

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21

BURO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

NO. W.S. 1,141

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BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,141

**Witness**

Richard Glavin,  
5 Court Road,  
Listowel,  
Co. Kerry.

**Identity.**

Lieut. Abbeydorney Coy. Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Kerry, 1913 - .

**Subject.**

Abbeydorney Company Irish Volunteers,  
Co. Kerry, 1913-1921.

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

Nil

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STATEMENT OF RICHARD GLAVIN

5 Court Road, Listowel, Co. Kerry.

I was born in Abbeydorney in the year 1890 and was sent to the local national school until I was 16 years of age. I then served my time to the carpentry trade for four years after which I worked as an improver for a further two years. At the time I was working in Ardfert which is about three miles from Abbeydorney.

When the Volunteers were formed in Ardfert about the end of 1913 I became a member. I left Ardfert, however, shortly afterwards and went back home to Abbeydorney. There was no company of the Volunteers in Abbeydorney at the time.

At the latter end of 1914 or early 1915, Eddie Barry of Tralee with the assistance of three local men - Murt O'Connor, a man named Donovan and Patrick Twomey formed a company of the Volunteers in Abbeydorney. I then joined the Abbeydorney Company. In all, there were about 60 Volunteers at our first meeting.

On the day of our first meeting the company paraded towards Listellick about three miles away where we were met by a company of Volunteers from Tralee under the command of their officers - Austin Stack, Alfie Cotton and Joe Melinn.

Shortly after the formation of the company, company officers were elected. John Scannell became captain; I became 1st Lieutenant and Tom Stundon became 2nd Lieutenant. We drilled and paraded all that year. We had no arms.

Up to the week before Easter Week 1916, we drilled as usual. On Sunday of Holy Week the company under Ned Barry, who was our drill instructor, paraded to Tralee. In Tralee at the Rink, which was the headquarters of the Volunteers in North Kerry, each man of the company received a single-barrel shotgun. Having drilled for a time at the Rink, we returned

to Abbeydorney bringing the shotguns, which numbered about 50 with us. All during Holy Week we did a lot of drilling with the shotguns and had long route marches. We were all keyed up as we heard rumours that there was something important "doing" and to the effect that there was about to be an attack on the British garrison all over the country.

On Tuesday night of Easter Week I, with a Volunteer named Walsh, called a company meeting in Killane about two miles north of Abbeydorney. At this meeting it was decided that I should go to the Rink, Tralee, on the following day to make it known to headquarters there that the Abbeydorney Volunteers were standing-to awaiting orders. I cycled into Tralee next morning, Wednesday, as instructed, and managed to get into the Rink which, at the time, was guarded by armed Volunteers. I met one of the headquarters staff whose name was Mick Fleming, of the Tralee Battalion, and gave him *the* message. He told me that if they received any definite orders from G.H.Q. Dublin the orders would be conveyed to the Abbeydorney Company, as well as other companies in the area. I returned to Abbeydorney, having previously arranged for a further meeting with the battalion staff at a later date. Having informed the Abbeydorney Company of the position in Tralee, we decided to await any further news.

About a week later we heard of the surrender in Dublin and, later still, we received a dispatch from P.J. Cahill of the battalion staff in Tralee, to hand in our guns to the local R.I.C. Barracks. Most of the members of the company complied with this order; a good many of them, however, would not surrender their shotguns and managed to retain them for use at a later date.

From the surrender of the guns to about March of 1917, things were very peaceful. In March, the Volunteers were reorganised in Abbeydorney. At the start our strength was abo

thirty men. Our officers were once again as before - John Scannell, captain; I was 1st Lieutenant, and Tom Stundon was 2nd Lieutenant. We started off training and drilling with route marches occasionally. Shortly after the reorganisation we received instructions from headquarters in Tralee to hoist the national flag on public buildings whenever possible. Every time the flags were hoisted they were burned down by the R.I.C. We then decided to paint the flag on a piece of sheet iron which we erected on the steeple of the Abbey in Abbeydorney. This particular flag remained on the Abbey steeple for about a year and a half and, try as they could, the R.I.C. were unable to remove it.

