

THOUSANDS OF TROOPS
POUR INTO WESTPORT

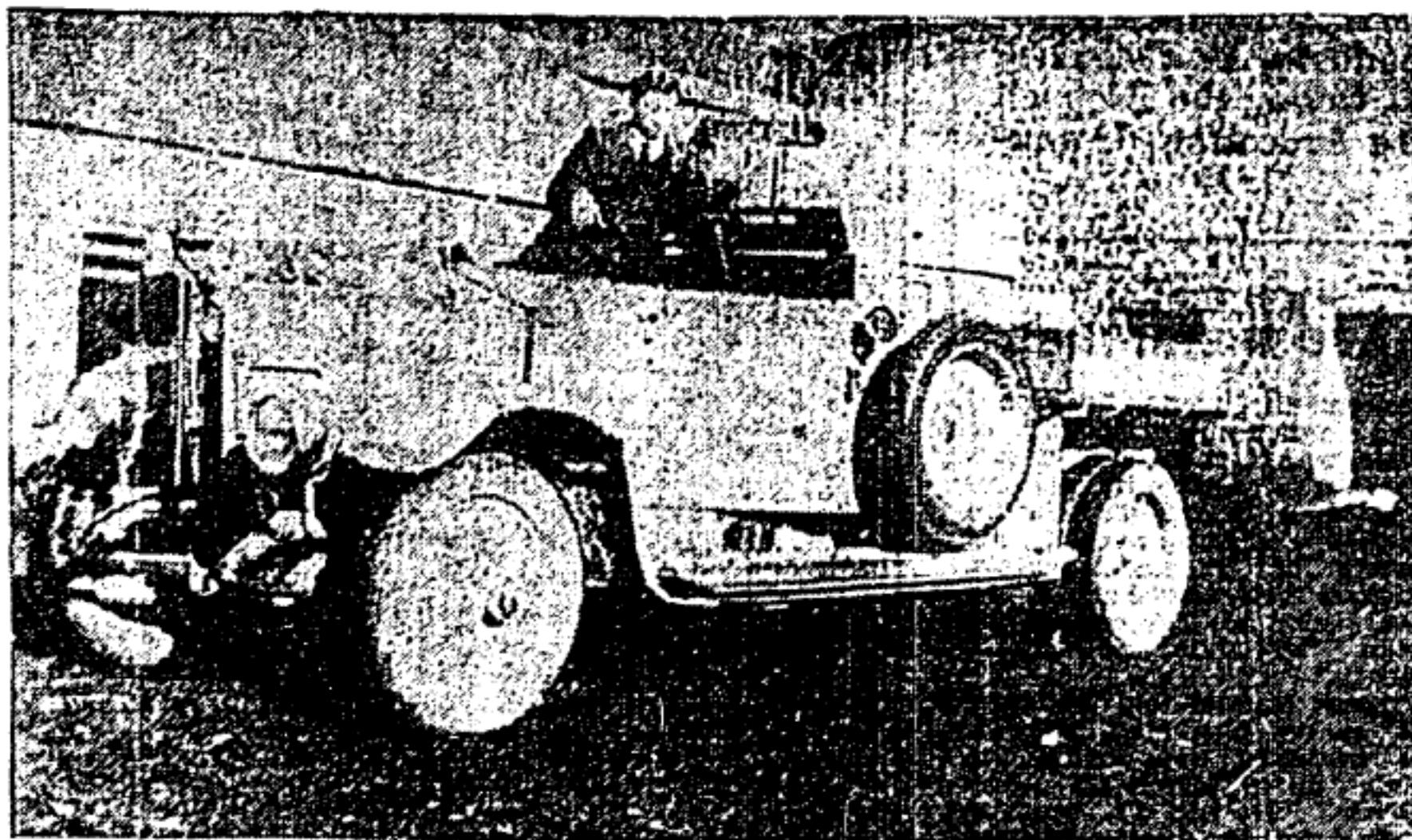
★ WOMEN, THE REAL
SOLDIERS OF CAMPAIGN ★

TANS AND POLICE
CREATE DESTRUCTION

WEST MAYO'S FIGHTING STORY

As told to—

Anthony
Lavelle



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, 1902, 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 it 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 famous armoured car, "Ballinlee," which was well known to both sides in North Mayo and Sligo during the Civil War.

