



NEWSLETTER  
Spring 2016

O'Connell  
Schools'  
Past Pupils'  
Union

# Annual Family Mass

for deceased past pupils

*This year we include deceased Past Pupils who took part in the 1916 Rising*

**Sunday May 22<sup>nd</sup> 11am**

School assembly area – North Richmond Street

**Light refreshments will be served after the Mass**

Dear all,

Welcome to our Spring newsletter. 2015 left us with a positive upbeat feeling about the shape and direction of the PPU. High attendance at our Annual Dinner, renewed interest in the Golf Society and believe it or not, an increase in numbers attending the Annual Mass where we remember Past Pupils, Brothers and Teachers. All have an added value to the confidence of the workings of the committee. The bottom line is, whatever we do is done with a focus on how best to help the students in the school.

At the moment the school is very focused on the 1916 commemorations. On Wednesday the 27<sup>th</sup> of April the school will unveil a plaque of the 135 volunteers in a garden area in the grounds of the school in remembrance of these brave idealistic men. Ceannt, Colbert and Heuston were shot after a British court martial. This of course was a primary factor that changed the course of history that eventually brought us to independence with a 26 county republic which we all enjoy today.

As President of the PPU and everyone associated, we are very appreciative of the work done on the commemoration by our own Past Pupil Sean Boyne. The research and the compilation of all the information has all the hallmarks of a professional historian and makes great reading. An extract from Sean's dedicated work appears overleaf. Thank you Sean.

Our new members to the PPU committee namely Declan McCulloch, Tom Farrelly, Neil Cotter and Laurence Flood have had a huge impact on shaping the work of the committee. Their input is much appreciated. This year we welcome on board Laurence Flood. But, we still need Past Pupils to come on committee in order to maximize what can and needs to be done for the school. Ireland has had a very strong tradition with volunteering and here in the school the committee is trying to foster the spirit of volunteer work aimed at helping the school.

I am putting out a strong appeal for anyone interested to serve, to come on board and make themselves known to anyone on committee.

Please remember the Annual Mass, Sunday May the 22nd, 11 00 am.

The Annual Daniel O Connell commemoration is Sunday May the 15th at Glasnevin cemetery. Anyone interested is free to attend. The school is always represented at this commemoration.

A calendar date worth keeping in mind for anyone interested in playing golf is the Old OConnells Golf Society outing in Ballymascannon Hotel on Wed the 7 Sept. Anyone interested should contact Paddy Coyle on 01 8212280 or 087 1520227

Please note the dates in your diary, smartphone or even on the calendar in the kitchen.

Yours sincerely

Tony Connellan  
President OCS PPU



# Brother Allen's List

## The O'Connell School's Men Who Took Part In The Easter Rising

By Sean Boyne

Article based on material in study, 'Brother Allen's List'

At first, it probably seemed like just another quiet Easter Monday. The schools were closed for the holidays and a young Christian Brother, William Allen, was enjoying a game of handball with some confreres at the ball alley in St Mary's, Marino, in north Dublin. They had gone to Marino for an art class but the teacher failed to show. Then an unexpected thing happened. The superior general of the order, Brother Whitty interrupted the game with some sensational news. He said the 'Sinn Feiners' had risen up in arms against the government. He instructed the Brothers



Joe Tallon, pictured at O'Connell's, 1910, image from OCS archives.

to return immediately to their various monasteries and avoid the city centre. It was 24 April 1916. The Easter Rising had just begun.

As Brother Allen hurried back to his base at O'Connell Schools (OCS), North Richmond Street, he encountered barricades at two bridges, manned by members of the Irish Volunteers. They saluted him and waved him through. Brother Allen would eventually discover that among the rebels was a sizeable number of former OCS students, some of whom he knew personally. He went on to oversee the school museum, displaying invaluable items from the Rising, such as Mauser rifles from the GPO. In old age, in July 1968, Brother Allen, still based at O'Connell's, drew up a list of OCS participants in the rebellion. He came up with 121 names, but noted that this might not be a complete list. There are some remarkable names on Brother Allen's list. Three of the executed leaders of the Rising were past pupils, all shot by firing squad on the same day, 8 May 1916 - Con Colbert, Sean Heuston and Éamonn Ceannt. The latter was one of the seven men who signed the Proclamation declaring an Irish Republic, and he had been in the same OCS class as Heuston. More recent research has added extra names, bringing the total to 135.

