

Kilmichael Ambush

This is about the Kilmichael Ambush which took place during The War of Independence in 1920. The war which followed The Easter Rising in 1916 which was resumed early in 1919 and increased in intensity during that year and 1920 and 1921. The British Government, who were resisting the campaign of the IRA volunteers to achieve independence for Ireland, introduced an auxiliary Police force from England and they carried out a campaign of terror over most of the country.

Tom Barry who was the Commandant of West Cork Brigade Flying Column decided that this should be dealt with.

Macroom Castle was the headquarters of the auxiliary force and a contingent of them travelled regularly from Macroom to Dunmanway.

Tom Barry's men gathered at a house near Ballineen on Saturday night 27th November, before setting out on the long march to Kilmichael which was on the main Macroom to Dunmanway Road. The volunteers arrived at Kilmichael early on Sunday morning, where they waited all day in the cold and wet and with very little food.

Around 4 o'clock in the evening the signal came that the auxiliaries were approaching. They were travelling in two open lorries known as Crossley Tenders. Tom Barry, who was wearing an army great coat, stepped out to the middle of the road and the driver of the first lorry, thinking that he was a British army officer, stopped.

The battle started immediately. Tom Barry lofted a Mills Bomb into the lorry. The firing commenced, and in the hand to hand combat that followed seventeen Auxiliaries were killed.

Three of the IRA volunteers also lost their lives – Michael McCarthy of Dunmanway, Jim O'Sullivan of Rossmore and Pat Deasy of Kilmacsimon Quay near Innishannon, who was only sixteen years of age.

When the battle was over, Tom Barry drilled his men on the road side and then they set off to march cross country, southwards to the townland of Granure a few miles from Ballinacarriga.

In the famous song "The Boys of Kilmichael" written by a man from Ballinacarriga, their destination is described as "The Far Away Camp of Granure".