In the year 1918 we were continually drilling and training. John Scannell, the company captain, and I attended a course of lectures and training on the handling and use of the rifle every Saturday night for a period of six months at Artfert, which had become battalion headquarters of the Abbeydorney Company at the reorganisation of the companies in the previous year. Early in the year, at the time of the conscription scare, we received into the company approximately 170 more Volunteers, which brought the strength of the company up to 200 men. At around this time the 200 Volunteers of Abbeydorney Company marched in formation to a mass meeting of Volunteers in the town of Tralee. There were at least ten companies at the meeting from Tralee town and surrounding districts. I should say that in all about 1000 Volunteers were present on the occasion, as well as about 3000 civilians. The meeting, which was a protest meeting against the threatened enforcement of conscription for Ireland, was addressed by a Fr. Lyons, C.C. of Tralee, Tom Slattery of Rock St., Tralee, Tom Dennehy, Tralee, and Austin Stack.

In 1919 the usual parades took place. At the end of the year I took part in collecting all arms in the area; most of

these were shotguns; we got one miniature rifle.

In the year 1920, on the occasion of the I.R.A. attack on Ballybunion R.I.C. barracks, I took part in the cutting of telegraph wires in the area. Later in the year I assisted in trenching and blocking all roads around Abbeydorney to prevent the passage of enemy forces through the village. In October of this year, the R.I.C. in Abbeydorney were reinforced by a number of Tans, which brought the strength of the enemy in the village up to 30 men.

A short time before the arrival of the Tans, a doctor in Tralee provided a sleeping drug which a servant girl in the barracks had arranged with members of the company to put into the tea of some five R.I.C. men on a particular evening, so that we could rush the barracks as soon as the drug became effective. This girl was very friendly and, on several occasions, brought out of the barracks clips of .303 ammunition, as well as a Mills bomb and a shotgun on other occasions, which she handed over to the I.R.A. I had received the drug which I passed to the girl, but on the very evening arranged for the drugging of the R.I.C., the Tans arrived so that the plan to rush the barracks at a prearranged signal from the girl never materialised.

On 31st October 1920, after the death of Terence McSwiney on hunger strike, I, with about 24 selected men from adjacent companies, took part in an attack on a Tan patrol in the village. We took up positions in doorways and side streets. The Tans usually walked around the village in twos and threes, parading up and down the street and afterwards visiting one of the two publichouses in the village. In the circumstances it was not possible to attack more than two or three of the enemy at a time. I was armed with a revolver; a few of our men had rifles; the others had shotguns; The night was very dark as we were waiting. Eventually I, who was acting as

scout for the attacking party, observed two figures emerge from the pub. I had to follow them for a short distance to make sure they were Tans. Having satisfied myself they they were, I returned to my post and informed Paddy Sheehan, company captain of Ardfer, who was in charge, and a man named Jack McCarthy, that they were Tans. Sheehan, McCarthy, and a couple of other men posted at this side street opened fire on the Tans as soon as they came within range. One of the Tans was shot dead; the other was wounded after which their two rifles were captured. We waited for a short while to see if other Tans would come on the scene but none did so. Later, I and the attacking party left the village and dispersed. The following morning eight lorry loads of Tans and military arrived and immediately opened fire all around. Having looted every shop in the village, they then burned down the public-house of a woman named Mrs. Lovatt. They remained in the village for 1½ hours, when they left for Ballyduff.

Some time later a question was asked in the House of Commons as to why Mrs. Lovatt's publichouse was burned down. The reply of Sir Hamar Greenwood was to the effect that Mrs. Lovatt would not harbour any of the Sinn Fein Volunteers - giving the impression that Mrs. Lovatt's pub was burned down by the I.R.A.

All during 1920 we had to meet very secretly in outlying districts. The meetings usually took place at Kilmiley. Tom Clifford, Battalion O/C. attended those meetings principally with the object of keeping the men of the company together.

