

## Stories from "The Troubles Era"

These are the stories recounted to me by an elderly gentleman living in my area who had these stories passed on from his parents.

There were two church of Ireland gentlemen shot dead sometime between 1920 + 1921 in the townland of Lissaruhig in the parish of Skibbereen. They were shot by the local Column of the IRA volunteers because it was assumed that these two men were spies for the British establishment. Their names were Mr Matt Sweetman and Mr Bill Connell. These men were local farmers and apparently had no involvement in the local activities, only that it <sup>was</sup> rumoured that Mr Sweetman's daughter was involved with a British soldier from the local 6<sup>th</sup> British Regiment. They left behind wives and children.

In and around 1919 a Black and Tan British ~~soldiers~~ from the Skibbereen Regiment went raiding a local house. The house belonged to a Mr Patrick O' Discoll from the Parish of Mohonagh who was at that time an IRA Activist. As the Black and Tan was looking up the chimney of the dwelling house looking for guns and ammunition he accidentally shot himself with his own gun which he was holding in his hand. The people of the house and the other Black and Tans had to bring the dead man back to the local barracks in the Family's Horse and Cart.

There was a local IRA training camp in the townland of Lissanahig. One day Mr Tom Barry the local Squadron leader arrived to inspect the camp and the men. With the excitement of the arrival of Mr Barry there was some confusion and Mr Patrick O' Driscoll of the previous story was shot dead by one of his comrades. Mr O' Leary was the name of the man who shot Mr O' Driscoll.

Mr Neilus Connolly was born in the townland of Smorane at Glenville House. At the age of sixteen, Neilus became very interested in the national "Cause" as it was called at the time. He was a great friend of Mr Tom Barry and Mr Micheal Collins who was shot at Béal na Bláth later on. Neilus and his comrades collected money from farmers for the cause. One day Neilus's house was surrounded by the local Black and Tans. Neilus slipped out the top window and into a heap of bushes and was covered by the same and escaped the Black and Tans.

Neilus Connolly was very involved in the area through out all the years of "The Troubles". One day he had his rifle inside the leg of his baggy trousers which were the fashion of the day. He was travelling by what is Cork Road today when he was surrounded by the Black and Tans. He was asked where he was going?

He said he was going south and kept walking on. The Tans called him back and before he turned around he dropped the gun into the ditch which went unnoticed by the Tans. He told them he was going to an Aunt's funeral. One of the soldiers asked Neilus to light his cigarette which he did with his matches and started to walk again, and again he was called back. The soldier said "Here you will need your matches to light the candle at your Aunt's funeral." Neilus took the matches and walked away. When the soldier got back to their barracks they recognised the man in the "Wanted man picture" on the wall and realised that this was the very man they had just met down the road and had got away!

Neilus Connolly was on the run a lot as he was a well known activist. He used to sleep in a local cave in Smorane. While he was in the cave he would soak his oil skin clothes in waste oil so that the soldiers could not catch or hold him if he was arrested.

Neilus Connolly was the last man to speak to Mr Michael Collins, the leader, before he left the Eldon Hotel to continue on his journey which ended in his death.

Neilus and Mr Tom Barry went to all the local areas to recruit local men for an ambush. They met at Minehans pub in Lisheen one night

They did not get any volunteers on that night and went back to Skibbereen. They were very disappointed.

Mr Neilus Connolly was eventually arrested and sent to Jail in the midlands, the North and In England. While in Jail in the UK he escaped and went into a monastery and met a monk. He hid him and after a few days he hid him in a 40 Gallon barrell and put him on the boat back to Ireland. When he arrived in Ireland he walked the journey back to west Cork avoiding arrest, going through Durmonway <sup>when</sup> he met two nice officers and took off his hat and said "Good day Sirs" and kept going. He got the train to Drimoleage and got off at smorane. He stayed in a 'safe house' there and resurfaced after 3-4 days, again he avoided re-arrest.

Mr Patrick McCarthy from the townland of Morrahilly, in the local parish of Aughadown was an irregular in the civil war which followed the 1916 rising. One day the freestate soldiers from the other side surrounded the irregulars Barracks in Skibbereen. Patrick was there at the time and was lighting a cigarette a short distance away and was spotted and shot by the freestate soldier. Prior to his death Patrick was known locally as "Kilmallock" and his last words before he died was "Kilmallock will fight no more". There is a plaque to Patrick in Skibbereen.

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January 2017

Source of Information = Mr John O'Connor  
Mr Micheal Connolly.