A HATFUL OF STORIES
REMEMBERING 1916

Remembering 1916 Writing Group, Ringsend Adult Education Service
Edited by Rachel McNicholl
City of Dublin Education and Training Board, 2016
Facsimile of the Proclamation rolling off the press at the National Print Museum, Beggars Bush

*Photo: Aileen Hunt*

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**Front cover image:** Hat (with bullet hole) worn by Jack Plunkett in GPO. Honor O Brolchain collection. *Photo: Aileen Hunt*

**Back cover image:** Easter bonnets made by Sewing group. *Photo: Rachel McNicholl*

All other images as credited in captions.

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Priscilla Fitzpatrick modelling an Easter bonnet made by the Sewing group
Photo: Rachel McNicholl
Introduction

The centenary of the 1916 Rising presented a great opportunity to learn more about the 1916 Rising and how it affected the Ringsend area. It was also an opportunity to gather stories otherwise hidden between the lines of history. The Remembering 1916 course in Ringsend College was open to anyone who had a story to tell or who wanted to learn more about writing local and family history.

The writing class met on Friday mornings from January to May 2016, sharing stories, researching aspects of 1916 we knew little about, checking historical facts, drafting, editing and sourcing photographs to go with our writing.

In most cases, family members were very willing to share information, to allow memorabilia to be photographed and to help with missing details. In a small number of cases, students found that relatives were unable or unwilling to remember, so one or two stories had to be dropped. This in itself was interesting. A hundred years later, we can talk with greater openness and curiosity about the complexities of our history, yet we are still only a couple of generations away from momentous events that left scars on all sides.

We had two guest speakers during the term: Honor O Brolchain (grand-niece of Joseph Plunkett) and Brian Siggins (local historian). We also had an outing to the Pearse Museum and St Enda’s Park and a walking tour from Beggars Bush to sites of the battle of Mount Street Bridge. For some of these special events we were joined by students from other courses and centres who were commemorating the Centenary in their work, including Horticulture, Sewing, Woodwork, Communications, Oral History and Creative Writing groups.

A Hatful of Stories

The writing in this booklet is the outcome of our Friday morning classes in Ringsend. The contents are grouped in four sections. The first presents local landmarks and placenames associated with the Rising or those who fought in it. Most of these pieces also featured in the blog accompanying our project: ringsend1916.wordpress.com.

The second section presents biographies of people who were active in the 1916 Rising. The third section presents biographies from the War of Independence era. Almost all the biographies are of people with whom the student had a direct connection through first-hand experience, relatives, friends or neighbours. The final section contains reflections on an exhibition at the Rotunda and an outing to the Pearse Museum and St Enda’s Park.

We hope you will enjoy dipping into our Hatful of Stories.
Landmarks and Legacy of the Rising

Carole Flanagan, Mary O’Neill, Frances Parnell, Louise Whelan, Rachel McNicholl

The following locations in or near Ringsend are among the places linked with the 1916 Rising or people who took part in it. It is not an exhaustive list, but we would be very pleased if people used it to map out their own walking tour, adding more to the trail from their own knowledge of local history. Our research was partly inspired by a News Four article, “Local Legacy of the Rising” by Emma Dwyer (October 2013), which we found online at newsfour.ie.

1. Ennis Grove
   by Carole Flanagan

Ennis Grove is a pretty little estate just off Londonbridge Road in Irishtown/Sandymount. It is named after Edward Ennis of 5 Dromard Avenue, Sandymount, who was a Volunteer in the Boland’s Mills garrison during the 1916 Rising. He was accidentally killed in the crossfire near the railway lines. According to the 1911 Census, he was aged 26 on 2 April 1911, so he was 31 or 32 when he was killed in Easter week 1916.

Edward Ennis is buried in Glasnevin Cemetery. A gravestone was erected in 2008.

2. Malone Gardens, Northumberland Road, Mount Street Bridge
   by Carole Flanagan

Malone Gardens is a small estate off Bath Avenue that was built between 1928 and 1929. It was named after Michael Malone (1888–1916), a carpenter and Volunteer who was a member of Éamon de Valera’s Boland’s Mills battalion. On Wednesday, 26 April 1916, he led a small number of men towards Mount Street Bridge to prevent British reinforcements from entering Dublin.

Battle of Mount Street Bridge
Malone took up a position at 25 Northumberland Road, at the junction with Haddington Road, with a small group of men.

They held off the British for hours. But British troops stormed the house in the end, throwing grenades at the front and entering from the garden as well. Malone was shot. A plaque on the side of the house commemorates him.

James Grace survived the fighting at 25 Northumberland Road. He was imprisoned by the British for his part in the Rising and released on Christmas Eve, 1916. He gave an account of the battle of Mount Street Bridge and the events in 25 Northumberland Road in his witness statement to the Bureau of Military History in 1949. At that time, his address was 24 Haddington Road – not far from the scene of events in 1916.
3. **Beggars Bush**  
*by Frances Parnell*

Commemorating two brothers  
Michael Malone’s brother William was killed in Ypres on 24 May 1915, almost a year before the Easter Rising. He was a sergeant in the Royal Dublin Fusiliers. An Post has brought out a stamp with both brothers on it as part of its 16 Easter Rising centenary postage stamp series. The image of the two brothers on the stamp shows the complexity of Irish identities and responses to the First World War and to the Rising.

Beggars Bush is the site of a former army barracks. The British Army used it from 1827 as a recruit training depot. It also housed elderly British Army reservists, who were known around Dublin as the “Gorgeous Wrecks” because of their GR (Georgius Rex) armbands.

During the 1916 Rising, Éamon de Valera’s Boland’s battalion had outposts outside the barracks, under the command of Michael Malone. Some of the reservists, returning to the barracks after military manoeuvres, were among the first British Army casualties of what came to be known as the battle of Mount Street Bridge.

The barracks was handed over to the Free State Army, under the command of Michael Collins, on 31 January 1922. It was the first barracks to be officially handed over by the British. In November 1922, Robert Erskine Childers (who had brought guns into Howth on Asgard in 1914) was executed in Beggars Bush, during the Civil War.

Beggars Bush is now home to the National Print Museum, among other things.

