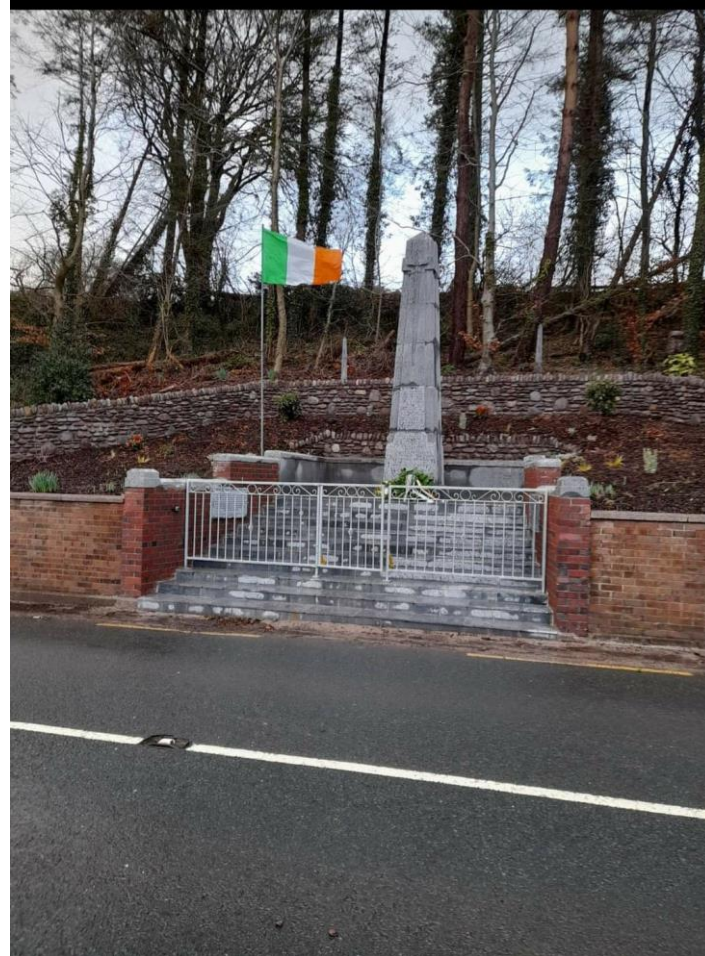


# The Dripsey Ambush 100 year centenary anniversary



**1**

The 28th of January 2021 marks a centenary since 10 young men were captured in a gun battle with British forces near Godfrey's cross on the Dripsey-Coachford road, which became known as the Dripsey Ambush.

Much has been said and written over the decades since that fateful January day when volunteers from local companies laying, in wait to ambush Crown Forces, who passed there on a regular basis. The companies who formed the Donoughmore battalion were: Blarney; Coachford; Courtbrack; Donoughmore; Grenagh; Inniscarra and Rylane.

The companies in the battalion became very active from 1918 onwards, training became more intense and by 1920 the war with Britain had intensified, the Black and Tans were already in the country threatening and intimidating people, taking pot shots at people working in the fields, and burning people out of house and home. They had to be stopped and the volunteers were prepared to put their lives on the line in doing so.

Good intelligence work in the Coachford-Dripsey area reported to their superiors that two lorries, and sometimes three of auxiliaries passed each Friday from Macroom to Ballincollig via Dripsey at approximately 11.30 am, so a plan was put in place to ambush them. When choosing the site Jackie O'Leary Battalion O.C. Frank Buateed, vice O.C. and Sean O'Hegarty Brigade Vice O.C. (who resided in Cork City) visited the area as well as senior officers from Coachford Company, and plans were put in place for an ambush on Friday January 28th 1921. The 6th Battalion who had been in a training camp in Kilcullen on the Donoughmore-Rylane boarder since early January were billeted in a discussed farmhouse at Carrig-na-Muc near Peake, here about a dozen Volunteers acted as scouts while the Flying Column rested for the night while as many as 20 more went to the Ambush site to dig a deep trench and an escape route about 30yards from the road. They also had to prepare a tree for blocking the road by sawing it practically the whole way through and tying it with a rope to ensure it did not fall before the right moment. All work was completed by around 5am.

The Flying Column were in the trench before 7am, the remaining Volunteers and scouts taking up strategic positions, so now all was in readiness. They stayed in their positions for hours on end on a cold, showery day.

