

Irish Volunteers were founded he joined immediately and was appointed captain of D Company, First Battalion, Dublin Brigade.

400, the little garrison of 20 held out until late on Wednesday and then surrendered. With their hands behind their heads they



THREE men associated with Limerick were executed for their part in the Easter Rising 90 years ago. Cork-based historian, and gaeilgair **PADRAIG Ó CUANACHÁIN** recounts the stories of Con Colbert, Edward Daly and Sean Heuston

Edward Daly an honourable and courageous Limerick man

EDWARD Daly was executed in the stonebreakers' yard in Kilmainham Jail on May 14, 1916.

Also on that morning another three leaders of the Rising were executed: Joseph Plunkett, one of the signatories of the proclamation of the Republic; Michael O'Hanrahan and William Pearse.

Edward Daly was born in Frederick Street in Limerick in 1896. He was a member of a family steeped in the republican tradition. His father had been in jail for Fenian activities and an uncle of his, John Daly, survived a sentence of 12 years imprisonment in English jails. Edward was educated in Limerick and worked for a short time as a clerk in the Limerick timber yard of Francis Spaight & Sons Ltd.

In 1912 he moved to Dublin and worked with Brooks Thomas Ltd, builders providers.

The year 1913 saw the foundation of the Irish Volunteers set up as a response to the Ulster Volunteers, established to oppose the implementation of a very moderate Home Rule bill. Not surprisingly, he was one of the first to enrol at the inaugural recruiting meeting in Dublin's Rotunda Hall.

In 1914 he was appointed company captain in the first battalion of the Dublin Brigade. His ability and reliability was proved by his participation in the Howth gun running and he was in charge of the funeral procession of the famous Fenian O'Donovan Rossa, at whose graveside Pearse was to give his historic oration.

No doubt, as a member of the IRB he was fully aware that a decision had been made by that organisation, at the outbreak of the First World War, to mount a rebellion against British rule in Ireland.

When the rebellion did come on Easter Monday 1916 he was in command of the first battalion stationed in the general area of the Four Courts.

One can imagine the tension and surprise when he addressed his company in Blackhall Place near the Four Courts: "Men of the first battalion I want you to listen to me for a few minutes and no applause must follow my statement. Today at noon an Irish Republic will be declared and the flag of the Republic hoisted. I look to every man to do his duty with courage and discipline."

The area of the Four Courts, Parnell Street,



Ned Daly: born in Frederick Street, Limerick in 1896

King Street and Church Street witnessed some of the toughest fighting of the Rising.

It is a military mystery how the rebels in not just Daly's command area but all over Dublin, armed only with rifles, shotguns and revolvers held out so long against numerically superior forces armed with machine guns, armoured cars and even artillery. Mostly, the rebel positions, despite repeated British attacks, held fast until the surrender on Saturday.

It was the heroic nurse Elizabeth O'Farrell, who early that day under a flag



Fr Albert: present at Heuston's death

of truce had brought Pearse's offer of surrender to Gen Lowe.

At about six o'clock she brought the surrender order to Daly in the Four Courts. Some of his men who had defended their position successfully during the week, when told the news shouted: "Fight it out."

Daly answered: "That is what I would like to do but as a soldier I must obey Pearse's order."

On May 3 he was tried by court martial in Richmond Barracks on a charge "that he did take part in an armed rebellion and in the waging of



Ger Maxwell: put in charge of British forces

war against His Majesty the King." As expected he was sentenced to death.

Gen Maxwell, commander of British forces in Ireland in his report to the British cabinet explained the reasons for Daly's execution as follows: "This man was one of the most prominent extremists in the Sinn Féin organisation. He held the rank of commandant and was in command of the body of rebels who held the Four Courts where heavy fighting took place and casualties occurred. He admitted being at the meeting of officers, which decided to carry out the orders of the executive council and commence the armed rebellion."

Edward Daly was an honourable and courageous man. He was respected not just by his own people but by the enemy also.

