

PROVISIONAL
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

County Donegal in 1916: From the Edge



Committee began moving the following Resolution
of which was received from the Council of Donegal

"That we beg to ask the County Council to forfeit
25 per cent of the Tonnage as a war bonus to the
contractors who entered into contracts prior to 1914
Councillor Mr. Dwyer seconded. As an amendment
Councillor Lerry moved and Councillor McEwan seconded
That the resolution be amended so as to apply to
contracts. On a division the votes for the
amendment Councillors Mr. Kelly (P), Mr. Kelly (A),
Lerry, McEwan and Mr. Gadden (P) - 5, for the
Councillors Mr. Gaddy, Mr. Lanning, Lerry,
Mr. Kelly (P) and Mr. Dwyer - 6.

To vote. The Chairman, who declared the motion
carried. Councillor Gaddy was not present at the division.



Donegal County Council
History and Heritage Education Pack

No. in Register	Date of Death	Cause of Death	Army Form B, 2185	Name
859	11 April 1916	Heart Disease		John Doherty
21	16 November 1914			Joseph Gallagher
15				Rodger Sweeney
32				Henry Doherty
940	10 July	Paralysis		Daniel Sweeney
11	9 April	Heart Disease		John Bradley
55	15			Patrick McEwen
8	19			George Mooney
89	12			James Dineen
				Henry Doherty

NOTICE

TO ALL EX-NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

BRANCH OF MAJESTY'S FORCES.

AND EX-NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

POBLACHT NA h EIREANN.
THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generation which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons

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No. in Register	Date of Death	Cause of Death	Army Form B, 218	Name
859	11 April 1916	Bed 1796		John Doherty
91	16 November 1914			Joseph Gallagher
				Rodger Swinney
				Daniel Swinney
				John Bradley
				Patrick McEwen
				Joseph Mooney
				James Dineen
				Mary Dineen

to take the place of the notice previously issued as Army Form B, 218.

NOTICE

TO ALL PARALYSIS
HEART DISEASE
AND EX-NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

BRANCH OF

MAJESTY'S FORCES.

AND EX-NON-COMMISSIONED OFFICERS

POBLACHT NA h EIREANN.
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IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generation which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons

INTRODUCTION



Liberty Hall, Dublin, after the 1916 Rising
(Donegal County Archives)

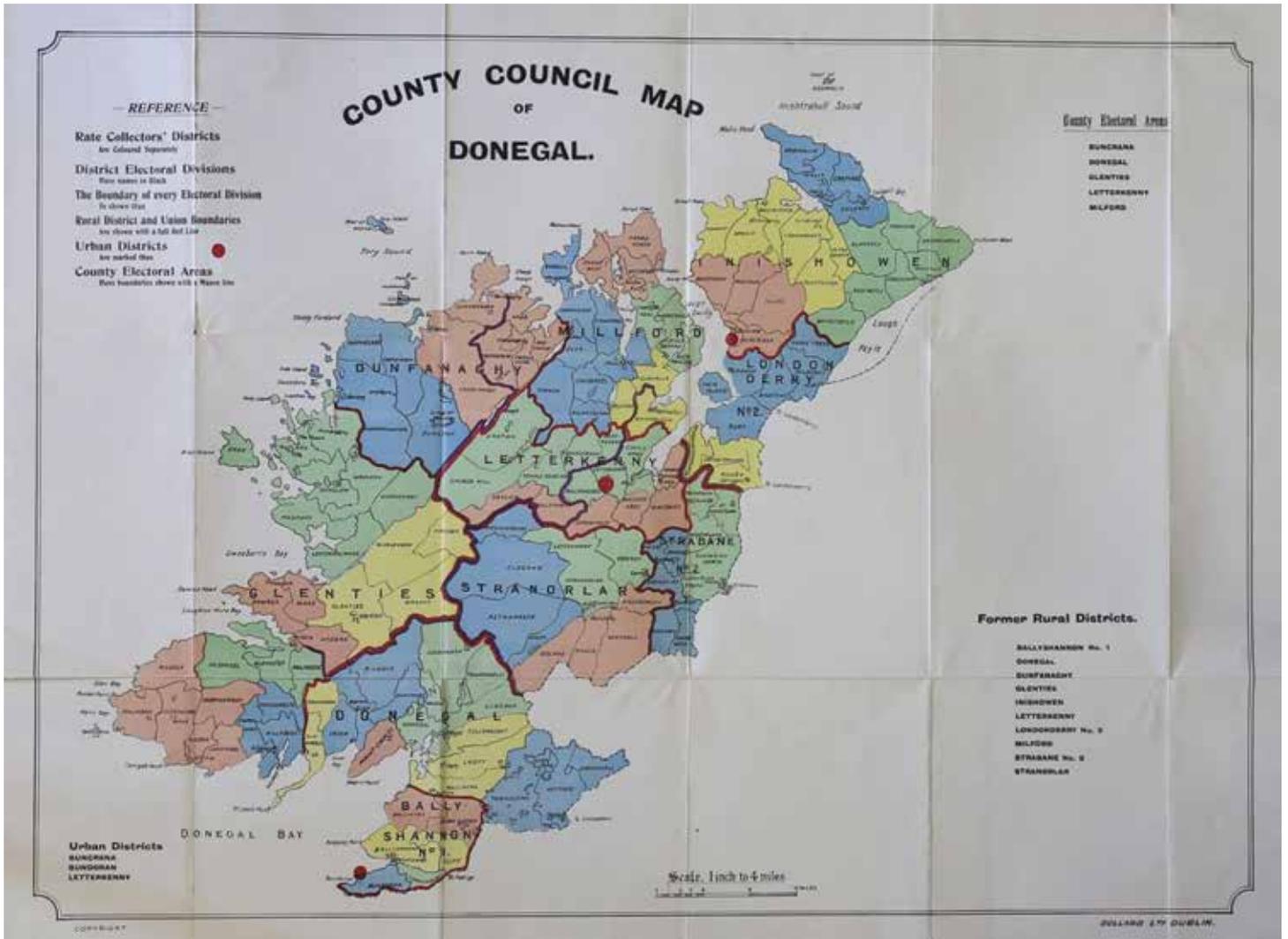
‘County Donegal in 1916’ History and Heritage Education Pack: An Introduction

The Education Pack - Booklet

This booklet endeavours to provide an overview of life in the county of Donegal and the major events affecting the people of the county in the year 1916, a seminal year in modern Irish history. This booklet is divided into four sections, focusing in particular on the events of the Rising from a County Donegal perspective. It also describes the life of ordinary people in the county and the impact of World War I in 1916.

