

Irish Independent 

1916

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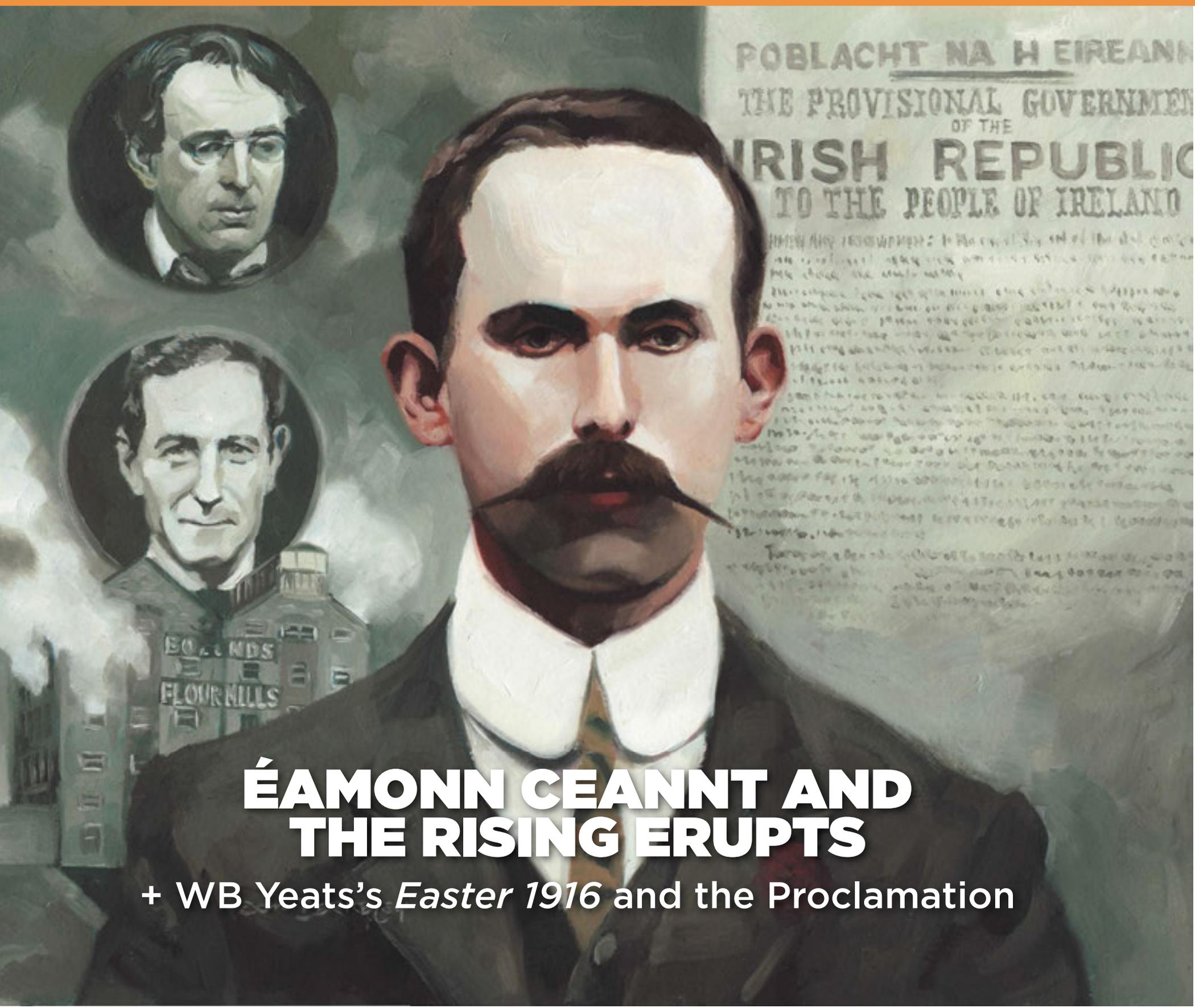
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1916  
2016

Clár Comórtha  
Céad Bliain  
Centenary  
Programme

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# ÉAMONN DE VALERA AND THE RISING ERUPTS

+ WB Yeats's *Easter 1916* and the Proclamation

# Contents

**4 UP FOR THE RISING**  
Donal Fallon on how the insurrection started on the morning of Easter Monday

**7 CHANGED UTTERLY**  
Lucy Collins on WB Yeats's masterpiece *Easter 1916*

**8 THE MANIFESTO**  
Richard McElligott assesses the Proclamation and what the document stands for

**10 IRELAND IN 1916**  
Fergus Cassidy looks at the place of children in society

**11 DOGGED DEFENDER**  
Richard McElligott on Seán Heuston

**12 PIPES OF WAR**  
Aoife Whelan profiles signatory Éamonn Ceannt while Kim Bielenberg talks to his family

**14 A COMPLEX PATRIOT**  
Fergus O'Farrell on Cathal Brugha

**15 NINE LIVES**  
More celebrities of the day

# Revolutionary notes and words

WHEN you think of home, what does it evoke? The National Concert Hall prompts such questions in its 2016 centenary programme. 'Imagining Home' is a seven-concert series in spring: *America, England, Into Europe, On Revolution, The Literary Imagination, This is Ireland* and *Out of the Tradition*.

Singer-songwriter Lisa O'Neill and Camille O'Sullivan are among the *England* line-up on Tuesday, March 29 2016, hosted by John Kelly.

"Musically, we are so connected," Camille explains of England/Ireland relations. Both have toured considerably in England. O'Neill says: "I've worked with some wonderful musicians like Neill MacColl and Billy Bragg and I've learned from them."

O'Sullivan has also worked with MacColl, who is leading the *England* concert band. One of O'Neill's most evocative songs is 'England Has My Man'. And while it

'seems to resonate with a nostalgia for emigration', she says, 'it was originally written about a short-lived romance'. 'Lyrically I think in English', she says 'but when it comes to melody and tone, it's coming from somewhere more rooted'.

She often uproots to tour and has crossed the Irish Sea "maybe 50 times" to perform in England. However, it was a recent "more than choppy" night ferry from France that brings to mind her image of Ireland: "I lay rocking in the little cabin bed and I imagined Ireland being a little green survivor bouncing up and down on the ocean," she says.

The concert promises to be a 'magical' evening, according to O'Sullivan. Among the other performers are Martin Carthy, Cait O'Riordan, Paul Brady, Andy Irvine and Cathal Coughlan. She is looking forward to performing at home.

"It's like being amongst the family, they know you so well," she says.

Writer Joseph O'Neill,

meanwhile, is taking part in *On Revolution* on Thursday, March 31. He believes it is "important for everyone to look back at the past... because the past is constantly changing and constantly contested. Art, if it's good, offers a special proximity to truth," he says.

And when it comes to looking back at Ireland's cultural successes of the past 100 years, he notes "the Irish culture of words — Joyce, Beckett, late Yeats, Flann O'Brien, Heaney, Friel, etc".

He adds: "I'm not a big fan of nationalising artistic achievement, but I can't willfully fail to notice the asymmetrical per capita achievements of 'our' writers. Ireland has been to writing in English what the Dominican Republic has been to baseball."

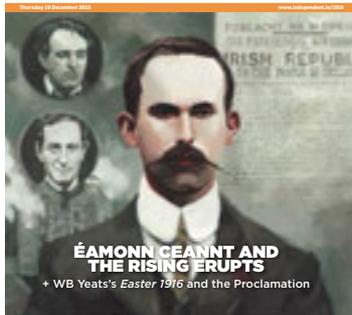
Alison Martin

*Tickets for Imagining Home, from Monday, March 28 to Sunday, April 3 2016 are available from www.nch.ie*



Above: writer Joseph O'Neill, who is taking part in 'On Revolution' at the National Concert Hall on March 31, 2016.

Right: Camille O'Sullivan will contribute to 'England' at the same venue on March 29.



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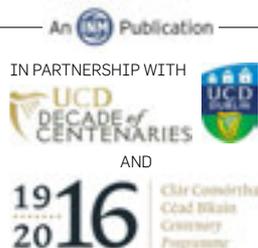
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Cover by Jon Berkeley, shows Éamonn Ceannt, WB Yeats and Cathal Brugha



## FROM THE UCD ARCHIVES

### Fitzgerald's image collection a treasure trove

PART of the papers of Desmond FitzGerald contains 179 photographs of historical importance, including atmospheric shots of buildings which were badly damaged or destroyed during the Rising. Taken in Sackville Street, Henry Street and Middle Abbey Street, the photographer remains unknown.

The papers of Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald were placed in the UCD Archives by their children, including former Taoiseach Garret FitzGerald, in May 1987.

Desmond FitzGerald was born in London in 1888 of Irish emigrant parents. He met Mabel Washington O'Connell at a Gaelic League class in London and they married in 1911. Two years later they moved to west Kerry, where they connected with Ernest Blythe and The O'Rahilly. In December they visited Dublin and Belfast, meeting leading figures in the



Irish Volunteers. In 1914 Desmond organised the Volunteers in west Kerry and became a member of the IRB.

The following year an order was issued under the Defence of the Realm Act which banned him from Kerry, and the couple

The papers of Desmond and Mabel FitzGerald, which includes 179 photographs of historical importance, were placed in the UCD archives in 1987.

moved to Bray, County Wicklow. He continued his Irish Volunteer activity there, while Mabel campaigned in London for support for Francis Sheehy Skeffington's hunger strike. Desmond was imprisoned for six months in 1915 for making a seditious speech.

Desmond and Mabel were in the GPO garrison during the Rising. Following his arrest he was sentenced to 20 years penal servitude, with ten years remitted, but was then freed in the general release. He was elected MP for Pembroke in the 1918 general election. Mabel was his campaign manager, and she was also elected to the Cumann na mBan executive in 1918.

The following year Desmond was appointed director of publicity for Dáil Éireann. In 1922 he was appointed Minister for External Affairs in the Provisional Government and then the Free State government. He became Minister for Defence in June 1927.

The collection of photographs are available at: <http://digital.ucd.ie/view/ucdlib:30685>.