Maj de Courcy Wheeler, aide to Gen Lowe, was so impressed by his soldierly bearing that he saluted him at the surrender parade.

The one British army officer held prisoner in the Four Courts, Capt RK Brereton, obviously a fair-minded man recorded of the rebels: "They fought like gentlemen. They were men incapable of acts of brutality."

Like all the other leaders he faced death with an incredible bravery difficult to understand in this material age.

On the night before his execution he was visited by three of his sisters, one of whom was the widow of Tom Clarke, another of the signatories who had been executed the previous day. They all wrote accounts later of how they had found him composed, happy to die in the cause of Irish freedom and confident that his sacrifice would not be in vain.

Perhaps the greatest praise of all was given by a priest Fr Columbus, OFM, who was present at his execution.

He wrote later: "I remember well seeing him coming down from the prison cell where he had been to confession and received holy communion. He was calm and brave as when he was with men in the Church Street area and wished to be remembered to the Sisters of Charity, Brunswick Street, who were known to him and had been very kind. As I shook his hand for the last time I felt intensely all that was meant by his marching out blindfolded to his death—such a gentle, noble, brave young Irishman."

Leaba i measc na Naomh go raibh aige.

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Dublin's O'Connell Street in the aftermath of the Easter Rising

Colbert one of young

CON Colbert of Athea was, at the age of 28, one of the youngest of the leaders executed following the 1916 Rising. He was born into a family with strong patriotic leanings. Both his father and an uncle were active in the Fenian movement. His mother's family was also involved in the National movement and the Land League, formed to break landlordism and restore the land of Ireland to the people of Ireland.

Like many others in rural Ireland at the time he had to leave home to find employment, fortunately not in a foreign country but in Dublin where he became immediately involved in Fianna Éireann, a national boy scout movement set up by Countess Markievicz and Bulmer Hobson to counter the influence of the Baden-Powell Scouts who unashamedly served the cause of Empire.

When the National Volunteers were founded at a mass meeting in Dublin's Rotunda, Con was one of the first to enrol and was appointed captain of F Company of the Fourth Battalion.

His life in Dublin was one of total involvement in all aspects of the movement for freedom. A member of the Keating branch of Conradh na Gaeilge he soon became a fluent Irish speaker and used the language on every possible occasion.

He was also a member of the secret Irish Republican Brotherhood, the driving force behind the planning of the Rising. One wonders how he found time for his full-time job as a clerk in a Dublin bakery.

Colbert was small and stocky in build, only 5'4" in height.

He was a devoted Catholic, a daily communicant, a non-smoker and total abstainer from alcoholic drinks. In lectures he gave to his men he often stressed that previous efforts to achieve Irish independence had failed because of "drink, want of discipline and loose talk".

Following Eoin Mac Neill's order cancelling mobilisation arrangements for East-



Con Colbert from Athea: nobility and brave

er Sunday, the Dublin leadership decided on insurrection at noon on Easter Monday.

As planned, Con Colbert and his company occupied Watkin's Brewery, one of the supporting outposts covering the South Dublin Union, headquarters of the Fourth Battalion, commanded by Eamonn Ceannt. The following day his unit transferred to Jameson's Distillery and for the remainder of the week held the position against intense British attacks until the surrender on Easter Saturday.

Accompanied by a British officer, Thomas McDonagh, one of the signatories of the proclamation brought Pearse's surrender order on Sunday. Colbert wept with disappointment. Later in the day his little company joined other rebels from the South Dublin Union in the march to an agreed surrender

point in St Patrick's College and his company were then marched to the Barracks. He was soon selected by D Metropolitans as one who could court martial and accordingly tried a court comprising British army officers presided over by C. The proceedings were completed in a matter of minutes. Major Armstrong stated that Colbert was the party who surrendered and that he was a Volunteer captain form.

When asked if he had anything to say in his only reply was "nothing to say". Not surprisingly he was sentenced to death and the sentence confirmed by Gen Maxwell. When Maxwell later British Prime Minister Asquith, an explanation of the 15 executions took place in Ireland, h