

Thomas J Clarke- 1916 Revolutionary

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**For: Tom, Breda, John,
Mary, Moke and Liz**

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Abstract

Extensive research has been carried out into the causes of the 1916 Easter Rising with commensurate investigations into the actions of the main personalities involved: Thomas J Clarke is an exception. Research by historians into his role in 1916 has not been thorough, rigorous or sustained. The purpose of this study, which is based on new and underused primary source material, is to investigate Clarke's position and influence in the Irish Republican Brotherhood, (IRB) 1907-1916: also his early life, influences and the foundations of his Fenianism 1858-1907 will be examined. The chronology of events in this thesis acts as a skeleton round which the important themes of his life, early development, growing republicanism, imprisonment and his time in America, can be arranged and discussed. These themes influenced Clarke's and the IRB's preparations for insurrection after he returned to Ireland in late 1907. From 1908 onward, Clarke used his status as the living embodiment of Fenianism in conjunction with his experience of working for Clan na Gael in America to re-galvanise the IRB. He achieved this through a policy of selective recruitment that limited the possibility of betrayal while avoiding diminution of his control over the organization.

After the declaration of War in 1914, he brought together a group of people to form the Augmented Executive of the IRB: this faction was largely responsible for the instigation, planning and implementation of the Rising at Easter, 1916. This is significant because hitherto, historians attributed planning for rebellion to the IRB Military Council: there is very little primary source evidence pre-1916 to support the existence of this group. Also, new primary source material indicates that Clarke was more heavily involved in the formation of the Volunteers and in the Howth gunrunning than previously thought. This thesis will attempt to place Tom Clarke in a more central role in events leading up to 1916 by utilizing untapped and underused primary source material.

Introduction

In an attempt to evaluate Thomas J Clarke's role in the 1916 Rising, and in the events that led up to it, the position of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) in Irish politics in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century needs to be considered. The work of the organization was acknowledged in the declaration of the Republic, 'Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood...' ¹ In this context, it would appear that the IRB was largely responsible for the 1916 Rising. As a member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood's (IRB) Supreme Council (SC), 1908-1914, O'Hegarty clearly indicated who was responsible for 1916:

But the insurrection came because the Supreme Council of the I.R.B. decided on an insurrection. They financed it. They used in its furtherance the organisation of the Irish Volunteers without the knowledge of the Volunteers' Executive. They were a movement within movements. They decided its date, and its manner. And when the insurrection did come, the Proclamation of the Irish Republic was signed by six members of the I.R.B. and one Socialist-Republican who, though, not a member, had worked in close touch with the organisation for months beforehand. ²

Here, O'Hegarty established a direct link between 1916 and the organization responsible for bringing it about, the IRB. This being the case, then the men who ran the IRB would play a significant role in events leading up to 1916 and this thesis will concentrate on one of those men, Thomas J Clarke.

Probing questions regarding Clarke's role in the IRB, 1907-1916, have not hitherto been fully framed, investigated or answered by historical researchers. These questions include; what was his role in the IRB's organization? To what extent was he involved in planning an insurrection in Ireland, against British rule, 1907-1916? How was Clarke involved in the decision making processes of the Irish Republican Brotherhood? What was his relationship with the other signatories of the 1916 Proclamation? How far was he responsible for the infiltration of nationalist organizations by the IRB before 1916? What influence did he have over these organizations and other people not in the IRB? How did his personality, temperament and experiences influence the decisions he made when organizing for insurrection? This thesis intends to seek some answers to these questions in the context of 1916, and start a process that will begin to place Clarke at the heart of revolutionary political events during the period 1907-1916.

In these sections, I will comment on the following:

1) Research Objectives and Aims

2) Research Themes

3) Primary Source Material

4) The organization of the thesis

¹ De Paor, Liam, *On The Easter Proclamation and other declarations*, (Dublin, 1997), p 10

² O'Hegarty, P S *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, Dublin 1924, pp 15-16

1) Research Objectives and aims

The overriding research objective of this thesis was to investigate the life of Tom Clarke with particular reference to his role in the preparation and staging of the 1916 Rising. Clarke was mentioned in most studies on the early Revolutionary period but his significance is undervalued and largely sidelined by students of the Rising who have focused more on that colourful duo, Pearse and Connolly-the poet and the socialist. Historians have neglected Clarke, partly for these reasons and partly because of an apparent lack of primary sources. The iconography in circulation directly after the Rising depicted Clarke in a prominent position but works on the Rising produced in late 1916 began the process of sidelining Clarke to the margins of Irish historical study. This diminution of Clarke's role in the Easter Rising will be fully investigated and debated in the chapter on historiography. The aim of this thesis is to establish the extent of Clarke's influence and authority with the six other signatories of the 1916 Proclamation, and other leading nationalists, in relation to the planning, organization and implementation of the Easter Rising.

2) Research Themes

This thesis will examine some of the more important themes of Clarke's life which will include: his early life and parental influences, how and why he became involved with the Dynamite campaign of the 1880s in America and his subsequent time in prison, the influence of John Daly on Clarke's revolutionary ideas and thoughts, his working relationship and friendship during his second visit to America with John Devoy and the role of his wife Kathleen Clarke in his life after 1898. Also, an examination in the later chapters of the spread of Clarke's influence within the IRB and nationalist organisations 1907-1916 will demonstrate his increasing control of events through these organizations in this period. The relationship between Clarke and the six other signatories of the 1916 Proclamation is also considered as a research theme.

3) Primary Source Material

Three collections of documents provided the primary source material base for this thesis. First, The Clarke Private Papers: these were the richest source of primary material I consulted. In 2010 the National Library of Ireland acquired the bulk of the papers and the contents are listed here in Appendix 1. They contain letters written by Tom and Kathleen Clarke to each other and letters to and from Clarke to John Devoy and John Daly. The bulk of the letters are between Tom and Kathleen written 1899-1901 and January-July 1907 and the information contained therein is diverse but with only with some or little information of a political nature. However, there is a substantial amount of information that gives a clear picture of the personality of Tom Clarke. Before the letters were acquired by the National Library of Ireland, I believe only one other historian, John O'Beirne Ranelagh, interviewed the holder of the papers, Emmet Clarke, the son of Tom and Kathleen. Ranelagh did not quote directly from them in his study on the Irish Republican Brotherhood³ and therefore, this research is underpinned by primary material that has not been fully utilized.

³ Boyce, D G, (ed), *The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923*, O'Beirne Ranelagh, John, Chapter 6, *The Irish Republican Brotherhood in the Revolutionary Period, 1879-1923*, pp 137-156, (London, 1988)

I have copies of the remainder of the Clarke papers including a statement by Billy Kelly which appears to be a copy of his Bureau of Military History statement, a letter from him to Kathleen Clarke, other letters to Kathleen Clarke from and to Father John M Heuston, Leslie Price (she married Tom Barry), Commandant W J Brennan-Whitmore and Pat McCartan, written and recorded personal recollections of Emmet Clarke. In toto, these have enabled me to broaden and widen my understanding of Tom Clarke's motivation, reasoning and decision making ability. Kelly's recollections and letters 'feel' correct while most of the detail contained therein can be verified in the work of either Louis Le Roux,⁴ Kathleen Clarke's autobiography⁵ and Sean McGarry's Witness Statement to the Bureau of Military History,⁶ Some of the information cannot be verified but this adds to the originality of the statement and letters..

Second, the Daly Papers, the autobiography of Madge Daly (she was the sister of Tom's wife Kathleen), is a firsthand account of significant and important events directly connected with Clarke in the period 1907-1916. The memoir is clearly written, is very detailed in parts but does not lionize Clarke nor is it a hagiographical study. This source has been used before but not directly in connection with a reassessment of the Tom Clarke and his actions.

Third, Witness Statements, Bureau of Military History. The information gleaned from the Witness Statements, evidence was collected by the Bureau of Military History from participants in events 1913-1921, is very factual I largely used statements from the rank and file of the IRB/Volunteers. The most significant is the Sean McGarry's statement. It is twenty five pages long and contains a significant amount of new material on Clarke, his actions, thoughts and the different policies he adopted to carry the IRB onward to insurrection. In a recent article on the Witness Statements, Fearghal McGarry argued that the contents and complexities of the statements show how difficult it is to present a single narrative on the Rising because they:

...offer a more complex picture of the revolutionary generation: more fractious and flawed than the heroes and martyrs commemorated at the GPO but also more human, vibrant and attractive.⁷

If taken together with the evidence of 'ordinary revolutionaries',⁸ then a more involved and clearer picture emerges of 1916. McGarry concentrated on Easter 1916 as the title of the article suggested and not the arguments between historians and the state, 1947-1960s. However, in her excellent article on the conflict between the Bureau of Military History and the Advisory Committee, Evi Gkotsaridis investigates how and why the exercise was started, and the acrimonious relationship between state and academia set in the context of revisionism and revisionist historians.⁹ In the context of this thesis, McGarry argues that the statements as oral sources are

⁴ Le Roux, Louis, *Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement*, (Dublin, 1936)

⁵ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Women*, (Dublin, 1991)

⁶ McGarry, S Bureau of Military History, Witness Statement, WS 368

⁷ McGarry, Fearghal, 'Too many histories'? The Bureau of Military History and Easter 1916, *History Ireland*, November/December 2011, Vol 19, No 6, pp 26-29

⁸ McGarry, 'Too Many Histories'? p 29

⁹ Gkotsaridis, Evi, Revisionist historians and the modern Irish state: the conflict between the Advisory Committee and the Bureau of Military History, 1947-1966

subjective. Often the rank and file coming from the lower middle-class and working class:

...who, -in contrast to the revolutionary elite-rarely recorded their thoughts in letters, diaries or memoirs. While the political views aired are biased...¹⁰

This may be true but he referred to some middle class revolutionaries 'such as Ernest Blythe and Bulmer Hobson were not so much recording their recollections of the past as making appeals to posterity'.¹¹ Which is worse? Or better? McGarry was aware that the statements covered a multitude of motives and varied considerable in style, content and plausibility but he qualified this by stating: 'The vast bulk of the Bureau's statements, however, are measured accounts that convey an air of authenticity.'¹² In the context of the statement by McGarry, this author finds the information contained therein as reliable because the bulk of information contained therein on Tom Clarke was supported in Le Roux's work on Clarke,¹³ and Kathleen Clarke's autobiography.¹⁴ However, not all of that information was contained in other primary sources and after carefully weighing up other options; I included material not backed up in other primary sources. This is particularly relevant with the information on the Augmented Executive and the debate on the provenance of the term Military Council.

These three collections of primary source material have a connecting denominator- they have been lightly or under used in connection with research on Tom Clarke. Other large collections of archival material were consulted, e.g. Home Office reports on Clarke's time in prison, Dublin Castle Intelligence reports on the period 1907-1916 (both Royal Irish Constabulary and Dublin Metropolitan Police) and the British Library Newspaper Collection. The newspaper collection was an extremely useful, and oft quoted from, source of primary material because it facilitated examination of articles on events connected with this thesis from a contemporary point of view.

4) Organization and outline of the Thesis

I have organized the chapters in this thesis chronologically. The first chapter discusses the historiography surrounding Tom Clarke while the remaining six cover the period from his birth in 1858 to his death in 1916. By adopting this system, the chronology acts as a skeleton around which the themes of the thesis can be arranged and discussed. Clarke's life involved considerable relocation: he was born in England and lived in South Africa, the United States of America (twice), Ireland (twice) and spent fifteen years in prison. Despite this, the chronology used in this thesis neatly dissects Clarke's diverse and fractured life into manageable sections to coincide with the changes therein.

¹⁰ McGarry, 'Too many histories'? p 27

¹¹ McGarry, 'Too many histories'? p 27

¹² McGarry, 'Too many histories'? p 27

¹³ Le Roux, *Clarke*,

¹⁴ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*

Chapter 1 Historiography

In the historiographical chapter, the discussion on Clarke's treatment by historians since 1916 is very revealing. Largely, a lack of information and serious research has led historians to underestimate Clarke and his role in 1916. Since 2000 however, some historians have started rehabilitating Clarke and have pushed their interpretation of his actions to a more realistic position in Irish history. In the ensuing chapters, I establish the case for a reassessment of Clarke which could further the process of his rehabilitation. With the 100th Anniversary of the Rising in four years, this thesis is timely in its attempt to reassess Clarke's role in the 1916 Rising.

Chapter 2 Early Influences: Irish and American Fenianism, 1858-1883

The second chapter will examine Clarke's early life: it is during this period that his interest in things Irish is initially instilled by his Mother and further developed by his own study of Irish history and, possibly, in reaction to and rebellion against his Father's strident militaristic Imperialism. His emerging republicanism leads him to join the IRB and after taking part in armed action against the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), to America [where he becomes involved with Clan na Gael and meets John Devoy] and subsequently to England on a failed dynamite mission for Clan na Gael which ended up with Clarke serving a fifteen year jail sentence. An assessment of why and how the dynamite campaign started, what it hoped to achieve and the personalities involved will put into context Clarke's involvement with the wider issues of Irish-American and Irish revolutionary politics.

Chapter 3 Dynamite Campaign, prison life and release, 1883-1898

The third chapter will look at Clarke's prison experience: it was during this time that he fully realised the depth and extent of his republicanism despite the rigours of the prison system designed for Treason/Felony prisoners. Through the Home Office Records and Clarke's own recollections of his time in prison ¹⁵, a picture emerges of a system that was designed to break the human spirit. The amnesty campaign will also be examined in the context of nationalist and parliamentary debate and its attempts to get the dynamitards, including Clarke, out of jail.

Chapter 4 Release from Prison, America, Clan na Gael and *The Gaelic American*, 1898-1907

Chapter four covers his release from prison, his unsuccessful attempt to settle in Ireland, his decision to emigrate to America and his return to Ireland in 1907. This chapter will focus on how he established the Clan newspaper the *Gaelic American*, in New York and the significance of his time as John Devoy's deputy. Importantly, his role in the alignment of Irish-American and German-American opinion against a proposed Anglo-American treaty that was defeated in 1904 will be examined to gain a greater understanding of the significance of Clarke's interaction with the Germans in America and Europe. Reports from the *Gaelic America* will also be investigated for information to underscore Clarke's involvement in this concern. Through hitherto unpublished correspondence between Tom and Kathleen Clarke-and the autobiography of Kathleen- a detailed analysis of Clarke's actions and reactions is possible. His second stay in America is particularly relevant because Clarke honed and developed his innate person management skills and his Fenianism/Republicanism became more inclusive and flexible because of the

¹⁵ Clarke, T J, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life*, (Dublin, 1922)

realities of managing an Irish revolutionary newspaper, his social connections and his political connections with German-Americans in 1905.

Chapter 5 Return to Ireland, reintegration and revolutionary politics, 1907-1912

In Chapter five, the relevance of Tom Clarke's return to Ireland in 1907 will be examined in the context of his reintegration into revolutionary politics in Ireland and specifically how he backed the progressives in their fight against the conservatives on the Irish Republican Brotherhood's Supreme Council for control of the organization. Clarke instigated the foundation of the IRB newspaper, *Irish Freedom*, and with his position as IRB Treasurer and the triumph of the progressive wing, he began to implement a harder edged republicanism. The focus will also be on how he established a business through Irish-Ireland connections and how by 1912, he was running a very successful newspaper business. Clarke's growing influence in the IRB, Wolfe Tone clubs and his wider Irish-Ireland connections will be examined in the context of his links with John Devoy and Clan na Gael in America.

Chapter 6 Ireland, steady progress and organizing for insurrection, 1912-1914

This chapter will focus on how Clarke entrenched and further developed his position in separatist politics in Dublin, 1912 -1914 in the face of overwhelming public approval for and popularity of Home Rule and the Irish Parliamentary Party. Through his position as IRB Treasurer and President of the Wolfe Tone clubs, he had, with Sean MacDiarmada, almost total control over the IRB, its propaganda, direction and importantly, its influence within other nationalist organisations. Through new and rarely used primary sources, I will establish how Clarke was fundamentally involved in the formation of the Irish Volunteers and the Howth gunrunning. The introduction of the Home Rule Bill in 1912 did not bode well for Clarke or the IRB but the start of the war in 1914 saw Clarke and the IRB set in motion concrete plans for insurrection.

Chapter 7 War, the Rising and Revolution, 1914-1916

Through the use of under used primary source material, this chapter will examine how and why Clarke established an Augmented Executive, or wider IRB executive, in August 1914. The consequences of this new arrangement will also be looked at to determine how the nexus of the IRB Executive and the SC was affected. Joseph Plunkett's journey to Germany in 1915 will be examined in the context of Roger Casement's time there: the chapter will also discuss the extended negotiations involved in the procurement of German Arms and will further discuss the relevance of the Plan of Campaign that Plunkett presented to the German High Command. The hands off policy adopted by Chief Secretary Birrell will be examined in the context of its effect on the Irish Volunteers, the IRB and Clarke's plans for insurrection.