FC

## IN MEMORIAM

### South Dublin Union memorial keeps track

THE modern Luas tram wends its way through the grounds of what used to be the South Dublin Union. If you get off at the St James's stop, you will see the monument to the men and women who fought there in 1916.

The stone pillar carries a bronze plaque with inscriptions in Irish and English. The latter reads: "This building was occupied and held by volunteers of the 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade, Irish Volunteers against

British forces during Easter Week 1916. Commanding officer for the area of occupation, Commandant Éamonn Ceannt."

Another memorial was unveiled in the complex at what was then known as St Kevin's Hospital in 1965. It marked the spot where Margaret Kehoe, a nurse from Leighlinbridge, Co Carlow was shot dead when she went out to look for a missing patient on the first day of the Rising.

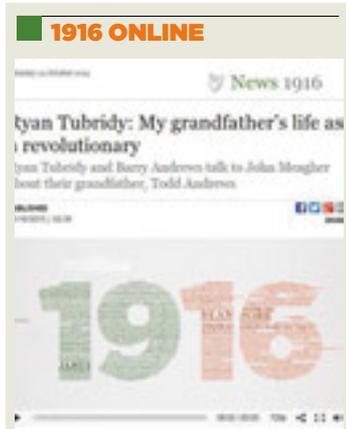
Ceannt said: "She died for

Ireland just as surely as if she'd worn the Volunteers uniform."

She was a niece of Captain Myles Keogh, who died in Custer's Last Stand in 1876. **LS**

\* On this page in No 4, the crew of the Asgard given was incorrect. Those who sailed were Erskine and Molly Childers, Mary Spring Rice, Pat McGinley, Charlie Duggan and Gordon Shepherd. The latter disembarked in Milford Haven and rejoined in Howth.





**Watch more online at [independent.ie/1916](http://independent.ie/1916)**

AS part of the *Irish Independent's* unrivalled coverage of the centenary of the Easter Rising, a dedicated website is now online. The site uses words, pictures and video to enhance understanding of a defining moment in our nation's history.

Read excerpts from important books, watch Ryan Tubridy talk about his grandfather, and marvel at the stunning photos of Dublin in 1916. The site also carries all the articles in our ongoing series 'My 1916'.

The [independent.ie/1916](http://independent.ie/1916) site will continue to build into a brilliant resource for students in years to come.

**REBEL TALES**

**Drama as comedy film is destroyed**

THE very first Irish-made film drama was another victim of the Rising. *Fun at Finglas Fair*, directed by and starring FJ McCormick, was made by James Sullivan's Film Company of Ireland. The short comedy told the story of two crooks who escape from jail in England and travel to Ireland to rob some farmers. In the end they are caught and thrown into a canal.

A junior civil servant, McCormick was born Peter Judge but adopted the stage name to conceal his identity from his employers. He was a member of the Abbey players with whom he became synonymous through the plays of Seán O'Casey, and also acted in major British films such as *Odd Man Out* and *Hungry Hill*.

But despite its historic nature as the first fiction filmed here, the only print was destroyed after its first and only screening at a trade fair in Talbot Street in April 1916.

A contemporary witness later: "After the trade show at the Masterpiece, during the Rebellion, the [British] soldiers entered the theatre and amused themselves winding all the films, both positive and negative, on the machines. They succeeded in destroying our good films. The cinema managers agreed that the film was good and would have been a huge success." **GS**

**FROM THE IRISH INDEPENDENT ARCHIVES**

**Photographs unearthed in 'Irish Independent' offices**



**Left: The ruins of Wynn's Hotel on Lower Abbey St after it was destroyed by fire during the Rising. In 1914 it had hosted one of the inaugural meetings of the Irish Volunteers.**

**Above: The Dublin Bread Company premises on the east side of Lower Sackville (O'Connell) Street**  
PART OF THE INDEPENDENT NEWSPAPERS IRELAND/NLI COLLECTION

A DUSTY, leather-bound photo album that lay forgotten in a cupboard contained a treasure trove of images charting the foundation of the State, including the 1916 Rising.

The album was discovered in the *Irish Independent* Editor's office earlier this year during renovations and contained some photos which were lost for decades. These photos from this newspaper are now amongst an intriguing archive of Ireland's

past that has just been unveiled to the public.

Expertly captured by photographers at Independent Newspapers over the course of over 100 years, the overall Independent Archives consists of glass plates, plastic negatives and a small number of prints.

Comprising a staggering 4.3 million images, the Independent Archives were donated to the National Library of Ireland in 2004.

Now the collection is in the process of being scanned and placed online in a labour of love by image archive advisor at Independent News & Media, Michael Hinch, and legendary photographer Tom Burke — who continues to capture key moments with his lens.

The images document some of Ireland's most important historical events including the 1916 Rising, the formation of the Irish state, the Civil War and the

first meeting of Dáil Éireann.

Just 18 photographs of the Easter Rising were taken because it was deemed too dangerous for staff to be on the streets.

At the time, the *Irish Independent* offices were based on Middle Abbey Street, just around the corner from the GPO.

The archives are available to the public to view at [www.independentarchives.com](http://www.independentarchives.com) while individual high-quality prints can also be purchased. **FS**

**THE LOST CHILDREN**

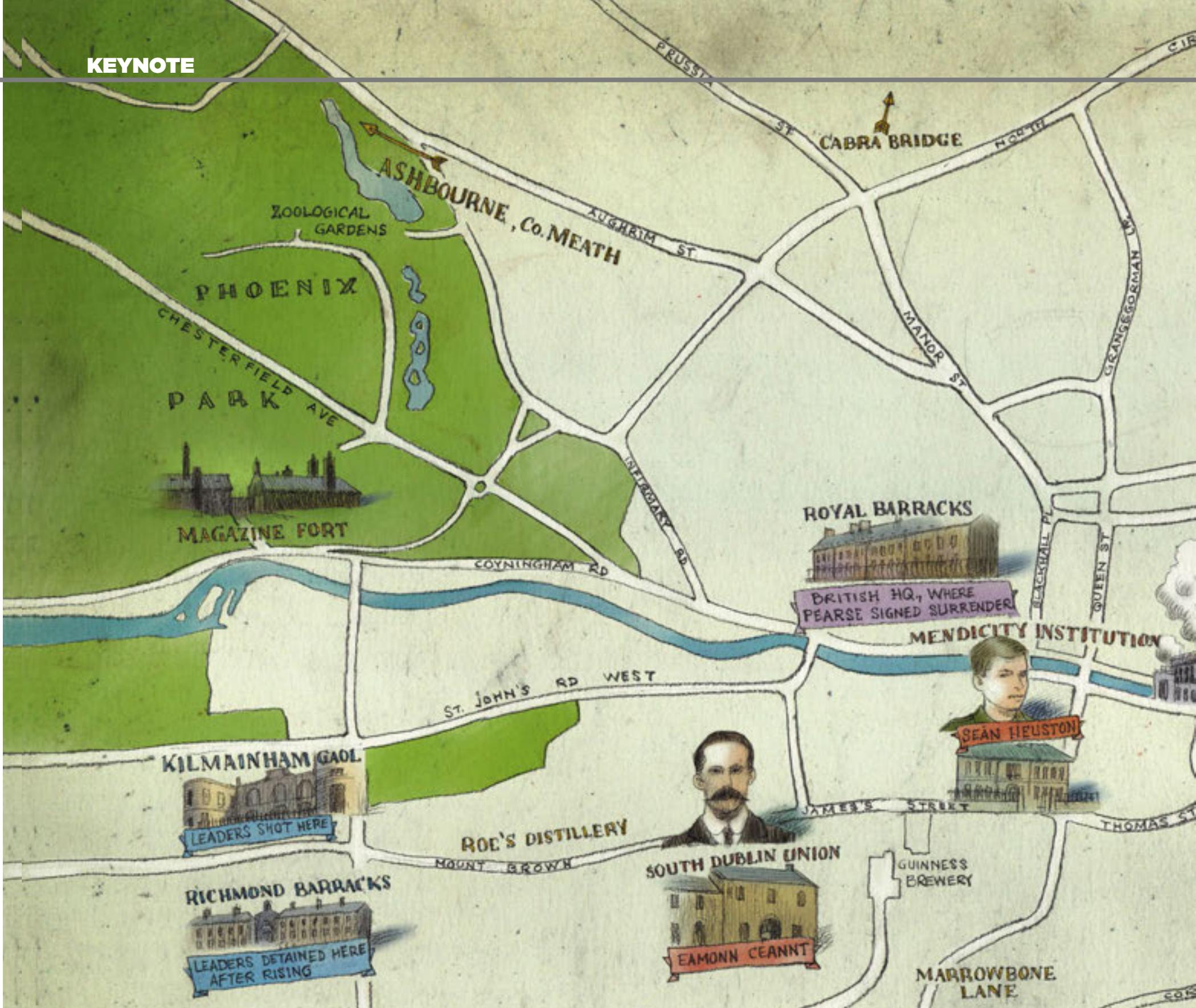
**Shot while giving water to a soldier**

ONE of the most famous chemist shops in Dublin sits at a busy junction where Westland Row meets Lincoln Place at the back of Trinity College. It no longer sells potions in powders, but the name 'Sweny' still sits over the door in gold paint on black glass.

It's the shop where Leopold Bloom bought lemon-scented soap in *Ulysses*, a purchase which has become a tradition for the Joyceans who flock to Dublin every June. Before that book was published, however, Sweny's was in the news because one of the family who ran the pharmacy was killed in the Rising.

Lionel Sweny, aged 13, was shot dead on the Wednesday as the bloodiest battle of Easter Week raged around Mount Street Bridge, half a mile from his home. Mystery surrounds his death, but his family said he was shot by rebels as he gave water to a wounded soldier.