Where does the name Beggars Bush come from? Before the Dodder bridges and Grand Canal Docks tamed the area, Beggars Bush was a treacherous marshland crossed by a handful of rough tracks and wooden bridges. It was a notorious hang-out for highwaymen and beggars. That is where it got its name, according to historian Turtle Bunbury.

4. **Boland’s Bakery and Flour Mills**  
*by Mary O’Neill*

Boland’s Bakery, on the corner of Grand Canal Street and Macken Street, where the Treasury Building now stands, served as the headquarters of the 3rd Battalion of the Irish Volunteers under Commandant Éamon de Valera. It was a key location, controlling the railway line and the main road leading from Dun Laoghaire, then known as Kingstown. A plaque on the side of Treasury Building dates from the fiftytieth anniversary of the Rising in 1966.
5. **27 Pearse St – Birthplace of Patrick and Willie Pearse**

by Mary O’Neill

Patrick Pearse, the second child of Margaret (née Brady) and James Pearse, was born at 27 Great Brunswick St in 1879. His father conducted his business as an “ecclesiastical and architectural sculptor” from the premises. After the death of their father in 1900, Patrick and his brother Willie (b. 1881) took over the business, which continued as Pearse & Sons until 1910. At this time Patrick was using the title Patrick H. Pearse, Sculptor. The business folded in 1910 due to Patrick’s workload with Conradh na Gaeilge (the Gaelic League) and St Enda’s school. Willie’s studies at the Metropolitan School of Art and a depression in the building trade were other contributing factors.

Of Margaret and James Pearse’s four children, Margaret Mary (b. 1877) was the eldest; Mary Bridget (b. 1883) was the youngest. Two older half-siblings from their father’s first marriage also lived in the family home in Patrick’s early years.

No. 27 Pearse Street now houses the Ireland Institute and the Pearse Centre, which has a theatre to the rear.

In 1926, Great Brunswick Street was renamed Pearse Street after Patrick, and Queen Square became Pearse Square. Westland Row Station was renamed in 1966. The station’s Irish name, Stáisiún na bPiarsach, holds the clue that it is named after “the Pearses” (plural). The commemorative stone plaque at 27 Pearse Street by sculptor Desmond Broe also honours both executed brothers, Patrick and Willie.

**Sources**

The Ireland Institute, www.theirelandinstitute.com

Wikipedia
6. Liberty Hall
by Frances Parnell

The corner of Eden Quay is the site of the old and new Liberty Hall. The old Hall was a two-storey building belonging to the Irish Transport and General Workers’ Union. It became the headquarters of the Transport and General Workers’ Union in 1912 and of the Irish Citizen Army in 1913. The ITGWU posed a big problem for Irish industry at the time. Workers came to the union to organise against the exploitation and tyranny of their employers.

Liberty Hall was badly damaged during the 1916 Rising and the workers had to rebuild and start again. The building was eventually declared unsafe and the current Liberty Hall was built on the old site in the 1960s.

7. Elizabeth O’Farrell Park
by Rachel McNicholl

Elizabeth O’Farrell Park is a small public park on City Quay, on the Liffey’s south bank. It is named after Elizabeth O’Farrell, nurse and republican. She was born in 1884 at 42 City Quay, the youngest of two daughters.

As a child, she formed a lifelong friendship with Julia Grenan. Elizabeth became a midwife, working at Holles Street hospital, while Julia worked as a dressmaker. Both shared strong nationalist beliefs. They were members of the Gaelic League, the Irish Women’s Franchise League, the Irish Women Workers Union and Cumann na mBan.

During the Rising, they were on duty in the GPO and performed nursing and courier duties. They nursed James Connolly, and they were the last women to evacuate the GPO.

When the leaders decided to lay down their arms on 29 April, Patrick Pearse chose O’Farrell to contact the British, fearing that a man would be shot down immediately. That afternoon, Pearse, accompanied by O’Farrell, surrendered to General Lowe. Later that day and the day after, she took the surrender order to Volunteer and Citizen Army units, coming under fire several times.

After the Rising O’Farrell and Grenan continued to work for Cumann na mBan and opposed the Treaty. Elizabeth continued to work in the National Maternity Hospital, Holles Street, for the rest of her working life. She died on 25 June 1957 and is buried in the republican plot in Glasnevin Cemetery, next to Julia Grenan.

Was O’Farrell airbrushed out of history?
In some versions of the famous photo of Pearse surrendering to General Lowe, O’Farrell’s feet and the visible hem of her uniform were deleted, to make it look like Pearse stood there alone. There are different theories about this. O’Farrell herself is supposed to have said that she deliberately stood back. Perhaps this was to ensure that Pearse was the centre of attention. Perhaps it was also because she intended to keep up her republican activities and did not want her face to become too well known.

The practice of touching up photos for the newspapers was quite common at the time, and if you look at the different versions of the photo online, you will see that other details were also changed or removed to “clean it up”.

Whatever about the photo, there was no excuse for O’Farrell or other women activists in the Rising to be dropped from the historic record for so long. It is good that their role has been researched and recognised during the Centenary commemorations.

Source
1916: Portraits and Lives (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015).
8. Whelan House, Ringsend
by Louise Whelan

Whelan House is a housing complex on Thorneycastle Street, Ringsend, backing on to the river Dodder. It was built in 1939 and designed by Dublin Corporation’s Chief Housing Architect, Herbert Simms. Whelan House was named in memory of Patrick Whelan (1893–1916), who was active in the Ringsend branch of the Gaelic League, played hurling for Fontenoys and was a Volunteer under the command of Éamon de Valera during the Easter Rising. He was killed in crossfire during the battle of Mount Street Bridge.

According to the National Graves Association, Patrick Whelan was only 23 years of age when he died. He is buried in Glasnevin Cemetery, where a memorial stone was unveiled on 24 November 1935.

Pembroke Cottages connection
Patrick Whelan was from a family of ten. Most of his family were involved in marine work like fishing and merchant sailing. At the time of the Rising, Patrick lived at 28 Pembroke Cottages, Irishtown.

His older brother Martin was a sailer and had joined the British Navy at 17. He was killed at the age of 31 in the battle of Jutland on 31 May 1916, only a matter of weeks after Patrick was killed in Dublin.

Thanks to Laurence Whelan and Mary Holmes, relatives of Patrick Whelan, for additional information.

