

LEITRIM CONNECTIONS WITH THE 1916 RISING

Seán Ó Súilleabháin

Seán Mac Diarmada

It is a matter of great pride for Leitrim people that a Leitrim man was one of the seven signatories of the 1916 Proclamation and also the organising genius behind the 1916 Rising. Seán Mac Diarmada was from the townland of Corranmore near Kiltyclogher and he spent his short life entirely devoted to the cause of Irish independence and freedom. His last letter, written to his brothers and sisters the day before he was executed, is one of the most dramatic pieces of writing to be found anywhere in Irish literature. Other articles in this edition of the Leitrim Guardian will deal with aspects of his life. An excellent biography of Seán Mac Diarmada has been written by Gerard MacAtasney called "*Seán Mac Diarmada; The Mind of the Revolution*"

Tom Clarke

The second significant Leitrim connection with the Easter Rising was Thomas J Clarke, another of the seven signatories of the Proclamation, whose father James was from Errew, Carrigallen. James Clarke was a Protestant and he married Mary Palmer, a Catholic, from Co Tipperary. James was in the British Army and served in different places and was based at Hurst Castle, Hampshire, England when Tom Clarke was born. Most sources give Tom Clarke's birthplace as the Isle of Wight but it appears he was born close by on the English mainland. The Clarke family later moved to Dungannon, Co Tyrone and it was there Tom Clarke grew up and acquired his republican interests.

Tom Clarke joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in 1878 and took part in



■ **Mac Diarmada Family.** Seán first on left, centre row.

a bombing campaign in England in 1883. He was arrested and sentenced to penal servitude for life. He spent 15 years in jail in terrible conditions for much of the time. Following his release in 1898 he went to America and became active in Clann na Gael. He and his wife, Kathleen Daly, returned to Ireland in 1907. By 1916 he was closely involved with Seán Mac Diarmada in planning the Rising. Tom Clarke, as the oldest of the seven signatories of the Proclamation, was the first name on that document. He was executed by the British on 3 May 1916, the second to be executed after Patrick Pearse. Gerard MacAtasney has also written a biography of Tom Clarke called "*Tom Clarke; Life, Liberty, Revolution*"

Paul Galligan

Peter Paul Galligan and Seán Mac Diarmada were, as far as we know, the only Leitrim-born persons to take part in the 1916 Rising. Paul Galligan was the man responsible for organising the Rising in Enniscorthy, Co Wexford where the town was held by the Volunteers for a week.

Paul Galligan was born in Church St, Carrigallen but his family moved to Ballinagh, Co Cavan when he was four years old. He joined the IRB and took part in the Howth gunrunning in 1914. He was sent to organise the Volunteers in Wexford before the Rising and he went to Dublin on Easter Sunday to see what was happening after the planned Rising was initially cancelled. He cycled back to Wexford and organised



■ C J Galligan, son of Paul Galligan at the grave of his grandmother Sarah in Carrigallen Cemetery

the resistance there. When the Rising was over, and an apparent failure, he escaped back to Cavan but was arrested a week later. He was sentenced to death but this was later reduced to five years in jail. He was subsequently elected as TD for Cavan in 1918 and again in 1921 and supported the Treaty. He resigned from the Dáil in June 1922 and later became a successful businessman in Dublin. His mother is buried in Carrigallen graveyard.

Five North Leitrim men interned after the Rising

In the days after the execution of Seán Mac Diarmada on 12 May 1916, seven North

Leitrim men were arrested. Their names were given in the Leitrim Observer of 20 May 1916 as:

"J N Dolan, merchant, brother of Charles Dolan ex MP, Jim O'Loughlin and Thos O'Loughlin, coachbuilders, Thos Gilgunn, Bryan Gilgun, Ballyboy, John Daly, Lake View, Agric Dept and Ben Maguire, Glenfarne"

Five of these were subsequently interned in Frongoch in Wales: James N Dolan, Manorhamilton, Thomas O'Loughlin, Manorhamilton, Ben Maguire, Glenfarne, John Daly Manorhamilton and Thomas Gilgunn, Boleyboy. Ben Maguire and James N Dolan subsequently served as TDs. John Daly, a native of Corduff, Carrickmacross, Co Monaghan, was an agricultural instructor and he is buried in Kilmakerrill Cemetery, Manorhamilton.

Four other men were arrested in South Leitrim after the Rising; Pat Dunne, editor of the *Leitrim Observer* and Sam Holt, later to become a TD, were both from Carrick on Shannon. Two Drumshanbo men; Joseph and Michael John Conefrey were arrested. All were released shortly afterwards.

Sir James Gallagher

Ironically, while the British were executing Seán Mac Diarmada and his fellow Irish freedom fighters, the Lord Mayor of Dublin, holding a very pro-British stance, was another man from Kiltyclogher. James Gallagher who was born in Aughavanny, just on the Fermanagh border served his time in Dublin and owned tobacconist shops in the capital.

Gallagher was elected as Lord Mayor in 1915, beating the Sinn Féin candidate and was re-elected in 1916. On taking office he swore allegiance to the King of England, the last Lord Mayor of Dublin to do so. He was active in promoting recruitment to the

British Army for World War I and after his death the *Leitrim Observer* stated:

"During the European War he was active in promoting recruitment and munition making and before relinquishing office as Lord Mayor was knighted in 1917"

Gallagher died in 1926, aged 65

John Mulhern - British soldier from Carrick on Shannon

It is a strange irony of Irish history that while generations of Irish people have strove for Irish freedom and independence there has always been those who take the other side, for whatever reason. While Seán MacDiarmada was one of the leaders of the 1916 Rising, fighting for Irish freedom, another Leitrim man died on the first day of the Rising, Easter Monday, on the British side. John Mulhern, a native of Carrick on Shannon was killed in O'Connell Street. A hairdresser before joining the army, he was in a regiment called the Royal Irish Rifles and was killed in action on 24 April 1916. While some sources suggest he wasn't on army duty when he was killed, a first anniversary note in the *Irish Independent* inserted by his wife in April 1917 says: "killed in action". His wife, Annie Mulhern, listed her address as 6 Stephen's Place, Lower Mount St., Dublin. John Mulhern is buried in Dean's Grange Cemetery.

John Rafferty, who took part in the Battle of Ashbourne in 1916, was a native of Lusk Co Dublin. His brother, Thomas, died as a result of injuries received at Ashbourne. John subsequently served as a Garda in Leitrim village.

Mar sin bhí daoine ó Chontae Liatroma páirteach ar an dá thaobh i 1916 ach caithfidimid bheith bródúil as na daoine ó Chontae Liatroma a bhí páirteach in Éirí Amach na Cásca i 1916, go hairithe iad siúd a bhí ag troid ar son saoirse na hÉireann.