His family searched hospitals for his body but there was some confusion about other youths killed in the same area, and others of similar names. His family gravestone doesn't carry his name, and it is believed his last resting place is a mass grave in Glasnevin cemetery. **LS**



# The Rising erupts

On Easter Monday morning, the rebels began to gather at Liberty Hall, St Stephen's Green and other parts of the city. As shots began to ring out, Patrick Pearse stood outside the GPO and began to read the Proclamation, writes **Donal Fallon**

**T**HE planning of rebellion, by its very nature, is a clandestine affair. Still, James Stephens began his diary *The Insurrection in Dublin* by noting that "this has taken everyone by surprise. It is possible, that with the exception of their Staff, it has taken the Volunteers themselves by surprise". In the confusion of orders and countermanning orders issued in the days and hours before the rebellion, Easter Monday began on a downbeat note for

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 >>>



# The Rising erupts

>>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

the rebel forces. At mobilisation points across the city, the painful effects of Eoin MacNeill's countermanding order of the previous day quickly became apparent.

Poor turnouts at certain gathering points meant that the plans of the insurrection were altered dramatically in places. Thomas Slater of the Second Battalion of the Irish Volunteers, who served under Thomas MacDonagh, remembered that as men began to mobilise at St Stephen's Green, it was clear they would not be able to carry out their duties in full. In addition to seizing Jacob's, a large imposing factory on Bishop Street, it was also hoped men from this Battalion would seize Trinity College Dublin, but "the numbers which could be spared from the main body at Stephen's Green were so small, MacDonagh decided to call off the taking of Trinity College".

Some stumbled on the insurrection by chance. Major John MacBride, a veteran of the Second Boer War who was employed by Dublin Corporation at the time of the rebellion, was innocently in the city to meet his brother for lunch. On seeing men mobilising at St Stephen's Green, he recalled that, "I considered it my duty to join them."

The largest body of participants was mobilised at Liberty Hall, the home of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, which had become central to the planning of the insurrection. Patrick Stephenson remembered that by 8am, hours before the rebellion, there was a "fair amount of bustle and coming and going", as Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army members and others arrived there.

The ICA had been unaffected by MacNeill's countermanding order, yet by comparison with the Volunteers it was a small force, and about 200 of its members participated in the rebellion. Willie Oman was one member of the workers' militia, and as bugler, the teenager would sound the fall-in at Liberty Hall for the assembled forces. He remembered that in the weeks beforehand, "each member of the Citizen Army had been called in before Commandant Connolly and Commandant Mallin and asked if he was prepared to act without assistance of the Volunteers. Commandant Connolly explained... that he was anxious to know the position and how many men he could rely on."

At Liberty Hall, barely more than 150 of the Headquarters Battalion destined to seize the General Post Office had mobilised. Still, the strength of the GPO garrison would rise drastically during the week. While the strength of the garrison is often listed in histories of the Rising at about 400, the most comprehensive study to date, Jimmy Wren's recent *The GPO Garrison Easter Week 1916 - A Biographical Dictionary*, illustrates clearly that it rose to over 500.

Liam Tannam of the Irish Volunteers remembered two very unusual outsiders in the mix, in the form of a Swede and a Finn, both seamen, who happened to be in Dublin at the time and wished to fight. When Tannam asked why, he was told that "Russia with the British, therefore, we against."

While not quite as exotic as the Nordic rebels, the Irish Diaspora was represented in the form of the Kimmage Garrison, a body of men from Liverpool, Glasgow and other Irish centres of migration in Britain who had been preparing for the Rising at the Larkfield Mill in Kimmage, staying on the property of George Plunkett. Arthur Agnew recalled: "We marched to Harold's Cross, where we boarded a tram. Plunkett insisted on paying the conductor for our tickets."

The signal that the rebellion had begun was to be the destruction of the Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park, a task that was left primarily to members of Na Fianna Éireann, the youth movement established in 1909. Fianna Commandant Eamon Martin recalled that, "we arrived at the outside of the Fort, pretending to be a football team, and by passing the ball from one to the other got near enough to the outside sentry to rush and disarm him". While the Fianna activists succeeded in gaining access to the Fort, the blast that followed was not sufficient to announce the rebellion in the spectacular fashion which they had hoped.

The first fatalities on both sides occurred in the vicinity of Dublin Castle, the symbolic home of British rule in the city. Unbeknownst to the Citizen Army, the Castle was poorly defended on Easter Monday, yet they still failed to breach its main gates. Constable James O'Brien of the Dublin Metropolitan Police was shot dead at the gates.

Having failed to penetrate the Castle beyond its guardroom, the Citizen Army occupied the neighbouring City Hall, and it was there that Seán Connolly became the first rebel casualty of the fighting. Connolly, a civil servant and a talented actor in the Abbey Theatre, worked in the motor tax department of Dublin Corporation, housed in City Hall. Connolly was joined in City Hall by a number of his siblings, all committed Citizen Army members, while his brother Joseph fought at the College of Surgeons, having walked out of Tara Street fire station to partake in the Rising.

The failure of the rebels to seize the Castle was disastrous, and as Fearghal McGarry has noted, "not only would its seizure have represented a tremendous propaganda coup, it would have netted leading members of the Irish administration and provided the rebels with a strategically important stronghold."

Outside of Dublin, news that events had gone ahead forced men into action. Volunteers in Maynooth marched into the city. In their midst was Thomas Byrne, who had earlier fought in the Boer War. He recalled that the men slept in Glasnevin Cemetery, before making their way onto the city. He remembered telling the men that "the grave-diggers will be here early in the morning and you must all scatter".

Patrick Colgan, who had also spent the night in the cemetery, remembered that when the men finally got to the GPO and met James Connolly there, "we must have appeared as a motley group of warriors to him, yet the welcoming smile which he gave us made us feel very full of ourselves."



*Outside of Dublin, news that events had gone ahead forced men into action. Volunteers in Maynooth marched into the city. 'We must have appeared as a motley group of warriors to him (Connolly)' recalled one*



Above: British troops under fire in Talbot Street during the 1916 rebellion.

GETTY IMAGES

Below: Author and historian Donal Fallon.



For many civilians on the streets, the first indication that a rebellion was underway was the sight of the rebel Proclamation. Read by Pearse at the General Post Office, it was distributed by young Volunteers, including Seán T O'Kelly. O'Kelly had not mobilised at Liberty Hall, but arrived on Sackville Street as the occupation of the GPO was beginning. He watched Volunteers smash out the glass of the windows of the building, and remembered "the strange impression this smashing of the windows left on me. It was one of the first things that made one realise."

A copy of the Proclamation was placed at the base of the Nelson Pillar, and the young medical student Ernie O'Malley

## The Irish Independent

THE day-to-day operation of a newsroom is underpinned by the diary, and its list of 'markings', the known events for which a reporter and/or a photographer is assigned.

So it was in the *Irish Independent* in 1916, when the news diary for April 24, Easter Monday, was drawn up.

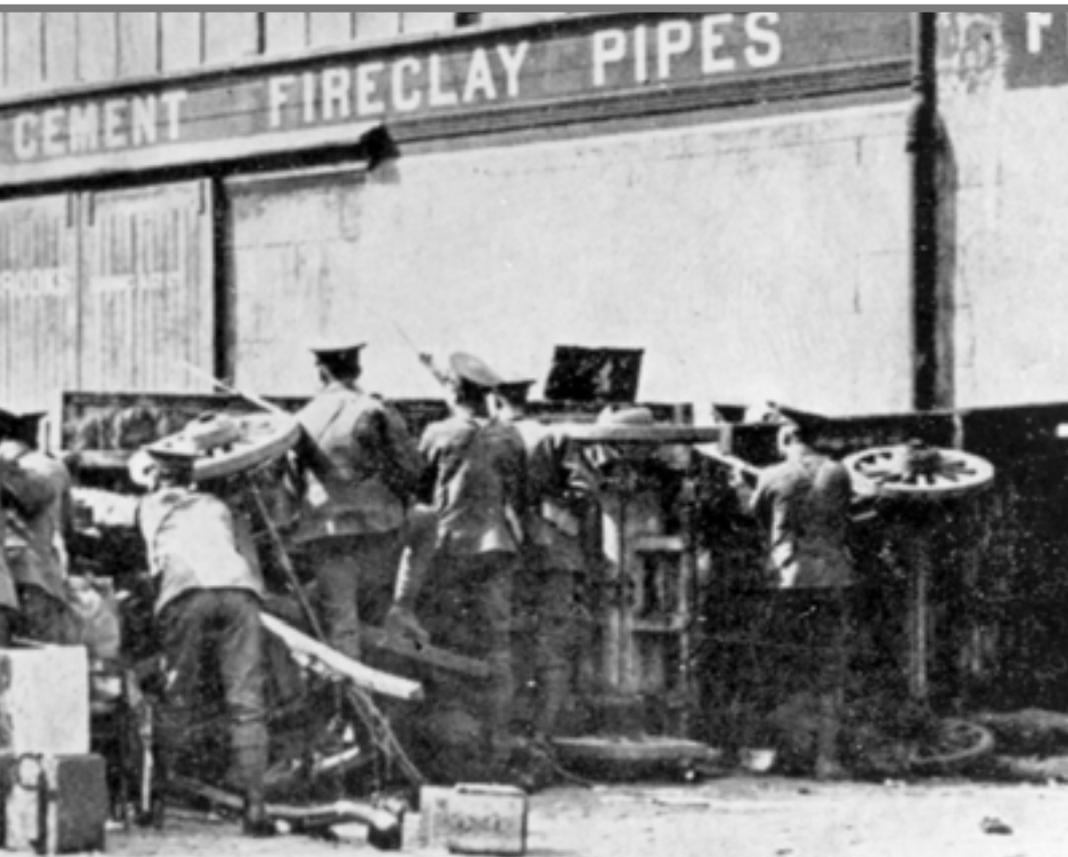
One reporter was marked for the Viceregal visit to Belfast, but simmering national unrest was obvious. A reporter called Linnane was required to check out 'Brittas and dynamite' and 'volunteers and Kerry incident'. Two others were also marked for 'volunteers', one of them to take in 'strikes' as well.

Most were not to finish their shift without a theatre assignment, at venues including the Abbey, Queen's, Tivoli, Royal and the Empire (today's Olympia).