The Education Pack – Facsimiles

This Education Pack includes 19 facsimiles - high quality copies of original documents and photographs which relate to the sections in the booklet. At the back of each facsimile are suggested questions. Teachers and students are encouraged to choose a section/theme to read, and then to study the facsimiles relating to the chosen theme. For background information on the major events of 1916 and their aftermath teachers and students are also encouraged to read the document study pack produced by Donegal County Archives entitled ‘A Decade of Change: Donegal and Ireland 1912 - 1923.’



Map outlining the rural districts of County Donegal
(Donegal County Archives)

County Donegal in 1916: A Brief Overview

County Donegal in the second decade of the 20th century was a very different place to what it is today. The 1911 Census put the population of County Donegal at 168,537 people, with 50% living in houses of just two rooms, though, due to the work of local authorities and the Congested Districts Board, the standard of living was rising. Among the improvements were the beginning of social housing, the gradual development of clean water supplies and sewerage systems, the building of roads and railways, the development of cottage industries, and efforts to spread the control of disease and improve access to education. The introduction of the Old Age Pension in 1908 and National Unemployment Insurance were also of benefit to many of the poorer people in society.

Nonetheless, by today's standards, the county in 1916 remained poor and remote, with basic and underdeveloped services. By 1916, World War I had raged for almost 18 months and many normal state services had slowed or had stopped because financial and human resources were being directed towards the war effort.



Letterkenny Main Street, c.1900
(Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)

Politically only home rule candidates had been elected as Members of Parliament (MPs) in County Donegal since 1885. In the 1911 local elections, 26 of the 32 seats had been won by home rule candidates. Unionists across Ireland, particularly in much of Ulster had resisted the Third Home Rule Bill. This opposition led to the formation of the Ulster Volunteers which in turn resulted in the formation of the nationalist Irish Volunteers in 1913. Two fishermen, Patrick McGinley and Charles Duggan from Gola Island, County Donegal, were involved in smuggling arms and ammunition for the Irish Volunteers, into Howth, north Dublin, on the *Asgard* in July 1914.

The Home Rule Bill passed its third reading in May 1914 (with a special temporary clause for Ulster included) but the outbreak of war in August resulted in its postponement. With nationalist opinion divided over the war, the Volunteer movement split. The majority opted to follow John Redmond's National Volunteers and support the war in Europe, while the remainder retained the name Irish Volunteers and were committed to securing independence for Ireland. Membership of the Volunteers grew in many parts of the county of Donegal throughout 1914. However, following the split in the organisation and an intensified recruitment campaign by the British Army, numbers in the organisation declined rapidly in 1915. Membership of the Irish Volunteers would increase again only after the Easter Rising in 1916.

MAJOR EVENTS AFFECTING THE COUNTY IN 1916



Henry Street, Dublin after the 1916 Rising
(Donegal County Archives)

County Donegal and the 1916 Rising

Events leading to the Rising



Eoin MacNeill
(Courtesy of University College Dublin Archives)

The Irish Volunteers, who were far fewer in number than John Redmond's National Volunteers, did not take part in World War I. Many of these were the most militant of the Volunteers and included some members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB). The IRB were the descendents of the physical force tradition nationalists whose last major event was a failed rebellion in 1867. Members of the IRB had gradually and secretly infiltrated the Irish Volunteers. By 1916 several IRB members were on the Irish Volunteers' Central Council.

Within the IRB the idea that 'England's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity' was firmly established and plans were made to stage a rebellion. A Military Council was formed composed of Patrick Pearse, Joseph Plunkett, Éamonn Ceannt, Thomas Clarke, Seán MacDiarmada, Thomas MacDonagh and James Connolly. These seven men were to become the leaders of the Easter Rising and the 'seven signatories' who signed the Proclamation of the Irish Republic. Connolly, who was a socialist, was commandant of the Irish Citizen Army.

Orders were given by the IRB for the mobilisation of the Irish Volunteers on Easter Sunday 1916. A series of mishaps however had a disastrous effect on the plans for a national uprising. Firstly, the vast majority of the Irish Volunteers answered to their leader Eoin MacNeill and not the IRB. He could see no potential for a successful rebellion and refused to allow the organisation's membership to become embroiled in activities that would lead to unnecessary bloodshed. When he realised that a Rising was planned for Easter Sunday he quickly issued an order cancelling all Volunteer activities.

The army that Pearse and the others had hoped for did not appear. In addition, the arms that they were waiting for from Germany did not arrive. The ship they were being transported in, the *Aud*, was intercepted by British warships off the coast of County Kerry. Rather than allow the British to gain control of the cargo the captain sank the ship. Roger Casement, who was involved in this operation, was arrested when he arrived ashore. He was executed for treason in August 1916.

The Rising in Dublin



Joseph Sweeney in later life
(Courtesy of The Irish Capuchin Provincial Archives)

In spite of these disasters the leaders pressed on with their plans and on Monday 24 April 1916, Patrick Pearse read the Proclamation of the Irish Republic to a group of onlookers outside the General Post Office (GPO) in Dublin. The confusion over mobilisation ensured that the Rising was confined mainly to Dublin.

Among those in the GPO with Pearse was Joseph Sweeney, from Burtonport, County Donegal (1897 - 1980). Sweeney was then a 19 year-old student in University College Dublin. He had been a pupil of Pearse's at St. Enda's School in Rathfarnham, and still lived there in 1916 acting as a courier and explosives maker. His account of his actions during Easter Week, later written in his application for a military pension, states that he was part of E Company, 4th Battalion, Dublin Brigade, and that his Officers Commanding were Pearse and Liam Clarke. His short account of events that week include his statement that he "served during the entire week in the

GPO and Moore Street, being engaged for the most part sniping . . ." His claim was backed up by several witnesses, one of whom added that, "he was an active volunteer and was engaged in the manufacture of munitions at St Enda's college prior to Easter Week" (Military Archives Pension Collection). He was one of James Connolly's stretcher bearers from the GPO following the surrender of the rebels (Dictionary of Irish Biography).

