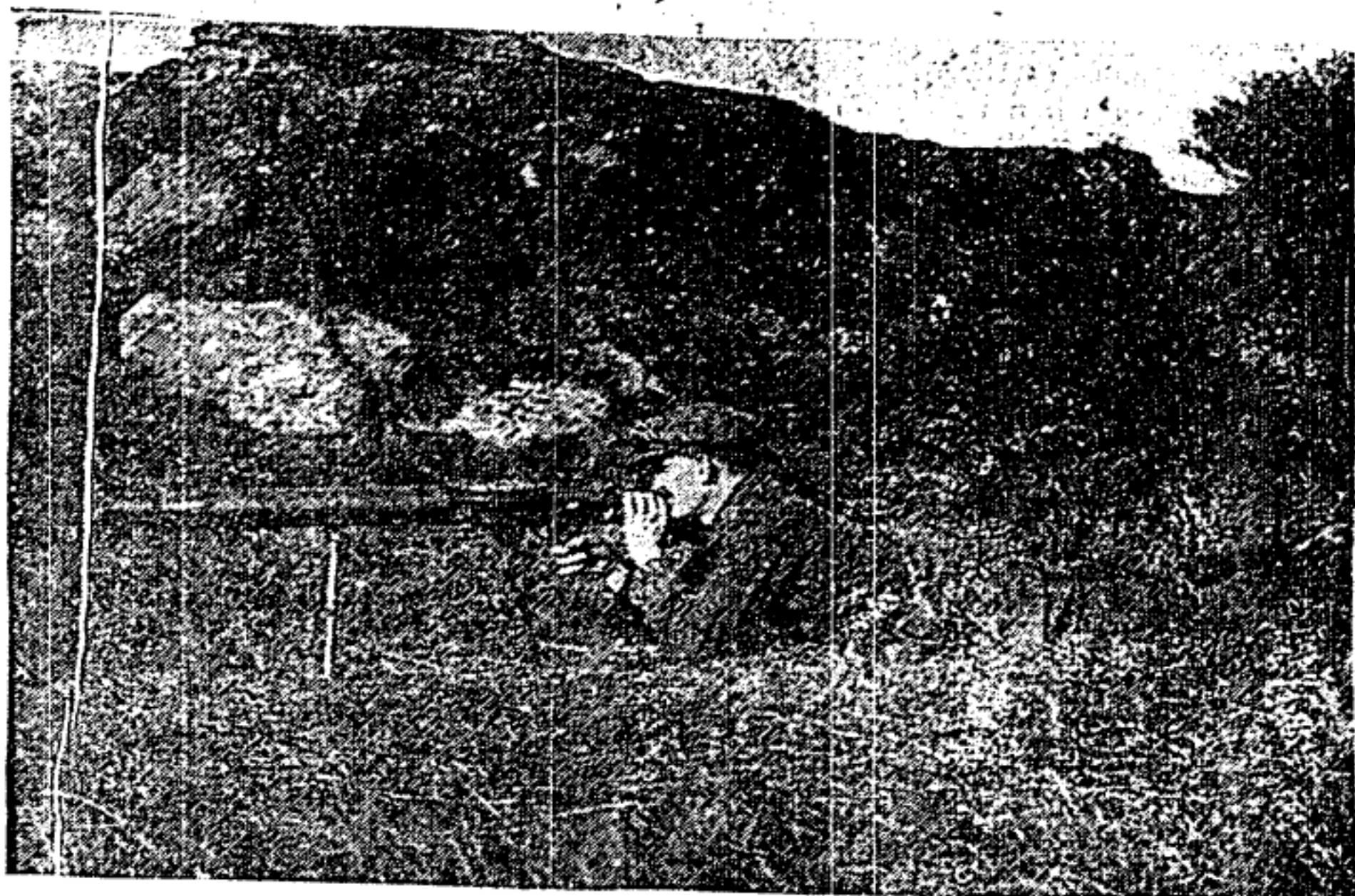


ATTACKS ON
ENEMY

CLOGHER CROSS
AMBUSH

A LIVING
HELL

WEST MAYO'S FIGHTING STORY



As told to—

Anthony Lavelle

THE PHOTOGRAPHER SNAPPED—The late Jack Leonard, whose photographs of Western Units on active service are used in this series, pictured in another role—the man of action. Photo copyright: J. Leonard & Son, Bofenaun

THIS is the story, according to the facts now available, of the fight for freedom in West Mayo, by the famous and fearless West Mayo Brigade I.R.A. led by the late Brigadier Michael Kilroy, of Newport, whose death in December, 1962, deprived writers of a valuable source of information on the exploits of Michael and his group of daring fighters. Many still remain to tell the story and this paper has the honour to give to its readers as told to staff reporters by men who fought side by side with Michael Kilroy in his campaign against the forces of occupation.