9. O’Rahilly House
by Louise Whelan

The O’Rahilly House housing complex in Thorneycastle Street, Ringsend, was built in 1955 and named after Michael Joseph O’Rahilly (1875–1916). Known as “The O’Rahilly”, he was a founding member of the Irish Volunteers in 1913 and became the only leader of the Easter Rising to die in action. Before he died, he took the time to write a message to his wife on the back of a letter he had received in the GPO from his son. The text reads:

Written after I was shot –
Darling Nancy
I was shot leading a rush up Moore Street
took refuge in a doorway.
While I was there I heard the men pointing out where I was & I made a bolt for the laneway I am in now.
I got more [than] one bullet I think.

Tons & tons of love dearie to you & to the boys & to Nell & Anna.
It was a good fight anyhow.
Please deliver this to Nannie O’Rahilly
40 Herbert Park
Dublin
Goodbye darling

The letter is reproduced on a memorial plaque on O’Rahilly Parade (formerly Sackville Lane), where O’Rahilly took shelter after being shot. The plaque was unveiled by his family in 2006.

Nancy O’Rahilly
Nancy (Nannie) O’Rahilly, née Brown, was born into a wealthy industrialist family in the USA in 1878. She met her future husband, Michael Joseph O’Rahilly, in Dublin. They lived between the USA and Ireland and travelled extensively in Europe before settling in Ireland in 1909. Nannie joined Cumann na mBan in 1914 and their two oldest sons were members of Fianna Eireann.

After the Rising, Nancy was active in the Volunteer Dependents’ Fund and the Irish White Cross and served on the committee of Cumann na mBan. At this time, Cumann na mBan were fighting for women’s rights as well as Irish freedom.

During the Civil War, Nancy supported the anti-Treaty side. She was arrested by Free State soldiers in 1922 and spent a week in Mountjoy Jail. She lived the rest of her life at 40 Herbert Park and died in 1961.
James Mallon, the Frongoch Barber

by Pat O’Byrne

It took two attempts to write this article. The first time, I found that I had not got enough information about James Mallon, known as the Frongoch Barber, even though he had cut my hair from about 1950 until he had to retire in 1961.

Trains disrupted Easter Monday 1916

In the *Irish Times* of 7 May 2016, in the “Home & Design” section, I saw a picture of a railway ticket for Easter Monday, 24 April 1916. The ticket was for a trip from Dublin (Amiens Street Junction) to the Hill of Howth and back. The ticket was only used on the outward journey. There were no return trains running that afternoon. The Burridge family who bought the tickets had to walk all the way home from Howth to South Circular Road, Rialto.

James Mallon was part of the reason why the trains were disrupted, as you will soon see. The piece about the railway ticket prompted me to get on with my second attempt at writing this story.

The Frongoch Hairdressing Saloon

When I got to know James Mallon, in about 1950, he had a hairdressing saloon beside Liberty Hall on Eden Quay. My father, who taught swimming, used to take my brother and me to lessons in Tara Street Baths, across the river, and if we needed a haircut, we would go to the Frongoch Barber afterwards. I have a memory of a painting of Mallon himself hanging in the saloon, wearing his Irish Volunteers uniform and a hat. I think it was painted by his nephew Cyril McGarry.

Jimmy Mallon used to tell me stories about his involvement in the Rising, but when it came to writing them up, I found that I needed to do some research. My inquiries revealed what Frongoch in Wales was all about, what Boland’s Mills with Éamon de Valera was all about, and what the Easter Rising 1916 was all about.

Family life in Dublin

James Mallon was born in Belfast in 1887. His wife, Florence Mallon (née Caroll), was Dublin-born. They lived at 21A (later 8) George’s Quay, Dublin, in 1915. He established his hair-dressing saloon in 1907. Ernest, their first son, arrived in 1913. Desmond Wolfe Tone Mallon died in infancy on 21 March 1916.

B Company, Boland’s and the Rising

Mallon joined the Irish Volunteers in 1913. During the Easter Rising, 1916, he was with B Company, 3rd Battalion, Dublin Brigade, in the Boland’s Mills garrison.

One of his “jobs” in the Rising was to make the railway lines unusable. They did this by removing a length of rail line and disposing of it in such a way that neither railway workers nor the British Army could find it and bolt it back in place. The length of rail line was hidden “under water”, possibly in the Grand Canal or in the much deeper Grand Canal Docks.

Patriotic hairdressers

James Mallon was not the only hairdresser at Boland’s Mills. Another hairdresser, Christopher Murphy, was shot on the rail line but lived, and after the Rising he set up in a saloon on Camden Row, Dublin.

Frongoch, Ballykinlar, Independence

After the Rising, James Mallon was interned in Wakefield Prison, Yorkshire, then the largest prison in England with 1,400 prisoners. Mallon was transferred to Frongoch prison camp on 24 June 1916, where he used to cut his fellow-prisoners’ hair. He arrived back in Dublin for Christmas 1916.

In 1920 James Mallon was a Sinn Fein candidate in the Dublin municipal elections, and in 1921 he was again interned, in Ballykinlar, County Down. After Independence he joined the National Army, where he reached the rank of Lieutenant. He resigned from the army in 1927.

Barber shop makes way for Liberty Hall

Mallon’s Frongoch Hairdressing Saloon was forced to close in 1961 when the building of the present Liberty Hall was started.

James Mallon did not enjoy a long retirement, as he passed away on 18 July 1961. He is buried in Glasnevin Cemetery. RIP.

His son, Ernest, and Sidney McGarry (brother of Cyril mentioned earlier) kept the hairdressing saloon going at a new location until some time in the 1990s.
Volunteer Patrick Murtagh and the 1916 Rising

by Laura Butterly

This is the story of the part my grandfather Patrick Murtagh played in the Easter Rising. When I was growing up, my mother always referred to her father as “being in the Troubles”. I never truly understood what she meant until this story came to light through my uncle Charles.

Patrick Murtagh was an Irish Volunteer, belonging to the 1st Battalion, F Company. At the time of the Rising, he was an apprentice bricklayer, aged nineteen.

Patrick was born on 1 July 1896 and lived with his family in Hill Street, near the Rotunda. He was apprenticed to his father, Charles. The details of their household are recorded in the 1911 Census.