Some of those theatres have long gone but, 100 years on, the diary has a certain

would recall that "some looked at it with serious faces, others laughed and sniggered." When a party of Lancers arrived onto Sackville Street in the very early stages of the rebellion to investigate events, a volley of shots rang out from the GPO as they approached the Pillar, with devastating consequences.

From the beginning, it was clear the civilian population were going to cause problems for the Volunteers. Curious, they milled around rebel positions, and in some cases were openly hostile. A member of the Jacob's garrison remembered that, "the women around the Coombe were in a terrible state; they were like French revolutionaries and were throwing their arms round the police".



Irish Rebellion - May 1916.  
Sackville Street, Dublin, held against a rebel charge.  
Picture taken under fire.

## Easter 1916

By W. B. Yeats

*I have met them at close of day  
Coming with vivid faces  
From counter or desk among grey  
Eighteenth-century houses.  
I have passed with a nod of the head  
Or polite meaningless words,  
Or have lingered awhile and said  
Polite meaningless words,  
And thought before I had done  
Of a mocking tale or a gibe  
To please a companion  
Around the fire at the club,  
Being certain that they and I  
But lived where motley is worn:  
All changed, changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.*

*Hearts with one purpose alone  
Through summer and winter seem  
Enchanted to a stone  
To trouble the living stream.  
The horse that comes from the road,  
The rider, the birds that range  
From cloud to tumbling cloud,  
Minute by minute they change;  
A shadow of cloud on the stream  
Changes minute by minute;  
A horse-hoof slides on the brim,  
And a horse plashes within it;  
The long-legged moor-hens dive,  
And hens to moor-cocks call;  
Minute by minute they live;  
The stone's in the midst of all.*

*That woman's days were spent  
In ignorant good-will,  
Her nights in argument  
Until her voice grew shrill.  
What voice more sweet than hers  
When, young and beautiful,  
She rode to harriers?  
This man had kept a school  
And rode our winged horse;  
This other his helper and friend  
Was coming into his force;  
He might have won fame in the end,  
So sensitive his nature seemed,  
So daring and sweet his thought.  
This other man I had dreamed  
A drunken, vainglorious lout.  
He had done most bitter wrong  
To some who are near my heart,  
Yet I number him in the song;  
He, too, has resigned his part  
In the casual comedy;  
He, too, has been changed in his  
turn,  
Transformed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.*

*Too long a sacrifice  
Can make a stone of the heart.  
O when may it suffice?  
That is Heaven's part, our part  
To murmur name upon name,  
As a mother names her child  
When sleep at last has come  
On limbs that had run wild.  
What is it but nightfall?  
No, no, not night but death;  
Was it needless death after all?  
For England may keep faith  
For all that is done and said.  
We know their dream; enough  
To know they dreamed and are dead;  
And what if excess of love  
Bewildered them till they died?  
I write it out in a verse —  
MacDonagh and MacBride  
And Connolly and Pearse  
Now and in time to be,  
Wherever green is worn,  
Are changed, changed utterly:  
A terrible beauty is born.*

25 September 1916

### AN ASSESSMENT DR LUCY COLLINS

YEATS was absent from Dublin for the Rising but his response to it was intense: "I had no idea that any public event could so deeply move me," he wrote to Lady Gregory, "and I am very despondent about the future". This iconic poem, which disappointed Maud Gonne when she read it, is a formal masterpiece, as well as a work that charts Yeats's uncertain feelings towards the events of 1916.

It begins with an image of the revolutionaries going about their everyday lives; only their "vivid faces" indicate the power of their inner feeling and their potential for heroic action. Yeats's disengagement from these men is highlighted by the repetition of the phrase "polite meaningless words" and by the fact that his most vigorous response in language is to make fun of them to his friends.

His contemplation of these figures as individuals begins with Constance Markievicz, whom Yeats had known for more than 20 years. His view of her is nostalgic; he contrasts her youthful beauty and gentleness to her 'shrill' revolutionary persona. Of the men, first Patrick Pearse and then Thomas MacDonagh, Yeats is more tolerant: as poets, educators and leaders, their potential for greatness is acknowledged. Even Gonne's husband, John MacBride, immortalised here as a "drunken vainglorious lout", deserves a measure of praise.

Sweetness is set against bitterness in this poem, as pure idealism is contrasted with violence and political struggle. Yet the transformation



that the rebels — and ultimately Ireland — will undergo is seen as both redemptive and destructive. Here are the seeds of the "terrible beauty" that has remained so resonant for modern readers.

Tragedy and comedy are interwoven in the poem. Twice — in the reference to motley and to the "casual comedy" — Yeats allows the ideals of the rebels to be viewed lightly, before their full implications may be recognised. Likewise, the flux of the world is set against the determination of the revolutionaries, their steadfast commitment to independence: these "hearts with one purpose alone" defy the endless fluctuations of the natural world, where animal life pursues its own unthinking goals.

Yeats distinguishes between the larger philosophical questions that are raised by the actions of the rebels and our need to honour their idealism. This focus on the good faith of these men and women ensures their immortality, both in Yeats's own poem and in Irish cultural and political history.

*Dr Lucy Collins is a lecturer in English at University College Dublin (UCD). She is the curator of 'Reading 1916', a forthcoming exhibition at UCD Special Collections*

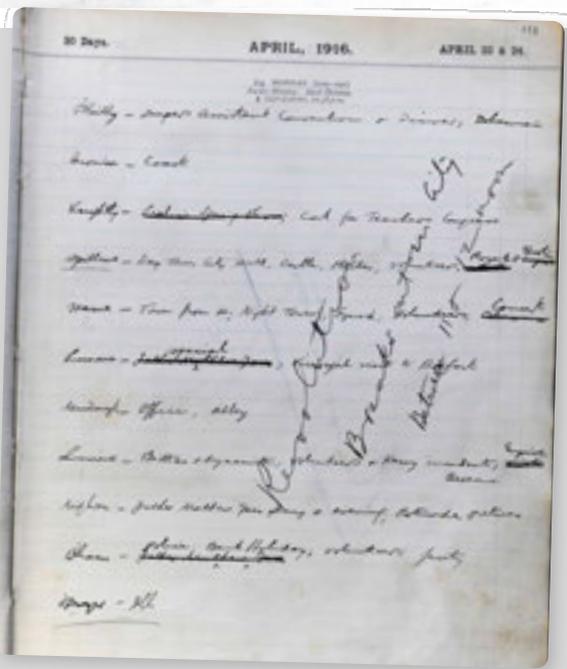
## roster, 24/04/1916

familiarity. A reporter called Knightly was down for the Teachers' Congress, in Cork, which we would know today as the INTO annual conference. Among the motions for discussion was one condemning 'the Irish Government and the British Treasury for the callous indifference shown to the conditions of the Irish teachers'.

Another reporter was assigned to the drapers' assistants' annual convention and dinner. Mandate, the union representing retail trade workers, still holds its delegate conference at this time of year.

They were among the markings — but then there was also the dramatic, breaking news, carefully recorded and writ large across the diary page: 'Revolution breaks out in city between 11 and 12 noon'.

Katherine Donnelly



Hostility from working-class women was something the Jacob's garrison in particular had to contend with in the early stages of the Rising. 'Separation women', as they were known, were often dependent on the income of family members fighting in the trenches of the First World War. Almost 400 Jacob's employees enlisted in the British Army during the conflict, and their relations were sometimes more than willing to make their feelings clear.

For some civilians, the outbreak of the rebellion created an opportunity to loot, in particular on Sackville Street. One newspaper would write that "half the shops in Sackville Street were sacked. Children who have never possessed two pence of their own were imitating Charlie

Chaplin with stolen silk hats in the middle of the turmoil and murder." Yet the first two shops looted were shoe shops, indicative of the intense poverty of inner-city Dublin.

On the first day of the rebellion, the looters proved a headache for the Dublin Fire Brigade. Lawrence's toyshop was predictably emptied and burned, and two people taken down by fire escape proved to be looters.

Mere hours into events, Sackville Street was already burning.

*Donal Fallon is an author and historian, currently researching republican commemoration and memory at UCD School of History*

# IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN:

In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom

**T**HE Proclamation of the Irish Republic is both a defiant call to arms, an eloquent justification of actions, a dramatic statement of ideals and a poignant prayer to Irish nationhood. In equal parts powerful and moving, its words have echoed down through the last century of Irish history. The Proclamation's principles have defined the modern Irish state and, at times, provided a forceful critique of its failings.

On Monday 17 April, the Military Council devoted one of its last meetings to approving the text. Yet like everything else which was veiled in secrecy by the Military Council, we know little about its creation. Its language — expressive and heroic — suggests that it was largely the work of Pearse. He, more than anyone else, knew that the Rising's importance would lie in its symbolic rather than its military impact.

As the IRB's orator-in-chief, it was only natural the Proclamation would be his composition. However it is clear that Connolly's influence can be seen and his socialist convictions are most likely responsible for much of the prose of its mid-section — which assert the rights of a sovereign people to social justice and total control of the nation's resources.

Within the Proclamation, the rebellion's leaders claimed legitimacy for their actions by arguing they represented the latest in a long line of Irish revolutionaries who 'six times during the past 300 years' have asserted Ireland's right to freedom by the use of arms.

Still the Proclamation was a progressive statement of intent which promoted a generous social and political vision for a new Ireland. It also alluded to Ireland's Protestant minority and rejected 'the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority in the past.' Yet in contrast to Sinn Féin's Democratic Programme of January 1919, the Proclamation made no attempt to outline the political or economic structure of the Republic. This is again

The lines above begin the most famous document in modern Irish history, writes **Richard McElligott**



indicative of the gulf between the romantic idealism of 1916 and the hard-headed practicality of the revolutionaries who followed.