THE West Mayo Flying Column, which was now armed and ready for action, decided to give the enemy, now concentrated in fortified barracks in the larger towns no rest. The police, Tans and soldiers patrolled the streets heavily armed. They ordered peaceful citizens to move on and beat them up if they were not quick in complying with the order, which was usually accompanied by foul language.

The members of the R.I.C. were performing police duties and the Sinn Fein Courts and the Sinn Fein police had to enforce law and order. For the most part the people obeyed the Irish Courts. The Volunteers investigated larcenies and assaults and brought the offenders to trial. If the courts imposed a sentence of imprisonment they had no prisons in which to keep the prisoners. They found a way out of the difficulty by making the prisoners put in their time working for farmers in remote areas. They were afraid to escape as they would be picked up by the local volunteers. The Louisburgh Volunteers investigated the larceny of furniture from Kylemore Abbey.

The Red Bridge Fight

THE men of the column decided to make it hot for the police, and stop them beating up defenceless people. Patrols of I.R.A. were sent into Westport to teach the Tans a lesson. As soon as these "heroes" heard the "boys" were in town they were afraid to face them and went into local houses until morning.

A patrol of three I.R.A. men—Broddie Malone, Joe Baker and Tom Ketterick, entered Westport to attend a dance held in Cloonskill, for the purpose of providing funds for the A.S.U. They heard that a patrol of 18 R.I.C. were seen in Altamount Street. The I.R.A. men got on to the bridge carrying the Achill railway over the street. From this position they bombed the patrol, using hand-grenades. Fourteen police were wounded in this attack. The I.R.A. then returned to the dance before midnight. The action lasted from ten to twenty minutes. The three men spent the remainder of the night at Davy Gibbons's of Sandyhill, a half mile from Westport.

The town was again scouted on the Sunday night afterwards by Thaddeus Walsh, Ted Morrison, J. J. Gavin and B. Cryan. T. Walsh observed an enemy patrol moving towards the station and ran to the three men on Monument Hill. They immediately ran to the Red Bridge and waited until part of the patrol had passed under the bridge. They then bombed them from both sides. The bombed patrol extended over 100 yards from the first to the last man.

On another occasion three units — Castlebar, Westport and Newport were mobilised at Clogher Cross and at night moved into Westport in hopes of meeting the enemy. The I.R.A. penetrated the town to the Octagon, Lower High Street, The Fairgreen and Castlebar Street. No enemy appeared on the streets of Westport that night.

Waited In Ambush

ON the 18th May, 1921, Ml. Kilroy took the Brigade to Ballinacorrige, Clogher area, between Westport and Newport. They waited in ambush positions but no enemy patrols appeared. The O/C then decided to send men in to attack the enemy in Westport and Newport, and thus draw them out on the roads.

The Westport patrol was in charge of Broddie Malone and was comprised of Paddy and Johnnie Duffy of Cloonskill; Joe Baker, Jimmie Flaherty, Paddy Keane, Rick Joyce and Michael Staunton.

On arrival in Morrin's wood near the Railway Station, the scouts from the town, who always kept a watch on the movement of enemy forces, notified them that a patrol of Tans had gone up Altamount Street. Their number was between 10 and 20. Positions were taken up at the Convent and Mick Malone's forge. The enemy also must have his scouts out because, instead of returning, they went into Dr. O'Rourke's in Altamount St., and remained there until morning. The I.R.A. men also remained in position until daybreak, wondering why the Black and Tans did not come back.

Joe Doherty, O/C of the Newport Unit was sent into Newport. He had with him Michael Gallagher, Jim Moran and big Jim Browne. They made contact with the enemy and one R.I.C. constable was killed. On communications at the time were: Joe Ring, O/C Westport Battn., Jack Keane and L. Hogan, Westport. The Westport men rested at Sandy Hill and the Newport men at D. Mulchrone's in Aughagowla.

Fight at Clogher Cross

ON the 23rd April, 1921, men of the Westport Unit lay in ambush at Clogher Cross. At 10 p.m. three lorry loads of the enemy came along. They came under rifle and shotgun fire from the I.R.A. and after a hot engagement the Tans moved off. It was reported that three of their numbers were wounded.

The following Volunteers took part: Joe Ring, O/C; Broddie Malone, Deputy O/C; T. Heavey, J. Duffy, P. Duffy, J. Flaherty, J. Flaherty, J. Baker, T. Ainsworth, M. Naughton, J. McDonagh, M. Staunton, J. Collins, N. Hogan and J. Bradley.

