

THE DUBLIN BRIGADE IN CUALA

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On Sunday, 19th September, the Dublin Brigade carried out operations of an extensive and interesting character in South County Dublin. The idea was that a Red force (consisting of the 2nd Battalion, with a small local auxiliary) held the village of Stepside, and that a Green force (consisting of the 1st, 3rd, and 4th Battalions, with an auxiliary from the 5th Battalion) should advance into the district, take Red's position, and either capture or destroy his force. The operations were carried out under the direction of the Genera Staff, Commandant MacDonagh taking the command of Red and Commandant P. H. Pearse of Green.

Stepside is on the main road from Dundrum to Enniskerry, and is a little over four miles south-east of the former. It lies in a hollow, and is dominated on practically every side by hills. It would not, therefore, be capable of defence against a force employing artillery. The operations were, however, conducted on the basis that the opposing forces consisted solely of riflemen, employing neither artillery nor machine guns, numbers and armament being as actually parading. As the cover in the immediate neighbourhood of the village is excellent, the roads in many cases being furnished with ready-made trenches, it was felt that a force of riflemen would be able to defend the position for several hours. It was accordingly laid down that Green was not to move off from his base until 10 a.m., and that unless a decision favourable to Green were reached before 4 p.m., he would not be held to have attained his object. Further, if Red should succeed in effecting his retreat and leave Green only an empty position, the decision would go to Red.

This account is written from the point of view of Green, although it takes note of the movements of both forces, and is not to

be regarded merely as a bulletin issued by Green's commander. It may, however, unconsciously fail at several points to do justice to Red.

Red's main force mobilised at 25 Parnell Square at 7:45 a.m., marched to Harcourt St., took train to Dundrum, and marched to Stepside, where it was joined by the local auxiliaries. Red was thus practically in position before Green moved off from his base.

Green mobilised at various points behind his base, and concentrated at Rathfarnham at 9:30 a.m. From Rathfarnham he marched to Kilmashogue Bridge at 10:30 a.m., the 4th Batt. under Commandant Kent furnishing scouts, advance guard, and connection, the 1st. Batt. under Commandant Daly, together with the Fingall (5th Batt.) auxiliary under Commandant Hayes, forming the main body; and the 3rd Batt. under Commandant De Valera furnishing connection and rearguard. The G.O.C and Staff marched with the main body. To the 4th Batt. there was attached a Cycle Corps of sixty men under Scout-Commander Keegan.

At Kilmashogue Bridge deployment commenced. The 4th Batt. deployed to the right, resting its right on Rockbrook and its left on Kilmashogue. Three Coys. of the 1st Batt. deployed to the left, resting their right on Kilmashogue and their left on Harold's Grange. The 3rd Batt., having scouted the road from Kilmashogue to Harold's Grange (which the 1st immediately occupied), pushed on to the Ticknock Crossroads, and thence to the road junction at Lamb Doyle's, with instructions to push on finally to Sandyford, allowing its left to rest there, and retracting its right to the Lamb Doyle's, to which the 1st would simultaneously extend its left. The whole front, therefore, extended from Rockbrook to Sandyford, the supports and general reserve (furnished by the 1st and 5th, with a substantial reinforcement now arriving from Tallaght) being placed about the centre of this line. This whole movement was carried out exactly as planned, the 3rd Batt. driving in enemy scouts as it advanced.

The following was the plan of attack conceived by the G.O.C. The main attack was to be delivered by the 4th Batt., which was to cross for this purpose Kilmashogue, portion of the Two Rock, and the Three Rock Mountains, thus dropping on the enemy, as it were, out of the clouds. The Cyclist Corps was to be sent round by the

Rockbrook-Glendhu-Glencullen Road, and to occupy Glencullen and Golden Ball, thus outflanking the enemy's left and cutting off his retreat by Golden Ball. The 3rd Batt., having occupied Sandyford, was to push on to Carrickmines, in order to effect a similar object on that side, - the outflanking of the enemy's right and the cutting off of his retreat by Carrickmines. The 1st Batt., with the auxiliaries, was to support the 4th Batt. in the main attack, protect communication with the base and flanks, and furnish the reserve. Thus, the position was to be struck a crushing blow in front at the same moment that retreat was to be cut off at the only two possible points, - Golden Ball and Carrickmines.