Events from Palm Sunday to Tom Clarke's execution in Kilmainham jail on Wednesday 3rd May 1916 will be investigated to establish Clarke's role in establishing the Republican HQ in the General Post Office (GPO) on Sackville Street and the subsequent surrender. The setbacks to Clarke's plans during Holy Week will be scrutinized in the context of Eoin MacNeill's vacillation on whether to commit the volunteers to offensive action. Also, this chapter will focus on Clarke and his role in the GPO: by using underused primary source material, his role as the leader in the GPO will demonstrate that his function was unchanged once the Rising commenced. His capture, last words and execution will also be considered.

Thomas J Clarke-1916 Revolutionary

Chapter 1

Historiography

Tom Clarke was an epic by himself ¹

Piaras Beaslai

¹ National Library of Ireland, (NLI), Piaras Beaslai Papers, MS 33,912, (15)

Tom Clarke has been viewed totemically in historical works on the period 1858-1916. Most mention him but a sustained, vigorous and academically robust study of his relevance to 1916 has not been attempted. A dearth of primary sources appears to have limited studies and investigations into Clarke's life but with the release of Witness Statements collected by the Bureau of Military History, more information on Clarke is now available. Recently, a recognisable trend has developed to rehabilitate Clarke to a more prominent position as the leading protagonist of 1916.² This is a much welcomed development and this thesis will attempt to further enhance Clarke's rehabilitation.

Historical Works, 1916-1966

Warne B Wells and N Marlowe, in *A History of the Irish Rebellion*³ published in 1916, presented a concise and precise history of the Rising, of Clarke's role and valuable information on the IRB. They maintained that Clarke held the firm conviction that one more rebellion must take place in Ireland and they argued that, '...little or nothing, beyond the fact of its existence, is authoritatively known about the Irish Republican Brotherhood. It appears to have been languishing when the Volunteer movement revived it.'⁴ This quote is significant because it shows quite clearly that the IRB were in the political doldrums in Ireland, 1912-1914, because of the predominance of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) and John Redmond's success in putting Home Rule onto the statute book in 1912 (although its introduction was suspended for the duration of the war). However, Clarke and the IRB took full advantage of the declaration of War in August 1914 by actively proposing action against British rule in Ireland before the war ended. Importantly, the authors mention the link between Clarke, John Devoy and Clan na Gael in America which saw monies funneled through Clarke to the IRB and other nationalist organizations up to 1916.

Here a pattern begins to emerge: Wells and Marlowe putatively created the myth of 1916. The status as martyrs of the 15 (later 16) could not be challenged

² Foy, Michael and Barton, Brian, *The Easter Rising*, Stroud, 1999, Fearghal McGarry, *The Rising*, (Oxford, 2010), Sean McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, Abingdon, 2003, Charles Townsend, *Easter 1916*, (London, 2005), Clair Wills, *Dublin 1916*, (London 2009)

³ Wells, Warne B and Marlowe, N, *A History of the Irish Rebellion of 1916*, (Dublin, 1916)

⁴ Wells and Marlowe, *Irish Rebellion*, p.89

(especially Pearse's whose photograph appeared in children's history books well into the 1950s. It must be remembered that the Catholic Church, in partnership with the state, controlled all education in Ireland up to the 1960s⁵), while the memory of the Rising in people's minds was hallowed and not open to different interpretations: the heroic interpretation/view of the Rising was sacrosanct and could not be re-shaped in any other form. Successive Irish Governments, post-1922, as well as the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, did little to amend this state-sponsored interpretation of events: both institutions continued to encourage the heroic myth of 1916 for the establishment, maintenance and perpetuation of their own power and influence.

Indeed, there is a *prima facie* case that although the Men of 1916 were heroic, their actions, decisions, motives and intentions are not above rigorous, independent academic investigation. Wells and Marlowe argued for an independent Ireland and established their own pro Irish view on how and why the Rising took place as opposed to John F Boyle's work on 1916 which was pro-British.⁶ However, Wells and Marlowe's work has limitations as it lacks a cogent methodology and it is not established how they gathered their information. Their work was one of several that created the heroic myth, but it was the executions of the leaders and the generally heavy handed reaction by the British to the Rising that saw public opinion slowly but perceptibly lean toward a realization that the intentions of the leaders of the Rising were valid. By December 1916, when the republican prisoners were released from jails in England, the martyrdom, beatification and canonization of the leaders, particularly Pearse, and the ideals of the Rising had caught the imagination of the nation, with some help from the Catholic Church, and an idealized myth of heroic magnificence began to take shape in the popular mind.

One professional historian who did publish a work on the Easter Rising was W Alison Philips. He was born in England in 1864 and appointed, in 1914, Lecky Professor of Modern History, Trinity College, Dublin. He published a history of the Rising in 1923, *The Revolution in Ireland*⁷ which drew this comment, in 1967, from F X Martin:

Philips was the first historian to address the rising in a comprehensive way; no

⁵ Coolahan, John, *The History of Irish Education*, (Dublin 1980), p

⁶ Boyle, John F, *The Irish Rebellion of 1916: A brief history of the revolt & its suppression*, (London, 1916)

⁷ Philips, W Alison *Revolution in Ireland 1906-1923*, (London, 1923)

other academic has attempted the task since 1923. Much has been published on the subject since that date, but the bulk of it is polemical and almost worthless to the historian.⁸

Martin's opinion of the limitations of academic research after 1923 is relevant to a certain extent but he ignores one important aspect; the information imparted in some of those works was based on first-hand experience of events that occurred 1898-1922 and so adds relevance or credence to events discussed therein. Martin failed to fully gauge the extent of Philips's reliance on a narrow interpretation of events through the sources he consulted. Philips explains how he was allowed by the Chief Secretary, Sir Hamar Greenwood:

...access for a short period in 1921 to the unpublished documents under his charge, without conditions or censorship of any kind. I was thus enabled to study among other things, the confidential reports submitted annually by the County Inspectors of the R.I.C. covering a period of ten years. These reports...vary of course very much in merit, but as a whole they proved of exceptional value for the light they throw on the general conditions of the country and of the shifting phases of popular sentiment in the several counties.⁹

Philips also had access to a variety of other unpublished documents, reports and military and police consultation documents in the Chief Secretary's office which he made full use of. However, he did not see that far more of the sources available to him were all relevant to the Rising, and he considered some were of little or no worth:

Of the vast mass of literature on the Irish Question published during the period covered by this work very little has any independent critical value. The numerous books or pamphlets written on one or other of its aspects are for the most part useful only as reflecting particular points of view. Subject to this last limitation, it may be said that the Sinn Fein propaganda works are almost entirely useless for the purposes of scientific history, and must be used with extreme caution.¹⁰

This narrowly focused approach, relying only on the records of the British Imperial authorities in Ireland was a lost opportunity for Philips. He declined to

⁸ Martin, F X, 1916-Myth, Fact and Mystery, *Studia Hibernica*, Vol 7, 1967, p 29

⁹ Philips, *Revolution in Ireland*, p viii

¹⁰ Philips, *Revolution in Ireland*, p viii

analyse the utterances of the IRB through sources available in Ireland at the time and he therefore lost the chance to reach a deeper understanding of the IRB's motivation and reasoning in attempting to overthrow British rule in Ireland through the vehicle of revolution on Easter Monday 1916. The dismissal of original sources because they are viewed as partisan, polemical or not in agreement with an individual historian's viewpoint is at odds with John Tosh's reflections on consulting as wide a range of sources as possible to gain the fullest possible insight into an event of historical relevance:

It will be clear, then, that historical research is not a matter of identifying *the* authoritative source and then exploiting it for all it is worth, for the majority of sources are in some way inaccurate, incomplete or tainted by prejudice or self-interest. The procedure is rather to amass as many pieces of evidence as possible from a wide range of sources-preferably from *all* the sources which have a bearing on the problem in hand.¹¹

Without doubt, the material collected by the British was 'in some way inaccurate, incomplete or tainted by prejudice or self-interest' as much as the 'Sinn Fein' propaganda was. This bias of sources needs to be recognised and overcome by a professional historian and the opinion therein has to be contextualised and made sense of in relation to other extant primary sources. The over reliance of a researcher on one source of primary material, as Tosh elucidated, does not lead to a balanced view of historical events and can lead only to a partial, myopic understanding of important historical themes, trends and changes. This point was underlined in a 1923 review of Phillips's work:

The fact that Professor Phillips was allowed access for a short period to the files and records in the Chief Secretary's Office in Dublin Castle adds a semblance of authority to his conclusions which the use he has made of those records hardly seems to justify. A confessedly very cursory and partial examination of official records has a tendency to obscure by over-emphasis of detail rather than to illuminate by elucidation of principle; and in fact the only unpublished documents which are quoted in the text are police reports which necessarily deal with the external symptoms (which are patent to all) and not with the hidden causes of political disease. We do not know, and are not told, whether all the statements of fact to which, without quoted authority, Professor Phillips commits himself are supported by similar unpublished evidence.¹²

¹¹ John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, (Harlow, 1984), p 58

¹² Anonymous review of Alison Phillips, W, *The Revolution in Ireland, 1906-1923*, *Journal of the British Institute of International Affairs*, Vol 2, No 6, Nov 1923, pp 260-262

Thus, the interpretations, inferences and opinions put forth by Phillips in his work are flawed. Flawed because of his over reliance on a narrow range of sources and his lack of reliance on IRB/Sinn Fein sources. Even though he regarded the latter as propagandist, they would have allowed him still to draw a reasonable conclusion upon the scope and range of their activities. If, by publishing their work shortly after the Rising, Wells and Marlowe are viewed as the progenitors of the myth that 1916 was an heroic deed and that the people involved were heroes, then it can be argued that Phillips also created a strain of historiography diametrically opposed to this view which can be described as a scientific, anti-nationalist in some quarters or a traditional version of history. Both these versions of the past have their limitations insofar as they appear not to have taken into consideration contradictory views.

In *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, published in 1924,¹³ P S O'Hegarty gave a detailed account of how and why the Rising of 1916 took place. As a member of the IRB Supreme Council from 1908 until his deportation to Wales in 1914, he was in a position to be involved with most, if not all, of the decisions taken by the Supreme Council. Similarly, he was on very good personal terms with Tom Clarke and Sean MacDiarmada: the latter visited him in Wales in 1915 and told him of the plans for the Rising. He suggested that the IRB, and Tom Clarke by inference, were responsible for the Rising and this was therefore based on first-hand knowledge and not on supposition or anecdotal evidence. O'Hegarty saw Clarke as 'The Revolutionary': he noted that 'The insurrection came upon the people of Ireland like a thunderbolt.'¹⁴ He listed extensively the reasons why the Rising was so unpopular and suggested that, 'If Ireland as a whole could have got hold of Tom Clarke and his comrades during that week it would have torn them to pieces.'¹⁵

O'Hegarty suggested that the IRB discussed the possibility of a volunteer organization for the South before McNeill, or indeed The O'Rahilly, ever imagined they would be connected with one. (New evidence to support this view, the Witness Statements, Bureau of Military History will be examined later in this thesis). He further suggested that once the Volunteers were formed, they were controlled thereafter by the IRB. Clearly, the *Victory of Sinn Fein* can be regarded as original

¹³ P S O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, (Dublin, 1924)

¹⁴ O'Hegarty, *Sinn Fein*, p.3

¹⁵ O'Hegarty, *Sinn Fein*, p.3

source material because O'Hegarty related opinions of events he was directly involved with. Can it be described as hagiographical? Not in the opinion of this writer: O'Hegarty described it as he saw it and certainly from the viewpoint of an Irish separatist who knew and was involved with some of the men who fought the British for the independence, or freedom, of Ireland.

For the first twenty years after the Rising, historical works hardly mentioned Clarke and it wasn't until the publication in 1936 of two significant historical works that historians were given a wider view of 1916 and Clarke's role therein. The first was Dorothy Macardle's *The Irish Republic*¹⁶ concentrated on the years 1912-1925 and was a largely republican hagiography guided by De Valera's views on the Irish political milieu of 1916-1923. Macardle's view was avowedly republican; she declared openly in the foreword:

This narrative is an attempt to supply what has been too long lacking: an account of the Irish Republican struggle from the viewpoint of an Irish Republican.¹⁷

Macardle realized the importance of Clarke but depicted him in cameo, hinting at a larger role for him than she actually portrayed. She recognized his contribution as the living embodiment of the Fenian tradition by noting that in 1898, 'torchlights and bonfires...welcomed him home to Ireland and the stories that were told again of the Fenians.'¹⁸

Similarly she used the analogy of welcoming bonfires later but in a different context although still with Clarke in mind. Commenting on the release of the untried internees on 22nd December 1916 from the prison camp in Frongach, Wales and those from Reading Jail on 23rd December 1916, she related how, 'In Ireland bonfires and torch-light processions welcomed these prisoners home, as they had welcomed Thomas Clarke and his brother felons a generation before.'¹⁹ Macardle recognized this as a continuation of the struggle against British rule and mirrors Clarke's return with the return of the released internees of 1916, both of which led to insurrection.

¹⁶ Macardle, Dorothy, *The Irish Republic*, (Dublin, 1999, first published 1935)

¹⁷ Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, p 24

¹⁸ Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, p 62

¹⁹ Macardle, *The Irish Republic*, p.204

In 1936, the second significant work in relation to Clarke and 1916 was Louis Le Roux's work, *Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement*.²⁰ The work, commissioned by Clarke's widow Kathleen, was hagiographical. Despite this, it has letters, opinions and information that indicate that the work can be treated as an original source. Most of the letters in this work are published elsewhere while some of the opinions are not. For example, Clarke wrote to Madge Daly regarding the arrangements for the Rossa Funeral²¹ and the excerpt from this same letter that Le Roux quoted is identical.²² Broadly, the information carried in this work is reliable but certainly, the opinions contain therein need to be treated with great caution.

In 1936, *Easter Week*,²³ was published. It is a fairly broad and comprehensive history of the Rising and O'Neill produced a socialist analysis of the events of Easter Week. He suggested that because the Labour Party leader, Arthur Henderson, was in the war cabinet and was intimately involved with the decisions to shell Dublin and to pass death sentences on the leaders, Connolly included, this precluded any serious left wing analysis of the situation in Ireland up to and including the 1916 Rising.²⁴ However, his analysis offered insights into Clarke's role and interaction with the wider IRB.²⁵

In his work, O'Neill clearly identified Clarke as an equal to Pearse but did not demonstrate their respective roles in the IRB or the relationship they shared. Still, the author visualized a working partnership between them which reflected a closer relationship than that suggested by other historians. This work does appear to be preferential, partisan and particular toward the revolutionaries but O'Neill clearly showed the relevant positions of the revolutionaries to each other and within the IRB.

Almost as a counter-balance to the green interpretation of history that followed the departure of the British from most of Ireland in 1922, the Irish Historical Society was founded in 1938 and with it its journal *Irish Historical Studies*. The historians who established the Society, T W Moody, D B Quinn and R Dudley Edwards, intended to transform Irish History by cleansing the record of mythological clutter and engaging in the 'mental war of liberation from servitude to the myth' of Irish nationalist history, by applying scientific methods to the evidence, separating fact

²⁰ Le Roux, Louis, *Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement*, (Dublin, 1936)

²¹ UL, *Daly Memoirs*, Clarke to Madge Daly, 18 July 1915

²² Le Roux, *Clarke*, pp 163-4

²³ O'Neill, Brian, *Easter Week*, (London, 1936)

²⁴ O'Neill, *Easter Week*, p 52

²⁵ O'Neill, *Easter Week*, p.20

from destructive and divisive fiction.²⁶ On the surface, this looks eminently sensible, historically necessary and morally correct. The mythological clutter was blamed for events in the 1970s, 1980s and 1990s which euphemistically were known as the Troubles. Similarly, mythology was also held responsible for the legitimisation of the Provisional IRA. However, the revisionist epistemology of value free history is concerned with:

Confusing objectivity with neutrality, the value-free school denies the historian "access to the kind of moral and emotional register necessary to respond to human tragedy," which in turn leads to a "credibility gap" between the professional historian and the public. Revisionists are writing a history disconnected to popular historical consciousness and are neglecting the social task of the historian.²⁷

The Easter Rising occurred because a secret Irish revolutionary organization, small as it was, thought that without a meaningful demonstration of force against an Imperial overlord, the soul of a nation would be lost. This is the consideration that needs to be kept in mind when writing about the revolutionaries who engineered the Rising. Similarly, speculation that Home Rule would have been granted at the end of the First World War cannot, in this author's opinion, be justified: it is just as absurd to say that if the Americans had not entered the War, the result would have been the same or to say if the French had sued for Peace with the Germans...This type of historical guess work has no place in any serious, historical analysis. However, what needs to emerge to carry the process forward is a critical analysis of the value-free presumptions that historians who attempt to minimise the national struggle and consequently nationalism use in their missives of historical examination. Brendan Bradshaw's opinion,²⁸ which Nancy Curtin examined, is valid and needs to be examined in the context of consulting all extant records and with:

... those who object to the antinationalist bias of a Foster will be challenged to counter his conclusions and produce a less assailable, more

²⁶ Curtin, Nancy J. "Varieties of Irishness": Historical Revisionism, Irish Style, *Journal of British Studies*, April 1996, Vol 35, pp 195-219

²⁷ Curtin, Varieties of Irishness, pp 197-198: The author quotes from Brendan Bradshaw, , "Nationalism and historical scholarship in modern Ireland," *Irish Historical Studies* 26 No 104 (November 1989): pp. 335-36 and Mary E Daly, *The Famine in Ireland* (Dundalk, 1986)

²⁸ Bradshaw, Nationalism and historical scholarship in modern Ireland, *Irish Historical Studies*, 26 No 104 (November 1989)

inclusive, and more sophisticated national history themselves. Bradshaw is quite right that empathy and engagement are often lacking in studies that misguidedly equate moral neutrality with objectivity.²⁹

Clearly, the recognition of one's own subjectivity in historical research is paramount. Historians are influenced by past historical writings and these act as guides for future research. In relation to research into the effectiveness of Clarke in 1916, historians have tended to adhere to the historical tenets handed down by previous generations of historians and received as almost unalterable. The same accusation was ranged against the republican/hagiography of the pre-1960s: 'In historical analysis the main outline of events tends to be taken for granted; what is at issue is their significance and their relationship with each other.'³⁰ This acts as a template or basis for the re-interpretation or revision of the significance of Clarke to 1916, and his relationship with the IRB, Clan na Gael, Sinn Fein and other Irish-Ireland organizations, the six other signatories of the Easter Proclamation of the Republic and others connected peripherally with events leading up to and including, Easter 1916.