**2**

Meanwhile, word of the planned Ambush was common knowledge in the villages of Dripsey and Coachford and surrounding area. It was indeed while shopping in Coachford that the news of the proposed ambush reached the ears of one Mary Georgina Lindsay. Mrs. Lindsay a Mayo native and her husband John, who hailed by Banbridge in Co. Down purchased Leemount house near Coachford in the early 1900s. The Lindsays who were extreme unionists were well known for hosting lavish parties and frequently entertained the gentry from far and near at their mansion in Leemount. On hearing the news of the planned ambush, Mrs. Lindsay was reported to be very disturbed and met with Fr. Edmund Shinnick who was curate in Coachford at the time and left him in no doubt that she was going to inform the military in Ballincollig, and inform them she did, which was to have

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devastating consequences for the 6th battalion and eventually for herself and her chauffeur, James Clarke.

In the interim, Fr. Shinnick, who incidentally was no friend of the volunteers and who frequently denounced all ambush activities from the pulpit, warned his congregation that anybody involved in such behaviour would risk excommunication by his Lordship, the bishop.

Yet it is fair to say Fr. Shinnick did send word to the Volunteers through an intermediary, that the military in Ballincollig were informed of their plan at Godfrey Cross. On hearing the news, most of the officers in charge were convinced that the said cleric was up to his old tricks and antics again trying to scare them off, they seemed to take no notice of him, but, on this occasion it was for real. It's easy to be wise in hindsight, but the decision to stay had disastrous consequences for the Flying Column. The Volunteers stayed steadfastly in their position, one can only imagine what it was like having been in the trench since before 7am, as well as the young scouts who were on the lookout and maybe with poor communication with one another.

In the meantime, a convey of lorries drove out of Ballincollig military barracks shortly after 4 O'clock heading for Dripsey. On board were dozens of well trained, well fed, warm clothed military who now had the element of surprise on their side. Having travelled via Canons Cross and along by Inniscarra Dam and on to Dripsey from the east they took everybody by surprise.

Two lorries stopped at Dripsey Cross where they dismounted, while two more lorries drove along the Mill Road towards Peake where they entered the fields and headed for Godfrey's Cross soon, the ambushers were almost completely surrounded.

As soon as the British were sighted, the signal to withdraw was given. They were almost completely surrounded and outnumbered and were it not for the bravery of the cover party, commanded by Captain Jim Barrett who took on the British and slowed down the advancing troops long enough a blood bath would surely have ensued.

In the gun battle 10 men were captured and those who were seriously injured were taken to

Sisk's Public house at Dripsey Cross where the publican provided food before they were taken to Ballincollig Barracks and later to Victoria Barracks (now Collins Barracks). The uninjured made good their escape, and their knowledge of the local countryside as well as falling darkness was of paramount importance.

Two of the men captured namely Eugene Langton and Denis Sheehan who were working in a nearby field and had nothing to do with the ambush were released. Jeremiah O'Callaghan from Aghabullagh was found not guilty and released. Seven men in the prison cells were court-martialled and sentenced to death by firing squad on the 28th February 1921 they were named, as Thomas O'Brien and Daniel O'Callaghan from Dripsey; John Lyons, Aghabullough; Timothy McCarthy Fornaught Donoughmore; Patrick O'Mahony, Derry Berrings; Captain Jim Barrett of Firmount Donoughmore who was Battalion Quarter-Master died of his wounds in Cork military prison while still a prisoner on the 22nd of March 1921. Press reports at the time said that Captain Jim Barretts funeral took place from Cork Cathedral at 11.30am on Monday March 24th. There was a military party present, and the officer-in-charge informed the relatives that a crowd of no more than 30/40 people would be allowed to follow his remains as the cortege began, the military took up their positions near the mourners' cars and accompanied the funeral to Donoughmore, despite the threat of the British to curtail numbers, Jim Barrett's funeral was reputed to be the longest funeral ever witnessed in Donoughmore.

The remaining volunteer who was seriously injured and sentenced to death was Denis Murphy, Vicarstown. Denis had his death sentence commuted to 25yrs penal servitude and was released in the General Amnesty in January 1922. Denis went on to live a long and healthy life, and 50yrs on laid a wreath at the monument in honour of his fallen comrades at the Golden Jubilee celebrations on the 28th February 1971.

Meanwhile the remaining volunteers discovered that Mrs. Lindsay was the person who had supplied the military authorities with information about the ambush and, following the sentencing of the





cork IRA executed volunteers Memorial UCC Cork old  
jail