Joseph Sweeney would go on to become the youngest TD of the first Dáil in 1919, fight in the War of Independence, support the Anglo-Irish Treaty and become Chief of Staff of the Irish Army in 1929.



Sweeney's Hotel, Burtonport, formerly the Sweeney family home, c.1905
(Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)



Conor and Eunan McGinley with their mother Elizabeth.
(Donegal County Museum Collection)

Two other UCD students, with connections to Donegal were in the GPO during Easter Week. These were Conor and Eunan McGinley, sons of Cú Uladh (Peter Toner McGinley) and cousins of Dr. J.P. McGinley, Letterkenny. In 1916, Conor McGinley (1897 – 1975) was 19 years old and a former pupil of St Enda's. He was studying architecture. When Pearse surrendered, Sweeney and the McGinleys were among those arrested and jailed. Conor was held in Dartmoor and Lewes prisons before being released in April 1917. Eunan was the youngest of the St. Enda's boys, aged 16. In Richmond barracks, after the surrender, he refused to tell the military authorities his real age, which would have meant his immediate release, because he thought his St. Enda's comrades might possibly be shot, and he intended to share their fate. He was held in Stafford prison before being released in July 1916.

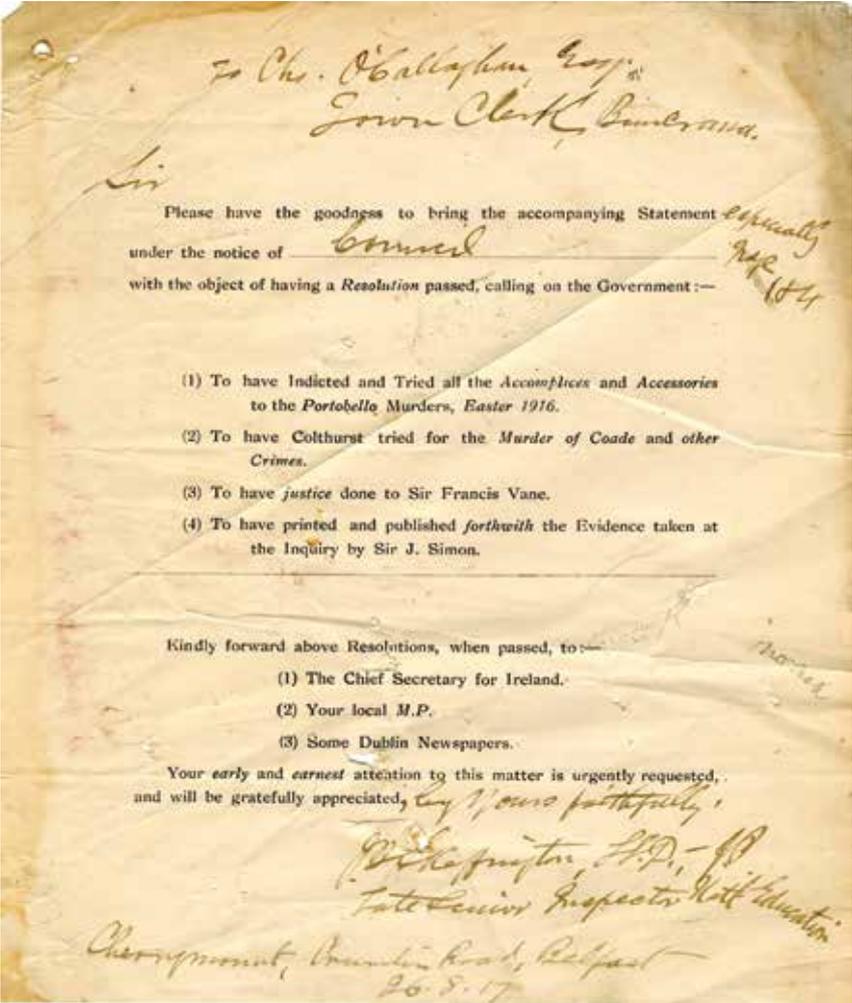
During Easter Week the rebels occupied key buildings in Dublin including the GPO, the Four Courts, the South Dublin Union, Boland's Mill, Stephen's Green and Jacob's Biscuit Factory, but crucially Dublin Castle was not held. On Tuesday, martial law was declared, and 16,000 British troops arrived from Belfast, the Curragh and from England. Tanks and a naval gunboat, the *Helga*, were used in the city centre to suppress the rising.



Nelson's Pillar, Dublin, during the 1916 Rising
(Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)



Hibernian Bank, Dublin, during the 1916 Rising (Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)



During the week, as law and order broke down, widespread looting took place. Ordinary civilians were caught in the crossfire. 485 men, women and children were killed during or as a direct result of the Easter Rising. Of these casualties, 184 civilians, 107 British soldiers, 58 rebels and 13 members of the police forces were killed between 24 and 29 April 1916 (Glasnevin Trust, 1916 Necrology 485). Among the dead was Pte. Con Duggan from Annagry, 3rd Btn. Royal Irish Rifles, who was killed in Dublin on 29 April. By Saturday, 28 April, when Pearse decided to surrender, the GPO and many other city centre buildings, particularly on O'Connell Street, lay in ruins.

Circular Letter from J. B. Skeffington to Buncrana Town Council and all local authorities in Ireland, seeking justice for his son Francis Sheehy-Skeffington and others unlawfully killed by British soldiers during Easter Week, 26 August 1917 (Donegal County Archives)

Activity outside Dublin

Men from County Donegal who were active during the Rising outside Dublin included Donncha MacNiallghuis (1887 – 1954), originally from Malinbeg, Gleann Cholm Cille. In 1916, MacNiallghuis lived and worked in Cork and had been an active member of the Irish Volunteers there since 1913. He was among a large number of Cork City Battalion Volunteers who assembled in Macroom on Easter Sunday in anticipation of Roger Casement's arms landing in County Kerry. However, the Cork Volunteers' attempt to mobilise ended abruptly following the failure of Casement's plan, and they were forced to return home without seeing any action. MacNiallghuis was subsequently involved in the War of Independence in Cork.