Young Patrick had joined the Volunteers before 1916, and in Easter Week he took part in some of the fiercest fighting of the Rising. He was in the Four Courts Garrison under the command of Commandant Edward Daly and Vice Commandant Piaras Beaslai. The Four Courts Garrison was the second largest of 1916, comprising over 300 men and women.

Fierce urban warfare

While on Church Street and in the surrounding areas of the Four Courts, my grandfather took part in what is said today to have been the fiercest urban warfare ever seen by any army of the time. Towards the end of the week their battalion was overwhelmed by the British who, by now, were using machine guns and armoured vehicles to gain control of the area. Commandant Daly sent out an order that if men could escape and get home they should try. According to my family a tired young Patrick disguised himself as a woman on the Saturday just before the surrender and made his way into a local church that was full of people praying. He mixed with the crowd and then managed to get away home safely.

The “Tan War”

Although the Rising was over, my grandfather never stopped being a Volunteer. While still finishing his apprenticeship with his father, he took an active part in the Irish War of Independence. It is often referred to as the “Tan War” or “Black-and-Tan War”. The Royal Irish Constabulary Special Reserve was made up of Temporary Constables recruited to assist the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) during the War of Independence. Their nickname “Black and Tans” arose from the colours of the improvised uniform they wore, a mix of khaki and rifle green.

Work life and family life

My grandfather went on to become a qualified bricklayer and later married my grandmother, Alice Herbert. They had six daughters, one of whom is my mother, Alice Murtagh, and two sons, of whom Charles, the younger one, is the source of this story.

My grandfather died in July 1972. He was buried in Balgriffin Cemetery in Dublin with full military honours.

Sources

Family members and the Ancient Guild of Incorporated Brick and Stonelayers. My uncle, Charles Murtagh, told the story to the Bricklayers guild, and there is an article about Patrick Murtagh on their Facebook page.
Laura Butterly with her grandfather’s medals
Photo: Rachel McNicholl

1916 Active service medal (left), 1966 Commemoration medal and 1921–1971 “Tan” medal
Photo: Rachel McNicholl

Reverse of medals
Photo: Rachel McNicholl
James Purfield, Boland’s Mills Garrison

by Carole Flanagan

This is the story of a man from the Ringsend area who was barely more than a boy when he joined up to fight for Ireland’s cause in the 1916 Rising. He was my friend Breda’s grandfather and his name was James Purfield.

James was born in 1900. In his early years he lived off Leitrim Place, which is where the Grand Canal Hotel is now. In the census of 1911, he is living on Barrow Street, which is only across the road.

Boland’s Mills and a bullet in the leg

At the age of just 16 Purfield joined B Company of the Irish Volunteers. With Éamon de Valera’s regiment, he was stationed in the Boland’s Mills garrison during the Rising. Legend has it that during the fighting at Mount Street Bridge he was shot in the leg trying to save a woman. He was taken to Sir Patrick Dun’s Hospital.

Medical staff at the hospital wanted to amputate his leg but his mother arrived shortly after and would not give permission. She then sneaked him out of the hospital and nursed him herself. The bullet remained in his leg his whole life.

Family life and public service

James went on to live a full life. He married and had eight children, four boys and four girls. His third eldest, who was also called James, is my friend Breda’s father. His other sons went to live in America.

James and his wife opened a shop in Brunswick Place, off what is now Pearse Street. In the new republic he also worked as a government service officer.

In 1954 James Purfield was made head service officer when the new Department of Social Welfare offices opened in Áras Mhic Dhiarmada in Store Street. It was named after Sean Mac Diarmada, one of the leaders of the 1916 Rising. Busáras is on its lower floors.

Unfortunately, James died at his desk during his first week in the new building. Aged only 54, he had given many years of service to his country. He was buried with full military honours in Glasnevin Cemetery.
By Louise Whelan

“To fight in 1916 but not have it as the defining moment for which you are remembered is quite something...” (Daire Collins, “Actors of 1916”, storiesfrom1916.com)

Discovering Arthur Shields

When I started attending the Remembering 1916 class in Ringsend, I had no idea who Arthur Shields was. He had died even before I was born so I had no reason to know of him. That is, until I started looking for a story of 1916 to share that sparked my interest, and he certainly did that...

To start with, I went to my local library in the hope of finding a book on the people who were a part of the Easter Rising so that I could pick one and start writing about them. I was looking for someone that I didn’t know anything about because I knew and had read different takes on other people’s stories about men and women who also had a great role in the Rising. One book that caught my eye was by Jimmy Wren, called The GPO Garrison Easter Week 1916. It is a biographical dictionary of all the names of everyone involved. As I was reading through it I came to a section on people who had emigrated after the Rising, and what caught my eye as I scanned the list was a man called Arthur Shields who had left Ireland to be a Hollywood actor. I began thinking to myself: A Hollywood actor part of the 1916 Rising? How did that happen? Straight away my story was found...

A Hollywood actor part of the Easter Rising?

Delighted with my starting point, it didn’t take me long to rev up the Google search engine and type in Arthur Shields. The internet then provided a whole lot of stories and information about him and his life and also his role in the Easter Rising. The thing that amazed me was that he was known first and foremost as a Hollywood actor, not for his role in the Rising. This seemed so strange that it automatically made me want to find out more, and to know why he emigrated from Ireland. The following story about Arthur Shields is based on all the sources and references I found while I was researching this great man. A list of the sources is at the end of this article.

Arthur Shields has been called one of the great stories of twentieth-century Ireland. He became involved with the Abbey Theatre at around age 17 and worked there as an actor, director and stage manager. He later went on to become a Hollywood star. But, unknown to many even today, he was also a patriot. He was a member of the Irish Volunteers and was prepared to fight at Easter 1916 even after the orders were countermanded.

Family background

Arthur Shields was born in Portobello, Dublin, on 15 February 1896, one of seven children (some sources say eight). His father, Adolphus, was a liberal Protestant and a prominent member of the political left – a free thinker, an avowed socialist and a pacifist. His mother, Fanny, was of German ancestry. One of Arthur’s older brothers was Will Shields (1888–1961), best known by his stage name Barry Fitzgerald.

The family moved frequently and eventually settled in Clontarf, where Arthur was educated at Greenlanes National School and Merchant Taylor’s School.