The final handwritten draft, consisting of two sheets of paper, was given to MacDonagh for safe-keeping. When the Military Council convened on Easter Sunday morning at Liberty Hall, MacDonagh handed the sheets to Connolly for printing. Connolly had arranged for three men, Michael Molloy, Liam O'Brien and Christopher Brady, to oversee the production of the document. All three were compositors and printers by trade and considering the conditions they worked under, they managed a minor miracle in getting the Proclamation produced.

The Proclamation was printed in the tiny printing shop room in Liberty Hall on an obsolete Double Crown Wharfedale printing press which Connolly had purchased in 1915. The machine was troublesome and time-consuming to use and required constant mechanical attention. Lacking sufficient type for the printing press, they were forced to print the document in two halves. The upper part down to the words 'among the nations' was set up first. It was impossible to achieve inking of the type evenly, which resulted in a lot of smudging and faint printing. The lack of type also clearly affected how the text was reproduced. For example, 'THE IRISH REPUBLIC' of the heading, has a C which is smaller than the other letters and looks like a converted O. For the main

text, the compositors ran into considerably trouble with the letter E. In all, 23 Es used in the document are of a different font or style to the surrounding letters.

Connolly initially wanted 2,500 copies produced on full-size posters. In the end, due to a shortage of paper, only 1,000 copies were printed. The material used was cheap and of poor quality, being so thin that it easily tore. The fact it could not survive for long in outdoor conditions helps explain the rarity of original copies.

The process lasted far longer than was expected and was not finished until Easter Monday morning. Therefore only for the Military Council's reluctant decision to postpone the Rising for 24 hours, the Proclamation would not have been ready to launch the Republic. Seán T O'Kelly, the future President, was detailed by Connolly to hang copies throughout the city centre. Aware of its historical importance, the self-proclaimed 'bill poster to the Republic', folded one copy into an official British Government envelope he had taken from the GPO and posted it to his mother. It arrived to her house a week later and now hangs in Leinster House. Other Volunteers handed out duplicates to members of the public. A few enterprising newsboys managed to sell copies to curious passers-by.

At around 12.45pm, shortly after the GPO was taken, Pearse emerged from the front door and beneath the building's shadow read aloud the Proclamation to

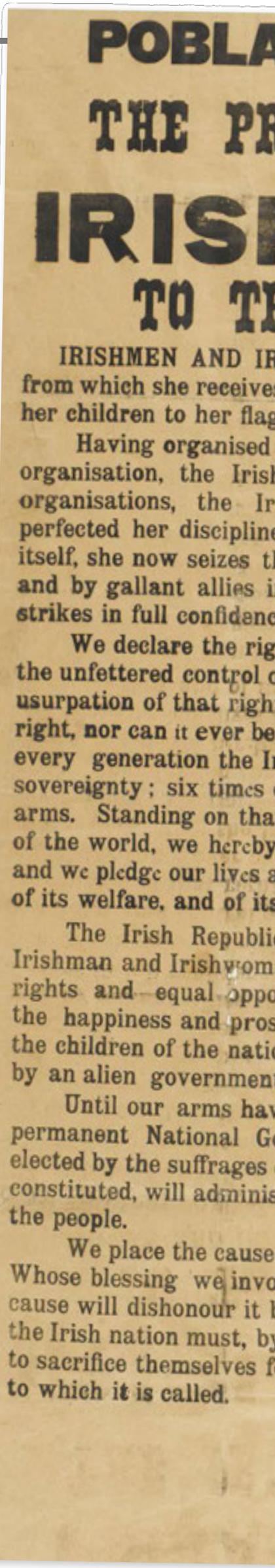
a small crowd of inquisitive and bewildered onlookers. The writer Stephen McKenna recalled: 'For once his magnetism had left him; the response was chilling; a few thin perfunctory cheers... but no enthusiasm whatever; the people were evidently quite unprepared, quite unwilling to see in the unformed figure, whose burning words had thrilled them again and again elsewhere, a person of significance to the country. A chill must have gone to his heart... this dismal reception of the astonishing Order of the Day was not what he had dreamed of when in many an hour of fevered passion and many a careful weaving of plan he had rehearsed the Act.'

Accounts by those in the GPO noted that Pearse suddenly seemed plagued with self-doubt over the unenthusiastic reception which greeted his pronouncement of the Proclamation. However once more Volunteers began to arrive and explained that copies posted around the city were attracting attention and excitement, his mood lifted.

Their document was the first formal assertion of the Irish Republic. By simply standing up and declaring it the Proclamation made real, at least to the rebels of 1916 and those who followed, the dream of a sovereign independent state. The men and women who subsequently fought the War of Independence were not fighting to achieve a Republic; they were fighting to preserve the Republic Pearse and his comrades had created that Easter.

The Proclamation had avowed the revolutionaries' resolve 'to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally' — sadly the history of independent Ireland often revealed the poverty of that noble sentiment.

*Dr Richard McElligott lectures in Modern Irish History in UCD. He is the co-ordinator of the Uncovering 1916 and the Irish War of Independence courses which are being hosted by the National Library of Ireland in the spring of 2016*



**ACHT NA H EIREANN.  
PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT  
OF THE  
H REPUBLIC  
THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.**

**IRISHWOMEN:** In the name of God and of the dead generations  
her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons  
and strikes for her freedom.

and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary  
Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military  
Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently  
e, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal  
that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America  
n Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she  
e of victory.

ht of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to  
of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long  
t by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the  
extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In  
Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and  
during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in  
fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face  
proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State,  
and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom,  
s exaltation among the nations.

e is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every  
an. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal  
ortunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue  
perity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all  
on equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered  
t, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.  
ve brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a  
overnment, representative of the whole people of Ireland and  
of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby  
ster the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for

of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God,  
ke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that  
y cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour  
y its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children  
or the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,

**THOMAS J. CLARKE,**  
**SEAN Mac DIARMADA,** **THOMAS MacDONAGH,**  
**P. H. PEARSE,** **EAMONN CEANNT,**  
**JAMES CONNOLLY,** **JOSEPH PLUNKETT.**

**THE PRINT RUN**

The document was printed in a tiny printing shop room in Liberty Hall on an obsolete Double Crown Wharfedale printing press on Easter Sunday and early Easter Monday, 1916. James Connolly initially ordered 2,500 copies to be printed, but due to a shortage of paper only 1,000 were produced. There are now believed to be fewer than 50 copies of the originals still in existence.

**THE IMPERFECT 'C'**

Notice how this 'C' is slightly smaller than the letters that come before it? A scarcity of type at the printers meant that different fonts and sizes were used. This 'C' looks to be a converted 'O'.

**Check your attic to see if you own one of the scarce Proclamations**

**I**f you have any suspicion your great-grandfather or great-grandmother might have been around Dublin in 1916, then it could be worth your while to have a rummage around the attic.

There are now believed to be fewer than 50 copies of the original Proclamation still in existence, with about half in public ownership — in libraries, universities and museums around the world. Four are owned by the State — in the National Museum, National Library, Kilmainham Jail and Leinster House.

But when they come up for sale huge sums have been known to change hands. The highest price paid was €390,000, at an Adam's auction in Dublin in 2004. It was the first time one had come on to the market for 15 years.

Four years later a copy signed by Seán McGarry, who fought in the GPO and was Tom Clarke's bodyguard, sold for €360,000.

Prices have dropped in recent years, with one original selling for €90,000 in 2014, just seven years after the owner had paid €240,000 for it.

**THE AUTHORS**

We don't know for certain who was responsible for the wording of the Proclamation, but as the IRB's orator-in-chief, it was only natural that much of the wording would come from Patrick Pearse. James Connolly's influence can also be seen, particularly in the socialist prose of the document's mid-section.



**A PROCLAMATION IN TWO PARTS**

The document was printed in two separate runs and then pieced together, due to the lack of type at the printers that day. The upper part down to the words 'among the nations' was printed first. The lower half was later found — still on the printing press — by British soldiers after they entered Liberty Hall during the rebellion, and souvenir copies were run off.

**WANTED!** Christopher Brady, the man who printed the document...

**D**ESPITE not fighting in the Rising, Christopher Brady is a central figure to the story of the event, as he was responsible for printing the Proclamation. A printer by trade, Brady had been employed at Liberty Hall since 1915,



where he printed *The Workers' Republic* newspaper and union materials for the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union.

Brady recalled that James Connolly and Thomas MacDonagh informed him and two workmen at Liberty Hall of the importance of the document he was to print only on Easter Sunday. Owing to the secrecy around the document and the manner in which it was sprung upon the workmen, they were not entirely prepared for the task. He recalled that "the shortage of type was so great that wrong fonts had to be used and I had to make a new

letter by converting an 'F' into an 'E' from sealing wax to make up the supply."

As they printed the Proclamation, an armed guard of Irish Citizen Army men protected the room, while Brady was also given an automatic pistol by

Connolly for his own protection. The printing had to be carried in two separate halves — when British soldiers arrived in Liberty Hall during the rebellion, the lower half of the Proclamation was still set for printing, and some souvenir copies were run off.

Brady was ultimately unsuccessful in his applications for a 1916 medal in later years, though he appealed directly to the Taoiseach in 1968, writing that "for a long time after the Rising I was on the run as the much wanted man who had printed the seditious Proclamation".

Donal Fallon

# Children of the revolution

Fergus Cassidy on what kept young people entertained — when they weren't working

**I**N the years up to 1916 the word 'teenager' did not exist. The line separating children and adults was thin and grey, with the word 'juvenile' arriving as definition of a hazy middle ground. The 1911 census provides statistics based on ages up to 15 years old, but then jumps to figures for 20 year-olds.

Out of a population of 4.39million in 1911, over 1.72m were aged under 15, almost 40pc of the total. Yet their position in society did not reflect such strength in numbers. Daily life for many children, especially those aged over 12, mirrored that of adult life — dominated by work and making ends meet. For younger children working before and after school was normal.