Nevertheless, Brendan Bradshaw's critique of the revisionist orthodoxy, while valid, attracted some criticism of its own. The period from the 1960s to the 1990s can possibly be described as the revisionist halcyon era. Since then, it would appear an uneasy, post-revisionist ethos seems to have begun to re-shape the thinking of historians on the issues of empathetic inclusiveness and value-free historical investigation. Hugh Kearney³¹ takes Brendan Bradshaw to task about his approach to revisionism. Bradshaw espouses a return to the nationalist tradition of MacNeill and Curtis while rejecting the value-free interpretation of history. Kearney recognizes that Bradshaw wanted it both ways by attempting to identify historians who clear the bar of Bradshavian propriety and pass some sort of anti-revisionist test and those who do not. Kearney cleverly identifies Professor Lee who, it seems, alternates his historical stance between the two opposing views of Irish history. Kearney thinks Bradshaw's:

...attempt to turn the clock back to the 'golden oldies' like MacNeill

²⁹ Curtin, *Varieties of Irishness*, p 219

³⁰ Tosh, John, *The Pursuit of History*, p 98

³¹ Kearney, Hugh, The Irish and their history, *History Workshop Journal*, Spring, 1991, 31, 1, pp 149-155

and Curtis is seriously misleading. For they in terms of their own time were also revisionists. We should discard the concept of revisionism itself and return to the notion of historical scholarship as an endless debate, in which it is possible to discuss people and movements in a spirit of relative detachment.³²

It is just this spirit of 'relative detachment' that needs to be encouraged in historical research, debate and scholarship. This may allow historians of various hues of opinion to peer out of their silos of research isolation and actively engage with each other in meaningful debates on commonality of agreement rather than the commonality of disagreement. Thus, Nancy J Curtin³³ carefully identified that by the 1970s, the new history was not so new and the highly priced and highly specialized works were not as accessible to the public as T W Moody had once hoped for. She notes that the work of the revisionists continued and that:

Scathing reassessments of the Easter Rising of 1916 and the republican tradition, clinically detached accounts of the Great Famine of 1846-51 which refrain from laying culpability at Britain's door, and more recently, reevaluations of early modern Ireland which Bradshaw argues desensitizes the trauma by placing it in the context of more general and comparative processes of conquest and colonization-these are the contested subjects which most provoke the antirevisionist ire.³⁴

Scathing reassessments or clinical detachment are not tools which a historian should carry into an institution where engagement with primary and or secondary source material will take place. Surely, empiricism has its place as a device to aid historical research and in turn to drive forward knowledge of particular historical themes and contexts. Curtin also noted some important qualities that were needed if a fuller, more contextualised and nuanced picture is to emerge of a relevant historical process:

Bradshaw is quite right that empathy and engagement are often lacking in studies that misguidedly equate moral neutrality with objectivity...But he is quite wrong that so-called mainstream or academy-based Irish history can be characterized as some sort of monolithic new orthodoxy. Indeed, there are as many varieties of Irish history as there are varieties of Irishness, and a

³² Kearney, *The Irish and their History*

³³ Curtin, Nancy J, "Varieties of Irishness": Historical Revisionism, Irish Style, *Journal of British Studies*, 35 April 1996, pp195-219

³⁴ Curtin, Nancy J, "Varieties of Irishness": Historical Revisionism, Irish Style, *Journal of British Studies*, April 1996, Vol 35, p. 203

welcome recognition of that is a necessary prerequisite for the emergence of a healthily contested and generally interesting reconceptualization of the Irish past.³⁵

Tom Clarke was not a knee jerking Fenian reactionary. He knew from personal experience that the British would neither cede Ireland gracefully nor easily and he took the long road to his objective of Irish Freedom, which manifested itself in the Easter Rising of 1916. His philosophical approach to revolution was patience, planning and preparedness: when coupled with his unbending Fenianism and with help and backing from John Devoy of Clan na Gael in America and John Daly in Limerick, the ground for insurrectionary action was steadily prepared after his return to Ireland in 1907.

Anglo-Irish relations was the theme taken up by Nicholas Mansergh in his text *The Irish Question*,³⁶ published in 1940. He tackled his task with great literary aplomb and covered the big issues of Irish-English politics in depth from 1840, when repeal of the Union became a practical aim of nationalists, until 1922 when independence was achieved. He clearly separated Sinn Fein policy from the policy of the IRB and mentioned Tom Clarke solely in connection with his analysis of the Republican movement and the IRB. Mansergh placed Clarke in the mainstream of Revolutionary Politics and thus the IRB but does not mention details of his time in America with John Devoy. This aspect of Clarke's life is fundamental to what happened on his return to Ireland in 1907 because after this date, Clan na Gael supported Clarke and the IRB with abundant financial assistance to further their revolutionary work. Mansergh claimed that Clarke was associated with the Fenian Rising as a young man; this is inaccurate as Clarke was only nine years old and in South Africa in 1867 when the Fenians' rose.

Desmond Ryan, *The Rising*, 1949,³⁷ suggested a role for Patrick Pearse that in reality did not exist. However, paradoxically, Ryan put Pearse on the same level as Clarke whereas many historians do the reverse. This is intriguing but is evidence that Ryan wanted Pearse to be seen in the best possible revolutionary light, which is with Clarke discussing relevant and important measures in the GPO. This strongly suggests that Ryan was aware of Clarke's position as de facto leader of the IRB and

³⁵ Curtin, "Varieties of Irishness": *Journal of British Studies*, April 1996, Vol 35, p 219

³⁶ Mansergh, Nicholas, *The Irish Question*, (London, 1940)

³⁷ Ryan, Desmond, *The Rising*, (Dublin, 1949)

of his influence within other organizations through IRB members of those organizations. These incidences are scattered throughout the work.³⁸ This association demonstrates two things, i) that Clarke was a central figure in 1916 and ii) that by associating Pearse with Clarke he emphasized Clarke's credentials as the leading revolutionary in the GPO.

Ryan also demonstrated his own admiration for Pearse which amounted to an over emphasis of Pearse's role which was speculative and associative. In places Ryan did provide some footnotes indicating which sources he used to glean relevant information from but he did not do this consistently. Apart from this, the work demonstrated an intimate knowledge of events leading up to and including the storming of the GPO and events thereafter. However, there is neither an explanation of the methodology used; nor a listing of primary or secondary sources referred to, nor an introduction which may have supplied some clues as to the direction, range and scope of the work. Furthermore, Diarmuid Lynch in his work on the IRB³⁹ devoted thirty-nine pages of corrections to factual inaccuracies in Ryan's work and ideally, both sources need to be consulted to arrive at a balanced view. Ryan may have thought he had produced the ultimate work on the Rising, but in his critique, Lynch as a participant corrected some of Ryan's facts and assumptions.

The I.R.B. and the 1916 Rising,⁴⁰ was published in 1957 (eight years after Diarmuid Lynch died) and two chapters on Lynch's time in America, 1918-1932, were completed by the historian Florence O'Donoghue. Lynch was in the GPO during Easter Week, he was Secretary of the IRB Executive for three months in 1915 when Sean MacDiarmid was in prison, knew Tom Clarke and carried out many missions for the IRB pre-1916. His recollections are a primary source of important information even if they do not criticize or analyze on a more objective basis the events leading up to and including 1916. Attempting to remain objective may be relatively easier for professional historians but Lynch participated in the Rising and was sentenced to death by the British and the creation of distance between him and the people and events he knew and experienced may have proved difficult for him. Of the thirteen chapters in the book, five dealt directly with pre-1916 events, while a further three chapters were comments on works relevant to 1916. The five chapters

³⁸ Ryan, *The Rising*, pp 17, 21, 135,

³⁹ Lynch, Diarmuid, O'Donoghue, Florence, ed, *The I. R. B. and the 1916 Rising*, (Cork, 1957), pp 110-149

⁴⁰ Lynch, *The IRB and the 1916 Rising*

were more narrative than investigative but they provide a very good starting point for a detailed examination of events during Easter Week.

The Fiftieth Anniversary of the Rising, 1966 to the present.

Tim Pat Coogan in *Ireland Since the Rising*,⁴¹ 1966 treated Clarke respectfully. He was sympathetic in his thoughtful analysis and depicted Clarke in human terms, was accurate and while not making adverse comments on Clarke's appearance, background, educational achievements, physical stature, time in prison or any other aspect of his life. Coogan devoted a page of the text to an interview he held with Kathleen Clarke in which she related her final visit to Tom Clarke in his cell at Kilmainham gaol. Coogan's work can be described as hagiographical because he recognized that criticism of the men of 1916 was, at the time of publication, counter-productive and certainly would not have been popular. His work was released in 1966 to coincide with the Fiftieth Anniversary of the Rising and became part of the hagiographical euphoria displayed in newspapers, on television and on the streets of Dublin.

Kevin B Nowlan's examination of Clarke in Tom Clarke, MacDermott and the IRB, in *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising*,⁴² published in 1967, is largely disappointing. It is a narration of events and did not introduce anything new about Clarke nor did he discuss the personalities or relationships of the IRB leaders in relation to each other or the other signatories of the Proclamation. Nowlan saw correctly that Clarke and MacDiarmada were close friends but more importantly, they were a team of two that organized, cajoled and fought for what they believed in. Similarly, Nowlan further acknowledged the close bond they shared and the influence they carried in Revolutionary circles, certainly between 1912 and 1916, by noting, 'They were there at the beginning and they were there at the end.'⁴³

In the same anthology, F X Martin penned, *1916-Revolution or Evolution?*⁴⁴ Martin carefully traced the growing influence of the IRB, and notably the Military Council, in its preparations for an insurrection. He described O'Hegarty's thesis that

⁴¹ Coogan, Tim Pat, *Ireland Since the Rising*, (London, 1966)

⁴² Nowlan, Kevin B, 'Tom Clarke, MacDermott and the IRB' in F X Martin, ed, *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising, Dublin, 1916*, (London, 1967)

⁴³ Nowlan, 'Tom Clarke, MacDermott and the IRB', p.121

⁴⁴ Martin, F X, *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising, Dublin, '1916-Revolution or Evolution?'* pp. 239-252

the Supreme Council of the IRB was responsible for the Rising as 'over-simplified' yet determined that the Rising became inevitable only when the 'seven members of the I.R.B. Military Council led out their men at midday on Easter Monday'. The analysis is imperfect as it hints at desperation rather than planning; this thesis will demonstrate that opportunism played not an insignificant role in the preparations for the Rising. The Rising came about because of the efforts of Tom Clarke and Sean MacDiarmada who, together with the other signatories of the Easter Proclamation, formed a committee in 1914 that bypassed the existing structures of the Organization and planned for insurrection from that point on. Martin began relating the importance of the year 1907 to Ireland. He noted that Tom Clarke and Augustine Birrell, the Chief Secretary who resigned in 1916 over the Rising, both arrived in Ireland in that year. This was the high point for Clarke in Martin's work as Martin near the end of the article, relegated Clarke to the sidelines while on the way indicating his significance within the IRB. In his valedictory remarks, Clarke was not mentioned and thus Martin effectively relegated him from his précis of the Rising:

The military failure was redeemed by the personal bravery of the Volunteers under fire, by their dignity and nobility in apparent defeat. The principle of the blood-sacrifice, propounded by Pearse, and subscribed to by Connolly, Plunkett, MacDermott, Casement and the rest, bore its startling results.⁴⁵

One work, printed in 1967, which was not a general or specialized work, was *The Imagination of an Insurrection*.⁴⁶ Here, William Irwin Thompson attempted to marry revolution and literature. He managed to fuse the two notions together but his strength is literary rather than historical. His historical view was narrative rather than analytical but his analysis of the poetry and poets of the insurrection, Pearse, Plunkett and MacDonagh was excellent. Unfortunately, he made a telling point on realism and poetry, imagination and reality that neatly ignored the part played by Clarke in the preparation and instigation of the Rising. Here, Thompson is blinkered by the blood sacrifice extolled by Pearse yet condemned by Connolly. There was realism in the Rising as well as poetry, heroism, inhumanity and cowardice.

The leaders of the Rising should not be pigeonholed or labelled solely as poet, militarist or socialist. Clarke sat in the GPO and launched into a two hour

⁴⁵ Martin, *Leaders and Men of the Easter Rising*, p.252

⁴⁶ Thompson, William Irwin, *The Imagination of an Insurrection*, (Stockbridge, Massachusetts, 1967)

lecture on the history of the IRB and the reasons behind the Rising, while the school teacher Pearse was the titular Commandant of the Irish Forces. Thompson described Clarke in very narrow terms referring to him as the, 'hero of the militarists. Fifteen years in prison would more than likely make any man dubious of restraint and refinement.' ⁴⁷ Here, Thompson laboured under a grave misapprehension. The militarists that he referred to are unnamed but he seemed to have used Clarke and his unnamed militarist admirers as a foil to Pearse and the other poets. In fact, Clarke was a man of restraint; his time in prison, and the how and why he was sent there, influenced his realization that words or actions committed in haste often resulted in failure; he was a patient man.

In *The Chief Secretary*, ⁴⁸ published in 1969, Leon O'Broin covered Augustine Birrell's tenure as Chief Secretary in Ireland. His highly readable text engaged with the issues, positions and policies Birrell was involved with when Chief Secretary. O'Broin mentioned how Birrell referred to Clarke as 'the tobacconist' and how 'Clarke was on the Castle 'B List', which meant that his movements were telegraphed by the police from place to place.' ⁴⁹ This gave a clear indication that the British were very interested in Clarke, his whereabouts and whom he met. This was partially the reason why Clarke did not leave written accounts of his activities in the IRB from 1907; the chance of discovery by the Dublin Metropolitan Police was too great.

Anne Marecco's *The Life and Times of Countess Markievicz*, ⁵⁰ was an account, published in 1967, of Constance Markievicz's role in political events leading up to and beyond 1916. In the context of the merger of Sinn Fein and the Dungannon clubs of the North, she mentioned an unrelenting conflict between Arthur Griffiths and Bulmer Hobson. The condition or existence of this relationship is not mentioned in any of the other works under review here. However, she casts a kindly eye over Clarke when a decision on whether the Citizen Army should march to Bodenstown had to be made by the Wolfe Tone Committee after an approach from Sean O'Casey representing the Citizen Army. This was resolved equitably when Clarke decided that the Citizen Army should lead the parade to Bodenstown.

⁴⁷ Thompson, *The Imagination of an Insurrection*, p.87

⁴⁸ O Broin, Leon, *The Chief Secretary, Augustine Birrell in Ireland*, (London, 1969)

⁴⁹ O'Broin, *The Chief Secretary*, pp. 91-2

⁵⁰ Marreco, Anne, *The Rebel Countess, The Life and Times of Constance Markievicz*, (London, 1967)

Bulmer Hobson's recollections of events leading up to 1916 and beyond, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow*,⁵¹ was published in 1968, a year before his death and this work can be treated as a primary source. Hobson was not included in the inner sanctum of the IRB under Tom Clarke after their split of 1914 but the information contained in this work is highly relevant in capturing a broader picture of revolutionary politics in Ireland, 1900-1914. Clarke and Hobson were very close and enjoyed a father and son type of relationship but Clarke was extremely hurt by Hobson's betrayal when he sided with the Redmonite Volunteers in September 1914.