AFTER Carrowkennedy ambush thousands of British troops were poured into Westport in an effort to capture the Column which had inflicted such an ignominious defeat on them.

The officers of the I.R.A. decided that the best way to avoid capture was to split up into small groups and get through the enemy lines.

P. Kelly, O/C Louisburgh Battalion, and three Volunteers from Louisburgh and four or five men from Newport decided to go to the Louisburgh area.

They were received and protected by the reliable Cullen people—the Hynes's, Gavin's, O'Malley's, Kelly's, Joyce's and Ryder's. They liked especially to visit the latter family. Old Thomas Ryder and his wife and their neighbours, Thomas Fergus and his sister (now Mrs. A. Harney, Louisburgh), were exceptionally hospitable and helpful. After a good meal the Volunteers went to bed and were looking forward to a much needed rest, when they were aroused by a volunteer named Gavan, from Lecanvey, who informed them that thousands of troops, Tans, etc., had gone from Westport to Louisburgh. The men left the house immediately and went up on the crest of a hill where they could observe the enemy movement and where good cover was available in the deep ravines cut by the torrents flowing down Croagh Patrick. An aeroplane, which was on a scouting mission, came right over them and flew low along the ravine, as if it spotted something. This was an anxious moment for all but luckily the plane continued its flight.

There was a Land Commission ganger there, named Pat Maguire, working on Glan farm. They asked him to send some of his workers up the mountain as if they were looking for sheep. They reported on the movements of the enemy.

LOUISBURGH MEN ARRESTED

LATER one man who had gone into Louisburgh informed them that Andy Harney, and his brothers John P. and Larry, were arrested at dawn, when they were sleeping in an unoccupied house in Legan farm. A large number of young men were rounded up that day around Louisburgh.

The military had a camp at Old Head. The column men then decided that if they could get into the area that had been combed they

would be safe, so when night fell they made straight in that direction. It was difficult as the searchlights from a gun-boat in Clew Bay were being thrown over the land at intervals of every ten minutes. They got as far as Tooreen and called to see the Harney family, who were much put out after the events of the day. They decided not to stay as the enemy might return. They called on Dr. O'Grady, a friend of theirs across the road, who was not suspected and had a good rest during the following day listening to enemy lorries passing outside.

Martin O'Reilly, I.O., in Louisburgh, suggested that they go to his father's house, at the end of Chapel Street, which had been raided. The way was scouted by Kathleen O'Reilly (now Mr. P. Kelly) and Miss Julia Harney (Mrs. Con Ryan) both members of Cumann na mBan.

They were welcomed by Simon O'Reilly and his wife and rested there for some time.

THE TRUCE

A FEW days later all the men on the run learned of the Truce between England and the Irish leaders and they returned to their homes. When they appeared on the streets they were welcomed by many friends.

They little knew that in less than a year their arms would be turned against one another, in a dreadful Civil War. But that is another story.

TRIBUTE TO WOMEN

THE real soldiers of the whole campaign were the women, who cooked, washed, darned and fed the members of the column. They often give beds to the tired men on the run and in many cases were better soldiers than their husbands and sons and did more to encourage the I.R.A. to continue in what looked like a forlorn hope. It would be unfair to mention some and leave out others so we can only pay tribute to them all.

DESTRUCTION IN WESPORT

THERE were a large number of incidents during the fight for Freedom that are well worth a mention.

One of them was the night the Tans burned a house in Westport, wrecked shops and beat up relatives of Column men. It happened two nights after one

policeman was killed and three wounded in the Drummin area.

The Tans and Police created a reign of terror in Westport for 5 hours. They went around drunk, wrecked the contents of shops, used heavy bombs on buildings and removed all furniture to the middle of the street and burned it. They threatened T. Ketterick's parents, with revolvers, burned their furniture and bullied the women in Broddy Malone's house and told them what would happen to the men of the column when they found them.

