

Paddy O'Brien

My name is Maebh O'Brien. I will be talking about my great-granddad, Paddy O'Brien. He was born on the 12th December 1895 and died on the 8th December 1979. Paddy grew up in Gurlough. He was also the tenth generation of O'Brien's of Gurlough to live in that townland. I am the thirteenth generation. Paddy grew up on a farm with his two sisters, Sr. Brendan and Sr. Louise, his mother Bridget Murphy and his father John O'Brien. His father was a member of The Phoenix Society. Paddy and his two sisters attended Ballinacarriga N.S.

When Paddy grew up he became very involved in the Irish movement. Paddy was secretary of the Ballinacarriga Sinn Féin Club. He was also a high ranking officer in the volunteers. There were lots of groups of volunteers in the area including Aultagh, Ballineen, Dunmanaway, Behagh and Ballinacarriga. They held secret meetings at the same time as sports days and feiseanna so they wouldn't be caught. The first of their meetings was held in Dunmanaway on the 19th June 1918. That meeting

was stopped when the British charged at the people with batons.

The volunteers also raided wealthy houses like Kilcaskin Castle and Conors of Manch for gun powder, guns, blankets, clothes etc. When the volunteers raided Kilcaskin Castle Paddy found a French Officer's jacket. Paddy's Aunt fitted the jacket to him. Tom Barry saw the jacket on Paddy and asked him if he could use it.

The volunteers also arranged training camps in the Autumn of 1918. The first training camp was held in Aultagh. The second training camp was held in Paddy's house in Gurlough which lasted a week. The volunteers trained during the cold winter nights. Any local people who had guns gave them to the volunteers. The volunteers also went on marches through Ballineen playing bagpipes as they went to show that they were unified. They trained hard for two years until they were ready to start The Kilmichael Ambush.

The first official column of Cork III Brigade was started on the night of the 21st November 1920. They were called the Flying Column. They gathered in Enniskenne on the 27th November. It was a normal winters day wet and cold. The volunteers left at 5:00am in the morning and headed for Kilmicheal. They walked through fields and old lanes so they wouldn't be seen by informers. The volunteers didn't want anyone to know what they were doing so nobody could warn the British soldiers. The volunteers arrived at the Ambush site at about 8:00am on Sunday 28th November. Paddy was in command of Section Three. He was positioned on the South side of the Ambush site in a bog-hole.

The British usually travelled on this road on a Sunday afternoon with three lorries (tenders), but on that particular Sunday there were only two. The tenders arrived at about 4:00pm. Tom Barry stepped into view in his French officer's jacket. The British were curious and slowed. A hail of bullets rang out from the volunteers. The Kilmicheal Ambush lasted about 8 minutes. Every British

Soldier was killed except one who escaped the Ambush site. Three of the 32 Irish volunteers were killed and were later buried in Inistletown-Kenneigh. The column left Kilmicheal at about 4:30pm and walked to Granure weighed down with arms and ammunition. The trek to Granure was approximately 11 miles long. There were 17 rifles, 17 revolvers, 7 Mills bombs and other heavy equipment. The volunteers went to a safe house in Granure called "The Faraway Camp".

On the 6th February 1921, Paddy heard that his home in Gurlough was burned to the ground by Dunmanway Auxiliaries. Paddy's father aged 65 was pulled out of his bed and shot. He was not killed but seriously wounded and injured for the rest of his life. The Auxiliaries also took their animals and their farming tools before they burned the house.

All these brave men and woman risked their lives for the freedom of our country. That is why I am proud to be Irish.

Written by Maebh O'Brien.

1th Class,

Ballinacarriga N.S.,

Kilvinane

Dunmanway

Co. Lork

Told by Micheal O'Brien.

Ballinacarriga

Dunmanway

Co. Lork

Paddy aged 24



This photo was taken of Paddy when he was 24 years. He is wearing a French officer's jacket. The jacket was later worn by Tom Barry in The Kilmichael Ambush.

Surviving Members At The Kilmicheal Monument



In the photo above there are five surviving members from The Kilmicheal Ambush including Paddy. From left to right: Patrick O' Donovan (Tonafora), Tim O' Connell (Cooleenagow), Ned Young (Dunmanway), Paddy O'Brien (Gurlough), Jack O' Sullivan (Kealkil). They are standing in front of the monument in Kilmicheal.

Medals awarded to Paddy O'Brien



Paddy was awarded three medals for his involvement with the Irish Movement. The medal on the left is for the Local Defence Force. The medal in the centre is for The War of Independence. The third medal was awarded to Paddy having survived 50 years after the Ambush.