A national primary school programme, started in 1831, was revised around 1900, with new principles, such as "development from within rather than moulding from without". By 1901 there were 20,478 teachers in Ireland. Sixty per cent of those were female, earning about 80pc of the male wage. A Blasket Islander remembered his first day of school: "Shyly I sat on the bench. The children were making a power of noise. The mistress went to the cupboard and took out a big tin and put it down before me. Then I saw a sight which put gladness into my heart — sweets in the shape of a man, a pig, a boat, a horse and many another. 'Be a good boy, now', said she, 'and come to school every day'. So there I sat looking at the book while not forgetting to fill my mouth."

A teacher in Coolbanagher NS, Laois, was examined and her results show the type of skills required to teach in 1903: "...needlework and literacy, hand and eye training, which included stick-laying, paper-folding, scale drawing and string work".

Children worked before going to school, especially in rural areas where they helped out on farms. Older children also had the responsibility of minding and showing younger ones what to do. In urban areas, children worked after school — cleaning, fetching water, fuel for a fire, and maybe a paper round. In cities many children worked on the streets and in markets. Street-trading included: "The hawking of newspapers, matches, flowers and other articles, playing singing or performing for profit, shoe-blackening and any other like occupation..."

An overhaul of the Employment of Children Act in 1915 stipulated that only boys aged 14 and over could legally trade on the streets (over 16 for girls), and they



Dublin children collecting firewood from the ruined buildings damaged in the Easter Rising. GETTY IMAGES

had to have a licence in the form of a badge. They could lose it if caught trading during school hours, or if obstructing the footpath.

When not at school or working, children played in the fields or in the streets. Most made their own toys, from sticks, wood, paper, matchsticks. A length of rope was ample for group skipping, which is probably where James Joyce picked up the following street rhyme he used in *Ulysses*:

"Give a thing and take it back/God'll ask you where is that/You'll say you don't know/God'll send you down below."

Where children really struggled was in health and welfare. Twenty percent of the 72,475 deaths recorded in 1911 were children under five. Causes of death included convulsions, bronchitis, scarlet fever, measles and whooping cough. In 1914, one baby out of every 11 born died within a year. Children also went hungry,

as reported by the Ladies' School Dinner Committee, which provided for hundreds of children, "...some paying a halfpenny, most received it for free". It consisted of "a pint of Irish stew, or pea soup and bread". The Children's Act of 1908 legislated on the prevention of cruelty and the protection of infant life. In its 1914 report, the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children recorded 4,000 complaints.

While Ireland had no school medical inspection programme, there was one for dental, which included 49 clinics: "The need for dental inspection is shown by the fact that while only 4pc of children aged 7 have decayed teeth, 75pc of children aged 13, who have not previously been inspected, have decayed teeth."

That didn't stop some children helping themselves to sweets and chocolates during the Rising, as newspapers reported that Woolworths, Noblett's Toffee House and the Maison Philippe's chocolate shop had their stocks removed free of charge.

"Whoever did it", wrote author James Stephens, "must have tasted sweetstuffs they have never toothed before and will never taste again in life. And until they die, the insurrection of 1916 will have a sweet savour for them".

## THE POPULARITY OF PANTO

During Christmas 1915 excitable crowds of children enthusiastically cheered on a gang of 40 thieves in Dublin. Even bigger roars greeted their nemesis Ali Baba, as he took to the stage in the panto at the Queen's Theatre in Great Brunswick St (now Pearse St). It was one of many pantos over the holiday period.

Over in the Empire theatre (now the Olympia), *Cinderella* played to packed houses, while *Sinbad* took the stage at the Coliseum in Henry Street. Cork seemed to have a split in pantoland, with *Red Riding Hood* at the Recreation Hall in Rochestown,

while in the city *The New Red Riding Hood* was presented in the Fr Mathew Hall.

*Dick Whittington* brought his cat to the stage of the Gaiety in Dublin, and the Opera House in Derry offered *Cinderella*. The Abbey put on comedy plays *The Lord Mayor* and *A Minute's Wait*, and a *Christmas Revue* by Madame Rock's students. Connor's Circus performed in Dublin's Rotunda Rink, while a picture show was held in the Round Room.

Other picture-houses which catered for the holiday season were the Town Hall and Princess Cinema, both in Rathmines, and the Bohemian in Phibsborough.

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# Heuston's *station*

Dogged defence of the Mendicity Institution lead to execution, writes **Richard McElligott**

**S**EÁN HEUSTON was born in Dublin and following school, he became an office clerk with the Great Southern and Western Railway Company. At 19, he joined Na Fianna Éireann, the Republican Boy Scout movement founded by the IRB member Bulmer Hobson and Constance Markievicz. Like many, Heuston found it a radicalising experience.

After attaining the rank of vice commandant of Na Fianna's Dublin Brigade in 1913, Heuston was also appointed Director of Training on its headquarters staff. This position led to him becoming a founding member of the Irish Volunteers. Leading members of Na Fianna were soon picked to fill vital positions within the new movement.

In the years before the Rising, Heuston continued to drill Fianna members, often on the grounds of Patrick Pearse's school, St Enda's. In July 1914, he commanded the

Fianna contingent that unloaded the rifles during the Howth gunrunning.

By 1916 Heuston had been appointed captain in the Irish Volunteers' Dublin Brigade, taking command of D Company in Edward Daly's 1st Batt. On Easter Monday, the battalion was ordered to take up positions around the Four Courts. However Heuston's small company of 25 men did not mobilise with the rest of Daly's main force.

## SNAPSHOT

### SEÁN HEUSTON

**Born:** 21 February 1891, Dublin

**Educated:** CBS North Richmond St

**Affiliation:** Fianna Éireann/Irish Volunteers

**Career:** Clerk in railway company

**Died:** 8 May 1916, Kilmainham Jail



Seán Heuston led 25 men down Sackville Street on Easter Monday 1916, and then on to the Mendicity Institution on the south quays, where they held out for two days.

Instead they assembled near Mountjoy Square and marched down O'Connell Street. There after a brief conference with James Connolly, the appointed commander of rebel forces, Heuston's company was ordered to cross the Liffey to take over the Mendicity Institution, a poorhouse located on Usher's Island on the south quays.

This was a vital position for disrupting British reinforcements coming from the Royal Barracks or via Kingsbridge Station (renamed in Heuston's honour in 1966) into the city centre. The decision to station Daly's main force in the Four Courts instead of the Mendicity Institution was a major tactical blunder by the Rising's planners. For the next two days Heuston's men doggedly defended the position as hundreds of British troops encircled his increasingly-exposed outpost.

Desperately short of food, rest and ammunition, hopelessly outnumbered and expecting the position to be overrun

at any moment, Heuston ordered his men to surrender around noon on Wednesday. After spending the rest of the week incarcerated at Arbour Hill detention barracks, Heuston was tried by court-martial on 4 May.

He was sentenced to death for falling into the second category of rebels defined by the British authorities as meriting execution: 'Those who commanded rebels actually shooting down soldiers, police and others'. Though actually only a minor officer, the trial was most likely swayed in its decision by the number of casualties his outpost had managed to inflict.

Despite this, Heuston made an audacious effort to escape this sentence by strongly challenging the inaccurate evidence put forward against him. It was to no avail.

*Dr Richard McElligott lectures in Modern Irish History in UCD*

1916-2016

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Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland

POST

## ÉAMONN CEANNT

# Gunman in the shadow

Perhaps the least known of the Proclamation's signatories, Éamonn Ceannt is nonetheless an important figure, writes **Aoife Whelan**

**O**N the eve of his execution, Éamonn Ceannt issued a statement from his cell in Kilmainham Jail, declaring that 'Ireland has shown she is a Nation. This generation can claim to have raised sons as brave as any that went before. And in the years to come Ireland will honour those who risked all for her honour at Easter in 1916.'

Edward Thomas Kent was born in 1881 in the RIC barracks in Ballymoe where his father was a constable. In 1883 the family moved to Ardee, Co Louth when his father was transferred and in 1892 they settled in Dublin. By the age of 15, he had begun to sign his name Éamonn Ceannt in his school diaries and, in 1898, achieved excellent results in his final exams and took up a clerical position with Dublin Corporation.

The same year also marked the centenary of the United Irishmen's 1798 Rebellion. Ceannt marched in the commemorative processions and was greatly influenced by these public displays of nationalist sentiment. The following St Patrick's Day, he purchased a copy of O'Growney's book on the Irish language. Shortly after, on 13 September 1899, Ceannt joined the central branch of the Gaelic League. Although the League claimed to be apolitical, it seems that Ceannt became more politicised in it, having been introduced to Patrick Pearse and Eoin MacNeill among others. He began teaching Irish at various League branches and his students included Seán T Ó Kelly and Áine Ní Bhraonáin, who was to become his wife in 1905. Áine was a sister of the journalist and playwright Kathleen O'Brennan.

The Gaelic League was concerned not only with the revival of the Irish language, but also with promotion of a truly 'Irish-Ireland'. This included the fostering of Irish music, dancing, literature, heritage, customs, habits and points of view. Ceannt shared this ideology. As an enthusiast of the uilleann and war pipes, he was involved in the establishment of Cumann na bPíobairí (The Pipers' Club) in Dublin in February 1900 and was elected honorary secretary a year later. Ceannt purchased a printing press in order to produce a journal entitled *An Píobaire* which first appeared on 5 July 1901. In September 1908, he travelled to Rome as official piper for a contingent of Irish athletes. He is reported to have played 'O'Donnell Abú' and 'The Wearing of the Green' during the group's audience with Pope Pius X.

In 1907, Ceannt joined the central branch of Sinn Féin in Dublin. He was an active member of the movement and was elected to the branch committee and then to the National Council. He was also elected to the Gaelic League Executive in 1909. Ceannt was among those who protested against

the visit of King George V in July 1911, under the auspices of the newly-formed United National Societies Committee. His colleagues on the committee included Seán Fitzgibbon, Seán Mac Diarmada, Thomas MacDonagh, Patrick Pearse and The O'Rahilly. The protestors organised a visit to the grave of Wolfe Tone at Bodenstown during the royal visit.

