

McGuinness, Joseph ('Joe')

by Marie Coleman

McGuinness, Joseph ('Joe') (1875–1922), politician and revolutionary, was born 10 April 1875 in Cloonmore, Tramonbarry, Co. Roscommon, one of seven surviving children of Martin McGuinness, farmer, and Rose McGuinness (née Farrell). Educated at Cloonmore national school, he was apprenticed to John Fitzgibbon, draper in Castlerea, before emigrating to the USA in the 1890s, where he was active in the New York Gaelic League. Returning to Ireland (1902), he helped establish a Gaelic League branch in Longford town before settling in Dublin, where he opened drapery shops in Camden St. and Dorset St.

He was a member of 'C' Coy, 1st Bn, Irish Volunteers, in Dublin, and took part in fighting in the Four Courts during the Easter rising. Dispute exists as to whether he was in the IRB. Sentenced in 1916 to ten years' penal servitude (later reduced to three), while in prison he was selected against his will as Sinn Féin candidate for the Longford South by-election (May 1917), which he won by 37 votes after a recount. Released on amnesty in June 1917, he held a number of positions in Sinn Féin: member of the standing committee (1918–22), director of elections (1919), and member of a committee investigating formation of an Irish stock exchange. Elected to the first dáil for Longford in a contest with J. P. Farrell (qv) at the 1918 general election, he was reelected unopposed in 1921. During all his election campaigns he was serving prison sentences. He supported the Anglo–Irish treaty.

He died in Dublin 31 May 1922. He was married to Katherine Farrell, a member of Cumann na mBan who had taken part in the Easter rising, and they lived above his drapery shop at 27 Dorset St. and later at 51 Gardiner St. They had no children. His brother, Frank McGuinness (1868–1934), initially a supporter of home rule, became an active member of Sinn Féin in 1917, serving as chairman of Longford county council and as a TD and senator for Cumann na nGaedheal and Fine Gael. His nieces, Margaret, Brigid, and Maureen McGuinness and Brigid Lyons Thornton (qv), were all active members of Cumann na mBan.

---

UCD archives, Michael Hayes papers; *Longford Leader*, 3 June 1922; Marie Coleman, *County Longford and the Irish revolution 1910–23* (2003); information from Mrs Mona Stanton, Dublin (grand-niece)