One past pupil, John Dwan, was killed in the fighting. Aged 23, he came from Lower Gardiner Street and was shot at North King Street. (Possibly due to an error when a handwritten list was being typed up, the name was given as John Divan on the Allen list. It was thought that the reference might be to Dwan, but the latter's name could not be found in available school records. However, a grand-niece, Maria Dwane, confirmed that John Dwan had been to O'Connell's, and the mystery was solved.)

Many of the OCS participants were very young – more than a third were aged 21 or younger. Vinnie Byrne, later to be a member of Michael Collins's special unit, the Squad, was only aged 15 – he was in Jacob's factory. Sean Lemass, who was in the GPO, was aged 16 – he would go on to become Taoiseach. (Another OCS man in the GPO was also destined for high office – Sean T. O'Kelly would become President of Ireland.) Richard Gogan (16) took part in the rebellion while on holidays from O'Connell's – Brother Allen recalled him returning to school after the Rising. Gogan, a future TD, had been given early release by the crown forces because of his youth, as had Lemass. Also released early was Joseph Cripps, who took the only photos inside the GPO during the rebellion. At least two youthful past pupils joined in the rebellion spontaneously, without being members of any unit – Billy Ashton (16) from Stoneybatter, later an army officer, and James Wren (17), from North Strand. (Wren became ill at the GPO and was ordered home after just one day.)

In the final stages of the Rising, the wounded James Connolly decided that OCS man Sean McLoughlin, aged only 20, would take his rank of Commandant General. Fortunately for McLoughlin, after the surrender a sympathetic British officer removed his insignia of rank before he was inspected by detectives picking out the leaders. With the exception of de Valera, the other Commandants faced the firing squad. McLoughlin would later emigrate to England. His death in Sheffield in 1960 seemed to pass unnoticed in his native Ireland. His close friend from O'Connell's, Paddy Stephenson, was in the GPO



Patrick Stephenson as a young man, image courtesy of Jimmy Stephenson

– he would go on to become Chief Librarian of Dublin, and was the father of architect Sam Stephenson. Another OCS man Joe Tallon helped to carry James Connolly on a stretcher after the surrender – in later life he was a highly respected maths teacher at O’Connell’s. Back in the early 1960s he addressed our sixth year class about his memories of the Rising. ‘We had all been to Confession, and we were all prepared to die.’

A few managed to escape at the surrender and were never arrested – one was Joseph Thunder, from Drumcondra, who was in Jacob’s factory. Thunder, who had a brilliant academic career at O’Connell’s and later at university, returned quietly to his public service job as a clerk in the Four Courts. He became a notable mountaineer and wrote science fiction in Irish. Many of those held were interned at Frongoch camp in north Wales, and were released by December 1916. At least one OCS internee would go on to become an extremely wealthy captain of industry – Percy Reynolds lived at a notable mansion, Abbeville, later famed as the residence of Taoiseach Charles Haughey. Seamus Hughes, who was in Jacob’s, was given a death sentence but this was commuted. He became the first announcer on Ireland’s first radio station, 2RN, in 1926.

In some cases, participation in the Rising was a family affair. Three brothers from the Byrne family who lived at 17 North Richmond Street, opposite the school, took part in the Rising – John C., Patrick and Peter. Their sisters Catherine and Alice also took part. Three brothers from the Bevan family were in the Four Courts, as was their father Joseph. Willie Staines, a bright student at O’Connell’s who had won a university scholarship, almost died in the fighting at the Mendicity Institute. Part of his skull was blown away by a grenade. At the surrender, Sean Heuston demanded he get urgent medical treatment, and his life was saved by the skill of a surgeon at the British military hospital on Infirmity Road. Sadly, he would pass away during the influenza epidemic in 1918.