In March 1912, Pearse launched his own newspaper, *An Barr Buadh*, as a platform for his nationalist philosophy. Ceannt was among its most significant contributors. By 1913, Ceannt had been sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood by Seán Mac Diarmada. When the Irish Volunteers were established in November 1913 in response to the foundation of the Ulster Volunteer Force, Ceannt was elected to the provisional committee. Although by this point Home Rule seemed to be within reach, many extreme nationalists believed the time had come to seek political independence for Ireland by force if necessary.

Ceannt played an active role in the financing and arming of the Volunteers and was involved in the importation of guns at both Howth and Kilcoole in the summer of 1914. These manoeuvres by the Volunteers were praised openly by the *Irish Independent's* Gaelic columnist, Eoghan Ó Neachtain, who beseeched God to reward the men who completed this task for Ireland's benefit: 'Nár laga Dia na buachaillí a rinne obair an Domhnaigh ar son na hÉireann,' he wrote.

Following the split within the Volunteers, Ceannt was elected financial secretary and was appointed commandant of the 4th Battalion in March 1915. He was also co-opted onto the IRB Military Council, along with Pearse and Plunkett, and became director of communications. Many of the meetings of the Military Council were held at Ceannt's residence in Dolphin's Barn. The song 'Ireland Over All', penned by Ceannt, was sold to raise money for his battalion.

As plans for an armed rebellion took shape, Thomas Clarke and Seán Mac Diarmada were recruited to the Military Council, followed by James Connolly of the Irish Citizen Army and finally by Thomas

MacDonagh. Despite Eoin MacNeill's countermanning orders which appeared in the *Sunday Independent*, on Easter Monday 1916 Ceannt took command of 120 Volunteers at the South Dublin Union workhouse and hospital (now St James's Hospital). Cathal Brugha served as his Vice-Commandant.

Ceannt's wife Áine, son Rónán and mother-in-law had been dispatched to stay with the Brugha family during the agitation. Ceannt and his men entered the Union through the Rialto entrance and immediately cut the telephone lines and erected barricades. Patients, inmates and staff were relocated to safer buildings displaying Red Cross Flags and provisions were allowed through. The strategically-located Night Nurses' Home became the rebels' HQ. They soon came under fire from British forces on the ground, supported by marksmen from the roof of the Royal Hospital nearby. The Volunteers held their positions and following the deaths of two commanding officers, Lieutenant Ramsey and Captain Warmington, the British retreated.

A second wave of troops managed to enter the Union complex. The fighting became an intense hand-to-hand struggle but Ceannt's military expertise and bravery ensured that his men held their position despite heavy losses on both sides. On Thursday 27 April, British troops launched a fierce assault on Ceannt's headquarters. Although losses were sustained and Cathal Brugha was seriously wounded, the British military didn't succeed in breaching the rebels' barricade. When the order to surrender was issued on Sunday 29 April, Ceannt was initially reluctant to comply but eventually stood down as the orders had come from Pearse and Connolly.

Éamonn Ceannt was sentenced to death following court-martial and was executed on 8 May. He hoped his actions and those of his comrades would form a legacy for future generations. He wrote in a letter to his wife: 'Tell Rónán to be a good boy and remember Easter 1916 for ever.' Although overshadowed somewhat in the aftermath of the Rising as scholars focused on other Nationalist leaders, Ceannt was nonetheless a quintessential revival figure as his political and military activism was preceded by his involvement in the Gaelic League, his Catholic schooling and his interest in traditional Irish music.

*Dr Aoife Whelan (pictured right) has recently completed a PhD in UCD's School of Irish, Celtic Studies and Folklore on Irish language journalism during the revival period*





**Left: The Kent family. Back row (l-r): William, Richard, Michael, Éamonn, Áine (née Brennan). Front row (l-r): James Patrick, Elizabeth (née Cummins), James Snr, Nell Casey (née Kent) and Jack Casey. PHOTOGRAPH COURTESY MARY GALLAGHER**  
**Above: Mary Gallagher and Éamonn Ceannt pictured at UCD Newman House, St Stephen's Green, Dublin. ARTHUR CARRON**

# Family brings Éamonn Ceannt's story to life

Relatives share stories of the rebel's legacy with **Kim Bielenberg**

**A**s a young man who had just left school, Éamonn Ceannt looked set to become a reporter at the *Irish Independent*.

He had an interview with the editor, but got cold feet. According to his sister-in-law Lily, "upon learning that he would be on duty by day and by night with little freedom, he changed his mind".

It wasn't that Ceannt was anything other than an extremely diligent young man. He just needed time outside work to pursue all his other interests — from playing the pipes, and teaching and learning the Irish language, to becoming a dedicated political conspirator.

He refused to join the Civil Service, because it was British, but accepted a job with Dublin Corporation on the grounds that its funds came from the people of Dublin. He stayed in his job as a clerk right up until the Rising, and after his execution his wife Áine fetched his final pay packet, which ran until Easter.

These details in the life of one of the forgotten leaders of the Rising are contained in Mary Gallagher's intriguing biography of Ceannt in the O'Brien Press *16 Lives* series.

Mary is a grand-niece of Ceannt and came to the work of biographer as a late vocation. She previously worked for Enterprise Ireland and the IDA.

It was only when an aunt died and she read a family diary of the Rising period by her grandfather Michael Kent (Ceannt's brother) that her interest was sparked and she wanted to find out more.

"My grandfather's diary mostly concerned itself with ordinary family life, including children having coughs and colds.

"But in the middle there is a stunning account of some of the events around the Rising."

While Éamonn Ceannt was single-minded and uncompromising in his political outlook and prepared to take up arms, his brother Michael took a sceptical view that would have been quite common among ordinary Dubliners at the time.

Mary says: "My grandfather was quite the opposite to Éamonn. He was an extremely peaceable man."

Michael happened to visit Éamonn on the day before the Rising, when there were Volunteers crowding the family drawing room, with bicycles stacked four abreast on the railings outside. He later recalled: "All through this I had the feeling that the whole thing was a jest: that they were boys playing at being soldiers."

Later that day, Michael drafted a letter urging Éamonn to give up the Volunteers. He said afterwards: "I believed physical force against England with her Super-Dreadnoughts (which could blow up Dublin city from 9-10 miles out to sea) would be utter madness."

But he had to concede that once the rebels had guns, "wild horses would not pull them back".

## WILLIAM KENT

Éamonn Ceannt's brother William, a sergeant-major in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers stationed in Fermoy, Co Cork, was court-martialled in 1916 and subsequently sent to the front line where he was killed almost on the anniversary of the Rising.

The charge at court-martial was that he had



**Áine Ceannt with her son Rónán. UCD ARCHIVES/THE ELGIN O'RAHILLY PAPERS**

Michael may have been sceptical, and another brother Bill served in the British army, but Mary Gallagher says they were a close family, and there were few political tensions.

Mary tells how on the eve of the execution of Ceannt his family were taken by British army car to visit him in Kilmainham Jail. Michael's diary describes how the car travels slowly across the city, and is stopped every quarter of a mile by sentries, their rifles pointing and their bayonets fixed.

In Kilmainham Jail, "the keys rattle, doors open and we enter to find poor Éamonn, after rising from a little table, lit by one candle.

stolen food to give to a prisoner named Thomas Kent (no relation).

This was the same Thomas Kent who was executed in Cork Jail in 1916 and whose remains have recently been identified through DNA testing in UCD. He was given a State funeral in September 2015. **AW**

"He received us and shook hands quite calmly and, after a word or two, put his arm around Áine, bent down with a sweet smile and kissed her lovingly... seeing them wrapped in one another we turned away and conversed with the two sentries at the door..."

Ceannt was executed by firing squad early on the following day. After the death of Éamonn, Áine became more politically active, getting elected for Sinn Féin in local elections and organising fundraising for the widows of rebels, and the families of imprisoned volunteers.

Éamonn and Áine had a son Rónán, who was 10 at the time of Rising.

Rónán is remembered by members of the family as a sad figure, who felt the burden of being the son of a 1916 leader.

A grand-nephew of Éamonn, who is also called Éamonn Ceannt, remembers Rónán coming to visit for Sunday dinner.

Éamonn Ceannt says: "His father had said to him at the time of the Rising that he should look after his mother, and he did so dutifully to the end.

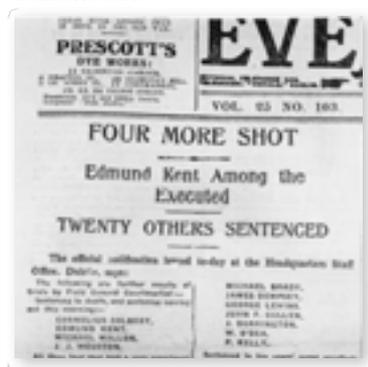
"But when she died he didn't seem to hold it together.

"He was a solicitor but as the years went on, he experienced ill-health and he never really made it economically in life, and he died in poor circumstances.

"He always felt that he could not quite live up to his father's reputation."

In a recently-uncovered letter, Rónán wrote to a family friend: "For years past I have wondered if Mamy (sic) was, in a way, not disappointed in me for not having shown myself as fine a man as my father was."

**Above: Éamonn Ceannt on the pipes. COURTESY: NA PÍOBAIRÍ UILLEANN**  
**Below: The Evening Herald of 8th May, 1916. 'Four More Shot. Edmund Kent among the executed. Twenty Others Sentenced'.**



CATHAL BRUGHA

# A very *complex* patriot

**Fergus O'Farrell** on the republican who refused to surrender

**C**ATHAL BRUGHA was centrally involved in all of the major events of Ireland's struggle for independence. Despite this, he remains one of the least understood personalities of the revolution. There is no dedicated English language biography of this complex and important Irish patriot.

Born in Dublin in 1874, Brugha was a gifted sportsman as well as an active member of the Gaelic League, IRB and Irish Volunteers. Though not on the military council of the IRB, he was considered important enough for the leadership to reveal its plans for rebellion to him in the weeks before the Rising.

During Easter week, Brugha was second-in-command of the garrison at the South Dublin Union, led by Éamonn Ceannt.

