

Sixteen Dead Men

O BUT we talked at large before
The sixteen men were shot,
But who can talk of give and take,
What should be and what not
While those dead men are loitering there
To stir the boiling pot?

You say that we should still the land
Till Germany's overcome;
But who is there to argue that
Now Pearse is deaf and dumb?
And is their logic to outweigh
MacDonagh's bony thumb?

How could you dream they'd listen
That have an ear alone
For those new comrades they have found,
Lord Edward and Wolfe Tone,
Or meddle with our give and take
That converse bone to bone?

W. B. Yeats

The Others: (The ‘Other’ men who did not sign the proclamation and that weren’t discussed before)

In my previous presentations, over the last two months, I have discussed the lives of Edward Daly and John MacBride. The 2016 centennial committee presented the seven signers: Thomas Clarke, Sean Mac Diarmada, Patrick Pearse, Thomas MacDonagh, Joseph Plunkett, Eamonn Ceannt, and James Connolly.

I will now give brief descriptions on the remaining men who made the ultimate sacrifice.

Con Colbert: Born in 1888, Colbert was a native of Limerick. Prior to the Easter Rising he had been an active member of the republican movement, joining both Fianna Éireann and the Irish Volunteers. A dedicated pioneer, Colbert was known not to drink or smoke. As the captain of F Company of the Fourth Battalion, Colbert was in command at the Marrowbone Lane Jameson distillery when it was surrendered on Sunday, 30 April 1916. His execution took place on 8 May 1916.

Seán Heuston: Born in 1891, he was responsible for the organization of Fianna Éireann in Limerick. Along with Con Colbert, Heuston was involved in the education of the schoolboys at Scoil Éanna, organizing drill and musketry exercises. A section of the First Battalion of the Volunteers, under the leadership of Heuston, occupied the Mendicity Institute on south of the Liffey, holding out there for two days. He was executed on 8 May 1916. Heuston Railway station in Dublin is named after him.

Michael Mallin: A silk weaver by trade, Mallin was born in Dublin in 1874. Along with Countess Markievicz, he commanded a small contingent of the Irish Citizen Army, of which he was Chief of Staff, taking possession of St. Stephen’s Green and the Royal College of Surgeons. He was executed on 8 May 1916.

Michael O’Hanrahan: Born in Wexford in 1877. As a young man, O’Hanrahan showed great promise as a writer, becoming heavily involved in the promotion of the Irish language. He founded the first Carlow branch of the Gaelic League, and published two novels, *A Swordsman of the Brigade* and *When the Norman Came*. Like many of the other executed leaders, he joined the Irish Volunteers from their inception, and was second in command to Thomas MacDonagh at Jacob’s biscuit factory during the Rising, although this position was largely usurped by the arrival of John MacBride. His execution took place on 4 May 1916.

Willie Pearse: Born 1881. His participation in the Easter Rising came about entirely through his close relationship with his brother Patrick. He was involved in the planning of it only insofar as he accompanied his brother to meetings, and throughout the rebellion he mostly acted as aide-de-camp to the newly appointed president of the Irish Republic in the GPO. Unique among the executed rebels, he pleaded guilty to the charge that he ‘took part in an armed rebellion and in the waging of war against His

Majesty the King'. His guilty plea may have bolstered the case for his execution, but he certainly did not play a significant leadership role in the Rising, and his execution can be linked to the fact that he was the brother of the commandant of the rebels. William was executed on 4 May 1916. Pearse railway station on Westland Row in Dublin was re-named in honor of the two brothers in 1966.

Thomas Kent: Born in 1865, Kent was arrested at his home in Castlelyons, Co. Cork following a raid by the Royal Irish Constabulary on 22 April 1916, during which his brother Richard was fatally wounded. It had been his intention to travel to Dublin to participate in the Rising, but when the mobilization order for the Irish Volunteers was cancelled on Easter Sunday he assumed that the Rising had been postponed, leading him to stay at home. He was executed at Cork Detention Barracks on 9 May 1916 following a court martial. In 1966 the railway station in Cork was renamed Kent Station in his honor.

Roger Casement: Born 1864, had been knighted for his service as a British consul exposing the dark side of the rubber trade in the Congo and Peru. Casement's involvement in the Easter Rising was over before the rebellion had even started. He had been working in Germany to raise support for a rebellion in Ireland and was arrested on Banna Strand, Co. Kerry on Good Friday 1916, after an attempt to land arms for the rebellion failed. His hanging at Pentonville on 3 August 1916 brought to an end the executions of those involved in the Easter Rising.

Michael O'Hanrahan's execution may have owed much to the fact he was sentenced to death early on in the period of executions, before the tide of public opinion turned against the authorities. Similarly, Con Colbert and Sean Heuston – who commanded smaller outposts at Jameson's Distillery and the Mendicity Institution – were both executed on 8 May 1916, three days before John Dillon addressed the House of Commons and accused the British authorities of 'letting loose a river of blood' in their response to the uprising.

All fourteen rebels who were executed as a result of their participation in the Easter Rising in Dublin were shot in the Stonebreakers' Yard at Kilmainham Gaol.

Elsewhere, Thomas Kent faced a firing squad at Cork Detention Barracks and Roger Casement was hanged at Pentonville Prison in London. Although Kent faced the same charge as the Dublin men – participating in an armed rebellion – he was not a leader of the Easter Rising and there was little or no rebel activity in Co. Cork in April 1916. His execution was the result of a military raid on the Kent family home during which a member of the RIC was fatally wounded.

But the 'Sixteen Dead Men' who were executed for their part in the rebellion became the martyrs of Easter Week and provided the inspiration for the subsequent revolution in Ireland. Their stories did, as Yeats wrote, 'stir the boiling pot'.