Ambush interrupted by truce
Freedom fight incidents recaided

STATEMENT BY
THE LATE
AMOS REIDY

A carefully planned ambush on the Newcastle-West, Abbeyfeale Road that was witnessed by the intervention of the truce in the summer of 1921, is amongst the most startling incidents during the period of Independence in West Limerick, recalled by a statement prepared by the late Amos Reidy, Rathine, Newcastle West.

Joining the freedom fighters as a young man, Reidy, who later changed his name to the more traditional Amos Reidy, was one of the major figures in the East Limerick Brigade. His participation in the battle of Abbeyfeale is well-known.

The statement recounts that in the summer of 1921, the North Cork and West Limerick Column of the I.R.A. was engaged in a battle between the Free State forces and the I.R.A. at Abbeyfeale. Reidy, who was then 18, was a member of the North Cork and West Limerick Column.

It was during this engagement that he witnessed an incident that would become one of the most talked about in the history of the war of independence in West Limerick.

"I was on horseback with a group of I.R.A. men," Reidy said in his statement to the Limerick Comité. "We were ambushed by the Free State forces near Abbeyfeale. We had with us a volunteer named Pat O'Brien, who had been captured by the Free State forces and was being brought to a detention camp in Limerick.

"As we approached the ambush point, I saw a group of Free State soldiers coming towards us. I knew it was over for us. I dismounted and took cover behind a hedge. I could see that O'Brien was being dragged towards the ambush point. There was no chance of us getting away."

The Free State forces opened fire, but the I.R.A. fighters returned fire. The battle raged on for several minutes, with casualties on both sides.

"I remember seeing a Free State soldier fall to the ground, but I don't remember if he was killed or only wounded," Reidy said. "I'm not sure if I was hit or not."

The Free State forces eventually withdrew, but the I.R.A. fighters were left with heavy losses. Pat O'Brien was captured and taken to Limerick, where he died in jail.

"I think it was a tragic incident," Reidy said. "It was a battle that could have been avoided if the Free State forces had exercised more restraint."

The statement goes on to recount other incidents during the war of independence in West Limerick, including the battle of Abbeyfeale, the ambush of the I.R.A. fighters near Abbeyfeale, and the capture of Pat O'Brien.

The statement ends with a message to the I.R.A. fighters: "We fought bravely and died for our cause. We will never forget our fallen comrades."

(Courtesy of the Limerick Comité)