Those who fought alongside Brugha remarked on his daring bravery, his silent nature, his devout Catholicism and his steely determination. On Thursday, 27 April, Brugha led a charge toward a British position through the warren of rooms around the Union. He sustained up to 25 wounds and, cut off from his unit by the heavy fighting, could be heard shouting, "Come on, you cowards, 'til I get one shot before I die. I am only a wounded man. Éamonn, Éamonn (Ceannt), Come here and sing 'God Save Ireland' before I die."

The rebels mounted a rescue mission and found Brugha propped up against a wall in a pool of his own blood, still clutching his Peter the Painter revolver. Joseph Doolan, who fought with Brugha during the Rising, later recorded that, "It was the greatest, bravest and most inspiring incident of that glorious week. A wounded man, alone practically, holding the forces of England at bay for an hour, taunting them with cowardice and proclaiming to them that he was only a wounded man."

Delirious from blood loss, Brugha was removed from the garrison, under the Red Cross flag, to a hospital in Dublin Castle. He underwent recovery in various hospitals until autumn, by which time the order for his detention had expired. From his hospital bed, he began reorganising what was left of the Irish Volunteers. His wounds never fully healed and he walked with a limp for the rest of his life.

In the midst of the 1918 conscription



Cathal Brugha arrives to Dáil Éireann on his bike in December, 1921.

GETTY

crisis, Brugha led a handpicked team of IRA assassins to London, where he planned to execute the British Cabinet if they introduced conscription in Ireland. The mission was aborted when the threat of conscription passed. He returned to Ireland just in time to be elected to the first Dáil as TD for West Waterford.

Brugha presided over the first meeting of the independent legislature on 21 January 1919, and became Minister for Defence in April. During the War of Independence he strove to assert his

ministerial authority over a decentralised IRA.

He was strongly opposed to any actions which might involve civilian casualties, and clashed with Michael Collins on many issues, including Collins's plan to shoot British intelligence officers, in what later became known as Bloody Sunday. Brugha removed some names from the hit list as he believed that there was not sufficient evidence against them.

Unlike many rebel leaders, he evaded capture throughout the war. He sometimes disguised himself as an Anglican minister, never slept at home, and was always armed. He was always prepared to fight to the death rather than surrender or be captured. He ran his ministry from an office above his candle-making business, Lalor's, on the North Quays.

Brugha opposed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, working hard to maintain unity within the IRA in the months before the outbreak of the Civil War in June 1922. Once the war had begun, he joined the anti-treaty forces in the rank of private.

On July 5, surrounded by Free State troops in a burning hotel on present day O'Connell Street, he ordered his men to lay down their weapons and give themselves up. Characteristically, Brugha refused to surrender. There are several accounts of what happened next, but the result was that Brugha was shot and mortally wounded. Before exiting the hotel, he told a female comrade that his death would shock the country into ending the civil war. He died in hospital on July 7.

Brugha has been remembered as an uncompromising republican who favoured war over politics. However, this interpretation is too simplistic, and belies Brugha's inherent belief in politics and his complex attitudes towards violence. As this Decade of Centenaries progresses, perhaps a more rounded portrait will emerge.

*Fergus O'Farrell recently completed his MA thesis on Cathal Brugha at the UCD School of History*

**SNAPSHOT**

**CATHAL BRUGHA**

**Born:** 18 July 1874, Dublin

**Educated:** Belvedere College

**Affiliation:** IRB/Irish Volunteers

**Career:** Candle salesman, President of the Dáil, Minister for Defence

**Died:** 7 July 1922

**LEARN MORE**

**READ...**

- \* *Eamonn Ceannt*, by Mary Gallagher (16 Lives Series, O'Brien Press)
- \* *Cathal Brugha — As I Knew Him*, by Sceilg [JJ O'Kelly] (Dublin, 1922)
- \* *A Terrible Beauty, Poetry of 1916*, selected by Mairéad Ashe FitzGerald (Dublin 2015)

**WATCH...**

- \* Seán Nunan describes taking

part in the rebellion in the GPO (RTÉ, 1965), <http://bit.ly/1ITexuC>

**CHECK OUT...**

- \* Eamonn Ceannt's last letter in the UCD archives, <http://bit.ly/1TnCbFU>

**LISTEN TO...**

- \* *The Week to Come*. An RTÉ documentary made by Proinsias Mac Aonghusa in 1966 from archive recordings of those who took part in the Rising, <http://tinyurl.com/hj3k5en>
- \* *The 1916 Proclamation*. A

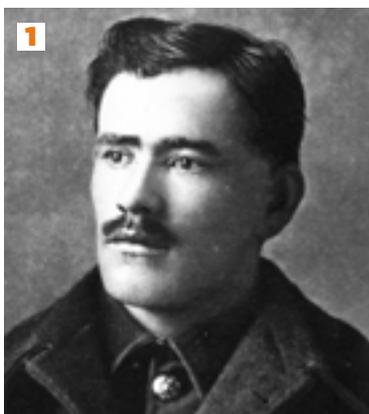


*History Show* special on the Rising's defining document (RTÉ 2014), <http://tinyurl.com/jj2fr9a>

**VISIT...**

- \* Many of the sites of the 1916 garrisons still exist. The South Dublin Union is now St James' Hospital, part of the Jacob's Factory is DIT Aungier Street, part of Boland's Mills is the Nama HQ. The GPO museum closed in March 2015 but a new visitor centre, GPO Witness History, will open in March 2016.

# NINE LIVES



## Grainne Coyne on the social and cultural heavyweights of the era

**1** BORN in Slane in 1887, **Francis Ledwidge** was the eighth of nine children. After school he undertook a variety of jobs but contributed poetry to the *Drogheda Independent*. Local aristocrat Lord Dunsany became his patron and helped his poetry reach a wider audience. Ledwidge was a socialist and republican and a founding member of the Slane branch of the Volunteers. He enlisted to fight in World War One and while serving his first collection was published, *Songs of the Fields* (1915). Upon learning of the execution of his friend and fellow poet Thomas MacDonagh he wrote *Lament*, which is regarded as one of his greatest works. Ledwidge died in a shell explosion in Belgium in 1917.



**2** Mary 'Molly' Allgood was born in Dublin in 1885. Sister to actress Sara Allgood, she chose to separate herself from her by changing her name to **Máire O'Neill**. She first appeared on stage in John Millington Synge's, *The Well of Saints* (1905) and they became engaged before Synge's death in 1909. She remained at the Abbey until she married drama critic GH Mair in 1911 and she moved to England. In her later years she made films, starring alongside Sara in Alfred Hitchcock's *Juno and the Paycock* (1930). She continued to act until her death in 1952.



**3** The first feature film made by the Film Company of Ireland was premiered in August 1916 at the Bohemian Theatre, Phibsborough. *O'Neill of the Glen* was directed by and starred **JM Kerrigan**, who was born in Dublin in 1882. Kerrigan was a newspaper reporter and member of the Abbey Players and later moved to the US where he performed on Broadway. After a role in John Ford's film about the Irish War of Independence *The Informer*, he moved again, to Hollywood, where he found plenty of work in the booming movie industry. He appeared in *Gone with the Wind* as the mill-owner and most of his later roles were minor, but despite this he has a 'star' on Hollywood Boulevard.



**4** John Casey was born in Dublin in 1880 and was mostly self-educated having started work at the age of 14. In 1906 he joined the Gaelic League and changed his name to **Seán O'Casey**. Influenced by Jim Larkin, he soon became active in the labour movement and joined the Irish Citizen Army in 1914. However, O'Casey soon became disillusioned with the direction of nationalism and was a non-combatant

in 1916. He turned his energy to drama and after several rejections, the Abbey Theatre produced *The Shadow of a Gunman* (1923), *Juno and the Paycock* (1924) and *The Plough and the Stars* (1926). He continued to write but none of his work had the impact of the early trilogy. He died in 1964 in England.



**5** Born Isabella Gertrude Amy Ovenden in Dublin in 1877, **Dr Ella Webb** would go on to play a major role in pediatric care. Webb ran her own private practice and free-dispensary and in 1918 was appointed as anaesthetist to the Adelaide Hospital, its first female doctor. Webb also worked at Saint Ultan's. She went on to found the Children's Sunshine Home as a convalescent place for children suffering from rickets. She was made a Lady of Grace of the Order of St John of Jerusalem and was awarded the MBE in 1918 for her medical work during the Rising. She died in 1946.



**6** **John Henry Bernard** was the Church of Ireland Archbishop from 1915-1919. His family came from Kerry but he was born in India in 1860. At 15, he entered Trinity to study mathematics and philosophy and became a leading figure in the university. In 1902 he became Dean of St Patrick's Cathedral and later became the Bishop of Ossory, Ferns and Leighlin before he was elected Archbishop of Dublin. He was also delegate to the Irish Convention in 1917-18 representing Unionist views. After his archbishopric ended, Bernard wrote a commentary on St John's Gospel which was published after his death in 1927.



**7** **Jem Roche** was a significant figure in Irish sport early in the 20th century. A county footballer and hurler with Wexford, he also boxed for a world title. After the American Tommy Burns came to London to defend his title, he was persuaded to fight in Dublin to defray his costs. He met the leading Irish heavyweight for a purse of £1,500 at the Olympia Theatre on St Patrick's Day 1908. Roche was knocked out in the first round. He returned to Wexford GAA and trained one of the greatest football teams ever, winning Leinster six times in succession from 1913-18, and winning the All-Ireland in the last four years. He died in 1934, aged 57.



**8 and 9** Brothers **Wilbur and Orville Wright** (born 1867 and 1871 respectively) developed the first successful airplane and are considered the fathers of modern aviation. The Wright brothers owned a bicycle shop and manufactured their own design from 1896. They successfully conducted the first free, controlled flight of a power-driven airplane

in 1903. After much scepticism Orville eventually demonstrated flights for the US Army, which led to a passenger seat plane being built in 1909. They became successful businessmen, filling contracts for airplanes in both Europe and the US. After Wilbur's death in 1912, Orville took over but sold the company in 1915. Orville died in Ohio in 1948.

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