

# REVOLUTION 1916 THE ORIGINAL & AUTHENTIC EXHIBITION



## SEÁN MACDIARMADA (1883-1916)

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Seán MacDiarmada often described as “the mastermind” behind the 1916 Rising was born at Corranmore near Killyclogher, County Leitrim, to Donald McDermott and his wife Mary McMorrow. Donald himself had been involved with Fenian land agitation and resistance activities.

Educated at the local primary school and at night school in Cavan, after a short spell in Scotland, Seán got a job in Belfast as a tram conductor in 1905. Sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) by Denis McCullough he was active with Bulmer Hobson in setting up the Dungannon Clubs. Moving to Dublin in 1907 he joined Sinn Féin and was director of elections for the North Leitrim by-election in 1908 where the Sinn Féin candidate was defeated.

Coming under the influence of Thomas Clarke in Dublin he became the manager of Irish Freedom the IRB newspaper in 1910 and writing in 1911 he commented: “Our country is run by a set of insolent officials, to whom we are nothing but a lot of people to be exploited and kept in subjection. The executive power rests on armed force that preys on the people with batons if they have the gall to say they do not like it.”

MacDiarmada was a very effective recruiter for the IRB bridging the gap between rural Ireland and the urban centres, and he built up a network throughout the Gaelic Athletic Association and Gaelic League. Affected by a bout of Polio in 1911, which restricted his left side, he had to subsequently walk with a stick, and the tap tapping became a precursor of his arrival. Speaking in Tralee in 1914 MacDiarmada summed up the IRB’s position:

*“Nationalism as known to Tone and Emmet is almost dead in the country and a spurious substitute as taught by the Irish Parliamentary Party exists... The Irish patriotic spirit will die forever unless a blood sacrifice is made in the next few years. It will be necessary for some of us to offer ourselves as martyrs if nothing better can be done to preserve the national Irish Spirit.”*

Imprisoned in early 1915 for a seditious speech, in Mountjoy Jail he is listed as absent from the O’Donovan Rossa Funeral on August 1st 1915 on the official programme.

The countermanding order issued by O’Neill and Hobson which delayed the Rising greatly upset MacDiarmada who promptly had Hobson placed under house arrest in Cabra until the Rising began. Limited by his condition during the Rising, Seán was with the rest of the Military Council in the General Post Office. He addressed the Volunteers in Moore Street to convince them to surrender.

Singled out by ‘G’ Men (detectives) overnight at the Rotunda, Captain Lee-Wilson abused MacDiarmada asking if “they were fighting cripples”; he took away his walking stick before the forced march to Richmond Barracks. This didn’t prevent MacDiarmada from commenting to a fellow Volunteer that “the cause is lost if some of us aren’t shot”.

MacDiarmada and James Connolly were the last leaders to be executed on May 12th at Kilmainham Jail despite an order from the British Cabinet to cease all executions only in exceptional cases because of the furore raised by Nationalist MPs such as Lawrence Ginnell. General Maxwell emboldened by the Irish Independent calling for the ringleaders to be executed had a dying Connolly and disabled MacDiarmada shot.

In his final letter Seán wrote to his long term love Min Ryan who had been a courier along with her sister in the GPO. She later married Richard Mulcahy.

*“I feel happiness the like of which I have never experienced, I die that the Irish Nation might live”.*

Is minic a deirtear gurb é Seán MacDiarmada príomhúdar Éirí Amach 1916. Rugadh é ar an gCorrán Mór é i ngar do Choillte Clochair i gContae Liatroma agus ba iad Donald McDermott agus a bhean chéile Mary McMorrow a thuismitheoirí. Bhí baint ag Donald féin le hógáidíocht talún na bhFiníní agus le gníomhaíochtaí ceannairceachta.

D’fhreastail sé ar an mbunscoil áitiúil agus ar scoil oíche i gContae an Chabháin agus, i ndiaidh dó seal gairid a chaitheamh in Albain, d’éirigh le Seán post a fháil i mBéal Feirste mar stiúrthóir tram in 1905. Chuir Denis McCullough é faoi mhionn i mBráithreachas Phoblacht na hÉireann agus bhí sé gníomhach le Bulmer Hobson ag bunú Chlubanna Dhún Geanainn. D’aistrigh sé go Baile Átha Cliath in 1907 agus chuaigh sé le Sinn Féin. Bhí sé ina stiúrthóir toghchán le linn feachtas fo-thoghchán Liatroim Thuaidh i 1908, ach níor éirigh le hiarrthóir Shinn Féin ann.

