

## coastguard howe strand

Imagine yourself under pressure..  
Imagine your whole country depending on you  
Well that's what happened to those poor families,  
Soldiers and Guards.....

Shattered glass,smashed up bricks  
Crying children that are sick  
crying families that got such a fright  
Ireland is crying through the night

The attack on Howes Strand Coastguard Station

by reporter Ava Madden

WHEN THE WALLS CAME TUMBLING DOWN.....

The attack on Howe Strand Coastguard station, an event that was to change lives for so many men, women and even children. Despite the building being surrounded by barbed wire, the windows on the ground floor sand bagged, the upstairs windows having steel shutters and the only entrance being in the front of the building which could be easily defended wasn't enough to keep back the attacking party whose only defence was a low fence about thirty yards from the front of the building....

On the night of the attack in mid July, eighteen men armed with rifles and some revolvers who organised the attack along with 24 others met in Clonbouig, of the 24 men four were armed and posted on the main Kilbrittain-Ballinspittle road to delay possible reinforcements from Kinsale, Bandon or Kilbrittain, some were posted as look outs and the rest took up position behind the main attacking party,...

It was Charlie Hurley, Battalion Vice-commandant who was in charge and who carefully explained the operation to everyone involved.

The attacking party marched to ~~to~~ within 400 yards of the station and as dawn was breaking about 4 o'clock in the morning they were given their final instructions.....an eye witness reported that "from his position he had a full view of the station as well as the enemy destroyer quite close to the bay"

Charlie Hurley, Jim Hodnett and Denis Manning are said to <sup>have</sup> ~~of~~ rushed to the first door and Jack Fitzgerald, Mick o'Neill and Con Lehane to the second, some carried fourteen pound sledgehammers and when both groups reached the doors simultaneously they shattered the station doors with just a few blows of their sledgehammers and before the enemy knew what was happening they had gained <sup>possession</sup> of the ground floor and staircase.

Despite the brave efforts of Lehane with his sledgehammer the second floor could not be got to and within minutes the enemy were firing through the windows where Fitzgerald, O'Neill and Lehane found ricocheting bullets flying all around them.

Fire was opened by the volunteers behind the fence thirty

yards away putting the three men in the crossfire who could not go back so were left with no choice but to continue their efforts to break down the door.

Meanwhile Hurley, Hodnett and Manning reached the upper floor and came face to face with the enemy....it was said that Hurley could of shot them but instead ordered them to surrender which they did and they continued into a room where 7 more who were firing from the window who were taken by surprise and when ordered by Charlie Hurley to "put their hands up" quickly obeyed. Charlie leaving the captured men under the guard of Manning and Hodnett entered the next room where he captured another man bringing the total to 10 . Charlie next instructed Hodnett to go and get more volunteers from the ground floor and on his way Hodnett was shot at by a marine, the bullet grazed his eyebrow but Hodnett proceeded to carry out his instructions despite being injured.

Four of the men continued their search of the building and with Lehané <sup>es</sup> successfully breaking down the door of the second floor where four more defenders were captured, this just left one a senior officer who refused to surrender despite Hurley threatening him with a Mills bomb which he would of thrown had not another captured man asked to speak with his senior officer who then quickly surrendered.

At this stage a white flag was shown from one of the windows and the firing ceased.

The events of that night and that of many others affected many people lives... not only the volunteers but that of their families aswell, the morning after attack Ger Coleman and the Regan children reported having "shots fired above they're

heads" by the black and tans on they're way to school in Gurraneasig and i have it on good authority that the volunteers had their dinner in the Coleman's house in Granasig the night they launched they're attack.

Here i have eye witness statements from Denis o brien, James O'Mahony and John Fitzgerald.

As a military operation against the enemy this attack was undoubtedly the most daring and succesful attack to date in west cork....that fateful night

"WHEN THE WALLS CAME TUMBLING DOWN"

This is Ava Madden .....over and out.

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1918-21

BUNO STAIRÉ MILEATA 1913-21

No. W.S. 1,353

ROINN



COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS.

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 1,353

Witness

Denis O'Brien,  
Adamstown,  
Ballinacraig,  
Co. Cork.

Identity.

Lieut. Kilbriain Company Bandon Batt'n.  
Cork III Brigade;

Member Cork III Brigade Column.

Subject.