Published in 1969, *The Making of 1916*,⁵² edited by Kevin Nowlan, was a ground breaking work dealing with aspects of 1916 as diverse as the 'Military History of the 1916 Rising', by G A Hayes-McCoy, 'Ulster Unionism and the New Nationalism', by David Kennedy and 'The Sinn Fein Movement', by Donal McCartney. However, the two chapters by Maureen Wall, 'The background to the Rising, from 1914 until the issue of the Countermanding Order on Easter Saturday 1916' and 'The Plans and the Countermand: the country and Dublin', fall under the purview of this review. Wall traces accurately and doggedly the background to the Rising treating Clarke fairly and adequately in relation to Pearse, Connolly and the other signatories. She followed this by quoting both Pearse and Connolly, on the lack of leadership and talking of revolution rather than acting on it, respectively.⁵³ By quoting these two, Wall underlined the scarcity of sources on Clarke accessible to her pre-1969 but also how Pearse and Connolly were regarded as the leaders of 1916. However, both Clarke's *Glimpses*⁵⁴ and Le Roux's work on Clarke⁵⁵ were available to her. Wall's analysis of the secrecy practiced by Clarke and MacDiarmada did not include the reasons why Clarke avoided the established circles and centres of the IRB structure. Clarke was almost paranoid because of his fear of spies and traitors. In addition to spending fifteen years in prison due to an informer, he was naturally distrustful of people he did not know and only relaxed his natural reticence once he got to know a person well.

⁵¹ Hobson, Bulmer, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow*, (Tralee, 1968)

⁵² Nowlan, Kevin B, ed, *The Making of 1916, Studies in the History of the Rising*, (Dublin, 1969)

⁵³ Nowlan, ed, *The Making of 1916*, Wall, M, Chapter (VII), 'The Background to the Rising; from 1914 until the issue of the Countermanding Order on Easter Saturday, 1916, p. 158-9

⁵⁴ Clarke, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life*

⁵⁵ Le Roux, *Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement*

In *Ireland Since the Famine*, 1971,⁵⁶ F S L Lyons produced one of the seminal works of Irish history. The work is detailed, erudite and comprehensive and demonstrates an understanding and depth of knowledge of themes that developed during this period. Lyons discussed a view of the secrecy practiced by Clarke and MacDiarmada, suggesting that it weakened the IRB chain of command from within and sowed confusion among IRB men across the country.⁵⁷ This clearly has some merit but must be considered in tandem with MacNeill's countermanding order of Easter Sunday which added to a confused and confusing overall picture in Dublin and across Ireland. Lyons mentioned that control of the IRB in 1915 was effectively in Clarke and MacDiarmada's hands and, to a lesser degree, the hands of the Military Council. He was not strictly accurate here as that control started earlier than 1915; possibly emerging in 1910 when Clarke persuaded the IRB Supreme Council to publish *Irish Freedom* and this was strengthened further when Clarke was elected IRB SC Treasurer, circa 1912.

Lyons mentioned that evidence existed to show that the IRB were attempting to gain control of the Irish Volunteers at a local as well as a national level. He did not discuss the source of this evidence but, a discussion on this in later chapters will show that his view was accurate. After discovering the depth of duplicity by Pearse and others over the imminence of a Rising, MacNeill issued the countermanding order to Volunteers. On Easter Sunday morning the Military Committee met in Liberty Hall and voted to go out on the following day Easter Monday. In a footnote, Lyons observed, 'Tom Clarke, that inveterate fire eater, was for coming out on Sunday as planned, but was overruled on the grounds of sheer impracticality.'⁵⁸ Lyons view of Clarke was one dimensional and later, this thesis will demonstrate that his personality was not as narrow as Lyons depicted in this work. Overall though, Lyons recognized that Clarke played a major role in events but his analysis of Clarke's role in the events leading up to and including 1916 is rather cursory. In contrast he suggests that the poets of 1916, MacDonagh, Plunkett and Pearse were far more influential than Clarke but their fame became more pronounced after rather than before 1916. Lyons recognized that the three represented a different strand in

⁵⁶ Lyons, F S L, *Ireland Since the Famine*, (London, 1971)

⁵⁷ Nowlan, ed, *The Making of 1916*, 'The Background to the Rising: from 1914 until the issue of the Countermanding Order on Easter Sunday, 1916,' pp 157-197

⁵⁸ Lyons, *Ireland*, p. 358

the making of Easter 1916 but he did not, to any great extent, make an attempt to relate their activities with those of Clarke and MacDiarmid.

In *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939*,⁵⁹ published in 1979, Lyons again treated Clarke poorly yet lauded Plunkett, MacDonagh and Pearse. In the chapter entitled 'The Revolutionary Generation', he examined the poetic value of the three particularly Pearse and then examined the birth of the new nationalism ushered in by 1916. He discussed Connolly, his legacy and examined why he joined forces with the IRB; but it is his analysis of Clarke that is under consideration here:

One of the most fanatical organizers of the 1916 insurrection, Thomas Clarke, provided a direct link with the Fenian tradition in his own person, embodying as he did in all its crude but potent simplicity the driving force of that tradition—an unrelenting hatred of England and an absolute conviction that the English connection could only be broken by an armed uprising to establish an independent Irish Republic. Yet, although this was the *raison d'être* of the Irish Republican Brotherhood which claimed the ultimate responsibility for the Rising that began on Easter Monday, 1916, the genesis of that event was far more complex than Tom Clarke knew, or cared to know.⁶⁰

Lyons describing Clarke in such strident terms, failed to mention his sense of humour, flexibility, organizational capabilities, Fenian idealism and his lack of dogmatic driven idealism. He described Clarke's 'unrelenting hatred of England' but failed to mention his unrelenting love of Ireland.⁶¹ Clearly, this appeared to be a further example of Lyons' one dimensional thinking in relation to Clarke. Lyons continued thereafter to examine the role that Pearse, MacDonagh, Plunkett and Connolly played in 1916, their legacy, and he discussed the aftermath of the Rising and events up to 1922. However, his description of Clarke is not entirely borne out in research undertaken by this author. Clearly, after spending fifteen years in an English prison, Clarke would not be well disposed toward British rule in Ireland. Indeed, most of the evidence seen in connection with this thesis indicates that he gave short shrift to those who were, in his opinion, fools and time wasters and because of his experience, was very cautious with whom he spoke. But it is the accusation against Clarke of ignorance of the genesis of 1916, which is the most

⁵⁹ Lyons, F S L, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland, 1890-1939*, (Oxford 1979)

⁶⁰ Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland*, p. 86

⁶¹ Clarke, Emmet: Clarke Private Papers: this and other information relating to Tom Clarke was conveyed via letters, a video tape recording and interviews from and with Tom & Kathleen's son Emmet Clarke.

misleading. Lyons did not even bother to underpin his charge with fact but perversely chose to exalt Pearse, and to a lesser extent MacDonagh and Plunkett.

If Lyons thought that by elevating Clarke to icon status he would encourage membership of non-constitutional organizations in the late 1970s then he erred on the side of caution. In fact the writings and imagery produced by Pearse lent themselves more readily to propaganda by non-constitutional organizations. Clarke did not espouse death for one's country as part of the solution to Ireland's troubles nor did he have a messianic trait that Pearse clearly did. Romantic republicanism did not sit well with Clarke. Having said that, this thesis will attempt to demonstrate how, in Lyons words, 'The Rising was the work of many diverse individuals and it can be viewed at many different levels.' ⁶² Planning for and carrying out an insurrection in Ireland in the early twentieth century brought together a disparate group of people who came from vastly different socio-economic, cultural and religious backgrounds but who worked together, not always harmoniously, to create a platform for revolution.

The standard work on the IRB is Leon O Broin's *Revolutionary Underground* ⁶³ published in 1967. O Broin based his work on British Government sources, other unpublished and published sources and conversations with 'individuals'. The work was full of detailed accounts of how the IRB worked, the personalities involved and the effectiveness of the organization. O'Broin's usage of British Government reports was particularly useful as it demonstrated the thinking of the British authorities and showed who they thought were worthy of attention. O'Broin quotes Hobson often and the impression remains that O'Broin thought that Hobson deserved more credit for his actions than he received. O'Broin recognizes Clarke's position in the IRB but saw MacDiarmada as the main player not Clarke, 'Sean MacDermott was effectively the executive.' ⁶⁴ In the opinion of this author, this was not accurate because Clarke and MacDiarmada both controlled the IRB with Clarke possibly acting as its unseen head.

O Broin then quoted McCullough's version of events of the meeting, in January 1916, where a decision to stage an uprising was taken, 'Although I presided at the meeting at which it was decided to have a Rising, I was never told a further

⁶² Lyons, *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland*, p. 85

⁶³ O Broin, Leon, *Revolutionary Underground, The Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, 1858-1924*, (Dublin, 1976)

⁶⁴ O'Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, p. 166

word about it.’⁶⁵ This seems to be evidence of how widespread was the deception practiced by Clarke was because he needed to keep McCullough in the dark about his plans for a Rising. McCullough complained later that there had been a great deal of deception practiced as he did not know that the Military Committee had been in existence since May 1915. This is important because it demonstrated that Clarke and MacDiarmada practiced deception on a very wide scale and this was not limited to organizations outside of the IRB but included some members of the IRB who sat on the Supreme Council.

George Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question*,⁶⁶ produced in 1976, treated Clarke as a serious historical character and by quoting reliable sources, e. g. Devoy; he painted a more inclusive picture of Clarke’s involvement in preparing for insurrection thus giving a fuller understanding of events. After describing Clarke’s early life, imprisonment and sojourn in America, he opined that, ‘*Irish Freedom* had been his idea before Bulmer Hobson took it up.’⁶⁷ This is important as Lyons did not attribute the start of the IRB’s newspaper *Irish Freedom* to Clarke but inferred that the newspaper was largely connected to Hobson, ‘...Bulmer Hobson’s *Irish Freedom*...’⁶⁸ Lyons possibly meant that Hobson was connected to *Irish Freedom* as editor or main contributor but he did not say this and the impression is given that the paper was largely associated with Hobson rather than Clarke. The original idea for a republican newspaper in Dublin was Clarke’s and control of *Irish Freedom* was the fault line between the IRB SC incumbents and the newcomers, the latter included Tom Clarke, in 1910-12. Despite Dangerfield’s accuracy in connection with Clarke, the work extols, uncritically, the Rising and the characters involved therein.

Ruth Dudley Edwards, in 1977, produced a fascinating study of Patrick Pearse, the *Triumph of Failure*.⁶⁹ She gave a balanced account of Pearse, recognizing his failings but suggesting he failed in many of the projects he undertook yet succeeded in his greatest ambition, to live on after his death in people’s memories. But it was her treatment of Clarke that is relevant here. Again, she realized his importance but sniped at various things connected to him such as the location of his shop and his detachment from the column advancing to the GPO. This

⁶⁵ O’Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, p. 167

⁶⁶ Dangerfield, George, *The Damnable Question*, (New York, 1976)

⁶⁷ Dangerfield, *The Damnable Question*, p. 96

⁶⁸ Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, p. 342-3

⁶⁹ Edwards, Ruth Dudley, *The Triumph of Failure*, (Dublin, 1977)

detracted from the central thesis of the work: that Pearse failed in reversing the Anglicization of Ireland. However, Clarke was not always underestimated by Edwards especially when she referred to the Military Council, 'In McCullough's opinion (and this is borne out by other evidence), the council was inspired by Clarke and dominated by MacDermott and Plunkett. Connolly had some involvement in the planning-Plunkett used to consult him.'⁷⁰

Here, Edwards demonstrated the reality of the composition of the group that Clarke brought together to draw up plans for a Rising around the time of the start of the First World War. Edwards attempted to identify Clarke's personality when she related Clarke's homily in the GPO, April 1916, to James Ryan and his sister on his own life and involvement in the IRB, 'It was unusual enough for Clarke to feel the need to justify himself, but he certainly expressed no doubts about the culmination of his life's work.'⁷¹

K R M Short's work on the Dynamite War in England, 1880-1887, *The Dynamite War, Irish-American Bombers in Victorian England*,⁷² was an anecdotal narrative of the attempts, some successful, to blow up buildings in London 1870-1887 in an effort to gain independence for Ireland. Short faithfully and doggedly recorded all of the characters associated with the Clan na Gael inspired campaign. The Special Irish Branch of the Criminal Investigation Division at Scotland Yard was established after the Local Government Offices in Whitehall were bombed on 15th March 1883⁷³ and it was members of this force that arrested Thomas J Clarke at 13:00 on 6th April 1883 at his lodgings in Nelson Square, London.⁷⁴ By using a narrative approach, a lot of facts surrounding the attempts by O'Donovan Rossa, Clan na Gael and American Fenianism to bomb the British into submission are revealed. Short did not attempt to synthesize these facts into an interpretation of the dynamite campaign but the contextualization of the events that led Tom Clarke to prison is very informative. Perversely, Short referred to Clarke only three times in the index but did not mention Henry Hammond Wilson despite referring to Clarke and Wilson in the text on numerous occasions. These omissions are all the more pointed

⁷⁰ Edwards, *The Triumph of Failure*, p. 247

⁷¹ Edwards, *The Triumph of Failure*, p. 292

⁷² Short, K R M, *The Dynamite War*, (London, 1979)

⁷³ Short, *The Dynamite War*, p 5

⁷⁴ Short, *The Dynamite War*, p 140

as Short listed 'Real Names and Aliases of Some Bombers and Suspects Mentioned in the Text' which included Clarke's real name and nom de guerre.⁷⁵

In the work, *Modern Ireland*, 1988,⁷⁶ R F Foster mentioned the IRB, the decision to Rise in emotive language, an oblique reference to Clarke and an almost heroic description of Pearse: -

Not even the IRB was united behind the eventual decision. Thus, 1916 was made by a minority of a minority, and many of those involved were pitchforked into action with no notice whatsoever. This owed a good deal to the methods of the reconstituted IRB, and still more to the style of leadership typified by Patrick Pearse.⁷⁷

He continued to discuss the Rising but did not mention Clarke in his analysis although the 'methods of the reconstituted IRB' was a veiled reference to him. Foster also referred to 'leadership' and Pearse and inferred that Pearse was in a position to make plans for the IRB and the Citizen Army on his own. This is neither plausible nor did it actually happen.⁷⁸ Clarke, MacDiarmada and Connolly made most of the important decisions in the weeks before the capture of the GPO and other buildings and continued to do so in the GPO. Foster did mention Clarke in his analysis of the IRB after the regrouping in the North in 1905 to its estimated membership of 2000 in 1916. He noted that militancy came to the fore by then with articles in the Irish Volunteer on military tactics and Gaelic League meetings which saw Douglas Hyde resign the presidency because of the:

...politicization of the league in the advanced nationalist interest. The IRB had gained control of the executive, and chose to define 'freedom' in political rather than culture terms: Tom Clarke, now directing appointments within the league, knew no Irish at all.⁷⁹

In fact, Clarke did know some Irish⁸⁰ and he joined the Gaelic League after his release from prison in 1898. It would be interesting for a case study to be undertaken

⁷⁵ Short, *The Dynamite War*, viii

⁷⁶ Foster, R F, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*, (London, 1988)

⁷⁷ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, p. 477

⁷⁸ National Archive of Ireland, (NAI), Bureau of Military History, (BMH), Witness Statement, (WS) 4, Diarmuid Lynch. Commenting on Patrick Pearse's contribution and involvement in IRB SC meetings, Lynch stated that Pearse said very little at these meetings.

⁷⁹ Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp. 475/6

to establish the level of Irish speaking ability of the 16 men executed by the British in 1916 for their activities in the Rising. In 1909, Tom Clarke was involved with establishing the teaching of compulsory or essential Irish in the National University. Pat McCartan was pushing for Irish in the university and had the full support of the IRB and Clan na Gael. Such was the lack of progress on this issue, McCartan left the university but Douglas Hyde promised him that Irish would be made essential in the University.⁸¹ Foster did indicate the extent of Clarke's reach within non-IRB organizations when he noted that he was 'directing appointments' within the league. It would seem that Foster is one of the main protagonists of the traditional, value free revisionism currently extant among other Irish historians and this work, while highly erudite and well researched does tend to lean toward broad statement-making which is no substitute for the nuts and bolts historical writing.