On the night of the Clogher Cross ambush the A.S.U. were moving from Carna to an ambush point on the Castlebar-Westport road at Sheeane Hill. Driminalor Company had been ordered to cut the road at Sheeane. It was reported that occasionally a lorry of Tans left Castlebar for Westport about midnight. The Westport boys assembled at Jim Moran's of Derrygorman, and afterwards moved to the ambush point. They waited until dawn but no lorry came. The Drummindoo Company was lying out waiting on the Castlebar Road on the same night.

Search For Tan Inspector

A SHORT time before this Westport A.S.U. took up positions at a sharp bend at Barleyhill, on the Newport-Westport road to ambush enemy lorries, travelling between Westport and Newport. After waiting all day no enemy passed. They then moved to the Newport area and stayed at Pim's Lodge at Rossbarnagh. They were made welcome by Mr. M. O'Donnell, caretaker at Pims, who made them comfortable.

They hoped while in the area to make contact and kill, a notorious Black and Tan Inspector named Fudge, who was terrifying the countryside around Newport at the time. He failed to show up and the Unit was taken across to Tier-naur in a boat by a Volunteer named Gibbons. They returned via Ballincollig to Westport area.

Newport Held

ON another occasion Ml. Kilroy and the Newport A.S.U. left ambush positions at Yellow River and Leap Burris-hoole to go to help Tom Maguire and his column, who were hard pressed at Partry. On their way to Westport they passed through Newport town and occupied it for an hour. Men in need of clothing were outfitted. The local R.I.C. remained in their barracks in Castlebar Street while the "boys" were in town.

Glenhest Man Beaten

ANTHONY Callaghan, Glenhest, Newport, was one of the I.R.A. who were beaten up by the Black and Tans. He was beaten so badly that he was left for dead but he survived and went on the run in the Nephin mountains. He had a second escape from death when Black and Tan bullets ripped his shirt to bits without hurting him.

It happened when he returned to his home on April 21st, 1921, to get arms he had hidden there. Soon after arriving at his home a lorry of Tans drove past and went down to Letterbrick Barracks, at the foot of Nephin. He waited for an hour to let them go back to Newport. Mr. Callaghan heard the noise of the lorry passing

the road leading to his house and started across the fields for the mountains. He was only gone 20 yards when bullets began to fly around him. The Tans had alighted from the lorry and left the engine running to fool Callaghan.

The I.R.A. man kept running with the enemy firing after him. As he was crossing a fence 200 yards away bullets cut the shirt off his shoulders. He was running towards the river when he saw some police in front of him. They had left the lorry before it reached the house. There was nothing to do but surrender. Remembering the beating he got on a previous occasion Mr. Callaghan asked District Inspector Munroe to shoot him on the spot and have done with it.

The District Inspector said that was the first time a man asked to be shot. Anthony said he could not stand another beating. With Ml. McNulty, Glenhest, he was taken to Newport Barracks. They were kept in the Barracks for five days and then removed to Galway Jail. Sergeant Butler, Newport, was in charge of the escort. The Sergeant never entered the Barracks again. The next time he left his home to go on duty he was shot dead.

West Mayo Prisoners

CALLAGHAN and McNulty were later removed to Rath Internment Camp, where among the 1,500 I.R.A. men in the living hell they met the following from West Mayo: Tom Derrigg, Joe McBride, Sinn Fein M.P. C. Gavin, and Peter Kelly, High Street, Westport; Joe Fergus, Tom Sammon, Jim Sammon and P. J. Prendeagast, Louisburgh; W. Fergus and J. Needham, Culleen, Murrisk; Broddie McLoughlin, Drummin, Westport. This man's father died while he was interned and he was refused permission to attend his funeral.

Others there were: P. O'Connor and L. Moran, Loughloon, Westport; Tom Bourke and J. McLoughlin, Doon, do.; Hubert Reid, Aughagower; John Kilroy and J. Clinton, Newport; Anthony McNamara and Ml. Gallagher, Achill; Peter Touhy, Islandeady; Pat and Ml. Tunney, Cushlough.

About 70 prisoners escaped through a tunnel dug from one of the huts and under the barbed wire. Charley Gavin of Westport, was one of those who escaped that time.

I.R.A. leaders from all over Ireland were in the camp including 25 men from South Mayo.

The Black and Tans tortured and hosed prisoners in the Camp and some of them lost their health because of the conditions there.

(To be Continued).

Briefs From
Ballaghaderreen

Ballindine Road
Objection

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