Constable Charles McGee, Royal Irish Constabulary
(Donegal County Museum Collection)

One of the first people to die on Easter Monday was a young County Donegal man, Charles McGee from Inishbofin Island, who was a Constable in the Royal Irish Constabulary. He was based in Castlebellingham, County Louth. On Easter Monday a group of Louth Volunteers mobilised in Dundalk and set off towards Dublin. At Castlebellingham, they captured a number of policemen, along with an army officer. In an incident, a Volunteer shot and wounded the officer and killed Constable McGee.

His grave stands in Gortahork graveyard and the inscription reads:
'R.I.P. Sacred to the memory of Constable Charles McGee who died on 24th April 1916 from wounds received whilst gallantly doing his duty as a member of the Royal Irish Constabulary – Erected by his sorrowing parents and by the subscribers of the Irish Police and Constabulary Recognition Fund'.

Daniel Kelly and the Irish Volunteers in Donegal



Ernest Blythe
(Courtesy of University College Dublin Archives)

One prominent member of the IRB was Daniel Kelly, from Killygordon, County Donegal. Kelly had been involved in the IRB since he was in his late teens. In 1916 he was in his thirties. For some years he had worked in the railways in Glasgow and, during his time there, he and others had tried to organise a branch of Sinn Féin. When he returned to Donegal in 1912, he was first stationed in Dungloe Road Railway Station, then in Cashelnagore near Gortahork.

From late 1913 he organised Irish Volunteer Companies in both Cloughaneely and Creeslough and spent some time trying to purchase arms and ammunition. By early 1915 the majority of those he had recruited had decided to stay with Redmond's National Volunteers. With membership and morale of the Irish Volunteers so low in early 1916, Kelly invited Pearse to Donegal to inspire enthusiasm and action. However, the Rising itself happened before Pearse had an opportunity to return to the county. Ernest Blythe, a future Government Minister in the first Free State government, visited Creeslough and Letterkenny in January 1916, in an effort to organise the Volunteers there (Blythe was later arrested and was in prison during Easter Week).



Cashelnagore Railway Station, c. 1950s (Donegal County Archives)

Donegal during Easter Week

News of Eoin MacNeill's order not to mobilise on Easter Sunday reached Donegal successfully. Nevertheless, a small group of about 30 Volunteers including Daniel Kelly had met at Creeslough on Easter Sunday to await instructions. When there was still no word on Easter Monday, Kelly and his brother Joe decided to travel to Portadown to take a train to Dublin. However there were no trains running, and they returned home.

After the Rising

The British Government was determined to adopt a tough policy against the insurgents. Over the following weeks sixteen leaders of the Rising were executed, including all seven signatories of the Proclamation. In August, Roger Casement was hanged in



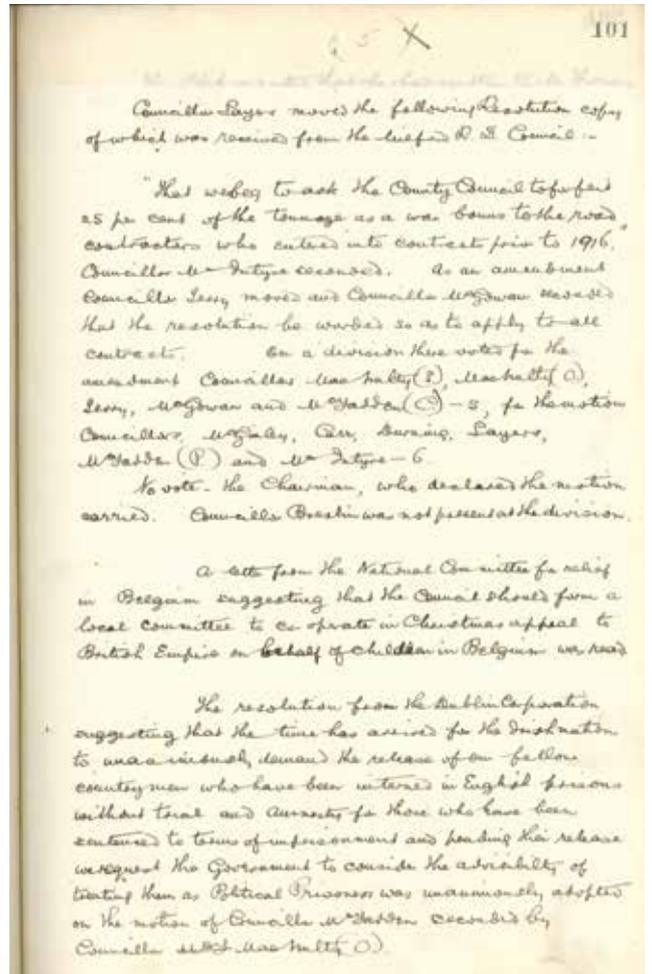
Éamon de Valera under guard following surrender, Dublin, April 1916 (Courtesy of University College Dublin Archives)



Group of Irish prisoners in Stafford Gaol, England, 1916, including Joseph Sweeney and Eunan McGinley
(Courtesy of Military Archives)

London. A further 97 people had their death sentences reduced to imprisonment, including Éamon de Valera and Countess Markievicz. In total over 3,500 people were arrested; almost 1,900 of these were sent to internment camps and prisons in England and Wales.

Despite the fact that their attempts to be involved in the Rising had been frustrated, a number of Donegal Volunteers were arrested as Easter Week ended. Kelly's witness statement describes the events at his home on the Saturday after Easter Monday, when the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) arrived to arrest him. As the police searched the house, Kelly's wife hid a rifle in her nightdress and Kelly watched in trepidation as the police searched a chest which contained not just baby clothes but 500 rounds of revolver ammunition (which the police did not discover). He also describes his lengthy journey with other prisoners, via Derry, to Wakefield and Frongoch prisons. Kelly was released from Frongoch before Christmas 1916 (Witness Ref. # 1004, Bureau of Military History 1913-1921, Collection at Military Archives).