At the age of 14 Arthur began work at the Evening Telegraph and later worked for the publishers Maunsel & Co. Because of his interest in acting, he attended drama classes in the Abbey Theatre from 1913 and soon started getting walk-on and more important parts.

Volunteering and Rising

Despite his father’s pacifist beliefs, Arthur Shields joined the Irish Volunteers in 1914, at age 17, with his friend and future brother-in-law Charles Saurin. According to Saurin, they joined in response to the shooting by the British Army of unarmed civilians on Bachelor’s Walk on 26 July 1914.

On Easter Monday 1916, both Shields and Saurin received orders to report to St Matthew’s Park. Shields, however, went to the Abbey Theatre to pick up his rifle, which was hidden under the stage. Reasoning that it was now too late to return to his company at St Matthew’s Park, Shields reported to Liberty Hall, where he met a group of Volunteers assembled under James Connolly.
It is said that Connolly welcomed Arthur by telling him, “If you’re as good a man as your father, you’ll be all right.” He was then sent with a party to Reis’s Chambers across the road, at the corner of Abbey Street, with orders to set up a radio transmitter. Later that day he was posted to the Hibernian Bank under the command of Captain Tom Weafer, and he spent the next two days carrying dispatches to and from the GPO under heavy sniper fire.

Arthur Shields spent the week of the Rising in and around the GPO, retreating to a house on Moore Street with the rest of the insurgents, including his friend Charles Saurin. They were among the last rebels to surrender to the British soldiers. As they marched by the Gresham Hotel, they passed reminders of the death and destruction that had taken place all week across the city. Henry Street was still in flames as the Volunteers marched past the British soldiers, waiting with pistols in hand.

**Frongoch prison camp, Wales**

Arthur Shields was sent to Stafford Prison in England with another famous rebel, Michael Collins, and from there they were both sent to Frongoch prison camp in Wales. Both men would return to Dublin by the end of 1916, Collins with a mission to destroy British rule and Shields with a mission to entertain on the Abbey stage, which he did for the next 22 years.

While Shields himself didn’t leave a detailed account of his role in the Rising, Charles Saurin made a detailed witness statement for the Bureau of Military History in 1949. The Shields family papers, which were donated to NUI Galway, include a copy of this statement, and the original is available online at bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie.

**Why did Shields not fight on after 1916?**

“It [the 1916 Rising] was a life-changing event for a lot of people. In that you should give your whole life – everything – to this one cause.” (Prof. Adrian Frazier, NUIG, RTÉ documentary Ar Son na Poblachta)

As I was researching this story, I found it interesting that Arthur Shields did not continue to fight for his country alongside Michael Collins when he left prison. Why would you be prepared to give your life for a cause and then leave it behind? My opinion is that he felt his Protestant background and liberal nationalism were incompatible with what he experienced in prison among the other mainly Catholic men, watching them get Holy Communion and mass and confession.

A documentary on Arthur Shields in the RTÉ series Ar Son na Poblachta suggested that this experience in Frongoch had a big influence on Arthur’s thinking after the Rising. Perhaps he felt the differences more strongly than before and thought that the ideals he fought for would not be realised.

**Back to the stage**

Even though he loved Ireland and believed in Ireland’s freedom, I think he felt he had done enough and wanted to go on a different path. Having had a lot of time to reflect, he knew that more fighting wasn’t the life for him. In his book The Abbey Rebels of 1916: A Lost Revolution, Fearghal McGarry writes that the Justice who ordered Shields’s release told him to go home, stick to theatre and “forget about all this revolutionary nonsense”. By October 1916, Arthur was strutting the boards of the Abbey stage again.

Through the 1920s and 1930s, Shields was the Abbey’s chief “handsome lead”. His brother Barry Fitzgerald was the company’s most popular comic actor.

**Film and TV roles in the US**

From the 1930s Shields spent most of his time in the US working in film and television. In 1936, John Ford cast him in a film version of The Plough and the Stars. In 1941, he played in another Ford film, How Green Was My Valley, along with an actor called John Loder. It became known after Hollywood actor John Loder’s film career was over that his real name was John Lowe, and he was actually the son of General Lowe to whom Patrick Pearse had surrendered after Easter week 1916. He is even in the famous photo of Pearse surrendering to General Lowe. What would Shields had made of this if he had known it in 1941?

**The Quiet Man and other roles**

Some of the most memorable roles of Arthur’s career were in Ford films, including the Reverend Playfair in The Quiet Man opposite John Wayne, Maureen O’Hara and Barry Fitzgerald. This 1952 film would become the apex of both brothers’ careers and is still one of the most beloved classics of all time.

Arthur played Dr Laughlin in She Wore A Yellow Ribbon with John Wayne, and appeared yet again with Wayne and Barry Fitzgerald in Ford’s Long Voyage Home. His other films include The Keys of the Kingdom, The Fabulous Dorseys, Gallant Journey, Drums Along the Mohawk and Lady Godiva.
By the 1950s Arthur’s roles in movies were diminishing and his health was failing, but he continued to work steadily, especially in television, despite poor health. His last film appearance was with Charlton Heston in *The Pigeon That Took Rome* in 1962.

By this stage he had moved to Santa Barbara, California, along with his third wife and his daughter, Christine.

**Final years**

Unfortunately, poor health prevented Shields from returning to Ireland in 1966 for the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising. However, his daughter Christine travelled to Ireland to represent him.

Arthur Shields died at his residence in Santa Barbara, California, on 27 April 1970. His brother Barry Fitzgerald died in Dublin in 1961. The Shields brothers are buried side by side in Dean’s Grange Cemetery, Blackrock, Co. Dublin.

**Thank you, Arthur Shields**

Although Arthur Shields is well remembered for his work as an Abbey actor, a Hollywood actor and a television actor, he is hardly ever remembered for the dramatic and valiant way he fought in the Easter Rising in 1916.

*Go raibh mile maith agat, Arthur Shields. RIP.*

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**Sources**

All online sources last accessed 16 June 2016.


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Wikipedia, article on Arthur Shields.

Clarissa Palmer, a Woman of her Time?

by Frances Parnell

Clarissa Palmer came from an Anglo-Irish background. She lived in upper Rathmines in a two-storey-over-basement house with her parents and two live-in servants. She worked as a school teacher in the inner city, where the poverty and its effect on children were horrific. No shoes, no warm clothing and starvation were common sights. Their health suffered very badly in the winter, if they survived it, and many didn’t. The only time they had any reprieve was in the summer when the weather was warm.