After the attack on the Tans in Abbeydorney, I could not reside at home and had to go on the run. Some days later, as I approached Ballyheigue village, I met Clifford. We discussed the situation generally. He had just received information that a party of Tans were in the habit of travelling in four lorries from Tralee via Ballyheigue to Causeway and

back a few times every week. Between us, we decided to attack the four lorries and arranged for the attack to take place a couple of days later. He selected about 30 men from who were drawn from each company in the battalion area. Three or four of the men had rifles; the remainder had shotguns or revolvers. We took up positions behind fences on each side of the road at a place named Ballynoe, north west of Causeway. We remained in position for the best part of the day, but no lorries appeared during the period. That evening, Clifford dismissed the men and ordered them to report on the following day at a different point on the same road. This point was an old fort about a mile further along the road, but about half a mile off the road and situated north of Causeway.

We all turned up next day at the fort. After some consultation, Clifford decided that we would attack the R.I.C. barracks at Causeway. He ordered a man named Donovan and me to proceed by a road, which is known as the lower road, and to come around the village of Causeway to a place named Ballinglauna which overlooked the barracks, and to report back to the fort with details of the positions of the Tans and barracks in the village. Having reached Ballinglauna, Donovan and I took cover inside a fence where we had a good view of the barracks. After about a quarter of an hour we observed an immense volume of smoke rising from one of the chimneys of the barracks. At the same time a small van, the property of Geary of Limerick, drove up and stopped at the barracks. Two Tans got out of the van; a third Tan - the driver - then got out. As the volume of smoke ascended - it was obviously a signal - military and Tans numbering 80 men closed in on the fort. The I.R.A. there had, however, been warned of the approaching enemy by scouts in the vicinity. As the I.R.A. were outnumbered they decided to retreat and were fired on by the enemy in doing so. The I.R.A. had placed a couple of men behind to cover the

retreat of the main body. These couple of men fired between them about 10 rounds at the enemy, after which they succeeded in rejoining their comrades who had succeeded in escaping the round up.

In the month of March 1921, I, by appointment with Murt O'Connor, approached Ballyheigue and got into the Sinn Fein Hall there by a back entrance. There we met Tom Clifford, Battalion O/C., Mick Pierce, company captain of Ballyheigue, and a man who was unknown to me, who was introduced to us as Frank Teeling. I was informed that an attack on Causeway barracks had been planned for the following night. I was ordered to mobilise Abbeydorney Company - our captain, John Scannell, was not available - for the purpose of assisting in the attack. In the meantime, Clifford, Pierce and Teeling appointed Moss Nolan company captain of Abbeydorney instead of Scannell.

When I went to Abbeydorney, I explained to the company what was to take place and what was required of them.

Early the following evening the roads around Causeway village were extensively blocked by members of the different companies in the area. I placed members of Abbeydorney Company numbering about 20 men on outpost duty around Causeway village so that it was completely isolated, especially from Tralee. These men were armed with shotguns and a couple of rifles. That night the attack, in charge of Clifford, took place. I was not in the actual attack, but was on outpost duty with the company from Abbeydorney. The attacking party did not succeed in taking the barracks, but managed to burn down the local courthouse. When we were informed that the attack, which had lasted a couple of hours, was over, I withdrew all our men on outpost duty.



In May, Moss Nolan, the new company captain, and I, with some members of Kilmiley Company, mobilised about 30 men armed with shotguns and revolvers for the purpose of blowing up Shannow Bridge, which is about five miles from Abbeydorney. A man named Billy Leary took charge of the operation. When three holes had been made in the bridge with picks and shovels, Leary placed a charge of gelignite in one of them and, with the aid of detonator, electric wire and battery, set off the charge. The first attempt was only partly successful. He then charged the second hole which he set off, with the same result. The third attempt succeeded in blowing the whole bridge away except for the parapet. When the job was finished we dispersed.

In the meantime, Clifford had it arranged that a second party of I.R.A. would take up positions near the demolished bridge so as to attack the Tans if they happened to come along to inspect the damage. It so happened that four lorry loads of Tans arrived shortly after the second party of I.R.A. had taken up positions. Their strength was too much for the I.R.A. to open an attack, so they withdrew.

From then until the Truce things were very quiet, except for a large-scale round-up by thousands of Tans and military in the area around this time which round-up I succeeded in escaping.

Signed: Richard Glavin  
(RICHARD GLAVIN)

Date: 14th April 1955

14<sup>th</sup> APRIL 1955

Witness:

John J. Daly  
(JOHN J DALY)

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