Richard Gogan, 1917, image courtesy of Dave Hendrick

Some of the Rising Volunteers went on to take part in the War of Independence and the Civil War. In the first few days of the latter conflict in July 1922, two OCS Rising participants would die, one on either side. Luke Condon was an officer in the National Army while Francis Jackson was with the anti-Treaty IRA. In at least two families, one finds brothers who were past pupils and Rising participants taking different sides. A quick survey suggests that at least 58 of the 135 listed Rising participants were involved in the Civil War either as combatants or as prominent supporters of one side or the other. A majority of them, a total of 34 (59 per cent), were on the Free State side, while 24 (41 per cent) were on the side of the anti-Treaty IRA.

Some of the Rising participants had brothers or other close relatives serving in the British Army in the Great War.



Sean Lemass, at O’Connell’s, 1915, image from OCS archives.

Eamonn Ceannt’s brother William, a sergeant in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers (RDF) was killed in France in 1917. Sean Lemass had two cousins who were officers in the RDF – one died in France in 1916. While a sizeable number of past pupils took part in the Rising, one could speculate that a bigger number served in the British Army in the Great War. Many who joined the army were supporters of John Redmond’s Irish Parliamentary Party which had the support, through the ballot box, of most Irish nationalists and which was taking the constitutional path towards Home Rule. Redmond encouraged his followers to join the British Army and fight for the ‘rights of small nations’.

Among the past pupils who joined up were men such as Tom Kettle, UCD professor and former Redmondite MP; George Allgood, from Claude Road, Drumcondra, brother of renowned Abbey actress Sarah Allgood; US-born Emmet Dalton, also from Drumcondra and the latter’s best friend from O’Connell’s, John Kemmy Boyle, from Upper Gardiner

Street. Of these four, only Dalton would survive the war. It may be appropriate to remember such men also, at this time of commemoration. In a magnanimous gesture in 1965, Sean Lemass said that Irish soldiers who gave their lives in the Great War died as honourably as those who died in the Irish republican cause from 1916 to 1923.

## OCS celebrates 1916 - Tom Farrelly

100 years after the Easter Rising, OCS had plans aplenty to commemorate the events that changed the face of our country, particularly with such a large number of participants in the Rising having a close connection with the school. This monumental milestone in Irish history is closely held to the history of O'Connell schools, with many famous names such as Eamon Ceannt, Sean McDermott, Con Colbert, Sean Lemass, Noel Lemass, John Devoy and Sean T. O'Ceallaigh having connections to the school.

On Wednesday March 16th we, along with every other school in the county, took part in the national flag day. Our celebrations took place in the school P.E hall, where we were treated to music, poetry, song and stories. There were invited guests and students performing on the day. We had in attendance some of the family of proclamation signatory Eamon Ceannt. The school was decorated and the gardens cleaned for this eventful day. RTÉ were also in attendance and we will be part of a special documentary that will be aired in May so keep an eye out for the school.

Our own students read and performed songs and poems that related to the events of 1916. It was particularly special to see some of our foreign national students immerse themselves in our deep and rich history and feeling as much a part of it as our local boys. Two students composed a brilliant song aptly called "you OCS boys" and can be viewed on the school Twitter page as well as the other social media platforms. This song was a crossover of a modern day ballad fused with rap music. It was very well executed and the students were immensely proud. We also had students who rewrote the proclamation for today and recited it. We had poet Gerry Buckley recite 'For what died the sons of Roisin', and we had singer Noel O'Grady perform a number of songs throughout. All of this was accompanied by a piper to add to the atmosphere.

We then moved outside to the school yard where there was the reading of the names of the 135 OCS students who took part in the Rising, which was accompanied by 3 gunshot salute (not a real gun, the area has enough of that lately) to represent the three OCS students who were executed in Kilmainham Gaol after the surrender. There was a mixed reaction to the shots; the students didn't flinch whilst us sensitive souls from the suburbs ducked for cover.

Lastly we all participated in the singing of Amhrán na bhFiann before retiring into the school canteen for refreshments. There was a great turnout from the parents of our students too and it made it a very special day to remember.



### O'Connell Schools' Past Pupils' Union Committee

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