**Willing to play their part**

Another of Clarissa’s interests was the work of the Suffragettes. She was convinced Connolly would ensure that Irish women would get the vote. When the Rising took place she and her members were willing to play their full role in it, from taking up arms to making sandwiches and carrying messages. One or two of the leaders felt they would be more useful serving in the kitchens – such was their chauvinistic attitude towards women.

**Dev bans women from Boland’s Mills**

During the week of the Rising, in the neighbourhood of Liberty Hall the women worked as a team preparing supplies of ammunition and food for delivery to the garrisons around the city. Clarissa led one of these groups to Boland’s Mills. The Officer at the entrance had orders from Commandant de Valera not to allow any women in. One of the Volunteers said the lads in Mount Street would be glad of any help. Clarissa asked where they were in Mount Street, and he wasn’t sure, so they went looking.

On arriving at Mount Street Bridge they were confronted with a terrifying sight – dead and dying soldiers and civilians lying in the street. There was a lull in the shooting and people were helping the dying and wounded and getting them out of the line of fire. While helping them she took the opportunity to slip one of their pistols into her skirt pocket. Her companions followed suit.

**Creating confusion on Northumberland Road**

The shooting started again so they ran for cover, down the canal and into the back gardens on Northumberland Road. They looked out from the corner of a house to see the soldiers lying on the road and behind gate posts, firing at the Volunteers, who were in strategic positions at the top of the street. The women took the opportunity to fire a few shots from behind, hitting two of the soldiers. Without delay they dashed back through the gardens down to the next house. This time, without hesitating, they fired some more shots.

At this stage the English thought their own men were shooting from behind. Confusion broke out. British Officers were running around barking orders for the men to hold their fire. By this time the women had emptied their guns, so they ditched them and started on their return journey to the city centre. Clarissa knew she could have done so much better with more women and guns.
“Keep those bloody women out”

On their way back to town they dropped in to Boland’s Mills. Clarissa told the women not to be put off too easily this time. The door was finally opened. The Volunteer was only a kid and Clarissa insisted on them being admitted. He hesitated and they used that second to push past him. But they had not got far into the building when they were confronted by an Officer who barred their way with a rifle.

“We want to see the Commandant,” Clarissa said.

“Not a chance,” he said roughly, “He is far too busy directing operations upstairs, and what are you doing here anyway?” All the while he was backing them towards the door.

“We’re here to report on what’s happening on Mount Street and Northumberland Road.”

“We know what’s happening up there, what kind of eegits do you think we are?”

“Well, at least give us guns,” she said.

“Is it guns you want, then? We don’t have enough for ourselves, and what would you be doing with guns?”

With that they were bundled out the door. “Go and make yourselves useful making sandwiches.”

As they were walking away they could hear him roar, “Keep those bloody women out or Dev will have your hide.”

They went away thinking what fools those men were and Dev being the biggest, seeing they were carrying out his orders. Not to recognise the value of women who were putting themselves forward. Those women were willing to fight and die for their country too.

Reality hits home

That evening Clarissa got home very late. Her mother was shocked at the condition she was in, her blouse and skirt smeared with blood.

“It’s not mine,” Clarissa said. “There was carnage on Mount Street and Northumberland Road today. The place was littered with dead and wounded. I and some other women did what we could to help. It’s all right, Mam, I’m fine.”

She noticed her mother going very pale and raising her hand to her heart, “I know! I know you are all right, but your father got news that your cousin, Private Alfred Palmer, was in the battle on Mount Street today.”

This time it was Clarissa who turned pale, silently hoping he was not one of the English soldiers she had shot.

Note: This story is a piece of creative writing inspired by real and imagined characters and events.
As a fellow Marist Brother, I came in contact with Brother John P. Flood in some of our houses over the years and heard some of his stories regarding his involvement in the War of Independence. I realised that he had a history out of the ordinary. However, with changes of address and our differing commitments, his story went to the back of my mind.

Motivation to research
Not until I joined the Ringsend project on Remembering 1916, under the direction of Rachel McNicholl, did I get the motivation and opportunity to follow up on what I had heard so long ago. On learning that the project also included persons and events from before and after the Rising, I was delighted to have Bro. Flood’s family story included for research and presentation. My search was greatly helped by an article by Brian Flood, nephew of Bro. John’s, posted on the Clan Flood website (clanflood.org).

First encounters with Bro. Flood
I first got to know Bro. John when he arrived back in Our Lady’s Hermitage in Athlone from his mission work in China in 1947. I was in my mid-teens as a boarder there in our house of formation, and attending secondary school in St Mary’s, our nearby Intermediate College. Although I did not know it at the time, Bro. Flood’s arrival caused a great stir among the older trainees, one of them declaring in excitement: “I saw Brother John in the yard!” Being resourceful and energetic, he soon became our supervisor as well as organising the recruitment of young boys for our Institute, as was the custom then.

During his term as recruiter, Bro. John visited many schools. Ray Ryan, a retired teacher from Marian College near Ringsend, and director of the adult Riverside Singers in Ringsend College, remembers an interesting visit from Bro. John to his own class when he was a student there in the late 1950s.

Words of wisdom
With his experience and wisdom, Bro. John helped young people in every way, whether with travel arrangements, study, sport or any other activity. “Don’t try to fill someone else’s shoes; just fill your own,” was his advice to Bro. Bonaventure as he left him at the bus station on his way to his first teaching post in Sligo. Now and then he also accompanied young Brothers on journeys abroad for further training.

Volunteer and army officer
Bro. John Peter Flood, born in July 1903, was one of a family of nine. They lived with their parents, John and Sarah, in 6 Emmett Street, Dublin, and later in 30 Summerhill Parade. They had strong republican sympathies and most of them were active within the Volunteers during the War of Independence.

From the army to the missions
In 1922 he joined the National Army, where he continued as Intelligence Officer, based at City Hall. He was later promoted to Captain, served in the Mid-Western Command, then the 13th Infantry Battalion, and lastly in the 56th Infantry Battalion. He resigned from the army in 1924 and gave an address at 51 Lindsay Road, Glasnevin, when applying for his army pension.

