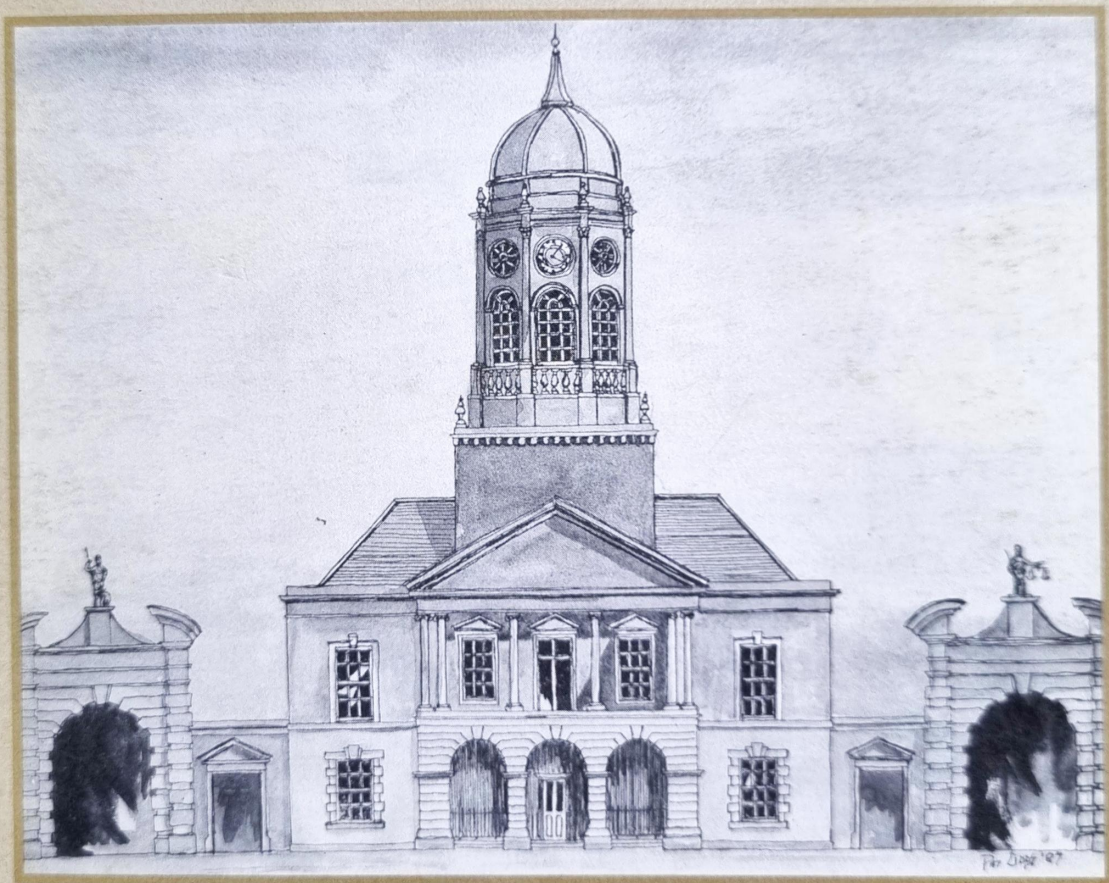
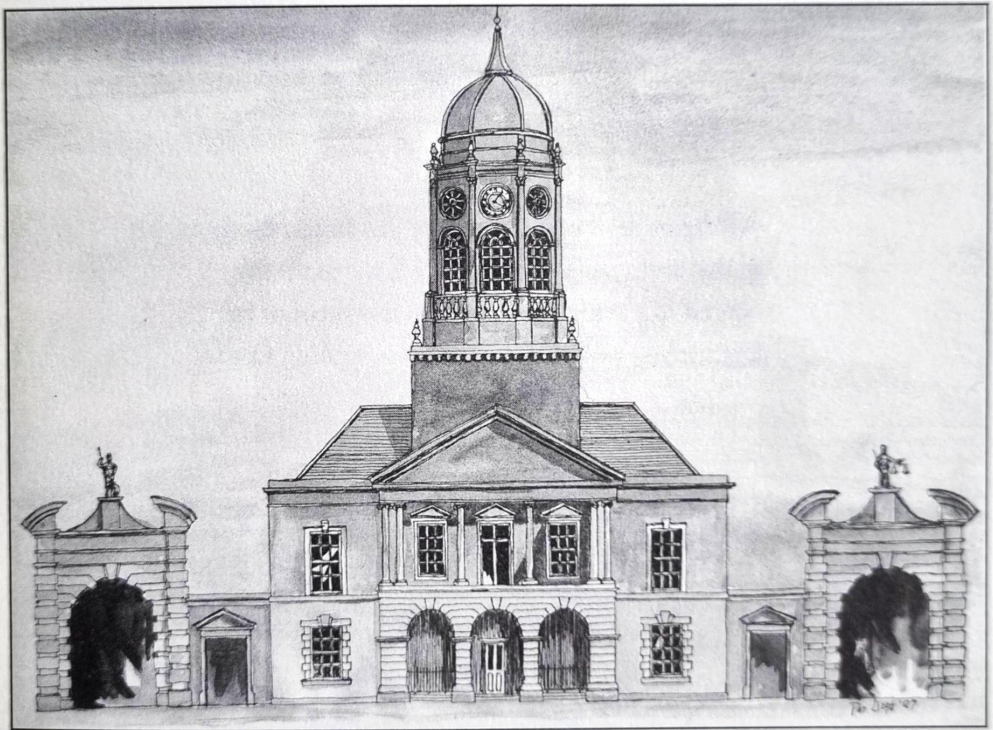