Resolution adopted by Dunfanaghy Rural District Council, demanding release of military prisoners following the 1916 Rising, June 1916
(Donegal County Archives)

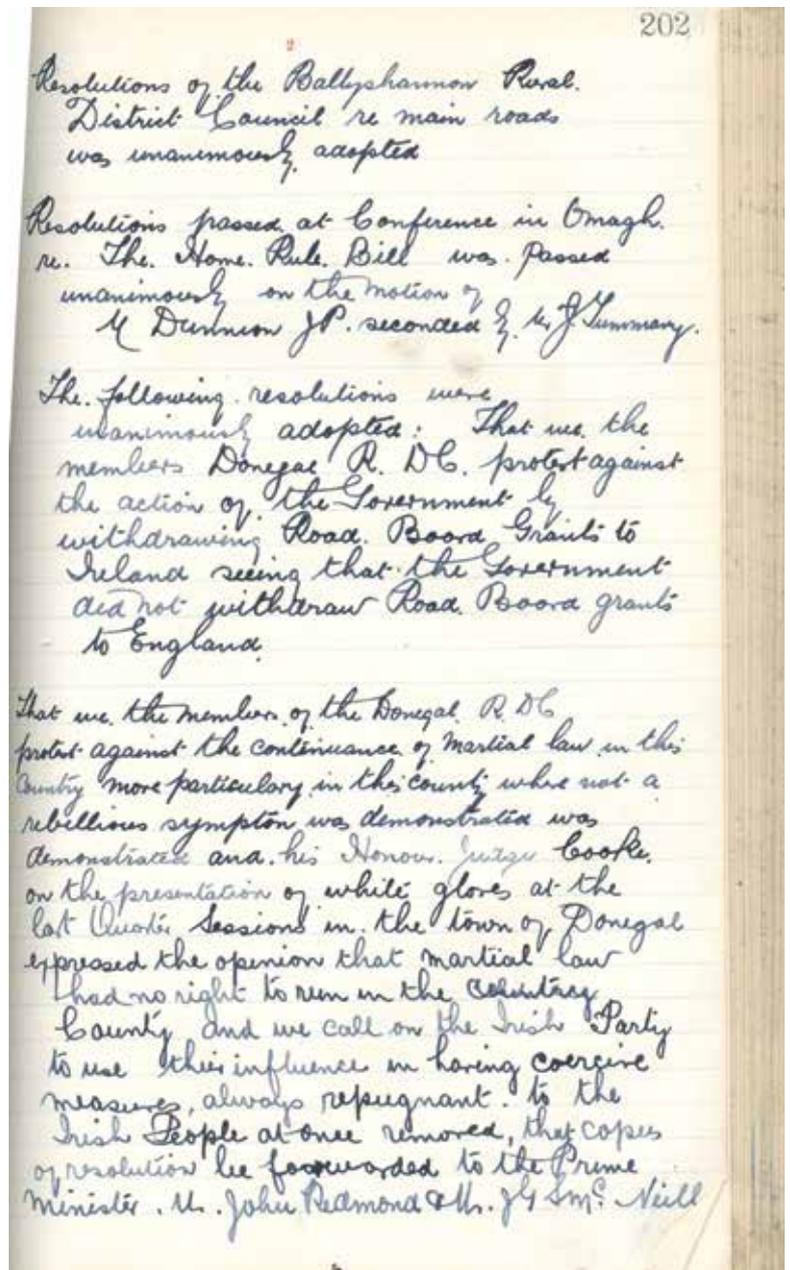
Joseph Sweeney and Eunan McGinley were sent to Stafford gaol and then to Frongoch prison camp in Wales. John Cassidy from Ballybofey was sent to Stafford. Sweeney was released in July 1916 and returned to Donegal to reorganise the Volunteers in the county. Conor McGinley was sent to Lewes and Dartmoor prisons (along with Éamon de Valera) and was released in April 1917.

During their time in prison these Donegal men had the opportunity to meet others, discuss their political ideals, educate themselves in the art of war and begin to plan the reorganisation of the IRB and the Volunteers. Daniel Kelly was selected to take charge of the reorganisation in Donegal. During the War of Independence, Kelly was active in Ballybofey, North Donegal and Derry.

Reaction in Donegal

County Donegal was very far away from the action in Dublin during Easter Week. So much so that Wednesday's edition (26 April) of the *Derry Journal* could only report that there were "rumours of disorder" in Dublin. By Friday, news was still not getting through and the paper complained that the lack of telegrams was leading to "alarmist and exaggerated reports" of the disturbances in Dublin. When news of the Dublin events did eventually reach Donegal the public reaction was negative. Local representatives voiced their disapproval, condemning "the mad policy of a small minority of their countrymen" (*Derry Journal*, 1 May), while others restated their loyalty to the Irish Parliamentary Party and the cause of home rule. In May, Inishowen Rural District Council passed a resolution condemning the rebellion and loss of life. At a meeting of the Donegal Board of Guardians on 5 May, Vice-Chairman Edward Melley protested a resolution condemning the Rebellion. A week later on 16 May, the Donegal Board read a letter, dated 13 May, from Melley stating that members of the press seemed to believe he was in favour of the "recent disturbances in Dublin and in other parts of the country", and stating that his remarks at the last meeting had been made "on the spur of the moment." In the early weeks following the Rising, it seems that many people's reactions were angry, confused and unsure.

However, the mass arrests, executions and martial law which followed the Rising, soon turned public opinion across Ireland. In Donegal Town on 10 June, the Donegal Rural District Council protested against



Resolution adopted by Donegal Rural District Council, condemning martial law, 10 June 1916 (Donegal County Archives)

the continuance of martial law “more particularly in this county where not a rebellious symptom was demonstrated.” Popular support for the rebels and their cause began to gather momentum. As men were gradually released from prison in late 1916, they were openly welcomed home. Joseph Sweeney later wrote that his “participation in the Easter Week Rising of 1916 seemed to spark off a change in the young people and I was greatly surprised and encouraged at the warmth of the reception given me on my return home following imprisonment in England and Wales” (Sweeney, 1970).