*The Revolution in Ireland*⁸² edited by D G Boyce and published in 1988, examined a variety of topics, which included land agitation, religion, revolutionary groups, literary life and British Government policy towards and in Ireland. The diversity of topics discussed made this work important. The chapter by John O'Beirne Ranelagh, 'The Irish Republican Brotherhood in the Revolutionary Period, 1879-1923', gave a potted history of attitudes and ideas in the IRB including its distrust of constitutionalism which continued beyond the War of Independence. It also revealed Clan na Gael's impact on events, and the relative decline of the IRB post 1916. Ranelagh concluded that the IRB was responsible for the Rising:

This is important not simply because subsequent initial historiography generally played down the dominating role of the IRB in 1916 by focusing attention on Patrick Pearse and James Connolly at the expense of Clarke, but within militant nationalist circles after 1916 the fact that the IRB was the mainspring of rebellion gave both it and its members powerful respect and thus influence. After 1916, it was this which made the IRB significant, rather than any particular act or plot it engaged upon.⁸³

⁸⁰ National Library of Ireland, ACC 6410, Boxes, 1, 2 and 3, letters from Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, and letters from Kathleen Clarke to Clarke, various dates but largely 1898-1900 and 1907-1908. He uses Irish words sporadically in these letters.

⁸¹ Le Roux, Louis, *Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement*, (Dublin, 1936), pp 114-115

⁸² Boyce D G, Ed, *The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923*, (London, 1988)

⁸³ O'Beirne Ranelagh, John, 'The Irish Republic Brotherhood in the Revolutionary Period', p. 145, in Boyce D G, (Ed), *The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923*. (London, 1988)

Ranelagh identified two distinct trends here; first, he recognized the IRB's capability to organize and carry out insurrectionary action was important and second, how Clarke's role was subordinated to Pearse's and Connolly's. This is crucial. Pearse and Connolly held much higher public profiles than Clarke and when journalists, historians and writers began to research the backgrounds of the three, biographical information on Pearse and Connolly was more readily available. Information on Pearse lent itself to an interpretation of his actions as messianic and cult forming.

Kathleen Clarke, in her autobiography, *Revolutionary Woman*, wrote her memoirs between 1939 and 1950 intending to have them published after her death. She died in Liverpool in 1972 at the home of her son Emmet and her memoirs were not published until 1991. The main point here is that Kathleen did not start to write them until 1939, twenty three years after the event. Chapters one to seven are relevant to this discussion on Tom Clarke and Kathleen provided an invaluable insight into their private life and the IRB/Clan na Gael activities of Tom Clarke from when they first met in 1898 until his death in 1916.

Tim Pat Coogan's work, *Michael Collins*,⁸⁴ published in 1991, was a detailed and comprehensive study of Collins and attempted to show him as a man with limitations. Coogan did not attempt to glorify Collins but skillfully demonstrated the reality of his position in relation to the war of independence. Collins admired both Clarke and MacDiarmada but in particular he 'revered' Clarke:

Two other figures with whom Collins would not have time to establish a lasting relationship, but whom he admired greatly, were Sean MacDiarmada and Tom Clarke... Clarke was the movement's link with the Fenians, an old dynamiter who had somehow kept his sanity through penal servitude in England, made his way to America, and then returned to Dublin to set up a little shop in the ironically named Great Britain St, which dispensed tobacco and revolutionary doctrines that struck more deadly sparks than any of his matches. Collins, with his equal regard for age and Fenianism, revered Clarke in particular.⁸⁵

In *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption, The Mind of the Easter Rising, 1916*, published in 1994,⁸⁶ Sean Farrell Moran examined the role that

⁸⁴ Coogan, Tim Pat, *Michael Collins*, (London, 1991)

⁸⁵ Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p.34

⁸⁶ Moran, Sean Farrell, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption, The Mind of the Easter Rising, 1916*, (Washington, DC, 1994)

Pearse played in 1916. He had some interpretive lapses in the text that stretched historical interpretation to the limits of reasonableness. Under a sub heading to his chapter on the state of Ireland, *The Resurrection of the Military Movement, Tom Clarke and the Irish Republican Brotherhood*, Moran devoted about four pages to Clarke, his role in reviving the IRB and the effectiveness, or lack of it, of the IRB from the 1890s to 1912. His analysis was sound in places but in others it was not. He employs the same device used by Lyons and Thompson; Clarke equals military and thus physical force and Pearse, Plunkett and MacDonagh equal poets and thus romanticism and ideology.

Moran related that 'Clarke had been born in England to a career British army officer and an Irish Catholic mother. He nearly entered the army at his Father's behest.'⁸⁷ Actually, Clarke's father, James, was indeed in the British Army, but he was a NCO, a sergeant, was born an Irishman and was a member of the Church of Ireland. Moran cited Le Roux as his source for this information but Moran was inaccurate: Clarke did not nearly join the British Army at his father's behest: whereas Clarke senior saw the British Army as an all conquering force and the guardian of the British Empire, Tom Clarke saw it as a destructive force which kept his country enslaved. Moran recognized the importance of Clarke but he attempted to place him under the aegis of Pearse whereas the reality was the reverse as this thesis will later demonstrate.

D George Boyce and Alan O'Day, in *The Making of Modern Irish History*,⁸⁸ published in 1996, explained fully the revisionist's case on different aspects of Irish history. They edited the volume and also contributed to it and it is D George Boyce's chapter entitled '1916, Interpreting the Rising', which is of interest here. Boyce produced a far ranging view of 1916 with many pertinent observations and he reviewed other revisionist historians work including, F X Martin, F S L Lyons, Father Francis Shaw and Ruth Dudley Edwards. His central idea was as follows:

The controversy over the revisionist analysis of 1916 has obscured rather than clarified the issues. Modern historians' determination to see the rising in its conspiratorial setting, to stress the importance of Irish Republican planning and preparation, to cast the event in terms of human choice and endeavour,

⁸⁷ Moran, *Patrick Pearse and the Politics of Redemption*, p. 71

⁸⁸ Boyce, D George and O'Day, Alan, eds, *The Making of Modern Irish History, Revisionism and the revisionist controversy*, (London, 1996)

may have failed to place the rising in its wider political/cultural context.⁸⁹

Boyce, and the other revisionists, are inclined to somewhat marginalize the IRB and therefore any role played by Tom Clarke. They did not investigate the role played by either and therefore do not 'place the rising in a wider political/cultural context', or seriously investigate the relevance of the IRB or Clarke to revolutionary politics, 1907-1916.

The Boyce chapter was imperfect because it did not evaluate seriously, if at all, Tom Clarke's role in the IRB from 1907-1916. Boyce mentioned Clarke but usually with another signatory. This reference to Clarke was in conjunction with the rebels avoiding outright vilification by the Catholic Church, '...with even the atheist Tom Clarke accepting the last rites of the church...' ⁹⁰ Boyce did not indicate where he gleaned this piece of information from. Clarke was attended by Fr. Columbus, O F M Cap, in his condemned cell in Kilmainham ⁹¹ but this did not confirm either way if he sought the last rites of the Church. Kathleen Clarke recalled a conversation Tom Clarke had with a priest in Richmond Barracks in 1916:

He told me that the priest had wanted him to say he was sorry for what he had done; 'unless I did he could not give me absolution. I told him to clear out of my cell quickly. I was not sorry for what I had done, I gloried in it and the men who had been with me. To say I was sorry would be a lie, and I was not going to face my God with a lie on my tongue.' ⁹²

This reference to Clarke's spirituality is far more credible than Boyce's inference as Kathleen Clarke was the last family member to see Tom Clarke alive.

In *The Long Gestation*, ⁹³ published in 1999, Patrick Maume argued, through narrative and a strong analytical framework:

...that the Irish Party and Sinn Fein had a similar social role, using broadly based nationalist agitations to prevent the British government managing the Catholic community through selected lay and clerical notables. ⁹⁴

⁸⁹ Boyce and O'Day, *The Making of Modern Irish History*, p. 170

⁹⁰ Boyce and O'Day, *The Making of Modern Irish History*, p. 172

⁹¹ Mac Lochlainn, Piaras, F, *Last Words*, (Dublin, 1990), p. 45

⁹² Clarke, Kathleen, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 93

⁹³ Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation*, (New York, NY, 1999)

⁹⁴ Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p 2

He largely succeeded to do this in his work by broadening out his argument to cover the waning and waxing fortunes of the two parties up to the Coupon election of 1918. Peter Hart reflected ⁹⁵ that Maume's work 'lacks the analysis to enforce some of his arguments.' ⁹⁶ This is somewhat harsh as Maume attempted to weave a broad analysis which included disparate organizations such as Sinn Fein, the Irish Parliamentary Party, British authorities in Ireland and to a limited extent the IRB or separatists as he often referred to them. Later in his article, Hart mentioned that Maume, in this work, may well have established lines of enquiry that other researchers may want to follow up but Hart finished by indicating that Maume should pick up the gauntlet thrown down by his own challenges and advance them further. However, the work clearly indicates that Sinn Fein and the Irish Party were the forerunners of the two main political parties, until recently, in the Republic. This may be so but in relation to Tom Clarke there are several issues which need to be discussed. Maume mentioned him by name four times but on other occasions used the terms separatists or IRB when describing an important event with strong IRB connections. Maume's analysis of pre-1907 groupings in revolutionary politics needs further analysis as he suggested the IRB group in Belfast were responsible for the replacement of the ruling clique in the IRB in Dublin: '...1907 marked the advance of the Belfast group into Dublin to displace the IRB leadership under F.J. Allen and to challenge Griffith at his strongest point.' ⁹⁷

It is true that Hobson, and to a lesser extent McCullough became more involved with the IRB in Dublin but only after Clarke returned in 1907. He also maintained good relations with Griffith and Sinn Fein as demonstrated by Maume, 'Griffithites and purists maintained relations with each other; Tom Clarke chaired a Sinn Fein branch.' ⁹⁸ Maume did not offer an explanation of what 'purist' meant in relation to Clarke nor did he give the context of the relationship between Griffith and Clarke or Sinn Fein and the IRB. Similarly, Maume was correct when he described who was in charge at the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa in 1915: 'The Irish Volunteers dominated the arrangements for the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa and policed Dublin

⁹⁵ Peter Hart, Untitled review of *The Long Gestation*, in the *American Historical Review*, Vol 105, No 5, Dec 2000, p 1809

⁹⁶ Hart, *Ibid*

⁹⁷ Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p 86

⁹⁸ Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p 123

for the day.’⁹⁹ What he did not depict was who planned the funeral and who was closely involved with the day to day arrangements of the funeral:

To prepare for the huge funeral he [Tom Clarke] formed a large committee, and divided this into sub-committee. Each sub-committee was in charge of a particular section. Commandant Tomas MacDonagh was General Commanding Officer and Chief Marshall. The general plan was formulated by Tom, but he and MacDonagh worked out the details.¹⁰⁰

One inference that can be drawn from the close working relationship of Clarke and MacDonagh is that Clarke held influence with the members of the Volunteer Executive and knew of its workings through MacDiarmada, Pearce, MacDonagh and Plunkett. The full title of the work under review here is *The Long Gestation, Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918* and Maume missed an opportunity to assess the extent of the infiltration of Nationalist organizations by the IRB.

Michael Laffan, 1999, in *The Resurrection of Ireland*,¹⁰¹ has produced a thorough examination of a crucial period in Irish history, 1916-1923. He examines and explains Irish republicanism with aplomb, an elegant writing style, backed up by extensive and exhaustive sources. His treatment of Clarke corresponds with the source material seen in connection with this thesis and Laffan noted that Clarke returned to Ireland from America to launch an insurrection:

...but this became a serious possibility only when the IRB managed to infiltrate the Irish Volunteers. Even then he and his colleagues faced an awesome range of obstacles.¹⁰²

His otherwise precise yet brief analysis of Clarke and his role in 1916 is blotted when he indicates that the majority of the leaders decided to surrender. Yet,

Clarke remained intransigent.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ Maume, *The Long Gestation*, p 164

¹⁰⁰ Clarke, Kathleen, *Revolutionary Woman*, (Dublin, 1991)

¹⁰¹ Laffan Michael, *The Resurrection of Ireland*, (Cambridge, 1999)

¹⁰² Laffan, *Resurrection*, p 34

¹⁰³ Laffan, *Resurrection*, p 46

This is an over simplification of events surrounding the surrender and the retreat from the GPO. The reality is more subtle and this is dealt with further in chapter seven of this thesis.

Michael Foy and Brian Barton in *The Easter Rising*, published in 2000,¹⁰⁴ compiled a highly detailed and sophisticated account of the Easter Rising. The author's depiction of Tom Clarke, his role in the IRB and his relationship with the other leaders was the fullest for seventy years since Louis Le Roux published his 'biography' of Clarke in 1936. The authors mentioned Clarke, and MacDiarmid, as the driving force of the IRB, and they described the different groupings and relationships of the signatories of the Proclamation of the Republic. However Barton and Foy, when they discussed Bulmer Hobson's actions in connection with the June 1914 split in the Volunteers, gave the impression that Hobson did not contact Clarke or MacDiarmid because of fast moving events. 'Events moved so rapidly that Hobson had been unable to consult Clarke and MacDermott.'¹⁰⁵ Madge Daly clearly indicated a more complex reality than Foy and Barton's unreferenced assertion:

For years the little group of I.R.B. men in Dublin had worked together loyally, meeting to discuss anything of national importance, and after free expressions of opinion, agree to take unanimous action. Yet, when the last question of the Redmond nominees arose, Hobson could not be got to discuss it with his old comrades, avoided them, and used his position as a well known I.R.B. man to influence men inside and outside that organisation to vote with him.¹⁰⁶

This is important because Foy and Barton excused Hobson from taking any responsibility for his actions. The agreement among the IRB men on the Volunteer Executive was to vote against Redmond. Hobson did not and paid the price by being excluded by Clarke from the higher echelons of the IRB. Foy and Barton produce further analysis of the split between Clarke and Hobson but they inflated Hobson's role in the IRB:

What had occurred was in effect a *coup d'état* by Clarke and MacDermott. Hobson knew that he was abdicating control of the IRB to his two former colleagues, but he was not prepared to cause a schism and, anyway, he was physically and emotionally exhausted.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁴ Foy, Michael and Barton, Brian, *The Easter Rising*, (Stroud, 2000)

¹⁰⁵ Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, p.5

¹⁰⁶ Madge Daly Memoirs, University of Limerick (UL), folder 77, pp. 5-6

¹⁰⁷ Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, p.6

This observation stretches reality to almost breaking point because Hobson did not exercise control over the IRB and therefore, Foy and Barton's comment that he was 'abdicating control of the IRB' to Clarke and MacDiarmada was wide of the mark and misleading.

Despite these inaccurate inferences and interpretations, the authors discovered hitherto unused sources. The first is the Ireland Report that Michael Foy located in the Casement Papers. He was 'thrilled' by the experience. The document described the strength of the British military in Ireland and Irish police forces, the contemporary Irish political situation and the various Irish nationalist organizations. The crux of the document concerned Plunkett and his attempt to persuade the Germans to send an armed force to land simultaneously with the start of a rising. They note, 'The Ireland Report is crucial to any understanding of the intentions of the Military Council and the lengths to which it was prepared to go to secure German assistance.'¹⁰⁸ The authors continued by giving a detailed appraisal of the document and they related the 'optimism' of the Military Council's plans and the anticipated victory parade past 'the Military Council which would now have reconstituted itself as the new government of an independent Irish Republic.'¹⁰⁹

Foy and Barton clearly indicated that Clarke was the leader of the Military Council and it was only with his authorization that any step of significance could be taken. The second lightly used collection of sources is the depositions of a priest and several volunteers whose accounts lend weight to events related to the Rising.¹¹⁰ Barton and Foy's work, as far as this research is concerned, is ground breaking as the authors identified new sources of original material which have a direct bearing on Clarke. Also, they provided many leads by quoting underused sources such as County newspapers that were originally written in Irish and were translated into English before the work was published.

In 2002, Brian Barton, almost as a corollary to the work reviewed above, produced *From Behind Closed Doors*.¹¹¹ The author presented complete transcripts of the courts martial of the fifteen men executed by the British in Dublin, 1916, based

¹⁰⁸ Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, p.14

¹⁰⁹ Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, p.18

¹¹⁰ The papers examined by Foy and Barton are deposited at The Allen Library, Edmund Rice House, North Richmond Street, Dublin. Foy and Barton, *Easter Rising*, pp. 33-34

¹¹¹ Barton, Brian, *From Behind Closed Doors, Secret Court Martial Records of the 1916 Easter Rising*, (Belfast, 2002.)

on material released by the British Government in 1999. The chronology of the work was somewhat odd as he chose to review the role played by the Commander in Chief of British troops in Ireland, General Maxwell, before reviewing the trials of the fifteen executed men. However, in the introduction, Clarke was named first as Barton attributed, directly, responsibility for the Easter Rising to the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

Interestingly, Barton identified Clarke as THE revolutionary by naming him as the sponsor, in fact with MacDiarmada, of the members of the Military Council but the real power resided with the group formed at the beginning of the First World War to bring together the plans for a national Rising. However, Barton's interpretation of Clarke's life in America, and his life after returning to Dublin, needs to be considered, 'When he returned to Ireland in 1907, he found his life transformed; his earlier sacrifices now earned him status, power and admiration.'¹¹² This was accurate to the extent that Clarke found 'status, power and admiration' after his return to Ireland; but he also had these in America through working as assistant, and deputy editor of *The Gaelic American*, to John Devoy and through his work with the broader Irish-American community in the cities on the eastern sea board of the USA. He did not need to find these rewards in Ireland after 1907; he returned to Ireland to organize the IRB into a machine capable of mounting insurrectionary action against British rule in Ireland. If a certain level of social cache was attached to his action, background and plans, this was no more than an added bonus and one which Clarke would have been aware of.