The Tans harnessed Ned Hoban and Malone's father to a sidecar and rode around the town whipping the elderly men in order to make them go faster. They made them go faster. They made them eat raw salt ling and hammered them with revolver butts. While they were pulling men out of their beds Malone escaped. They went to Malone's house looking for him and threatened to shoot his daughter when she told them she did not know where her father had gone.

They then got a man named Reilly and put him under the car in place of Malone. Reilly was made to paint the fountain in the Fairgreen red white and blue. They wrecked the home of Charles Hughes, at the corner of High St., Hughes, at the corner of High Street and Shop Street, and flung a piano out of the top window.

Questions were asked about the destruction of Westport in the British Parliament and the Attorney General in reply stated: "The house of one person and the contents of others were systematically destroyed by members of the Crown forces, acting under orders from their superior officers. The persons whose property was destroyed were known to the police to be actually engaged in the rebel conspiracy. The decision to destroy property was taken by the responsible police officer on the spot, acting on his own discretion. I am satisfied that the officer concerned acted according to the best of his judgment, believing that immediate action of a drastic character was called for, if future outrages were to be averted."

This strange reply came after six months of continuous questioning in the Commons as members tried to make Government representatives state that their troops or police had been responsible for reprisals.

The same thing happened in almost every town in Ireland as drunken Tans were let loose on the people.

LOUISBURGH FAIR DAY RIOT

A CORRESPONDENT has sent me in an account of an attack by police on a Volunteer Parade in Louisburgh on the 9th December, 1918.

It was the fair before Christmas and the town was packed with people. As it was also the week before the General Election and the officers of the Volunteers headed by a band were to parade through the streets to a meeting addressed by Tom Derrig and Joe McBride.

R.I.C. from Westport and other places were drafted in to Louisburgh to stop the meeting. Fifty to sixty police armed with carbines, under a District Inspector named Hanlon.

The parade was in charge of A. McDonald and T. Harney and in the front rank were several wanted men whom the police had failed to capture.

As the parade advanced the D.I. ordered the police to intercept the parade and arrest the men in front. Sergeant Higgins, who was in charge of Louisburgh Barracks, was the first man to put his hand on McDonald's shoulder and as he did so he was struck with a stout staff (which had a little tricolour attached) and felled to the ground. He was almost trampled to death in the melee that followed, as the parade broke up with the excitement. McDonald made off through the crowd but weakened by illness he was unable to escape from ten armed police who followed.

It took 30 police to clear a way through the crowd and to the Barracks as volleys of sticks and stones rained down on the heads of the police. A few members of the R.I.C. were medically treated and the Sergeant was brought to the barrack in a pool of blood.

Tom Derrig addressed the meeting but after a sentence or two the police came near the platform, firing off their guns to stampede the people who remained steadfast.

Tom Derrig assured them with perfect calmness that the shots they had heard were only a prelude to what would resound throughout the length and breadth of the land in a few months.

A. McDonald received a sentence of 12 months in Galway Jail. Tom Harney escaped to the Capital and those two men later played an honourable part in the later War of Independence—being attached to a unit of the Dublin Brigade.

(To be continued).

£400 MALICIOUS INJURY CLAIM AGAINST
MAYO COUNTY COUNCIL

Lackney Owner's Car

Department's Letter On Well-Boring
Irks Councillor

"This Looks Fierce Daf."

group scheme without boring a well first Get the water and organise the group scheme then I think this is a very wrong approach by the Minister," Mr. Kivlehan added

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Judge J. Circuit Court missed an damages on gan, a 63 Kossick, E. agant Jan can and g Ballina to adged to at the rea Premises on The acti alleged in dant's yard he was a Ratter (21 assistant st tured leg The ev de heard by t ruary sess of It for subm When the Thursday. B.L. Ginst Gillyvray so said if the dant was injury he v natural ances to that Mr. J. L. by Mr P the defence ence it w had been t vious occas licensed inclined to he had dr should hold committed The