Three Murders in Dublin Castle, 1920



Sean O Mahony

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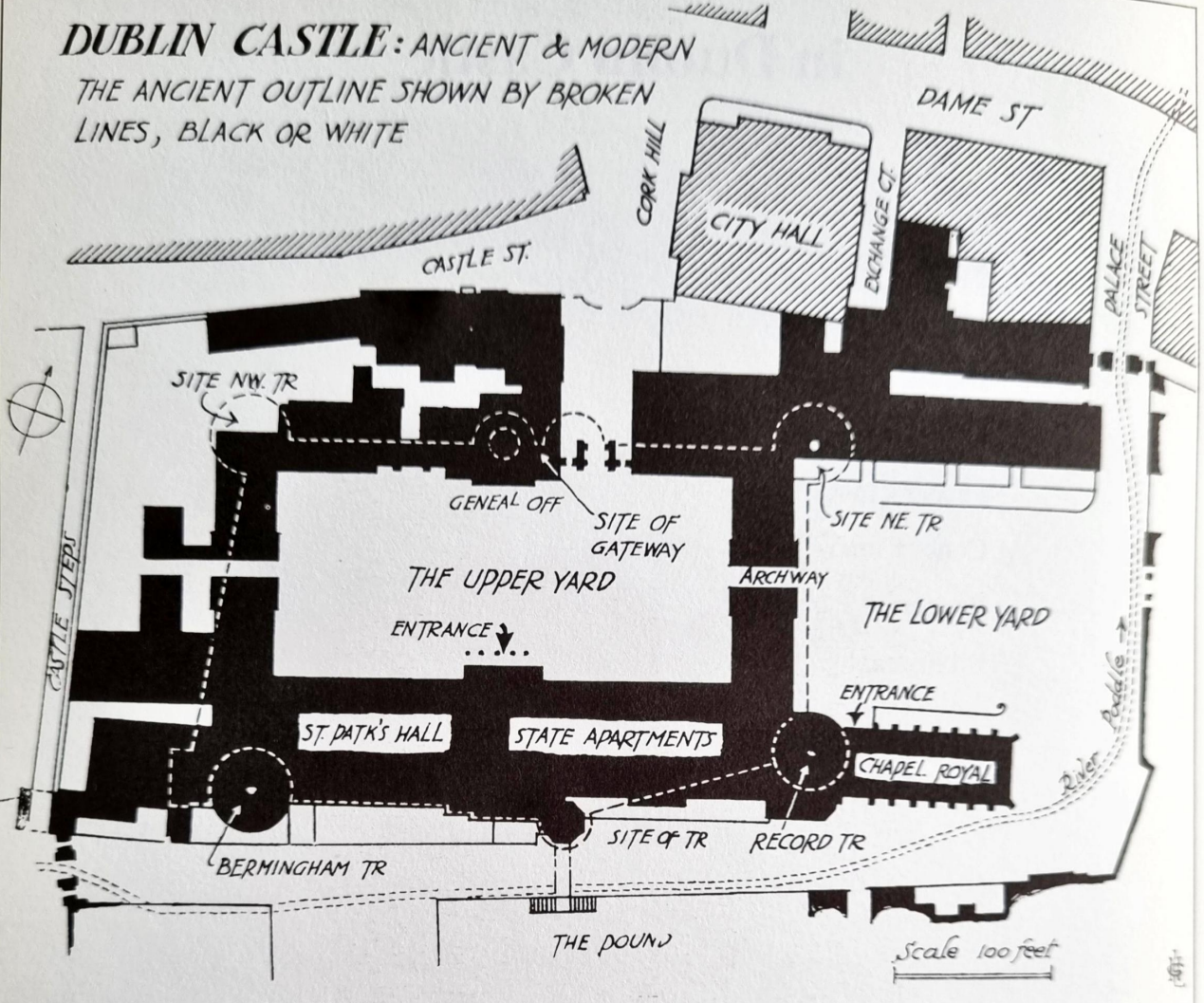
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DUBLIN CASTLE: ANCIENT & MODERN

