

L.R.A. BURNINGS IN LIVERPOOL

OPERATION DESCRIBED BY ACHILL VOLUNTEER

CAPTURED MEN INTERNED IN BALLYKINLAR CAMP

WEST MAYO'S FIGHTING STORY

As told to—

Anthony Lavelle



This picture shows the passage through Headford, Co. Galway, of the funeral of a number of executed members of the Second Western Division I.R.A. in transit to a Republican plot at Donaghpatrick (4 miles from Headford). The following men were executed on January 20th, 1923, by the Free State Army for carrying arms—Captain Martin Burke, Manuslynn, Caherlistrane, Co. Galway; Captain Stephen Joyce, Caherlistrane; Captain Michael Walsh, do.; Vol. Hubert Collins, Kilkeel, Headford, and Lieut. Thomas Hughes, Athlone. On the 11th April, 1923, 6 more members of the 2nd Western Division were executed at Tuam. They were Comdt Frank Cunnane, Killeona, Headford; Lieut. John Maguire, Cross, Cong; Lieut. John Newall, Cloghanover, Headford; Vol. Martin Moylan, Farmerstown, Annaghdown, Co. Galway; Vol. Seamus O'Malley, Oughterard. The bodies of the executed men were handed over to the relatives in October of the same year and with the exception of Lieut. Hughes all the men were buried at Donaghpatrick. The 2nd Western Division I.R.A., was commanded by Comdt. General Thos. Maguire, who resides at Cross, Cong. Photo (Copyright): J. Leonard & Son, Bofeenau

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 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.

LAST week we told how the L.R.A. burned 17 warehouses at Liverpool and Bottle Docks as a protest against the destruction of lives and property in Ireland by British Forces. This week Sean Mor Lynchelann, Pollranny, Achill Sound, tells how they carried out the operation.

He said there 200 hundred members in the Liverpool Battalion of the L.R.A. Their work was to help the boys at home by purchasing arms and sending them home when men from Ireland came to collect them. They had their headquarters in Scotland Road and used to meet in the back room of O'Connor's pub. One day they got orders to burn the docks, warehouses and timber yards. Liverpool was to get the first rattle of the L.R.A. raids on the 28th November, 1920. They planned the operation and had to get bolt cutters and supplies of paraffin oil. The men selected were armed but they had orders not to cause loss of life and not to fire except in self-defence. The time selected for the burning was 8-10 p.m. when the police on the docks where changed. The Volunteers had to go in with bolt cutters under their top coats, and also tins of oil.

Mr. Lynchelann said: "There were two miles of warehouses. I was on one side cutting bolts off the doors and M. Byrne, a Dublin man, was on the other side. When Byrne had ten bolts cut he came over and said his bolt cutters had broken and asked me to do his I cut the bolts on my side and then I went over and cut his side. Other men came along with tins spilling oil on the goods and lighting them. We were all armed with revolvers but were not supposed to take life. When the stores began to burn there was terrible confusion with fire sirens screaming and fire brig-

ades rushing to the scene. In the confusion the most of us escaped and made for a Ceili in Scotland Road.

Michael Moran, Doonagh, and Charlie Barrett, N.T., Keel, had a clash with police but managed to escape. In escaping Michael Moran lost his cap. Later when arrested the police tried fitting the cap on each one of us to see if it would fit. The men, in escaping, knocked out policemen with bolt cutters and oil tins. Also there were: P. J. Rowland, Keel; a man named T. Tighe from North Mayo; Joe Kelly, Ballaghaderreen; Michael Doogan, Bleanaskill, Achill.

SWALLOWED LIST OF NAMES

CONTINUING the story, Sean said they were working the next day on the docks and everybody was talking about the fires. He said to some English workers: "They must be an awful pack of so and so's to do the like." The Englishman replied: "The city must be full of them, God help us."

Sean then explained that that was the way the British Forces were carrying on in Ireland—burning and killing all before them.

The Englishmen said they would see their members of Parliament and get them to stop the war in Ireland.

After the fires every house where Irishmen were lodging was searched. A detective was stationed in every street.

Sean told how a spy gave them away. He said they were all in the back room in O'Connor's when a Navy man who used to sell them

arms, came in. He saw them all there reading the newspapers, which carried glaring accounts of burnings. He said he had to go out for a paper, and although they offered him papers he went out. He was not long gone when in came a number of detectives. One of them said: "You are all under arrest—don't stir."

Sean added: "We flung all the papers we had into the fire and Joe Kelly of Ballaghaderreen, stuffed a list of names into his mouth and swallowed it before the detectives could get it. The Navy man came in again and offered to sell them a revolver and 500 rounds of ammunition while the detectives were there. Sean told him in pretty strong language, what to do with it. They were all brought to the Bridewell and were there two weeks before they were charged. They were paraded every day while police looked out through holes at them. This was done so that they could recognise them at their trial.

INTERNED IN IRELAND

THEY were all shipped to Ballykinlar Camp in the North of Ireland, until the Truce.

In the camp they fought to have their own officers. They had to wash their own clothes and were fed on American bacon which was terrible to eat. The cocoa served was rotten. It was very cold in the camp and they got very few newspapers. They used the newspapers as blankets to keep themselves warm. When released they were sent to Liverpool where they were met by a pipers band and got a tremendous welcome.

THE LATE DICK WALSH

SEAN told how he met the late Dick Walsh of Balla, Willie Malone and Tom Keterick of Westport, when they were over in Liverpool buying arms. He brought Dick Walsh to his lodgings and on the way they were stopped by a policeman who asked who the stranger was. Sean told him this man was over looking for work. Another policeman who came up, referring to Sean, said: "This man is all right he works in the docks every day." Dick went away the next day with the arms. Friendly customs' men let them pass.

THE BLACK AND TANS

SEAN also told that he saw the police authorities in Liverpool fitting out the Black and Tans in the Barracks. They took men out of prisons and mental homes, put them in uniforms and sent them to Ireland.

The Tans came to Achill at one time and went into the licensed premises owned by Mr. Anthony O'Malley, Achill Sound, and after taking plenty free drink they started to make a revolver range of the bar by shooting at the bottles on the shelves.

The Tans also paid a visit to Newfield and Tiarannaur where they beat an I.R.A. man named Larry McGovern, and his sister Tillie McGovern and knocked all the teeth out of their heads. They also raided the premises of John Gibbons of Newfield.

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KEVIN I

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WORLD'S



Wedding



Charges Against Sligo Publican Dismissed