

TOM CLARKE

“I and my fellow signatories believe we have struck the first successful blow for Irish freedom. The next blow, which we have no doubt Ireland will strike, will win through. In this belief, we die happy.”

TOM CLARKE was born March 11th 1858, first child to James and Mary Clarke at Hurst Castle Isle of Wight where his father was a member of the British army having recently been promoted to the rank of bombardier. James, his father, a protestant, was born at Errew, Carrigallen where his family were referred to as Clerkin, while his mother Mary, formerly Palmer, was a native of Clogheen Co Tipperary. Following a number of postings which included South Africa, the family returned to Dungannon in 1865 upon James being appointed sergeant of the Ulster Militia.

Whilst attending St Patricks

catholic NS Tom took a keen interest in Irish history and the first stirrings of his republicanism occurred. By 1878, Tom was involved in the IRB (Irish Republican Brotherhood) using the cover of an amateur drama society to move around the country and conduct meetings. By his early 20's Tom had already taken part in ambushes and open combat with the crown forces, who were putting down republicanism with great force. Following a period in America where Tom attempted to put down roots, which included owning a farm in upstate New York, however, the pull of Republicanism occupied his every waking moment. He returned to Dublin in 1907 where he opened a tobacconists, seeking to live and operate under the radar, which was a necessity because of having been imprisoned in England years earlier. The years after 1907 were spent furthering the cause which culminated ultimately in the rising of April 1916. Because of his seniority i.e. his age, Tom Clarke was the first signature on the proclamation and was in



charge of a section of the GPO. Following the surrender and subsequent so called trials, Tom Clarke was executed on the 3rd of May 1916 leaving behind three children and his wife Kathleen who later went on to become a Fianna Fail TD.



Dr Emmet Clarke (senior), son of Tom Clarke, his wife Ellen, behind is Thomas (oldest son), and peeping out is Emmet, younger son. Also in the photo are: Tomás and Micheál Whelan aged three and two years old at the Whelans home in Aughavas 1966.

SEÁN MACDIARMADA

SEÁN MACDIARMADA was born in January 1883 in the townland of Corranmore, a few kilometres outside the village of Kiltyclogher. He was educated at Corraclona National School, which he left in 1903. After a short period of working as a gardener in Edinburgh he returned to Leitrim and went to a night school in Tullynamoyle to study book-keeping and Irish.

It was here he met Master Pat McGauran a native Irish speaker and scholar who cultivated Seán's interest in Irish History, language and culture. He then went to live

“Make no lament for me...I die that the Irish Nation may live”.

SEÁN MACDIARMADA, KILMAINHAM GAOL, DUBLIN, MAY 11TH 1916 FROM HIS LAST LETTER

in Belfast, where he worked as a tram conductor. It was here he joined the Dungannon Clubs and the IRB.

In 1908 he moved to Dublin as Sinn Féin's national organiser and befriended IRB activist Tom Clarke. In 1912 he was appointed manager of the newspaper 'An Saoirseacht' or 'Irish Freedom'. MacDiarmada travelled the country tirelessly recruiting members for Sinn Féin and speaking in public. After one such meeting in Tuam, Co Galway in May of 1915 he was arrested under the 'Defence Of The Realm Act' for publicly discouraging men from enlisting with the British Army to fight in 'the great war' against

“...counsel them (the children) to always practice truth, honesty and straightforwardness in all things, and sobriety, if they do this and remember their country they will be all right. Insist on their learning the language and history”.

SEÁNMACDIARMADA, KILMAINHAM GAOL, DUBLIN, MAY 11TH 1916. FROM HIS LAST LETTER

Germany. He was imprisoned in Mountjoy Prison and was subsequently released after a public outcry.

In April 1916 he fought in the 'Easter Rising' and was one of the seven signatories of the Proclamation of Irish Independence. Following his arrest after the Rising he was court martialled and sentenced to death. He was executed by firing squad at 3.45 am on May 12th 1916 in the stone-breaker's yard in Kilmainham Gaol.

NORA MCGILLEN

HOUSE OF SEAN MAC DIARMADA

Here the stone walls wait for you
impenetrable, indestructible.

The trees are breathing softly,
water still flows from the small spring
by the side of the house.

The whitewashed walls have kept
the shining image of your soul,
and the blue green front door
has remained holy with your touch.

I peer in the kitchen window,
searching for the fifteen year old boy
who went to seek his fortune in Glasgow.

The chairs are gathered somberly around the table,
the stone floor remembers your footsteps
measured with patience and truth.

From the front door the anguished fields stretch towards Kiltyclogher.

Your lost years are here on these fields,
amongst scant grasses, and the searing light of whin bushes,
along lacey meandering lanes the outline of whitethorn hedges,
and the slow moan of the wind through hay-fields that wait,
and beneath the grief of wild geese you still run,
breathless, intact, windswept, indomitable.

When you faced the firing squad at Kilmainham

This place remained whispering
in the sap of your blood.



URSULA MCMORROW

SEAN MAC DIARMADA

A proud presence in my childhood,
first cousin of my grandfather,
of the same line
and the Leitrim borderlands

where secrets were closely kept,
shadows moved in the night:
nothing was certain.

Keeping to the back roads,
you moved through the countryside,
a Gaelic League Timthire
pledging with people
who had never hoped to be free

And gathered comrades among
raveled emigrants
in England, Scotland and America;
careful not to make promises
that you couldn't keep.

You were the mind of the revolution:
powerful, thorough,
watchful

and achingly handsome,
with astonishing wide smile
and cobalt-blue eyes
that said everything.

But some scorned you as one of those
desperadoes in the Post Office.
Reading a bloody proclamation indeed,
that foolish school master;
no statesman among them,
only trouble makers
and those mannish women
who followed, scenting excitement.

Min grieved her hoped-for husband
and the priest who loved you
kept watch until execution;
stifling platitudes,
listening as you railed
against church opposition
and recited for the last time
Brian Boy Magee.

Later, unhinged,
he roamed to Dunquin,
and a Gaeltacht cottage,
dedicating himself
to the dreams of the sacrificed.

My father was cautious about claiming you
not wanting to sully
a precious association.

A hero in the family:
now that was something
to be quiet about.

*Ursula McMorro,
A descendant of
MacDiarmada (in
purple top)
reading her poem
dedicated to his
memory.*

