

O'Hanrahan, Michael (Ó hAnnracháin, Micheál)

by Carmel Doyle

O'Hanrahan, Michael (Ó hAnnracháin, Micheál) (1877–1916), nationalist, journalist, and author, was born 16 January 1877 in New Ross, Co. Wexford, one of six sons and three daughters of Richard O'Hanrahan, a cork cutter, and Mary O'Hanrahan (née Williams), both of New Ross. The family were of known fenian tendencies; his father had supposedly taken part in the 1867 rising. When Michael was young, the family moved to Carlow town, where they lived at 91 Tullow St. He was educated at Carlow CBS, then attended Carlow College Academy. Joining the Gaelic League in 1898, he founded its first branch in Carlow, becoming its secretary (1899). Proficient in Irish, he taught classes for the league at Carlow's Catholic Institute. He was a delegate of the Carlow branch to the second representative congress of the Gaelic League, held in Dublin in 1900. With his brother Henry, he was chief founder of the workers' club on Brown St., Carlow, the name of which was placed on the building's exterior in both Irish and English. Reputedly deciding against a career in the civil service owing to his distaste at the requisite oath of allegiance to the British crown, in 1901 he started as a cutter in his father's cork business.

Within a few years he had moved to Dublin, where he obtained a position as a proofreader at the Cló Cumann printing works, which published magazines and books for the Gaelic League. He was joint secretary with Uaitéar MacCumhaill of the National Council in 1903 during the protests against the visit to Ireland of King Edward VII. In 1905 he became secretary of the chief branch of the Gaelic League, and was a member of Dublin district committee. He attended the first annual convention of the National Council at the Rotunda, Dublin (November 1905), at which Arthur Griffith (qv), speaking to a small audience that also included Patrick Pearse (qv) and Patrick McCartan (qv), outlined the proposals of economic self-sufficiency and parliamentary abstentionism that would form the basis of the Sinn Féin movement. Becoming a member of Sinn Féin, in 1909 O'Hanrahan was secretary of the Gaelic League language procession that was held in Dublin, and was an active member of the language week committee.

Joining the IRB, he was a founding member of the Irish Volunteers (November 1913), and was appointed quartermaster general of the second battalion in 1915. Noted for his methodical attention to detail, he was employed full-time on the Volunteer headquarters clerical staff at 2 Dawson St., Dublin, and stored guns and ammunition in his home at 67 Connaught St., Phibsborough, where he lived with his mother and several siblings. During the 1916 Easter rising he was third-in-command under Thomas MacDonagh (qv) and John MacBride (qv) at Jacob's biscuit factory on Bishop St., Dublin. While foraging in the building for food supplies, O'Hanrahan fell down a flight of stairs and injured his head; despite suffering from concussion, he did not tell MacDonagh of the incident for fear that he would be sent to hospital. After

the surrender, O'Hanrahan was court-martialled and sentenced to death. He was executed in Kilmainham jail on 4 May 1916, and was buried in Arbour Hill cemetery, Dublin. His brother Henry, a fellow member of the Volunteers HQ clerical staff and who also fought in the Jacob's factory garrison, was likewise condemned to death, but the sentence was commuted to life imprisonment.

O'Hanrahan had worked as a freelance journalist for several nationalist publications, including *Sinn Féin*, *Nationality*, and the *Irish Volunteer*, using the pseudonyms 'Art' and 'Irish Reader'. His literary works include the historical novel *A swordsman of the brigade* (1914), based on the military exploits of the Irish brigades in France; several hours before his death he wrote a will bequeathing the copyright to his mother and sisters. A posthumous publication, *Irish heroines* (1917), was initially delivered as a lecture by O'Hanrahan to Cumann na mBan during the winter of 1915–16, treating such figures as Rosa O'Doherty (qv) and Nuala O'Donnell (qv). *When the Norman came*, a military adventure dealing with Dermot MacMurrough (qv), the twelfth-century king of Leinster, appeared in 1918. The manuscript draft of a third novel entitled 'My sword, my fortune' was destroyed during a raid at O'Hanrahan's home immediately after the rising. Sean O'Sullivan (qv) drew a pencil portrait of O'Hanrahan in 1942, and an oil portrait by Leo Whelan (qv) was shown at a commemorative exhibition of the 1916 rebellion at the NGI in 1966. Wexford's 1916 roll of honour was dedicated to O'Hanrahan; the rail station in Wexford town is named after him, as is the bridge across the river Barrow at New Ross opened in 1967.

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GRO (birth cert.); *IBL*, viii (Oct.–Nov. 1916), 30; *Ir. Times*, 5 May 1916; Alice Tracy, 'Michael O' Hanrahan', *Carliovana*, i (Dec. 1963), 12–13, 38–9; Roger McHugh (ed.), *Dublin 1916: an illustrated anthology* (1966), 265; Breandán MacGiolla Choille (ed.), *Intelligence notes 1913–16* (1966); NGI, *Cuimhneachán 1916: a commemorative exhibition of the Irish rebellion 1916* (1966); Martin Shannon, *Sixteen roads to Golgotha* (1966), 169–70; F. X. Martin (ed.), *Leaders and men of the Easter rising: Dublin 1916* (1967); id., '1916: myth, fact and mystery', *Studia Hibernica*, vii (1967), 19; Bernard Browne, *County Wexford connections: a biographical data on famous and infamous Wexford connections which encompasses the whole county* (1985), 8; Piaras F. MacLochlainn (ed.), *Last words: letters and statements of the leaders executed after the rising at Easter 1916* (1990 ed.); *Beathaisnéis 1882–1982*, iii (1992); Bernard Browne, *Living by the pen: a biographical dictionary of County Wexford authors* (1997); *1916 rebellion handbook* (1998 ed.); information from Caitriona Murphy, Co. Wexford