In *Irish Political Prisoners, 1848-1922, Theatres of War*¹¹³ Sean McConville wrote, 'about Irish political violence-promoted, plotted and carried out-and the imprisonment in England of successive generations of rebels.' This he does very well by explaining the plans and campaigns of various Irish organizations and the response of the British Government to the activities of the Young Irelanders, Fenians and Dynamitards in the given time period. However, he hardly mentioned the reasons why these men were fighting Britain and the British Empire, political freedom for Irishmen and Irishwomen in their own country which was ruled by an alien Imperial power. The level of research is reflected in the depth and breadth of references which McConville described in a bibliography thirty pages long with such

¹¹² Barton, *From Behind Closed Doors*, pp. 135-136

¹¹³ Sean McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners, 1848-1922, Theatres of War*, (London, 2003)

diverse sources as the Mitchell Library, Sydney, Australia, National Library of South Africa and 105 Journals, newspapers and works of reference which included the newspaper that Tom Clarke produced in Chatham Jail, *The Irish Felon*.¹¹⁴ However, McConville did not provide a balanced view of the dynamitards prison experience when he suggested that, 'We have examined closely Michael Davitt's convict experiences, which are sufficiently close to those of the dynamitards to allow us to minimize repetitive description.'¹¹⁵ McConville devoted an entire chapter to Davitt and his experiences in jail which was facilitated by abundant primary and secondary source material. However, the prison experience of Davitt was very different to that of Clarke: McConville detailed Davitt's prison behaviour:

He was no turbulent Rossa: his prison record shows only a handful of disciplinary reports, and those of the most trivial kind. This was a man who tried to survive in the convict system, keeping his mental and emotional balance, and limiting the damage which could undoubtedly arise from a long confinement.¹¹⁶

In contrast, Clarke, between 4th December 1883 and 4th July 1888, was 'sentenced to Confinement on Punishment Diet' for a total of 71 days, 31 days on No. 2 diet and 40 days on No. 1 Diet.'¹¹⁷ While Clarke also wanted to survive the ordeal, his behaviour dictated otherwise and it was this aspect of his time in prison that was strikingly different to Davitt's and warrants separate investigation and interpretation. However, McConville's research is broad and he considered a broad range of issues and aspects of the campaign for the release of the Irish prisoners which included an astute analysis of the changing British political landscape, 1883-1898.

In the *Mind of the Revolution*,¹¹⁸ Gerard MacAtasney produced in 2004 a vibrant and descriptive biography of Sean MacDiarmada. Tom Clarke is mentioned throughout the work but largely as a mentor or father figure to Sean MacDiarmada. Their relationship was more complex than this. MacDiarmada's flamboyance and persuasiveness was the perfect foil to Clarke's reticence and taciturnity. MacAtasney

¹¹⁴ Clarke, Thomas J Clarke, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life*, Dublin, 1922, p 39

¹¹⁵ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, p 361

¹¹⁶ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, p 276

¹¹⁷ PRO HO 144/195/A46664C/

¹¹⁸ MacAtasney, Gerard, Sean MacDiarmada, *the Mind of the Revolution*, (Manorhamilton, 2004)

gave Clarke credit for his role in the Rising and he quoted both Kathleen Clarke and Min Ryan as saying that Clarke and MacDiarmada were the revolution and without either of them, a Rising would not have been possible. MacAtasney found it difficult to acknowledge that Clarke was the elder partner in the IRB and effectively senior to MacDiarmada. The raid on the *Phoenix Park* magazine is discussed and MacAtasney indicates that it was 'Another event which bore MacDiarmada's imprimatur.'¹¹⁹ However, MacDiarmada invited Paddy Daly (who initially went to MacDiarmada with the idea) to meet Tom Clarke and others at the Clontarf Town Hall:

Sean McDermott said on my arrival, "Paddy here has some great ideas about the Magazine Fort and I would like you to hear what he has to say." Then Tom Clarke asked me to explain all about the matter.¹²⁰

Paddy Daly approached Sean MacDiarmada, his boss, and he in turn approached Tom Clarke, who effectively was his boss. Approval from Clarke for additional manoeuvres to those already agreed was vital and essentially this is what MacDiarmada did: he sought approval from Tom Clarke. However, MacAtasney's book recognized the important role that Clarke played in the run up to the Rising but it concentrated on and was about Sean MacDiarmada.

In *Easter 1916*,¹²¹ Charles Townsend produced, in 2005, a well researched analysis of the Easter Rising and events leading up to it. The strength of this work lies in Townsend's grasp of detail and fine analysis of events, movements and themes. He described¹²² how the Irish Volunteers came into existence, its development and very uneven spread across the South of Ireland in 1913. He also carefully analyzed in the Epilogue: The Rebellion in History, how 1916 was portrayed across historical works and through a number of different academic disciplines. He suggested that Pearse, Clarke and MacDiarmada were not anti-democratic:

They were ready to act without majority support-this was the reason for their [Clarke and MacDiarmada's] conflict with Bulmer Hobson-but in this way they were hardly different from any revolutionary insurrectionists of the nineteenth or twentieth century.¹²³ [Parenthesis by this author]

¹¹⁹ MacAtasney, *Sean MacDiarmada*, p. 118

¹²⁰ Daly, Patrick, The Allen Library, papers relevant to 1916, folio PP3

¹²¹ Townsend, Charles, *Easter 1916, The Irish Rebellion*, (London, 2005)

¹²² Townsend, *Easter 1916*, pp 41-48

¹²³ Townsend, *Easter 1916*, p 358

This character observation of revolutionists clearly indicated that Clarke's ordinariness did not impede his ability to organize for insurrection. In fact, his ordinariness was the almost perfect disguise to hide behind thus providing him with effective cover to carry on his revolutionary business without attracting more attention from the authorities in Dublin Castle. Despite this, Townsend is off the mark on two counts, the regularity of IRB SC meetings and the composition of the IRB Executive:

Immediately after the outbreak of war, the Supreme Council held one of its rare meetings and resolved in general terms to mount a rebellion, but the enthusiasts for insurrection-pre-eminently Tom Clarke and Sean MacDermott-were faced with the same problem as Pearse. They needed to keep their plans secret from their own colleagues, even those on the smaller IRB Executive (the Supreme Council's standing body) who, like Denis McCullough, accepted Hobson's interpretation of the Brotherhood's constitution.¹²⁴

This suggests that the Executive of the IRB SC did not have Clarke and MacDiarmada as its members. In fact they were the Executive: they acted as Treasurer and Secretary respectively while McCullough, after 1915, was President. McCullough lived and worked in Belfast and therefore the power of the IRB SC, between meetings and subject to that body's approval on all matters except policy, rested in the hands of Clarke and MacDiarmada. Similarly, as discussed later in this thesis, the IRB SC met quarterly between the outbreak of war and January 1916. Townsend may be confusing the exercise of deception practiced by Clarke and MacDiarmada with the regularity of IRB SC meetings. Indeed, the IRB SC may have had complete trust in Clarke and MacDiarmada, the IRB Executive, and rubber stamped many if not all of their decisions at their regular quarterly meetings held between September 1914 and January 1916.

Owen McGee, in his work on the *The IRB*,¹²⁵ published in 2005, discussed the fortunes of the IRB, from foundation through its connections with Parnell and the Land League to the formation of Sinn Fein. He argued that the IRB was never an insurrectionary conspiracy but was more involved with disseminating propaganda to politicize Ireland and draw it closer to republican thought and policy. This is not

¹²⁴ Townsend, *Easter 1916*, p 94

¹²⁵ McGee, Owen, *The IRB, The Irish Republican Brotherhood from the Land League to Sinn Fein*, (Dublin, 2005)

supported by the actions of the IRB once war started in 1914 or through its connections with Germany. In fact, the IRB under Clarke was working toward using the Volunteers as its armed wing in The Rising and the policies that Clarke followed cut across McGee's thesis on the activities of the IRB. McGee's work is erudite and well researched but on closer examination, his analysis of Clarke and his influence on revolutionary politics in Ireland after 1907 does tend to err on the side of understatement. To demonstrate this, two issues connected to Clarke and discussed by McGee will be examined. McGee stated that:

By April 1912, when a home rule bill was introduced by the Liberal government, the IRB in Ireland was essentially nothing more than the *Irish Freedom* newspaper, three small circles led by Denis McCullough in Belfast and Hobson's following. Tom Clarke did not revitalize the IRB.¹²⁶

This is a very narrow interpretation because McGee did not take into account IRB connections reinvigorated and/or started by MacDiarmada in the period 1909-1911; Tom Clarke's own IRB connections, which were partly built on John Daly's nationwide IRB links; nor IRB members in Britain. It was Clarke's intent to have a small well disciplined and controllable IRB membership. Indeed, Clarke on his own did not 'revitalize' the IRB; he did it in association with Bulmer Hobson, Denis McCullough, Sean MacDiarmada, Sean McGarry, Diarmuid Lynch, Pat McCartan, John Daly and John Devoy amongst others. McGee further opined:

By 1913, however, the IRB had little or no organization left...its experienced leadership had resigned and it had no initiatives except for keeping *Irish Freedom* in print, and this was achieving very little. Consequently, once the Irish Volunteers were formed, an excited Clarke and MacDermott decided to bank all their hopes for the future upon the volunteer movement.¹²⁷

This is an over simplification of the motives of Clarke and MacDiarmada in connection with the Irish Volunteers. Research for this thesis will establish that Clarke and MacDiarmada were heavily involved in the formation of the Volunteers. McGee did not recognize that Clarke was recruiting men for the IRB whose personal qualities and what they could actively and positively bring to the organization were more important than their numbers.

¹²⁶ McGee, *The IRB*, p. 353

¹²⁷ McGee, *The IRB*, p. 355

Matthew Kelly in *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916*, 2006,¹²⁸ discussed how after studying Irish history, literature and the Gaelic language interspersed with theories of Irish economic self-reliance, the shape of an Irish nation began to emerge which largely differed from the concepts of British imperial authority. He continued:

Comprehending the status quo in this way configured the Irish nation as an alternative and unimpeachable source of authority that legitimised the actions of advanced nationalist initiatives. This was the Fenian Ideal.¹²⁹

Kelly noted two or three negative aspects of this trying time for Clarke without noting any of the difficulties facing a man who had spent fifteen years of his life in jail. Did Clarke's difficulties reflect a wider unpopularity of the IRB? Was this a reflection of the inaction of the IRB Supreme Council to effectively promote the aims of the IRB efficiently and with vigour? Or was it that the IRB and separatism were at a low point? None of these questions were investigated nor was John McBride's attempt to gain work on the Dublin Council analyzed.

In *Turning Points of the Irish Revolution*,¹³⁰ produced in 2007, Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon wrote an account of the activities of the Intelligence Services in Ireland 1912-1921. He argued that the British Government's grip on power was initially weakened and then completely severed through the under use of the intelligence it received. However, Grob-Fitzgibbon posed the question he proposed to answer in his work:

The years 1912-1921 represented a colossal security failure for the British Government. The question this raises, of course, is how the British Empire, with all its political and military might, was unable to quell the insurgency in Ireland during these years.¹³¹

Grob-Fitzgibbon did not examine in that 'colossal security failure' the Royal Commission of Enquiry, under Lord Hardinge, into the Rebellion of 1916. Mentioning this would have compounded the intelligence failure as the Intelligence services of both the DMP 'G' division and Major Price's Army intelligence unit did not penetrate the inner circles of the IRB that Tom Clarke, Sean MacDiarmada and the other

¹²⁸ Matthew Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916*, (Woodbridge, 2006)

¹²⁹ Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*, p 10

¹³⁰ Grob-Fitzgibbon, Benjamin, *Turning Point of the Irish Revolution*, (New York, 2007)

¹³¹ Grob-Fitzgibbon, *Turning Point*, p. 3

Proclamation signatories inhabited. Similarly, Grob-Fitzgerald did not investigate the lack of communication between Naval Intelligence and the Irish Executive, in 1916, over the sharing of intelligence that strongly indicated that a Rising was imminent.

Emerging from this historiographical study of Tom Clarke is a picture of neglect by historians of his revolutionary views, personality, strengths, weaknesses and the context of his work with the other signatories of the Proclamation of the Republic which culminated in the events of Easter 1916. The few works that acknowledged he was centrally involved with the Rising, and in fact was *The Revolutionary*, do so by placing him at the heart of events and working out his relationship with the other leaders. Most of the works reviewed refer to Clarke in passing or minimize his role, traduce his personality, occupation, and appearance. Others just flatly ignore him. Historians may have used issues of class, doctrinal belief or lack of information to underestimate Clarke's role in 1916 but this thesis will go further along the path taken by Foy and Barton to attempt to rehabilitate Clarke to a more relevant position within the context of Irish historical study.

Who was Tom Clarke? What was his role in organizing an insurrection in Ireland against British rule in the opening years of the twentieth century? How involved was Clarke in the decision making processes of the IRB? What was his relationship with the other signatories of the 1916 Proclamation? How far was he responsible for the infiltration of Nationalist organizations before 1916? What influence did he have over these organizations and other people therein who were not members of the IRB? These were the questions which opened this historiographical review and answers were sought from the works under review. With some exceptions, these questions were not fully answered and this thesis will attempt to answer them in an empathetic, even handed and academically rigorous manner.

Chapter 2

Early influences, Irish and American Fenianism

1858-1883

There was a dramatic club in Dungannon with which Tom Clarke and myself were associated and we both travelled with an excursion organised by the club to Dublin... When in Dublin Clarke and I were introduced to Michael Davitt and John Daly who were in Dublin at that time... I don't now remember the hotel where we met or the name of the person who introduced us. I don't remember what discussions we had with Davitt and Daly in Dublin, but I am certain that the possibility of organising must have been discussed. A short time after the Circle was formed in Dungannon, John Daly came to Dungannon and addressed the members of our circle. Daly's address was concerned with the object of taking military action against the R.I.C., the drilling, training and arming of the members of our organisation for that object. It was the intention at this time to get all young Irishmen of good character and trustworthiness into the organisation.¹

Billy Kelly

¹ Kelly, Billy, Clarke Private Papers, (CPP) Memorandum in Tom Clarke

Early Life 1858-1880: England, South Africa and Ireland

Thomas James Clarke was born on 11th March 1858 in Hurst Castle, which is on a spit of land that overlooks the River Solent and is adjacent to the Isle of Wight. Six days later, on 17th March, St Patrick's Day, 1858, the 'Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood was brought into existence'² and later became more widely known as the Irish Republican Brotherhood. This was pure coincidence but the symbolism of these two events in Irish history is relevant. Thomas J Clarke, the first signatory of the 1916 Proclamation was born at the same time as the IRB was founded, the movement he was associated with for most of his life. He was in both the IRB and Clan na Gael for thirty-five years and certainly from 1900, Clarke's fortunes and those of the IRB/Clan na Gael were inextricably intertwined.

Clarke was born to a Catholic mother, Mary Clarke (nee Palmer), who came from County Tipperary and a Protestant father, James, who was from County Leitrim. They were married in 1857 and soon after James was transferred from his garrison in Clonmel to Hurst Park, where Thomas Clarke was born and baptized a Catholic. James was a Corporal in the Royal Artillery, saw active service in the Crimea and was transferred to South Africa on 9th April 1859. Tom Clarke's son, Emmet, recalled his mother telling him that Tom Clarke told her that he learned about the Fenian heroes of old at his mother's knee and it was these views that had a lasting impact on him.³ Tom Clarke was diametrically opposed to his father's views on British Imperial power. His father considered the British Army to be unbeatable and an arm of British Imperialism spreading British civilization across the globe. Clarke senior was part of that civilization and the myth of Empire woven by British Imperial propagandists whereas Clarke junior was not and saw the same dynamic as self serving and destructive in relation to Ireland. Clarke senior served in various garrisons across South Africa until 15th

² Denieffe, Joseph, *A Personal Narrative of the Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood*, (Shannon, 1969)

³ Clarke Private Papers, (CPP). Clarke, Emmet, son of Thomas & Kathleen Clarke, I obtained primary source material from him in the form of letters, memorandum, oral recollection and a videotaped interview. (These sources were not lodged with the National Library of Ireland). Emmet Clarke, Oral recollection, noted 19 June 1993.

March 1865 when he returned to Ireland. He was appointed Sergeant of the Ulster Militia based at Charlemont Castle, Co Tyrone and was transferred to Dungannon. The married quarters in Dungannon Militia Barracks were too small to accommodate the Clarke family so James and Mary rented a private house nearby.

Tom Clarke lived under military conditions for the first ten years of his life and this possibly gave him an underlying sense of discipline from the contact he had with his father and other soldiers. Similarly, the environment he grew up in had a predominant Britishness about it: his father's Regiment was British and if there were children on the bases he grew up in they were most likely to be sons or daughters of British men in the Royal Artillery although not exclusively so. His mother, on the other hand related stories of the old Fianna and gave him a good grounding in the history of Ireland from a nationalist perspective.⁴ Thus it proved that when Clarke returned to Ireland with his parents, there was probably an element of expectation and emotional joy to see the country where his parents were born. The probability that they missed Ireland was very possibly transmitted to Clarke in terms of a place they would have called home and clearly, this may have bred in Clarke's mind a romanticized view of Ireland which was diffused by the reality of returning home.

There is no evidence to support, his mother's tales of Irish history notwithstanding, the idea that Clarke was strongly pro-republican before the age of fourteen. After this, he began to develop strong feelings and an emotional tie for and to Ireland.⁵

However, reality was staring him in the face and the rigours of the famine, still very much a living memory for Irishmen and Irishwomen, were expressed candidly by friends and acquaintances of his mother and father. Therefore his parent's influence, his own view of the horror wrought in Ireland by the famine, his dislike of British rule and his knowledge of Irish history, synthesized within Clarke's mind steering him toward a republican viewpoint. This idealism

⁴ CPP, *Clarke, Emmet*, Oral recollection, 19th June 1993

⁵ CPP, *Billy Kelly statement* on Tom Clarke

precluded other youthful activities as he discussed with Billy Kelly and friends ways and means of working toward a free Ireland. Clarke was at war with England before he joined the IRB and accepted the republican analysis of the damage inflicted on Ireland by British Imperialism.⁶

Thus, Clarke's interest in republican politics was established at an early age. He attended St Patrick's National School in Dungannon until 1880 when the school closed because of a declining population. One of his teachers, Cornelius Collins, made Tom an assistant teacher but Clarke was a restless adolescent and preferred action to words. Clarke was an actor of sorts and he set up a dramatic club to act as a front for his IRB work.⁷

Clarke became more involved with the IRB. He went to Dublin in 1879 with the Catholic and Total Abstinence Reading Rooms and Dramatic Club where he and his friend Billy Kelly were introduced to Michael Davitt (Fenian, MP, journalist and one of the founders of the Irish National Land League) and John Daly (Fenian, IRB organizer). Unbeknown to either Clarke or Daly, they would become intimate friends bound by their shared experiences in English prisons. Billy Kelly described the circumstances of how Clarke became involved with the IRB:

There was a dramatic club in Dungannon with which Tom Clarke and my self were associated and we both travelled with an excursion organised by the club to Dublin... When in Dublin Clarke and I were introduced to Michael Davitt and John Daly who were in Dublin at that time... I don't now remember the hotel where we met or the name of the person who introduced us. I don't remember what discussions we had with Davitt and Daly in Dublin, but I am certain that the possibility of organising must have been discussed. A short time after the Circle was formed in Dungannon, John Daly came to Dungannon and addressed the members of our circle. Daly's address was concerned with the object of taking military action against the R.I.C., the drilling, training and arming of the members of our organisation for that object. It was the intention at this time to get all young Irishmen of good character and trustworthiness into the organisation.⁸

⁶ Le Roux, Louis, *Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement*, (Dublin, 1936)

⁷ CPP Kelly Statement

⁸ CPP Kelly Statement

Notably, the four met in a hotel to discuss the business at hand and not in a public house where some IRB business was necessarily conducted because of lack of suitable premises. Davitt and Daly were impressed enough by the young Clarke to ask him to organize the IRB in and around Dungannon. Sectarian rivalry was not a rare occurrence in Dungannon and *The Tyrone Courier* throughout the 1870s reflected in its columns the tensions between the two communities and described them as 'Orange and Green.' One leading article noted that in the town of Coalisland, less than ten miles from Dungannon, 'The members of each party are ready and right willing to assert their belief that they are right by force of arms. Orange and Green have not yet learned to tolerate each other, and more than likely never will.'⁹ The same article also noted that the police kept the peace between the two sides, '...and it keeps all the tact and watchfulness of the officers of the law to keep them separated into two different camps in the town.'¹⁰

This suggested that the town was segregated into two, largely, opposing groupings. Further outbreaks of sectarian violence occurred on 12th July 1880 outside Dungannon when shots were fired on people returning from Orange parades.¹¹ On the 13th July 1880, a riot occurred in Dungannon when Catholics and Protestants confronted each other in the central square where shots were again fired and several people were injured.¹² Thus the world that Tom Clarke inhabited in Dungannon was dangerous. Sectarian attacks and counter attacks were relatively commonplace and there was an element of danger for people of both persuasions. A parade of the Ancient Order of Hibernians took place on 15th August 1880 and a clash developed with some Orange folk. A riot broke out, a magistrate read the Riot Act and the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) opened fire on the Hibernians: a man called Hogan was shot dead and several other people

⁹ British Library Newspaper Collection (BLNC), *The Tyrone Courier*, 24 January 1880

¹⁰ BLNC, *The Tyrone Courier*, 24 January.1880

¹¹ BLNC, *The Tyrone Courier*, 16 July 1880

¹² BLNC, *The Tyrone Courier*, 16 July 1880

were wounded including Billy Kelly's brother.¹³ On the 16th August, the Dungannon IRB, under Clarke, fought back:

On the night of the 16th August 1880, 11 of the R.I.C were ambushed in Irish Street, Dungannon, by some members of the I.R.B including Tom Clarke and myself – about five or six in all. We opened fire on the police and they escaped into a public house in Anne Street. Reinforcements of police arrived on the scene and we had to retreat.¹⁴

The *Tyrone Courier* reported that the Lady Day Parade went off peaceably during the day but in the evening, a riot occurred and the RIC came under gunfire from revolvers.¹⁵ Further disturbances took place on 17 August: *The Irish Times* reported on 18 August, 'All is quiet today in Dungannon.'¹⁶ This offensive action by the IRB in Irish Street was organized by Tom Clarke. The arrest, in connection with the IRB action, and later release of a man resembling Clarke prompted him to lay low for a period of time and eventually to leave Ireland for America.

ii) America and Clan na Gael: 1880-1883

Billy Kelly described the transfer of Clarke and friends from the IRB in Ireland to Clan na Gael in America:

In September 1880, Clarke and I and a few others decided to emigrate to America. Previous to leaving for America we obtained a transfer from the Dungannon Circle of the I.R.B. to Camp No. 1 Clan na Gael in New York (No.4 Union Street.)¹⁷

However, the ship carrying Clarke to New York broke down and required emergency maintenance. After a delay of two weeks the emigrants sailed off in an old cattle ship which stopped at Halifax and Boston en route to New York. Clarke and Kelly got in touch with Patrick O'Connor when they arrived and they

¹³ CPP, *Kelly statement*

¹⁴ CPP, *Kelly statement*

¹⁵ BLNC, *The Tyrone Courier*, 20 August 1880

¹⁶ BLNC, *The Irish Times*, 18 August 1880

¹⁷ CPP, *Kelly statement*

both worked in his Boot and Shoe shop and slept in the cellar. Billy Kelly recalled that O'Connor was no simple shoe repair man:

Patrick O'Connor...was a member of the Clan na Gael. Patrick O'Connor introduced us to members of the Clan na Gael Camp in New York. A man named James Connolly of Cavan was senior guardian of the Camp and Timothy Riordan was financial Secretary of the Camp. Shortly after our admission to the camp, Tom Clarke was appointed recording Secretary of the Camp. ¹⁸

The appointment of Clarke as Recording Secretary of the Napper Tandy Club reflected his standing in the IRB/Clan na Gael in the early 1880s. His proven track record of action in Dungannon would not have gone unnoticed and the leading lights of the Clan in the leading Clan club recognized this and started him on a career within their revolutionary structure. A member of the Napper Tandy Club provided a word picture of Clarke's personality at age twenty-three in 1881:

In a lecture delivered before the Tyrone Association in New York, in 1924, Mr John Kenny said that Clarke was a "bright, earnest, wiry, alert young fellow" when introduced to the club, of which I was then President. ¹⁹

Billy Kelly underlined the nature of the Napper Tandy Club, 'In the summer of 1881, we joined the Napper Tandy Club. Dr Gallagher was the Club leader. The purpose of this club was the instruction of its members in the use of explosives.' ²⁰ Gallagher's dynamite lessons were attended by both Clarke and Kelly, 'and sometimes Clarke went with the 'master' to a desolate spot on Long Island where they experimented, blasting rocks with nitroglycerine.' ²¹ Thus Clarke was beginning to be drawn into the Dynamite Campaign that ran from 1881 to 1885.

¹⁸ CPP, Letter, Billy Kelly to Kathleen Clarke in September 1919

¹⁹ Le Roux, *Tom Clarke*, p 19

²⁰ CPP, *Kelly statement*

²¹ Short, K R M, *The Dynamite War, Irish-American Bombers in Victorian Britain*, (Dublin, 1979), p 133

The context of the campaign by Irish-Americans to gain independence for Ireland in the 1870s and 1880s was intricate and it seemed that Clarke played a relatively minor role within the inherent complexities of that campaign. Skirmishing as a method of guerilla warfare was discussed in 1875 by O'Donovan Rossa, Patrick Ford and others, and together they, 'took the ground that Ireland and England were in a *state of war*. This fact had to be recognized at the starting point' ²² John McCafferty, who was at the gathering, defended the amassing of a Fund for Skirmishing by noting that all means were legitimate. ²³ This attitude was irresponsible and reckless as it condoned the later loss of life, freedom and sanity of skirmishers and innocent victims alike. As a balance to this misplaced braggadocio, the newspaper man Ford published a code of conduct for skirmishers in 1878, 'Maxims for Skirmishers' next to an appeal for donations: the maxims detailed the parameters of the strategy to be employed. ²⁴ The Atlantic Ocean provided a comfortable barrier between the planning of this campaign in the USA and the bloody reality of carrying out the intentions of the originating group in Britain.

This therefore was the beginning ²⁵ of the Dynamite/Skirmishers Campaign which gained limited publicity in December, 1875, when O'Donovan Rossa wrote to the *Irish World* newspaper in New York, 'calling for funds for parties of skirmishers who would mount repeated small attacks on England while work continued for a general insurrection.' ²⁶ Initially, money did not flow into the fund: revolutionary action was promised by Rossa when the fund reached \$5,000 and his ambition went further than just obstructing or harassing the British

²² Whelehan, Niall, 'Cheap as soap and Common as Sugar': The Fenians, Dynamite and Scientific Warfare, in McGarry, Fearghal and McConnell, James, eds, *The Black Hand of Republicanism Fenianism in Modern Ireland*, (Dublin, 2009), p. 115

²³ Whelehan, Cheap as soap and Common as Sugar, p. 115

²⁴ Whelehan, Cheap as soap and Common as Sugar, p. 115

²⁵ Short, *The Dynamite War*, McConville, Sean, *Irish Political Prisoners, 1848-1922, Theatres of War*, (London, 2005), Whelehan, Niall, 'Cheap as soap and Common as Sugar': In toto, these accounts discuss the how and why the Dynamite campaign came about, who was involved in the planning and implementation of it, the situation in both America and England and the aftermath of the campaign.

²⁶ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, p. 332

Government and he was literally 'in favour of anything' ²⁷ however improbable, unlikely or impractical to gain Irish independence. Rossa's alcoholism probably contributed to his mind set. ²⁸ The success of the audacious *Catalpa* mission, planned and devised by John Devoy to rescue Fenian prisoners from Fremantle, Australia, had bolstered Rossa's fund as money flooded in and the original target of \$5,000 was achieved very quickly. However, Rossa was neither connected to the Clan nor the *Catalpa* rescue but he basked in the reflected glory of the successful rescue. The rescue demonstrated what a well planned yet audacious scheme coupled with limited funds could achieve.

By March 1877 the fund had reached \$23,000 and this prompted criticism of the narrow base of the trustees: John Devoy and four other Clan men became the new trustees and disassociated the fund from Rossa's violent plans against the British. The fund was renamed the National Fund and had swollen to \$90,000 by 1880. The money therein did not finance any terrorist acts as the trustees spent most of the funds providing start up money for the Irish engineer John Holland's idea for a submarine. His idea for a submersible to be used for military purposes in establishing an independent Ireland did not materialize but, 'the culmination of his work came with the launching of the *Holland* in 1898 which was purchased by the United States Navy in 1900' ²⁹ with the British buying several submarines from the Holland Company in 1901. The original submarine, *The Fenian Ram*, designed by John Phillip Holland is now on display at the Paterson Museum, New Jersey. ³⁰

Essentially, Rossa was a dangerous but clever maverick who became alienated from old comrades-the revolutionists John Devoy and Michael Davitt, and the militant constitutionalist Charles Parnell-when the Clan accepted the tenets and parameters of the New Departure. Support flowed between these very distinct groupings: the Fenians and their resources backed parliamentary agitation while the parliamentary party was committed to the land war. Rossa's

²⁷ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, p. 332

²⁸ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, p. 334

²⁹ Short, *The Dynamite War*, p.263

³⁰ Hickey, D J and Doherty, J E, *A New Dictionary of Irish History from 1800*, (Dublin, 2003), p.208

alienation was complete when Patrick Ford, editor of the *Irish World*, supported the New Departure and Rossa found himself without a newspaper, organization, friends or colleagues to use as vehicles to promote his views on the shape of Ireland's future. However, in June 1880, the *United Irishman* newspaper appeared with himself as editor and later, he organized a poorly attended convention and after an unsuccessful attempt to have the National Fund audited, he started the United Irish Reserve Fund.³¹ His intentions were straightforward and unsubtle. 'The formula was quite simple: if supporters would send him the money Rossa would undertake to find the men to set fires and place explosives in England.'³² This resulted in the first attack on England by Rossa and his Skirmishers:

On 14 January 1881 Rossa turned words into action with an explosives attack on Salford barracks. Four civilians were injured, including a boy of 7 who died two days later.³³

The Clan was not to be outmanoeuvred by Rossa and started to make its own plans for a dynamite campaign in England. These plans, and later actions, acted as a counterbalance to its accommodation with the parliamentary nationalists and kept alive its aims of an armed struggle. Captain William Mackey Lomasney was chosen to lead and plan the campaign and he journeyed to England but stayed in France for long periods between February and July, 1881. However, McConville noted that:

Early in 1881 Lomasney set off on a four month reconnaissance mission to England and Ireland. Fearing a backlash against the Irish community in England and military reprisals in Ireland, Lomasney recommended to the Clan leadership that the business of arming and organising supporters in Ireland and Britain should proceed much further before a major dynamite campaign was launched.³⁴

³¹ Short, *The Dynamite War*, pp. 46-47

³² McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, p.338

³³ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, p.342

³⁴ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, p.337

McConville did not mention Lomasney's time in France or his IRB associate John O'Connor.³⁵ The impression gleaned from Short's interpretation of Lomasney's mission to Europe in January 1881 and equally the tone used in his letters to John Devoy of 1880 and 1881³⁶ suggested Lomasney undertook an assignment incorporating a much wider role than McConville outlined. This is underscored by a meeting between Lomasney and Charles Parnell.³⁷ Between 1881 and 1885, the Clan and Rossa's organization mounted approximately sixteen attacks on a variety of targets in England with varying success.

More relevant to Clarke's involvement in the dynamite campaign was Dr Thomas Gallagher's visit to England and Ireland. He left New York in October 1882 and returned to America just before Christmas 1882. During his trip he sized up potential targets for a bombing campaign which was planned to start in the spring of 1883.³⁸

There is no primary or secondary evidence suggesting Clarke was aware of the dissensions within Clan na Gael or the IRB but he read the daily newspapers and discussed events in Ireland, America and England with Billy Kelly and others and was cognizant of official Clan business through his post as recording secretary of the Napper Tandy Club. Much calumny came down on the heads of those connected to both organizations on each side of the Atlantic for putting together a badly organized campaign which saw all of the dynamitards arrested, outright condemnation from the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) and a negation of the campaign by some leading IRB/Clan na Gael men.