With that new encouragement serving as an incentive to action, Sweeney, Daniel Kelly and others began reorganisation of the Volunteers in earnest in 1917. Greater numbers of young men than ever before now joined the more radical Irish Volunteers. In September 1916 the RIC County Inspector wrote of his concerns about the growing number of young Donegal men who, unable to travel to Scotland and England to find work, were joining nationalist organisations:

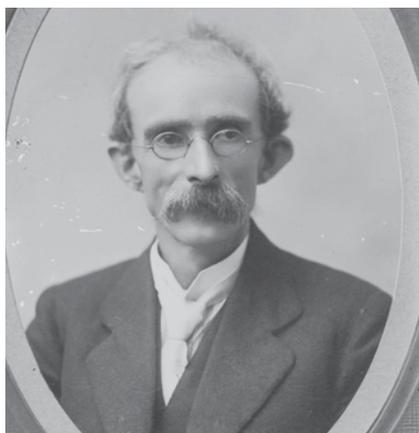
“These men and their families have become sullen and discontented...there is little doubt but that they will come together, discuss their grievances, form some societies, secret or otherwise. Extremists will hear of their discontent and will probably endeavour to utilise it for their own ends.” (County Inspector’s Monthly Report, September 1916, NA, UK; Sweeney, 2006, p.179).

The movement for separation from the United Kingdom was gaining momentum.

The Signatories

The signatories (as their names appeared on the Proclamation) were Thomas J Clarke, Seán MacDiarmada, Thomas MacDonagh, Patrick Pearse, Éamonn Ceannt, James Connolly and Joseph Plunkett.

Thomas J. Clarke (1858 - 1916)



(Courtesy National Library of Ireland)

Thomas J. Clarke (Tom) was born on the Isle of Wight. The family moved to South Africa and later to Dungannon, County Tyrone. In 1882 Clarke emigrated to the United States, where he joined Clan na Gael. In April the following year, he was arrested in London for possession of explosives. He was sentenced to penal servitude for life, eventually serving fifteen years in gaol. Following his release, on ticket-of-leave in 1898, he again went to the United States. He married Kathleen Daly with whom he had three sons.

Clarke became a United States citizen in 1905, but the family returned to Dublin two years later, where they set up two tobacconist/newsagent shops. He was an

influential figure, behind the scenes, in the years before the 1916 Rising. Together with Denis McCullough, Bulmer Hobson and Seán MacDiarmada, he revitalised the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), and had a major role in setting up the organisation’s newspaper, *Irish Freedom*. He joined the Irish Volunteers on their formation and was a member of the IRB Supreme Council. In late 1915 Clarke was co-opted to its Military Council which was responsible for planning the Rising. Clarke worked out the general strategy and MacDiarmada was responsible for the details. Clarke was the first signatory of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic. During the Rising he remained in the GPO with other members of the Provisional Government. He opposed the surrender, but was out-voted. Clarke was tried by court-martial and executed by firing squad at Kilmainham Gaol on 3 May 1916.



Proclamation of the Irish Republic, read by Patrick Pearse from the steps of the GPO, Dublin on 24 April 1916

Seán MacDiarmada (1883 - 1916)

(Courtesy National Library of Ireland)

Seán MacDiarmada (John Joseph MacDermott) was born in Corranmore, County Leitrim. In 1905 MacDiarmada settled in Belfast where he worked as a tram conductor and later as a barman. He joined the Gaelic League and the Ancient Order of Hibernians. He was sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood and acted as an organiser for Sinn Féin. In 1907, he moved to Dublin where he became a full-time organiser for the IRB and managed its newspaper *Irish Freedom*. He infiltrated cultural organisations such as the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) and the Gaelic League, recruiting members to the IRB, and, where possible, getting them elected as officers of the relevant committees. Following the outbreak of the War in August 1914, he campaigned against Irishmen joining the British Army and was sentenced to four months in Mountjoy Gaol under the Defence of the Realm Act. On his release, he was co-opted with Clarke to the IRB Military Council. MacDiarmada had a leading role in planning the 1916 Rising. During Easter week he fought in the GPO. MacDiarmada was tried by court-martial and executed by firing squad in Kilmainham Gaol on 12 May 1916.

Éamonn Ceannt (1881 - 1916)

(Courtesy National Library of Ireland)

Éamonn Ceannt (Edward Thomas Kent) was born in Ballymoe, County Galway. In 1892 his family moved to Dublin. Ceannt later worked with Dublin Corporation. In 1899 he joined the central branch of the Gaelic League. He became a fluent Irish speaker and adopted the Irish form of his name. Ceannt taught Irish, part-time, at various Gaelic League branches. In February 1900 he was involved with Edward Martyn in setting up the Dublin Pipers' Club. Ceannt was involved in the unionisation of his fellow workers in Dublin Corporation, eventually becoming chairman of the Dublin Municipal Officers' Association. In 1907 he joined Sinn Féin and in 1912 he was sworn into the IRB. On the foundation of the Irish Volunteers in November 1913, he was elected to the provisional committee and became involved in raising finance for the procurement of arms. Following the withdrawal of the National Volunteers under Redmond, Ceannt, Pearse and Plunkett were elected to key offices in the Irish Volunteers. In March 1915, Ceannt became commandant of the 4th Battalion of the Dublin Brigade and was then co-opted to the IRB Military Council. On Easter Monday 1916, Ceannt and 120 men of the 4th Battalion of the Irish Volunteers occupied the South Dublin Union, a workhouse off James's Street. They held part of the complex until they were informed of the general surrender the following Sunday. Ceannt was tried by court-martial and executed by firing squad in Kilmainham Gaol on 8 May 1916. He was survived by his wife Áine O'Brennan and his son Rónán.