THE ANCIENT OUTLINE SHOWN BY BROKEN LINES, BLACK OR WHITE



The Guardroom of Dublin Castle, situated at the end of Exchange Court off Dame Street by City Hall where McKee, Clancy and Clune were murdered.

INTRODUCTION

The execution of a network of British spies by the Active Service Units of the Irish Republican Army on Sunday 21 November 1920 has overshadowed the murders on the same day of three prisoners in Dublin Castle. The men had been seized earlier in raids late on Saturday evening or in the early hours of Sunday morning and Crown Force officers consigned them to the guard-room for interrogation.

Brigadier General Ormonde de l'Epee Winter head of the British Secret Service in Ireland and two Auxiliary Officers, Captain Hardy and Captain King, were the Crown Force Personnel who interrogated the three murdered prisoners.



Brigadier General Sir Ormonde Winter

This short booklet is prepared for the 1916-1921 Club (incorporating the Dublin Brigade Association) to give us a better understanding of those Patriots that we commemorate annually with a religious service near the anniversary of their deaths.

Brigadier Dick McKee

Dick McKee was born in Phibsborough Road, Dublin on 4 April 1893. He was the eldest of a family of five. After his father's death, while the family was young, the mother moved to Finglas Bridge and it was here that McKee was reared. He grew to be over six feet tall and he was a keen sportsman, concentrating mainly on cycling and handball.

After leaving school he was apprenticed to the publishing business at the well-known publishing house of Gill & Son, Upper O'Connell Street, Dublin. In due course he became a compositor. During the War of Independence, McKee used the basement of his workplace to store war materials.



Brigadier Dick McKee

He joined the Volunteers in 1913 serving in the G Company, Second Battalion Dublin Brigade; during the 1916 Rising he served in Jacob's Factory under Thomas MacDonagh. After the surrender he was imprisoned in Knutsford Jail and in Frongoch Internment Camp. He was released in August 1916. He became Company Captain and then Commandant of the Second Battalion and eventually he was promoted to Brigadier of the Dublin Brigade. As such he was an ex officio member of the IRA General

Headquarters Staff that included Collins, Mulcahy and Russell. He held the rank of Director of Training while attached to GHQ.

McKee found himself back in jail by 1918 as a political prisoner in Dundalk Jail. He took part in the first unsuccessful ambush on Lord French in Dame Street. Rory O'Connor and McKee planned and executed the successful escape from Mountjoy Jail of Piaras Beaslai, Paddy Fleming and J. J. Walsh. From a base in Aungier Street he printed an t-Oglách and he took part in the evacuation of Dan Breen from the Mater Hospital after Breen had been seriously wounded in action.

During the War of Independence he had many escapes and only narrowly avoided capture, when Sean Treacy was killed, by escaping on a bicycle during the confusion at the time of the shooting. The incident took place outside the drapery establishment "The Republican Outfitters" run by Peadar Clancy. In the final part of his military career he was on full time active service and moved through a network of safe houses.

The execution of each and every British agent had to be approved by the Cabinet. It was their custom to review the evidence before sanction could be given for an execution. Dick McKee attended the Cabinet meeting in Upper Dominick Street where each name on the list was carefully checked. Cathal



*Daniel O'Donovan, Sean O'Mahony, Dick McKee
under arrest by British soldiers after a raid
on the offices of Dail Éireann, 76 Harcourt Street, Dublin.*



Bust of Dick McKee

Brugha, the Minister for Defence was unhappy about the evidence in respect of some of the suspects. As a result about fifteen names were deleted from the list and their lives were saved as a result of Brugha's conscientiousness.