Kilbriain Company Irish Volunteers,  
Bandon Batt'n. Cork III Brigade,  
1914-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. 8.2672

Form B.S.M. 2

The strength of the unit at this time was about 45.

The first activity of a military nature in which I was engaged was an attack on Timoleague R.I.C. Barracks on 25th February 1920. This was a battalion operation, and Sean Hales, who was O/C. Bandon Battalion, was in charge. Several men from Timoleague, Ballinadee, Kilbrittain and Barryroe units took part in this engagement. Amongst those from Kilbrittain who took part were: James Barrett, John Barrett, Denis O'Brien (witness), John O'Brien, Jack O'Neill, Jim O'Mahoney, Jack Fitzgerald. There were also a number of others whose names I cannot recollect. I was one of a party, armed with shotguns, who were in position in a house opposite the barracks. There were other parties in position at a number of points in the street, while a section was detailed to place a mine against the gable of the building. The mine failed to explode. Intermittent fire was then opened by all covering sections. This continued for about 3 hours when all sections were ordered to withdraw. With the other men from Kilbrittain company I returned home.

About this time there was a further change in the officers of the Kilbrittain company as the O/C. (James O'Mahony) was appointed adjutant, Bandon Battalion. The officers of the company now were:- O/C. Jack Fitzgerald; 1st Lieut. Michael O'Brien; 2nd Lieut. Jack O'Neill. The officers of Bandon Battalion, at this time, were, I think: O/C. Sean Hales; Vice O/C. Charlie Hurley; Adjutant James O'Mahoney; Q.M. - I cannot recollect.

When the evacuated R.I.C. Barracks at Ballinspittle was destroyed at Easter 1920, nearly all members of the Kilbrittain Company were engaged on the operation. On this occasion I was on outpost duty on the Ballinspittle-

Kilbriittain road with two others - Jerh. O'Neill and John Cunningham. We were armed with shotguns. The demolition of the barracks was carried out by the main body of the company, using picks and crowbars.

There were several raids on the local mails during the summer of 1920, but I did not take part in any of these raids.

About the first week in July 1920, I took part with about ten other members of Kilbriittain Company, under Jack Fitzgerald, in a raid on Howe's Strand Coastguard Station. In this raid we captured nine rifles with a considerable amount of ammunition and equipment. The raid was carried out in broad daylight, about 12 noon. The whole party strolled towards the Coastguard Station and on the way met one of the coastguards. He was held up and questioned. He informed us that two members of the Service were out boating and that one other man was on duty. He also told us where the rifles and ammunition were stored. I was then placed in charge of this man who was held prisoner while the other members of the I.R.A. party went on to the Coastguard Station, where they found the military stores and removed them. I detained my prisoner until the others returned to us with the captured stores. He was then released. Our party then moved across country to Clonbuig where we dumped the captured arms. Amongst those who took part in this raid were:- Jack Fitzgerald, Jerh. O'Neill, Dave Sullivan, Paddy Sullivan, Jack O'Neill, John O'Leary and Denis O'Brien (witness).

The staff at the Coastguard Station was increased following this raid and a fresh supply of arms and ammunition was made available. Before the end of July 1920, it was

decided to attempt to capture the station for the second time. On this occasion, Charlie Hurley, who was Vice O/C., Bandon Battalion, was in charge. The operation was carried out by the members of Kilbrittain Company assisted by a few men from Ballinadee and Timoleague companies.

The Coastguard Station was situated on high ground on the edge of a cliff. It was standing on its own grounds. There were two entrance doors on the front of the building. It was decided on this occasion to carry out the attack about midnight. Two men were detailed to break down the doors with sledge-hammers. The main attacking party was divided into two sections - one to dash through each doorway when the door had been forced. One doorway - that attacked by Denis Manning (Kilbrittain Company) - was smashed in and the attacking party, at this point, dashed into the building. The second door, which was being smashed by Con Lehane (Timoleague Coy), withstood the attempt for a short time and the occupants of the station opened fire. However, the entrance of our men through the other door took the defenders by surprise and, when called upon to surrender, they laid down their arms. In this case, we captured, I think, 25 rifles together with a large supply of ammunition and equipment. In order to remove the captured stores on this occasion we had to utilise a horse and cart. All arms were then removed to the dumps in Ballinadee and Clonbuig areas. Amongst those who took part in this operation were:- Charlie Hurley, Jack Fitzgerald, Denis Manning, Jerh. O'Neill, John O'Leary, Con O'Leary, Dave and Paddy Sullivan, Jack O'Neill, Michael McGrath, Denis O'Brien (witness), - all from Kilbrittain - Con Lehane (Timoleague), Tim Crowley, Jim Crowley, John and James Barrett (Ballinadee). There were no casualties.



BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21  
W.S. 5/20

ORIGINAL

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21  
BURO STAIRS MILITARY 1913-21  
No. W.S. 5/20

NOINN  COSANTA.

BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY, 1913-21.

STATEMENT BY WITNESS

DOCUMENT NO. W.S. 560

Witness

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| (a) James O'Mahony,  | (m) Clunderreen,<br>Timoleague,<br>Co. Cork. |
| (b) Denis Crowley,   | (b) Kilbrittain, Co. Cork.                   |
| (c) John Fitzgerald. | (c) CLASHMORAN, KILBRITTAIN, Co. CORK.       |

Identity.

Company Officers "B.1" Company (Kilbrittain)  
1st Battalion Cork III Brigade 1917-1921.

Subject.

( Activities of "B.1" Company (Kilbrittain)  
1st Battalion, Cork III Brigade 1917-1921.

Conditions, if any, Stipulated by Witness.

Nil

File No. S.1788

Form D.S.M. 2

June

With the exception of a small number of men some of whom were in prison at the time, a few on duty elsewhere, the full company took part in this operation. Armed guards were posted in the village road 200 yards from the R.I.C. Bldg. on the Bandon-Castle Road and at the entrance gates on the Kinsale-Kilbrittain road during this operation which took three hours to carry through. Several men were on scout duty, some in the vicinity of the village some in adjoining districts on the lookout for the presence of raiding parties.

June.	Engagement	Location	Names of Volunteers engaged in attack.	Result.	
	Attack on Homes Strand C. Guards Station	Homes Strand, Kilbrittain	C. Hurley M. O'Neill P. Crowley John O'Neill D. Crowley Denis Manning H. Crowley Dan Manning J. O'Leary.	John Fitzgerald D. O'Brien P. O'Sullivan J. O'Brien David O'Sullivan Jerh O'Neill (Knockpague) E. O'Brien	Station taken by surprise. Vols. captured 10 rifles, 5000 rds. ammunition and equipment.

D. Crowley was on police observation duty, procured required information re patrols and arranged for immediate communication of information regarding enemy movements. Scouts Tom Fitzgerald, Denis O'Sullivan, M. Collins and J. O'Leary, local scouts, reported that the old garrison of six C. Guards at Homes Strand had been reinforced by four and that all of them were armed with rifles. Station and garrison were from then on kept under close observation day and night by local scouts. Further reports showed that a few members of the garrison left the station on a certain each week and went by boat three miles across the bay to the bigger C. Guards at Courtmacsherry. E.I. decided to raid the station and effect its capture by surprise if possible. On appointed day, the boat being left as usual with four members of the garrison, 16 armed Volunteers managed to get unseen by the sentry to within 25-30 yards of the station at 3 p.m. when all but the sentry was indoors. Denis Manning quickly held up the latter with a revolver and his comrades led by C. Hurley immediately rushed into the station and quickly held up and disarmed four members of the garrison found on the ground floor, after which two men on the top storey, on the advice of their disarmed comrades, agreed to surrender their rifles to the raiders.

June. Bails were raided twice during this month by following men :- John Fitzgerald,  
P. Crowley, John O'Neill, H. O'Neill, H. Crowley.

July Two men of E.I Coy. shot an R.I.C. man in Bandon.

July	Engagement	Location	Names of men engaged in actual attack.	Result.	
	Attack on Marine Station.	Homes Strand, Kilbrittain.	C. Hurley Jerh O'Neill (Knockpague) P. Crowley D. Manning H. Crowley Dan Manning Denis O'Sullivan T. Murphy David O'Sullivan.	M. O'Neill John O'Neill D. Crowley P. O'Sullivan M. O'Brien J. O'Leary D. O'Brien John Fitzgerald J. Roche	Surrender of garrison. Vols. captured 15 rifles, 10,000 rds. of amm. and equipment.

