

STORIES OF THE REVOLUTION 1916-1923

The Clonakilty area is an area of great interest for historians as there was a lot of activity here in relation to the Revolution in 1916- 1923.

Woodfield is the birthplace of Michael Collins who was one of the leaders of the IRA. He used to go to school in Clonakilty and often stayed with his aunt in the Emmet Square.

There were occasional raids on the Royal Irish Constabulary barracks for ammunition and guns which was located at the top of McCurtain Hill. This building is still in use today as the Garda Station.

During this period, there were many informers in the town. The IRA used to barge into the informer's house and charge them with the offence of informing. The penalty for these actions was normally execution.

My Great Granda told my Granny that the IRA used to come at night time and take the horses that they owned. The horses used to be returned by sunrise the following morning. If they didn't give them the horses they were threatened to be killed. They sometimes asked for food.

There are many stories passed down through the generations. My Dad told me he was told a story from a man from Barryroe. He said that if they were out working in the fields and they saw a convoy of trucks with the black and tans in them, they would run for cover as they often took pot shots at them for fun.

Michael Collins was in the West Cork area meeting his own people and on his journey back to Dublin they decided to take the back roads home thinking it would be safer than the main roads. Once they reached Béal na Bláth, the road was blocked. Instead of turning back, Collins gave the order to remove the blockade. It was here they were ambushed. A gun fight broke out and unfortunately Michael was fatally wounded.

The division of the army that was present that day when Michael was shot were the same people who escorted his body back to Dublin. They wore black berets with two ribbons as a mark of respect to Collins, one for the day he was shot and the other for the funeral. That division in the present day army still wear the two ribbons as a sign of mourning for the loss of their leader.

A friend of my Dads that lives in Douglas was in a house when he was very young with his father. The house belonged to his Dads friend. He was one of the men at the ambush firing at Collins and his men. This was in 1967. A fancy Rolls Royce pulled up outside the house. It was a film producer called Albert Broccoli, he was there to find out who shot Michael Collins. He signed a cheque that day and told them to write in whatever amount of money they wanted for the information. He tore up the blank cheque and said that he swore a pact the day of the ambush to take that information to his grave with him.

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