Bhí tionchar mór ag Tomás Ó Cléirigh air agus nuair a bhí sé i mBaile Átha Cliath i 1910 ceapadh ina bhainsteoir ar Irish Freedom é, nuachtán an IRB, agus bhí an méid seo le scríobh aige i 1911: “Our country is run by a set of insolent officials, to whom we are nothing but a lot of people to be exploited and kept in subjection. The executive power rests on armed force that preys on the people with batons if they have the gall to say they do not like it.”

Bhí MacDiarmada iontach éifeachtach i mbun earcaíochta don IRB agus bhí sé in ann a bhearna idir ceantair thuaithe agus ionaid uirbeacha a dhruidim. Bhunaigh sé líonra den IRB trí Chumann Lúthchleas Gael agus trí Chonradh na Gaeilge. Bhuail póillió é i 1911 a d’fhág bacach é ar a thaobh clé é, agus ag brath ar mhaide siúil. Chuireadh fuaim an mhaide shiúil in iúl feasta go raibh sé ag teacht. Agus é ag caint i dTrá Lí i 1914 chuir MacDiarmada dearcadh an IRB in iúl:

*“Nationalism as known to Tone and Emmet is almost dead in the country and a spurious substitute as taught by the Irish Parliamentary Party exists... The Irish patriotic spirit will die forever unless a blood sacrifice is made in the next few years. It will be necessary for some of us to offer ourselves as martyrs if nothing better can be done to preserve the national Irish Spirit.”*

Cuireadh i bPríosún Muinseo é i 1915 mar gheall ar chaint cheannairceach a thug sé, agus tá sé liostáilte as láthair ar chlár oifigiúil shochoraid Uí Dhonnabháin Rossa

Chuir an freasordú Eoin Ó Néill agus Hobson, isteach go mór ar Mhac Diarmada agus d’ordaigh sé agus go gcuirfí faoi bhraighdeanas baile Hobson i gCabra go dtí go dtosnóidh an Éirí Amach. In aineoinn é teoranta mar gheall ar a thinneas, bhí Seán leis an gcuíd eile den Chomhairle Mhíleata in Ard-Oifig an Phoist agus ba eisean a labhair lena Óglaigh i ngairdín 16 Shráid Uí Mhórdha lena chur ina lúí orthu géilleadh.

Dhíriigh na bleachtairí na nÓglaigh a bhí faoi garda thar oíche lasmuigh den Rotunda. Is anseo a thug an Captaen Lee-Wilson droch-íde do Sheáin ag fiafrú an ag troid bacaigh a bhí said. Bhain sé a mhaide siúil de sular b’éigean dona hÓglaigh siúl go Beairicí Richmond. Ina ainneoin seo dúirt Mac Diarmada le duine de na hÓglaigh an méid seo “the cause is lost if some of us aren’t shot”.

B’iad Mac Diarmada agus Séamus Ó Conghaile na ceannairí deireanacha a cuireadh chun báis ar an 12 Bealtaine i bPríosún Cill Mhaighneann in ainneoin an ordaithe a thug Comh-aireacht na Breataine nár chóir duine ar bith eile a scaoileadh, ach amháin i gcásanna eisceachtúla toisc an raic a bhí á thógaint ag Teachtaí Parlaiminte Náisiúnacha ar nós Lawrence Ginnell.

Ach thug éileamh an Irish Independent go gcuirfí na príomh chinnirí chun báis misneach do General Maxwell an ordú a thabhairt chun Ó Conghaile a bhí i mbéal a bháis agus MacDiarmada a bhí ina bhacach a chuir chun báis. Musclaíodh an dá lámhach sin ach go háirithe spiorad athbheochain na hÉireann sa slí a bhí an Bráithreachas agus MacDiarmada ag gníomhú ina threo. Ina litir deiridh scríobh sé chuig a ghrá geal Min Ryan, a bhí ina teachtaire lena deirfiúr in Ard-Oifig an Phoist. Phós sí Richard Mulcahy níos déanaí i 1922.

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