James Connolly (1868 - 1916)

(Courtesy National Library of Ireland)

James Connolly was born in Edinburgh. The family lived in extreme poverty and James went to work at the age of eleven. He joined the British Army at fourteen, serving in Ireland for seven years. Returning to Edinburgh in 1890 he became actively involved in socialist politics. He came to Dublin in 1896 where he founded the Irish Socialist Republican Party and published the newspaper *The Workers' Republic*. In 1904, Connolly and his family moved to New York where he was active in Irish nationalist and socialist circles. He was a co-founder of the Industrial Workers of the World and a national organiser for the Socialist Party of America. Returning to Ireland in 1910, Connolly worked as Belfast organiser for the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union (ITGWU). After moving to Dublin, he was second-in-command to James Larkin

during the 1913 lock-out. In 1914, Connolly succeeded Larkin as head of the ITGWU and editor of *The Irish Worker*. He also became commandant of the Irish Citizen Army (ICA), which had been formed to protect workers during the 1913 lock-out. In January 1916, he reached an agreement with the leadership of the IRB for a joint insurrection involving the Irish Volunteers and the ICA. He was co-opted to the IRB Military Council and together with MacDiarmada and Plunkett, he had a leading role in the final preparations for the Rising. He was responsible for providing the ICA contingent of 200-250 men. Connolly contributed to the content of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic and became vice-president of the Provisional Government. During the Rising, Connolly was located in the GPO. As commandant general of the Dublin division of the army of the Irish Republic, he directed military operations. On Thursday of Easter Week, he suffered a serious wound to his ankle outside the GPO. Following the surrender, he was tried by court-martial and executed by firing squad in Kilmainham Gaol on 12 May 1916. He was survived by his wife Lillie Reynolds and children, including his son Rory who served with him in the GPO.

Patrick H. Pearse (1879 – 1916)



(Courtesy National Library of Ireland)

Patrick Henry Pearse (also known as Pádraic or Pádraig Pearse) was an Irish teacher, barrister, poet, writer and political activist. From his early school days he was deeply interested in Irish language and culture. He joined the Gaelic League in 1895 and became editor of its paper, *An Claidheamh Soluis* (Sword of Light). He lectured in Irish at UCD. To advance his ideals, Pearse set up a bilingual school for boys, St Enda's, in Ranelagh, Dublin in September 1908. He later moved the school to a larger location at Rathfarnham in 1910. He also established Saint Ita's, a school for senior girls and mixed preparatory at Cullenswood House.

Pearse was one of the founder members of the Irish Volunteers, and the author of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic. He was present in the GPO during the Rising, and was Commander-in-Chief of the Irish forces. After six days of fighting, Pearse issued the order to surrender. Following a court-martial at Richmond Barracks, Pearse was executed on 3 May 1916 at Kilmainham Gaol.

Patrick Pearse visited County Donegal a number of times between 1906 and 1914, to promote the spread of the Irish language, on behalf of the Gaelic League. The Gaelic League employed him to promote and encourage the spread of Irish as a medium of instruction by teachers. It was for this purpose he came to visit Coláiste Uladh in Gortahork. His first visit was in September 1906. He was met at Creeslough railway station and went on to Marble Hill, home of Hugh Law M.P. He later gave a lecture at Coláiste Uladh. On his second visit on 3 July 1907 he attended the re-opening of the college and toured the Donegal Gaeltacht. In 1914, a number of meetings were held to increase recruitment to the Irish Volunteers. On Sunday, 1 February 1914, a meeting was held in the Parochial Hall, Dungloe. The principal speakers were Patrick Pearse and James Boyle, a former M.P. and solicitor from Stranorlar. In Pearse's speech he stated that:

“A splendid opportunity was given to Irishmen now to realise themselves as men, and they could not call themselves men if they were not able, if need be, to fight in defence of their manhood, in defence of their homes, their women and children, in defence of their rights.”

Pearse's Only Legal Case

Patrick Pearse was a Barrister-at-Law at the King's Inns. His only case was when he represented Niall MacGiolla Bhríde from Creeslough in *McBride v McGovern* in 1906. The case was an appeal to the King's Bench Division from a Magistrates' Court in the Donegal Gaeltacht. A prosecution was brought against MacGiolla Bhríde on the grounds that his horse and trap displayed his



Name plate of Niall MacGiolla Bhríde
(National Museum of Ireland)



Niall MacGiolla Bhríde
(Donegal County Museum Collection)

name and

address in the Irish language and in the Gaelic font which did not comply with Section 12 of the Summary Jurisdiction (Ireland) Act, 1851. Pearse contended that as the Act applied to a bi-lingual State such as Ireland and as the alleged offence happened in a Gaeltacht area Irish should suffice. MacGiolla Bhríde however was convicted and fined because it was held that:

“An Englishman . . . if knocked down by an Irish cart in any part of the country, whether Connemara or elsewhere, is entitled to have the name and address of the offender in characters that he can read, if Irish letters are used he may be powerless to identify . . .” (*McBride v. McGovern*, 1906, 2 IR 181)

While this decision was clearly a defeat for the Irish language it helped to fuel an increased drive towards the re-emergence of Irish as an official language.

Thomas MacDonagh (1878 – 1916)



(Courtesy National Library of Ireland)

Thomas MacDonagh was from Cloughjordan in County Tipperary. MacDonagh was a teacher, poet, playwright and political activist. He taught English and French at Pearse's school, St Enda's, until 1910 where he was also assistant headmaster. Later he taught in UCD. In 1912 he married Muriel Gifford, sister of Grace Gifford. He joined the Irish Volunteers in November 1913 and from April 1915 was also a member of the IRB. He joined the IRB Military Council weeks before the Rising and became the last of the seven signatories. During the Rising, MacDonagh was commandant of the 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, stationed at Jacob's Biscuit Factory. Following the surrender, MacDonagh was tried by court-martial and executed by firing squad on 3 May 1916.

Two years before the Rising, in April 1914, MacDonagh visited Inishowen, on the invitation of the Irish Volunteers. He spoke at a large rally in Cruckaughrim, Carndonagh, where he appealed to young men to join the Irish Volunteers. He praised the Volunteers as a national movement, made up of men “of all creeds and classes”. He declared that “it was expedient for the Irish people to have a trained body of men to support and hold the Irish claim” (*Donegal Annual*, 1966).

