Patrick Reidy*

(Patrick Reidy)

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*4th March, 1955*

Witness: \_\_\_\_\_

*D. Griffin*

(D. Griffin)

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