From the army to the missions
After his resignation from the army, Peter Flood went to Turin, Italy, to train as a Marist Brother, taking the name Bro. John. Members of the Jesuit order who were ministering in the Summerhill area and who had a mission in China may have inspired him to work with them and with our own Marist brothers, who had a mission there. He worked in China for the next 25 years.

His missionary work while attached to St Francis Xavier’s College in Shanghai included helping families who found themselves in poor circumstances. Helmut Spielmann, an Austrian Jew who was educated by the Marist Brothers at St Francis Xavier’s College while in exile in Shanghai, mentions the help of Bro. John in his book Shanghai – Eine Jugend im Exil (“Shanghai – A Youth in Exile”), published in 2015. Spielmann and his young friends carried out a bitter secret “war” against the Japanese, who had occupied the city, but Bro. John apparently pointed out what their boundaries were and set them in the right direction. He later recruited them as interpreters in Japanese, Chinese, German and Hindustani for the long-awaited Americans.

People Involved in the War of Independence
Forthright and spirited
Not one to dodge an argument, the Bro. John I knew had strong opinions on many topics, from the best way to cook favourite meals and not waste any leftovers to getting the most wear out of clothes and shoes, and where to buy them at the right price. He was forthright in his political views and was very annoyed that Tom Clarke was not given as prominent a place as some of the other leaders when the history of the Rising was being written or spoken about in hindsight. “Whose was the first name on the list of signatories,” he would say, and, “Who did most to prepare for the Rising?”

Now and then, of course, arguments were started on serious or mundane matters just to get the sparks flying and hear him defend his views with spirited eloquence. I recall him telling us once that Kevin Barry might have escaped capture during that fateful ambush in 1920 if someone had not exclaimed, “There he is under the truck.”

End of an eventful life
After an eventful life, Bro. John retired to our Marist house in Clondalkin, where he died in 1990. He is buried in the Flood family plot in Kilbarrack cemetery.

Other family members
An older brother, John Joseph, known as Sean, a Commandant in the IRA, served five years in Peterhead Prison in Scotland for his activities in the fight for Irish independence and died soon afterwards, in 1929, age 33. Another brother, Thomas, was stricken with appendicitis the night before his court martial with five associates for similar activities. He had to be operated on in the military King George V Hospital (now St Bricin’s), Arbour Hill. As a result, the date of his court martial, and of the other five who were to be tried, was put back. The Truce was declared before the rescheduled date, so all six were saved.

Frank, another brother, was executed in 1921 for his role in the War of Independence. He was a student at UCD and only 19 when he was executed. He had been great friends with Kevin Barry, from their time in O’Connell Schools together. Kevin Barry was executed by the British in 1920. He and Frank Flood were among the “Forgotten Ten” whose remains were transferred from Mountjoy Prison to Glasnevin Cemetery in 2001 and given full state funerals.

Alfred, the youngest member of the Flood family, joined An Garda Síochána in 1924. He became Deputy Garda Commissioner in 1967. On retiring in 1972, he served as President of the Garda Síochána Pensioners’ Association for 14 years.

Mary, the only Flood sister, was very supportive of Peter, perhaps especially after he resigned from the army and was trying to come to a decision on his future.

Remarkable contribution to Irish independence
During war times and peace, the Flood family have made a remarkable contribution to the cause of Irish independence and its continuation. I hope I have helped to have that recognised through my association with one of them.

Sources
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Members of the Marist Community.
Margaret Keogh of Stella Gardens
by Mary O’Neill

Margaret Keogh was brutally gunned down in 1921 in the doorway of her home at 20 Stella Gardens, Ringsend, when she answered the door one evening. She later died from her injuries. She was only nineteen.

Her assassins are thought to have been one of the British Army “murder squads” of the time or the Black and Tans, who had been raiding known republican homes in the area. They were responsible for many inhumane acts and the murder of innocent citizens as well as political activists.

**Pieces of forgotten puzzle**

Historian Pádraig Óg Ó Ruairc has been putting together the pieces of the forgotten puzzle that is Margaret Keogh. She was the eldest daughter of Patrick and Margaret Keogh. She worked as a printer’s assistant and was a leading activist in the run-up to the Easter Rising of 1916. Because of her activities, she became a target for the Black and Tans. She was brutally murdered just because she was a local heroine and a thorn in the side of British imperialism.

Margaret was shot on 10 July 1921, the day before the ceasefire between the IRA and the British Army was to begin. The truce had been announced three days earlier. Was it a coincidence that she was shot just before the ceasefire? She made a brief statement before she died but could not identify her attackers. She died from her injuries in Sir Patrick Dun’s Hospital. She was given full military honours at her funeral in Glasnevin Cemetery, the coffin draped in her beloved tricolour of green, white and orange. Although an inquiry into her assassination was held, the report was never released.

As I write this, in May 2016, a committee has been formed to keep Margaret Keogh’s name alive, and maybe at some stage her name will be immortalised in the annals of Irish history by a plaque or some other form of remembrance. It would be fitting for such a heroic and unassuming lady.

**Nationalist and suffragette**

Margaret was a member of Cumann na mBan, the women’s organisation that supported the Irish Republican Army during the War of Independence. She was also a suffragette and a member of the Irish-language organisation Conradh na Gaeilge (the Gaelic League). She had been arrested in 1920 for refusing to answer in English when questioned by British forces during fundraising activities for Conradh na Gaeilge. Her arrest was for campaigning for the Irish language and for the freedom of her beloved Ireland.

**Keeping the name alive**

Is Margaret a forgotten statistic of the War of Independence or will her name live on in Irish history, alongside other heroes of that era like Kevin Barry, Michael Collins or Constance Markievicz?

**Sources**


Rotunda: The Birth of a Nation

by Laura Butterly

The exhibition “Rotunda: Birth of a Nation”, which ran from 7 to 31 March 2016, showcased the lives of extraordinary medical women through a series of previously unseen images, diaries and a specially commissioned video. The public was introduced to women of the Rising and of the Rotunda who went on to become important figures in Irish medical history: Bridget Lyons Thornton, Kathleen Lynn, Dorothy Stopford Price, Mary O’Shea and the Hon. Albinia Brodrick.