Joseph Mary Plunkett (1887 - 1916)

Joseph Mary Plunkett was born in Dublin. He was a poet and journalist. Plunkett took an active interest in Irish heritage and the Irish language. He joined the Gaelic League and began studying with Thomas MacDonagh, with whom he formed a life-long friendship. He edited *The Irish Review* and helped to establish an Irish national theatre.



(Courtesy National Library of Ireland)

Plunkett was elected to the provisional committee of the Irish Volunteers in 1913 and later became a member of the IRB. In April 1915, he went to Germany to assist Roger Casement in procuring arms. With James Connolly and Séan MacDiarmada, Plunkett was involved in the military strategy for the Rising and was the youngest signatory of the Proclamation. Plunkett fought in the GPO during the Rising. Following the surrender, he was court-martialled. He married Grace Gifford, a sister-in-law of Thomas MacDonagh, at Kilmainham Gaol, the night before he was executed. He was shot by firing squad on 4 May 1916.

Plunkett attended Coláiste Uladh in Gortahork, County Donegal to learn Irish. There he met a girl called Columba O’Carroll, the daughter of a family friend. He wrote love poems for her, which he printed on what he called The Columba Press.

Coláiste Uladh

Cloughaneely Irish College
 Has a wealth of wit and knowledge,
 Not to speak of health and beauty
 Grace and graciousness go leor;
 But among its charms entrancing
 Men and Maidens, songs and dancing,
 There is nothing so delightful
 As yourself mo mhíle stór.

Loud the sound that hails awaking
 Banbha’s sons, for the dawn is breaking.
 And the waves of Cloughaneely
 Help to swell the Ocean roar;
 But the breeze that sweeps above them
 Fills their song and makes us love them,
 For it’s laden with the music
 Of your heart mo mhíle stór.

When the moon is shining palely
 On the evening of a céilí
 And purple stars are peeping
 Through the open College door,
 There is music in the night
 Of the dance, and voices laughing
 But ‘tis nothing like the music
 Of your voice mo mhíle stór.

There are maidens without number
 Filled with grace the magic slumber
 Of Usheen when darkly dreaming
 By the fairy Ocean shore.
 But your voice’s bell-branch ringing
 Would have waked him with its singing,
 And have sent him forth to battle
 For his dreams mo mhíle stór.

Biographies of other 1916 leaders with links to Donegal



Patrick and Willie Pearse at St. Enda's School, 1914

(Courtesy of The Pearse Museum)

William (Willie) Pearse (1881 - 1916)

William (Willie) Pearse, Patrick's younger brother, was a sculptor. He studied at the Metropolitan School of Art in Dublin and in Paris. Along with his brother Patrick, he took over the family business of ecclesiastical and architectural sculptors, on their father's death. The firm made the pulpit and altar rails of the Cathedral of Saints Eunan and Columba in Letterkenny. The pulpit has within it carvings of the four Evangelists, Isaiah the prophet, and the Four Masters. Within the altar rails are carved symbols of the Passion of Christ.

Willie joined the Irish Volunteers and fought in the GPO during the Easter Rising. Following the surrender, he was court-martialled and executed by firing squad on 4 May 1916.

Roger Casement (1864 - 1916)

Roger Casement was born in County Dublin. After the death of his parents he was raised by his uncle, John Casement, near Ballycastle, County Antrim. From 1895 onwards he worked as a consul in various locations in Africa, including the Congo, where the British Foreign Office authorised him to investigate and report on Belgian mismanagement. His report exposed systematic infringement of the human rights of the indigenous people. He also served at consular postings in Brazil. His report on human rights abuses in Peru had considerable impact, gaining Casement international recognition as a humanitarian.



(Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)

He left the consular service around 1911 and appears to have been disillusioned with the British Empire. On the foundation of the Irish Volunteers in November 1913, he became a member of the provisional committee. After the War broke out in August 1914, he identified Germany as a potential Irish ally. Casement visited Berlin with three requests: arms, German officers to lead an insurrection in Ireland, and the formation of an Irish brigade consisting of Irish soldiers in the British Army then held as prisoners of war in Germany. The Germans promised only a small quantity of arms and very few of the prisoners of war were willing to join the Irish brigade. Casement was arrested at Banna Strand in County Kerry on Good Friday 1916, following the failed attempt to land arms from the *Aud*. He was taken to the Tower of London and tried for high treason at the Old Bailey. Casement was hanged at Pentonville Prison on 3 August 1916.

Casement in Donegal

Roger Casement was committed to the revival of the Irish language. Between 1904 and 1906 he spent much of his time in Ireland including visits to Donegal where he learned Irish and visited many areas of the county including Fanad, Portsalon, Tory



Roger Casement on Tory Island, c.1906
(Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)

Island, Cloughaneely and Glenties. In Fanad, he visited and corresponded with John Clinton O'Boyce, a school teacher in Portsalon. In a signed letter to O'Boyce, dated 8 April 1905, from a London address, he thanks him for sending "the paper with the account of the Irish case at Dunfanaghy. I hope all the carts in Tirconail will now put the names in Gaelic." He wrote, "God bless you all in green Tirconail - I hope and pray you will all fight and strive for the old tongue and never rest till you hear it coming back to hill and field and glen - fireside and Church too. It is the children we want to get it strong."

Casement attended Coláiste Uladh in Gortahork. He gave £100 for the building of the college hall. At the formal closing of the 1916 session of Coláiste Uladh, Úna Ní Fhaircheallaigh addressed the meeting;

"Many things have happened since the last annual occasion. We have seen much of sorrow . . . We lost also one of our fastest friends and most liberal benefactors by the death of Roger Casement. Were it not for him we should not have this hall to meet here tonight . . . Let us pray for the souls of these departed friends; and next year I hope to have in this hall a small statue or bust of Roger Casement, with suitable inscription, so that future generations of Irish students may learn to cherish and revere the memory of one who had the language cause so much at heart, and did so much to promote it" (Derry Journal, October 1916).



Roger Casement on Tory Island, 1912
(Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland)