Who did we name the station after?

COLBERT STATION, Limerick.

But who was Colbert, and what did he do to merit having a big city station named after him?

The main square in Newcastle West is named in his honour too, even though people living there don’t know that.

We can start our search for Colbert on Sarsfield Bridge. There are three figures on the memorial there — Ned Daly, Con Colbert and above them, Tom Clarke.

Colbert was among the leaders of the 1916 insurrection in Dublin and was executed by firing squad after a military trial in its aftermath.

But why name the Limerick station after him? Was he as important as Pearse or Conolly, who have Dublin stations in their honour? Or was he as little known as Sean Houston, whose plaque of honour is in the old headquarters itself, King’s Bridge?

True, neither Houston nor Colbert were signatories to the Proclamation, but were they — was Colbert in particular — control of the events that shook and reordered a nation?

The answer is yes, and he is his background.

Con Colbert was tenth of a family of thirteen born at Monasterevin, Co. Kildare, to parents Michael and Nora (née McDermott) Colbert. He was born on 22nd October 1898.

That made him 28 years of age when 1916 came about — and not a mere boy. He was a man, born to be in control.

His maternal grandfather, Cornelius McDermott, had been a legandary teacher at Coorlarry NS. The Colberts were a quite respectable family, rearing a magistrate and a doctor, as well as landowners.

The family moved back to the ancestral home at Athas some years later, and Con got his early education at Athas national school.

Because of the size of the family, the youngsters were farmed out to various places, and Con was dispatched to his aunt Uzzie at Shanagolden, going to Kilphasle school to age 13, when he returned to Athas. He took a keen interest in Irish while at school, and got an interest in geography and politics.

Then he moved to Dublin to stay with his sister Kathy at Ranelagh Road, and took the equivalent of the junior cert, and was put to the Customs and Excise service but he turned that down because of the mandatory affiliation of that post with the Crown, and his sister, who was in a bakery in Parnell

The movement grew rapidly, and became an item which Redmond, the leader of the Irish Party in Westminster, could not ignore. Redmond sought control, and got it, but only after a vote which was opposed by most of the leaders, and the organisation began to drift away from the idea of armed insurrection.

With the outbreak of the Great War, Redmond’s opinions were so far from the IRB’s thinking that his nominisation was expelled from the governing council, and Colbert was instrumental in kicking them out. There was only a minority now in the IRB — many had fled to France, and some were in the GPO.

A further reorganisation in 1915 saw Colbert elected as Chairman of Fianna Éireann.

The last time that Colbert saw Athas was at Christmas 1915, where he put the locals through an intensive drill course.

And so we come to Eireann.

McNeill cancelled the hostilities at the last minute, and threw everyone into confusion.

But a sort of innovation were set aside and Colbert’s girlfriend, one Lucy Smyth, went to the GPO.

Colbert was in command of the 23 men in Watkins’ brewery, a South Dublin outpost, transferred during the week to augment the Dublin garrison at Moorehouse Lane.

But the whole event was doomed, and he eventually met his end, and they were all taken into detention. He was identified as being one of the supreme leaders of the nationalist cause, and was shot.

Many people believe that Con Colbert was unimportant compared to the other leaders. Yet, he had been under close observation by the British for years.

To his sister, Nora, May 7, 1916:

Kesto,nah Gaoth.

My Dear Nora

Just a line to say goodbye to you and yours and ask you to pray for my soul. Don’t blame me — perhaps it’s just a way of saying goodbye and God bless you and yours.

Con

He was executed by firing squad at 3.45am on May 8.

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Table Quiz

The Ballybunion Film Club presents a table quiz next Tuesday at 8.30.

The quiz will be held in the Glasshouse Bar, and the proceeds go towards the film archive fund.

The team size is 4-5 per team of four.

There will be special prizes and audio rounds and excellent prizes.