McKee and his Vice Brigadier, Peadar Clancy, were betrayed to the British authorities by an ex-British Army Serviceman variously described as "a ne'er do well", "a drunken bousey" and "a tout". They were captured in Sean Fitzpatrick's of Gloucester Street and removed to Dublin Castle. The Squad, led by Bill Stapleton subsequently executed the spy in a pub near the Five Lamps.

McKee and Clancy and a visiting Volunteer, Conor Clune, were tortured under interrogation in the guardroom and subsequently murdered on Sunday evening 21 November 1920. McKee was bayoneted in the liver, suffered from broken ribs, abrasions to the face and received many bullet wounds. Since 1939 a commemorative plaque adorns the external wall of the guardroom of Dublin Castle in Exchange Court next to City Hall (see map p. 4).

McKee's funeral was held after mass in the Pro-Cathedral. He was laid out in his volunteer uniform and Collins risked his security to be present at the Service. The coffin was draped in the Tricolour and his cap and belt surmounted it. He is buried in the Republican plot in Glasnevin. He was aged 27.

The former Maryborough Barracks, Dublin was re-named McKee Barracks in his honour. A fine bronze bust of McKee by Lawrence Campbell RHA is on display in the hall of the Officers Mess of McKee Barracks since 1950. Also, a prominent thoroughfare in his home district of Finglas is called after him.

Vice-Brigadier Peadar Clancy

Peadar Clancy, a native of Carrowreagh East, Cranny, West Clare was born in 1888. He had six brothers and six sisters and the family had a Fenian tradition. After leaving school he was apprenticed to the drapery business and he served in Killadysert, Co. Clare; Newcastlewest, Co. Limerick and Youghal, Co. Cork. He then moved to Dublin and in due course became a partner in a drapery business called "The Republican Outfitters" located in Talbot Street.



Vice-Brigadier Peadar Clancy

From his youth he was a keen Gaelic Leaguer and he was immersed in national activities. During the Easter Rising he served in the Four Courts Garrison. He was court-martialled and sentenced to death. However, his sentence was commuted to Penal Servitude for 10 years. He remained in an English Jail until the amnesty in 1917.

He was actually selected as the Sinn Fein candidate in the famous East Clare by-election but his candidature was not ratified by GHQ so de Valera was chosen in a second convention in Ennis. He commanded the raid on the Kings Inns in Dublin, which captured several weapons and a large quantity of ammunition. He became No. 2 of the Dublin Brigade with the rank of Vice-Brigadier. Clancy was also attached to GHQ and he held the rank of Director of Munitions. His immediate superior was his Easter Week colleague, Dick McKee. Because of their duties, rank, and in particular, their deaths and final resting-place their names are indelibly linked together.

Todd Andrews has left us an endearing memory of the personality of

Peadar Clancy in his memoir *Dublin Made Me*. He says that while in Mountjoy Prison:

“I was overcome by the extraordinary impact which Clancy’s personality had on me. I had never heard or seen Clancy before nor indeed did I ever see him again but he left an indelible impression of the superman, a man whose commands I at least would have a compulsion to obey as if I had been hypnotised... In the presence of Clancy I felt a mere puppet on a string.”

Captured, tortured and murdered in the exact same circumstances as McKee, his body bore many bullet wounds when returned by the British authorities. The bodies of McKee and Clancy lay side by side at the requiem mass in the Pro-Cathedral. He too was dressed in his volunteer uniform and his tricolour-draped coffin bore his cap and belt. He is buried in the Republican plot in Glasnevin. He was aged 32.

The Army barracks in Islandbridge, Dublin was renamed Clancy Barracks in honour of Peadar Clancy and some streets in Finglas were also named in his honour.

Volunteer Conor Clune

Conor Clune was born in Quin, Co. Clare in 1893. He was a very keen Irish language enthusiast and spoke Irish on every possible occasion. He was educated for a time in Colaiste na Rinne in Co. Waterford. He was an employee of Raheen Co-op owned by the MacLysaght family in Tuamgraney, Co. Clare. His employer and friend, Edward MacLysaght, invited him to come to Dublin that weekend when another employee withdrew for domestic reasons. They travelled by car on Saturday 20 November 1920. As a Gaelic language enthusiast he sought out Piaras Beaslai in Vaughan’s Hotel where he was captured that evening in a raid by Auxiliaries. Beaslai, who was familiar with the Hotel’s surroundings escaped with other senior Volunteers including Michael Collins and Dick McKee. Vaughan’s Hotel in Parnell Square was an important meeting place for the IRA executive. The British authorities may have exaggerated his role as he was transferred to Dublin Castle where he joined McKee and Clancy who were captured elsewhere later that night.