To meet this formidable plan of attack, the measures adopted by Red were able and energetic. Foreseeing the attempt to cut off his retreat by Golden Ball, he despatched a Company to occupy the southern slope of the Two Rock Mountain and watch the road from Glendhu to Glencullen. Perceiving the importance of the line Lamb Doyle's-Sandyford-Carrickmines, he despatched another Company to dispute the advance which would undoubtedly be made in that direction. Boldly determined to strike at Green's main line of communications, he despatched a third Company to operate in the rough ground between Ticknock and Harold's Grange. What he does not seem to have foreseen is that the attack in force would be delivered across the mountains. While the wisdom of none of his steps can be questioned, they had cumulatively the effect of unduly weakening Red's reserve; it does not appear that he was able to keep up communication with the outlying Companies; and at the last moment he was unable to draw in those of them which survived, so as to have "full strength" to meet the final assault. The fact is that the total strength at his disposal was hardly large enough to hold the large extent of country which he was forced to occupy.

Green's attack developed practically as pre-arranged. The 3rd. Batt. had some difficulty in pushing along the line Ticknock-Lamb Doyle's-Sandyford, but successfully accomplished the task, surrounding and compelling the surrender of the Red Company which was operating in that quarter. A Red force sent out towards Ticknock and Harold's Grange threatened the communications of the 1st Batt.

from the right as it advanced from Harold's Grange towards Lamb Doyle's in order to be in position to support the 4th Batt. at the proper moment. Two Companies sent up the road or lane which runs up the mountain from Harold's Grange appear to have driven off this body, and it was not again heard from during the day. At 3 p.m. it was reported to H.Q. (then at Lamb Doyle's) that Sandyford was occupied by the 3rd Batt., and simultaneously came the news that the 4th Batt. (which had been delayed in the beginning of its march across the mountains by having to wait to resume touch with its scouts) was now descending the mountain immediately above Stepside, and would shortly be in position to deliver the main attack. The G.O.C. ordered two Companies of the 1st Batt., under Commandant Daly, to support Commandant De Valera, now pushing on from Sandyford to Carrickmines; while he himself, with the remainder of the 1st Batt. and the Fingall and Tallaght auxiliaries, advanced from Lamb Doyle's towards Bamacullia to support Commandant Kent.

The only question now was whether the 4th Batt., after the preliminary delay and its exhausting march, would be able to push home the attack before 4 p.m. Commandant Kent realised that this was absolutely necessary if a favourable decision were to be gained for Green. He accordingly occupied the Bamacullia Road (at the foot of the mountain) with all despatch, and immediately attacked through the wood. At the same instant the G.O.C. sent two Companies of the 1st Batt. under Captain O'Sullivan to support him. Gaining the road at the foot of the wood, Commandant Kent, still supported by Captain O'Sullivan, pushed home the attack along the lines of hedges, and actually entered Stepside at 3:50. The G.O.C., with the reserve, entered ten minutes later, from Sandyford. By that time Carrickmines had been occupied by the 3rd Batt., and Golden Ball was already held by the Cyclist Force. The umpires accordingly gave the decision to Green.

The commander of Red desires to commend the able and zealous work of his staff. The commander of Green desires also to commend his staff, and to express his satisfaction with the staff work of the individual Battalions and with the working of the communications, which never broke down during the day and which enabled him to

keep in half-hourly touch with every unit of his command. He desires in particular to commend the work of Commandant Kent and the 4th Batt., the ability and promptness of whose attack, after a strenuous march across the mountains, enabled a decision to be reached by 4 p.m. Special commendation is also due to the auxiliary force from the 5th (Fingall) Batt., which had to undergo the fatigue of the journey from and to their home district, in addition to their part in the operations.

P. H. P.