I went along on 15 March with my teenage son to see the exhibition for myself. It was held in the Round Room, a beautiful space. I was very interested to learn about these brave women, about whom I knew very little. I found the exhibition very insightful and educational.

I sat down and watched the video, which tells Mary O’Shea’s account of the week of the Rising. She had been a midwife in the Rotunda during the Rising and wrote a memoir of the time. Her story is amazing told through the video. You can vividly visualise her account as she sits at the window of the Rotunda looking out at all the mayhem going on outside. She says, “We could not keep away from the window in spite of the warnings; we saw all the prisoners collected into the lawn in front of the hospital and marched away to prison. One, I think, was the Countess, judging by the size of her small hands and feet.”

I left the exhibition feeling very proud of the Irish women of 1916. I don’t think I would have been so brave. I will never again view the Rotunda only as a maternity hospital. It also played a big part in the birth of our nation.

Sources

Exhibition brochure for “Rotunda: Birth of a Nation” (Dublin: Rotunda Hospital, 2016).

Anthea McTeirnan, “Life and death: the Rotunda and the Rising”, Irish Times, 29 February 2016. This article includes the quotes above from Mary O’Shea’s memoir (Abbeyleix Heritage Trust).
Trip to Pearse Museum and St Enda’s Park

Bro. Gerry Stewart’s Reflections

Our memorable visit to the Pearse Museum and St Enda’s Park in Rathfarnham took place on 22 April 2016. After the journey through Dublin’s traffic-laden streets, it was so satisfying to experience the peace and quiet of the spacious grounds of The Hermitage, the eighteenth-century house to which Patrick Pearse moved St Enda’s from its original Ranelagh location. Here he continued his educational dream for an Irish Ireland. The house also became Pearse’s home, and his mother, brother and sisters helped with the running of the school. It is now a museum and park run by the Office of Public Works.

Walled garden

A tour of the walled garden was first on our agenda. It was here that Pearse’s students were given plots and taught how to grow the produce required for their sustenance. Alan, the gardener, expertly explained the management of such a garden, including the benefit of high walls for shelter and a south-facing brick wall that radiates heat stored during the day, and he talked us through the most suitable locations for trees, shrubs and flowers.

Gaelic education alive and well

As we entered the house, a uniformed student who held the door for the stragglers among us was pleasantly surprised when I said “Go raibh maith agat”, and we both enjoyed a wee chat in Irish. He was from Coláiste Pobal Rath Cairn, one of the many colleges and schools that organise group tours to this hallowed place, and I suddenly realised that Pearse’s ideal of a more practical Gaelic education for the young was still relevant in our own times.

A special past

Our tour of the museum itself proved just as interesting as the gardens. Our eloquent guide explained the history of the building, its former owners, and their impact on its development. Visiting the historic rooms where the Pearse brothers, their fellow teachers and students once lived and worked, and listening to our guide’s anecdotes relating to furniture, fittings, artefacts and art, we were placed gently in that special past.

The dormitory, which included four of the original beds, was a nostalgic reminder of my own times in another “hermitage”, the Marist house of formation in Athlone, Our Lady’s Hermitage. With time running out, we hastened to our bus with our bundle of memories, to travel back through still busy streets to our own quiet haven in Ringsend College.

Laura Butterly’s Reflections

I visited the Pearse Museum and St Enda’s Park in April with a group organised by Ringsend Adult Education Service. The great house, The Hermitage, was built in 1780 for Edward Hudson, a successful Dublin dentist at that time. In 1910 Padraig Pearse moved his school, St Enda’s (Scoil Éanna) from Cullenswood House on Oakley Road, Ranelagh, Dublin, to this site on Grange Road, Rathfarnham. The school was bilingual, with teaching in English and Irish.

Garden, coffee shop, museum

On arrival, we got a guided tour of the walled garden. The gardener explained the whole layout of this beautiful and simple garden and told us what the walled garden was used for during Pearse’s time. I enjoyed this very much. After the garden tour I stopped off at the coffee shop for some light refreshments before embarking on the tour of the museum. This guided tour was also very interesting and will take you back in time.

A real sense of home and school

As the house was also Padraig Pearse’s family home and a boarding school, you get a real sense of the house during that period. His mother, brother and sisters all helped to run the school. You can see Pearse’s study and the family sitting room. You also see the school dormitory, study hall and chapel.
Now a public treasure
In 1968, following the death of Pearse’s sister Margaret Pearse, the house was left to the State. The OPW are now in charge, it is open to the public and entry is free. It is definitely well worth a visit.

Sources
The Office of Public Works/ www.pearsemuseum.ie

Postscript re scholarships at St Enda’s
by Frances Parnell and Rachel McNicholl

The week after our visit to St Enda’s, our Ringsend group had a lively discussion about one aspect of the history. Pearse’s school was a private, fee-paying school, which meant that only families who had enough money could send their sons there to benefit from Pearse’s radical and progressive methods.

Our tour guide at the Pearse Museum had told us that there were two scholarships for boys from the Irish-speaking west of Ireland. We wondered whether there had been any scholarships for boys from inner-city Dublin, which had the worst slums in Europe at the time. We decided to follow this up.

In answer to an email from Frances Parnell, the Pearse Museum said they were not aware of any scholarships for inner-city children specifically, but that Pearse may have offered scholarships to other boys (besides those from the Gaeltacht) at his own discretion. Through a follow-up phone call to the museum, Frances learned that Pearse had offered a scholarship to a lad from the Cullenswood area when the school was in Cullenswood House.

Of course, all secondary schools would have been private in Pearse’s time. But even after Ireland gained independence, it was several decades before free secondary education came along. It was introduced in 1967, one year after the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising.

Not everyone liked St Enda’s.

Not everyone who was privileged enough to be sent to St Enda’s liked it there. Ironically, trade union leader James Larkin’s sons hated the school. They said food was scarce and “there was a great belief in much physical exercise to keep oneself warm.” This is according to one of their sons who is quoted on the above panel in the Museum.
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A Hatful of Stories: Remembering 1916 is a fascinating collection of writing by students of Ringsend Adult Education Service.

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Almost all the biographies profile people with whom the students had a direct connection through first-hand experience, family members, friends or neighbours.

Easter bonnets created by the Sewing class for Remembering 1916.