After the liquidation of the enemy Secret Service on the morning of Bloody Sunday it is clear that the British assumed that he was an operative imported to Dublin that weekend to take part in the executions.

Another Republican prisoner, P. J. Young, who was in custody at the time in the Castle is convinced that Clune was killed in error for Sean Fitzpatrick the man arrested with McKee and Clancy at Fitzpatrick’s home in Gloucester St.. Both Clune and Fitzpatrick were of similar build and both were wearing brown suits. Young overheard two Auxiliary officers disputing the identity of a particular prisoner. One said, “that’s him” while another said



Volunteer Conor Clune

“no, its him” as they eyed just Fitzpatrick and Clune. Whatever the truth, Clune was maltreated in the guardroom of Dublin Castle. He too was eventually murdered on 21 November 1920. His employer Edward MacLysaght took charge of the body when the authorities released it. He had the body medically examined. The examination proved that Clune was shot 13 times in the chest. This was abundant evidence that the excuse that he was trying to escape was a complete fabrication.

Clune’s body was brought home to Co. Clare for burial. His coffin was draped with the tricolour but when a British Officer objected to it, Canon Slattery the presiding priest complied and removed the national flag. He is buried in Quin Abbey near his ancestors, one of whom, Fergus Clune, had

been executed by Cromwell. Conor Clune was aged 27. Incidentally, a kinsman of his, Archbishop Clune of Perth, Western Australia became involved in peace negotiations in early 1921 as a go-between, between the IRA and the British Government.

Some streets in Finglas, adjacent to those named after McKee and Clancy were named after Conor Clune cementing together the names of the three Patriots who died for



Ireland on a very notable day in Irish History – Bloody Sunday, 21 November 1920.

Postscript

As a result of these deaths in custody the British authorities held a military court of inquiry. It was held on 3 December 1920. The report found that death was the result of:

“Bullet wounds fired by members of the Auxiliary Division, Royal Irish Constabulary, in self defence and in execution of their duty – i.e. in preventing the escape of the deceased party, who was in their lawful custody.”

It stretches credibility somewhat that the garrison of Dublin Castle found it impossible to prevent the escape of three unarmed prisoners from the guardroom without shooting them.

The general belief was that they were tortured in order to extract from them the names of the Volunteers who had earlier shot the Cairo Gang as the British spies were popularly known. When this information was not forthcoming they were killed. The condition of their bodies when delivered to their families supported this belief.



Auxiliaries of F Company at Dublin Castle – with the noted Captain (Tiny) King in centre.



Two photographs of the Guardroom specially arranged by the British authorities to demonstrate that an attempted escape had taken place. These were widely circulated for propoganda purposes. The 'civilians' were in fact Auxiliaries.



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Pamphlet No. 1 in a series.

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He is the author of *Frongoch – University of Revolution*.

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1916-1921 CLUB

The 1916-1921 Club was founded in the 1940s in an effort to heal the divisions of the civil war. Protagonists on both sides were invited to join.

The Association of the Old Dublin Brigade, Óglaigh na hÉireann was open to surviving members of the War of Independence. The Club incorporated the Association in the early 1980s as their membership declined.

Membership of the Club is open to all Irish citizens who subscribe to the objectives and accept the documents upon which it bases its charter.

OBJECTIVES

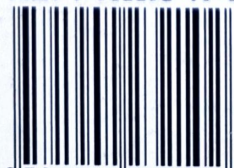
- To honour and remember the dead who fought for Irish Freedom and all those who worked its achievement.
- To cultivate in our time the spirit of Nationality and Unity that marked the 1916-1921 period.
- To contribute to the cause of an Ireland – united, independent and sovereign.
- To work for the reconciliation of all Irish people in the context of a united nation, in the belief that it is only such a united people who can effect a lasting and real peace with the British.
- To promote Irish traditions and cultures.

SOCIETY CHARTER

1. The Proclamation of Easter 1916.
2. The Declaration of Independence, enacted by Dáil Éireann in 1919.
3. Bunreacht na hÉireann enacted by the Irish people in 1937.
4. The Republic of Ireland Act 1948, enacted by Oireachtas Éireann.
5. The Declaration of Dáil Éireann unanimously adopted in May 1949.

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