Dynamite Campaign: Arrest, trial and imprisonment: England, 1883

Despite the internecine strife over the dynamite campaign in the IRB, Clan na Gael and the IPP, Clarke remained loyal to the fundamentals of the Clan and

³⁵ Short, *The Dynamite War*, p.59

³⁶ O'Brien, William, and Ryan, Desmond, eds, *Devoy's Post Bag, Volume II, 1880-1928*, (Dublin, 1948), for example Lomasney-Devoy, 3 November 1880, 9 November 1880, et seq

³⁷ O'Brien, William and Ryan, Desmond, *Devoy's Post Bag*, Lomasney-Devoy, pp. 39-40

³⁸ Short, *The Dynamite War*, p.126-127

the IRB, and was eager and proud to go, in 1883, on a dangerous mission to England. Billy Kelly detailed Clarke's feelings on the mission: -

All his life Tom prided himself on having gone to England on this expedition, and never did he utter a complaint that he and his co-volunteers had been let down by any Irish Chiefs.³⁹

However, Clarke's journey to England did not start very well. Timothy O'Riordan, Secretary of Camp No 1, ordered Clarke to be in a state of readiness to go on a mission and 'in early March one of the men selected to join Gallagher for the London mission refused to go and Clarke was chosen in his place.'⁴⁰ Timothy O'Riordan gave Clarke money and instructions for his journey and also a contact in England, namely Albert Whitehead through whom Clarke would learn of the other people on the mission and their aims.⁴¹ Clarke's role as a foot soldier in the operation mounted by Gallagher is not entirely accurate: John Devoy...

...asserted that the Revolutionary Directory had supplied funds without asking questions to T.J Clarke and Dr. Gallagher, who were "given money to defray their expenses, and we made no enquiry as to what they were doing. "⁴²

On one level, this indicates that Clarke was more than a foot soldier for this particular mission, as he went with Gallagher, 'the master', to Long Island where they used nitroglycerine to blast rocks experimentally.⁴³ This may indicate that Clarke was possibly Gallagher's deputy or number 2 for this mission: physical evidence of this may have been lost or destroyed in a shipping accident Clarke was involved in on his journey to Britain in 1883. In the overall context of the Dynamite Campaign and the power struggles within and without the Clan, Clarke

³⁹ Le Roux, *Tom Clarke*, p 23

⁴⁰ Short, *The Dynamite War*, p.133

⁴¹ Le Roux, *Tom Clarke*, p. 25

⁴² O'Brien, William and Ryan, Desmond, *Devoy's Post Bag*, (Dublin, 1979), p. 9 The quotation marks refer to a direct quote from the *Gaelic American*, 30th June 1923, which was reporting on the proceedings of Devoy's libel action against the *Irish World* in 1920

⁴³ Short, *The Dynamite War*, p. 133

was a relatively minor player. However, Billy Kelly described how the mission started for Clarke:

Tom travelled via Boston, hoping thus to elude possible spies, but his ship struck an iceberg and sank shortly after sailing. He lost his luggage, but he himself was fortunately picked up by a passing vessel and landed at Newfoundland. There he gave his name as Henry Hammond Wilson, an Englishman returning to his native land. He was given new clothes and five pounds to enable him to reach his home in England.⁴⁴

Clarke was again unlucky when travelling by ship: this was the second time in his life-the first a serious collision involving the ship carrying him and his parents to South Africa-that he had been involved in potentially life threatening shipping incident. The maritime mishap had the effect of throwing the British spies off his track and he landed in Liverpool undetected. He rendezvoused with Dr Thomas Gallagher, the head of the group and Albert Whitehead in Birmingham. It was here that Clarke met another member of the group, W J Norman, (alias William Joseph Lynch) whose evidence for the Crown at the trial of the dynamiters in June 1883 ensured a guilty verdict became a reality. This was 28th March 1883. On the 29th, Clarke and Gallagher travelled to London, left their luggage at Euston Station and went to their hotels in the Strand.⁴⁵

On 31st March, Clarke rented a room on the second floor of 17 Nelson Square, Blackfriars Road which was owned by a Mrs Clare. That same day he brought his baggage, which weighed sixty pounds, from Euston to his new lodgings. He planned to go to Birmingham on 2nd April and wrote to Whitehead a coded letter confirming this. However the police had intercepted and copied all letters and telegrams dispatched by Clarke and his co-conspirators during their stay in England. On 4th April, Clarke, who had gone to Whitehead's shop in Birmingham began the return journey to London. He stayed in the Midland Hotel:

⁴⁴ Le Roux, *Tom Clarke*, p 25

⁴⁵ Le Roux, *Tom Clarke*, p 28

A cabman, Robert Lanchester, said that he drove "Wilson" from the hotel to Whitehead's shop. He left the shop for the railway station with a heavy portmanteau. "Wilson" admitted in later years that he noticed that day that he was being shadowed by the police. He knew also that his portmanteau contained highly dangerous explosives, and he feared that rough handling at the station, where the portmanteau had to be slid down a slanting board, might detonate them, and send station, porters, police and conspirators sky high. All went well, however, and "Wilson" with his luggage reached his London lodgings safely on the evening of April 4.⁴⁶

It was at 17 Nelson Square that Detective Inspector Littlechild arrested Clarke while Chief Constable Shea arrested Gallagher. Clarke, under his assumed name Henry Hammond Wilson, Dr Thomas Gallagher, William Ausburgh, John Curtin, Alfred Whitehead and Bernard Gallagher were all tried on Monday 11th June 1883 at the Old Bailey before the Chief Justice of England, the Master of the Rolls and Mr Justice Greer with crimes under the Treason Felony Act of 1848.

The prosecution built most of their case, along with the nitroglycerin found in the possession of Clarke and Gallagher, on the confession of Norman. However, under cross examination by Clarke, Norman admitted that he had not seen him before.⁴⁷ The issue of informers is very interesting here, as on different levels it appeared that the British authorities had a very good idea of the scope and nature of this element of the dynamite campaign. The highest levels of Clann-na-Gael had been penetrated by British intelligence: Henry Le Caron, his real name was Beach, and the self styled General, F F Millan were both in a position to advise the British Government of most, if not all, of the Clan's plans, decisions, meetings, discussions and future activities. Similarly, the informer Norman was most probably a plant who worked at the level of the conspirators and could be relied on to produce evidence relating to the day to day movements of the men involved.

This use of informants working for the British coloured Clarke's views on who to trust and this demonstrated itself most vividly in 1914 with Clarke's

⁴⁶ Le Roux, *Tom Clarke*, p 29

⁴⁷ BLNC, *The Times*, Tuesday, 12 June 1883

interaction with Bulmer Hobson over the split in the Volunteers. Clarke, after eleven years of imprisonment, could not accept that he was found guilty of Treason-Felony on slender evidence. (The case as presented was overwhelmingly conclusive in establishing the guilt of the dynamitards). In a letter to Fred Allen in 1894, he mentioned the work of friends in America, probably Clan-na-Gael, who, he thought, were not diligent enough to overturn the evidence of Norman.⁴⁸

Clarke and his colleagues were patently guilty: the possession of such large amounts of explosives combined with the obvious American nature of his colleagues and some of their clothes indicated something more than innocent activity. At his trial, Clarke defended himself but he made a serious slip when he was being questioned over the composition of the explosive substance found in his portmanteau. The Prosecuting Counsel was explaining to the Court the various elements contained in the explosive mix when Clarke corrected him and the Counsel remarked that Clarke was conversant with the explosives after all. This was a salutary lesson for Clarke who through this learned the power of silence and the advantages of minimum verbal expression and intervention.⁴⁹ On Thursday 14th June 1883 at 17:45, the jury retired to consider their verdict and returned an hour and ten minutes later. Lynch and Gallagher's brother, Bernard, were acquitted but Gallagher, Whitehead, Curtin and Clarke were found guilty and were sentenced to penal servitude for life.

Life for Clarke from an early age was very much out of the ordinary: he spent the first ten years of his life in South Africa, travelled back to Ireland and had to resettle there within the parameters of a mixed religious family. His views on the future for Ireland were coloured as much by his mother's nationalist views as they were by the starkly divergent views of his father who saw British imperialism as a force for good while others saw it as the advance column for British capitalism. His association and membership with the IRB led him into direct confrontational action with the Royal Irish Constabulary in an action he saw

⁴⁸ BLNC, Tom Clarke to the *Irish Weekly Independent*, 4 August 1894

⁴⁹ Le Roux, *Tom Clarke*, p 34

as attacking the representatives of the power that was not working for the entire population of Ireland. He went to the USA in 1880 but returned to England in 1883 on a mission for the Clan as a dynamitard. He became involved in the dynamite campaign and he and his fellow dynamitards were caught, tried and sentenced to long terms in jail. Clarke survived over fifteen years of prison life that had killed, maimed and severely injured many of his dynamitard colleagues and emerged to begin another eventful part of his life.

Chapter 3

Dynamite Campaign, prison life and release

1883-1898

We treason-felony prisoners were known in Chatham as "The Special Men" and some twelve or fourteen of us were kept, not in the ordinary prison halls but in the penal cells-kept there so that we could be the more conveniently persecuted, for the authorities aimed at making life unbearable for us. The ordinary rules regulating the treatment of prisoners, which, to some extent, shield them from foul play and the caprice of petty officers, these rules, as far as they did that, were, in our case, set aside, in order to give place to a system devised by the governor of the prison, Captain Harris. This was a scientific system of perpetual and persistent harassing, which gave the officers in charge of us a free hand to persecute us just as they pleased. It was made part of their duty to worry and harass us all the time... This system was applied to the Irish prisoners, and to them only, and was specially devised to destroy us mentally and physically-to kill or drive insane. It was worked to its utmost against us for six or seven years, and it was during that time that all men who succumbed went mad.¹

Thomas J Clarke

¹ Clarke, Thomas J, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life*, (Dublin, 1922), pp 13-14

Survival in the Convict Prison System: Clarke and the Irish Political Prisoners, 1883-1890

Following the guilty verdict handed down at the Old Bailey on 14th June 1883 ² Clarke and the rest of the Gallagher team of dynamitards were incarcerated in Millbank prison. By 1884, most of the dynamitards had been transferred to Chatham Prison having been sentenced for their exploits and deeds as bombing envoys for Irish-America. ³

The chair of the Directorate of Convict Prisons was held after 1869 by Sir Edmund Du Cane whose control over prisons amounted to a closed world, even to the Home Office and Ministers. Du Cane had experience of Irish prisoners, particularly Michael Davitt and O'Donovan Rossa, and kept watch over the changing political scene and the consequences for Irish political offenders. The loss of power by the Liberals in 1883 plus the lack of friends in England, Ireland and America, indicated that the dynamitards faced the unrelenting and all encompassing power of the convict system without much help from outside people or organizations. ⁴ Clarke was of the opinion ⁵ that the system of human degradation in Chatham prison was devised by the Governor, Captain Harris, and implemented by the prison staff; but it was the chairmanship of Du Cane that ensured that outside scrutiny was kept to a minimum. This element of Clarke's time in prison will be examined but it is the length of the brutality inherent in the prison regime that is important here:

This system was applied to the Irish prisoners, and to them only, and was specially devised to destroy us mentally and physically-to kill or drive insane. It was worked to its utmost against us for six or seven years, and it was during that time that all men who succumbed went mad. ⁶

² <http://www.oldbaileyonline.org/index.jsp>, the trial of Thomas Gallagher, Alfred Whitehead, Henry Wilson, William Ansbrough, John Curtin, Bernard Gallagher for treason, 28th May 1883, reference number t18830528-620

³ For an in depth description and discussion of these men's treatment in English jails please refer to Sean McConville's work, *Irish Political Prisoners, 1848-1922, Theatres of War*, (Routledge, 2003). Chapter 8, The Dynamitards in Prison, pp 361-404, is a detailed account of the conditions of prison life, the politics and politicians involved with the prisoners and on wider issues, various reports on the treatment of prisoners and the Amnesty Association's attempts, both in Ireland and England, to secure the release of the dynamitards after 1890.

⁴ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, p 361

⁵ Clarke, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life*, p 13

⁶ Clarke, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life*, pp 13-14

Clarke's description of the time period of the, in his eyes, greatest oppression against the Irish prisoners suggests that this chapter can be divided, chronologically, into two relatively distinct time frames, 1883-1890 and 1890-1898. Certainly in 1890, reports and news of the conditions under which the Irish prisoners were incarcerated began to reach a wider audience through the *Chatham Visitors' Report*; questions in the House of Commons; reports in journals and newspapers; and by 1892, through the Amnesty Association.

Clarke and Chatham Prison, 1883-1890

Two important but circumstantial factors relating to this specific group of Irish prisoners in Chatham need to be examined. First, the majority did not come from England: most were Irish who had lived in America for a period of time before crossing the Atlantic on their individual missions. Second, these men, and certainly Clarke,⁷ looked upon themselves not as ordinary criminals but as political prisoners who were fighting for a cause and it was these factors in part that led the Irish prisoners to complain and fight against the harsh system employed in Chatham. The difference in treatment of the Irish prisoners in the two periods could lead to a conclusion that the severity of the regime 1883-1890 was imposed with a purpose to rob individuals of their sanity and physical well being. This is in contrast with the improved, but still harsh, treatment of the Irish prisoners after 1890. In addition to this, the regime in prisons, for ordinary criminals involved complete obedience, passivity and obsequiousness.

This was particularly prevalent during Edmund Du Cane's Chairmanship of the Prisons Directory, also Captain W F V Harris's time as governor and Deputy Governor Captain Burgoyne's period there.⁸ It must be noted that including the Chair, almost all of the prison staff at Chatham were ex-naval or ex-military men and harsh discipline was the order of the day-every day-for prisoners and, to a lesser extent for warders.⁹ Clarke referred to the many hundreds of officers with whom he came into contact but singled out two of note. One was an Irishman who threw scraps of bread into the Irish prisoners' cells and who would, when possible, 'whisper' a snippet of interesting news. The other was an Englishman who, under

⁷ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 41

⁸ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, p 372

⁹ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 53

cover of haranguing Clarke, told him of the imminent visit of Richard Pigott, newspaperman and forger, to Chatham to obtain information about Parnell from John Daly. Clarke wondered why this man had helped him and his prison colleagues and found out only many years later after his transfer to Portland that the man was married to an Irish woman.¹⁰

Prison life was harsh for the criminal inmates of convict prisons but it possibly was harsher for this specific group of Irish prisoners. Clarke's *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life* reflected the depth of that harshness and the accusations he discussed suggest that they were treated much worse than the ordinary criminal population. This may have an element of truth but this must be tempered with the individual personalities of the prisoners. Clarke was extremely headstrong when he entered Chatham in 1883 and to a certain extent, naive. Between 4th December 1883, just after arriving at Chatham, and 4th July 1888, Clarke was confined on punishment diet on no more than thirteen occasions for a minimum of two days to a maximum of twenty days. The offences were for talking, carrying forbidden items-a piece of lead or a newspaper-and in one incident he was confined for striking another prisoner.¹¹

In the case of the Irish prisoners, Clarke's argument might be relevant given the press coverage of bombings and attempted bombings, 1881-1885.¹² The fear generated by the dynamite campaign did not stop at the prison gate and warders read newspapers and drew conclusions of their own. Most of the prison staff were viewed unfavourably by the Irish prisoners but not all. John Daly in his evidence to the Chatham Visitors noted that Principal Warder Ruffell demonstrated kindness and humanity to all prisoners he encountered.¹³ On the other hand, Clarke mentioned 'a scientific system of perpetual and persistent harassing, which gave the officers in charge of us a free hand to persecute us just as they pleased.'¹⁴

To accurately gauge in which year this incident occurred is very difficult but Clarke was twenty five in 1883 and thirty two in 1890: the heavy work, poor diet,

¹⁰ Clarke, *Glimpses*, pp 53-54

¹¹ PRO HO 144/195/A46664C, record of prison offences in Chatham prison.

¹² Newspaper Library Colindale, *Salford Weekly News*, 15 January 1881, *The Times* 18 March 1881, *The Times* 3 August 1882, *The Times* 18 January 1883, *New York Tribune*, 18 March 1883, *The Times* 12 June 1883, *The Globe* 31 May 1884, *The Saturday Review*, 31 January 1885.

¹³ NA HO 144/194/A46664C, *Report of the Visitors of Her Majesty's Convict Prison at Chatham as to the Treatment of Certain*

Prisoners Convicted of Treason Felony, (Chatham Visitors' Report), qq. 1551-68, pp 45-6

¹⁴ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 13

Clarke's ambivalent personal attitude, lack of communication and the 'special' treatment of the prisoners by the warders all combined, it would seem, to wear down Clarke and his fellow prisoners to such an extent that mental and physical health appears to have deteriorated significantly. Irrespective of the purported equality of treatment between the rank and file prison population and the Special Men, the punishment cells where they were confined were uncomfortable. There was no hammock nor movable furniture-the bed was a plank of wood and the stool a block of wood attached to the floor-which meant that these could not be thrown around the cell by a prisoner venting his anger.¹⁵ The authorities knew that the Irish prisoners would be in the Convict prison system for a long period of time but there is little primary source evidence to suggest that any attempt was made to refurbish punishment cells and make them slightly more comfortable. This does, however, give some credence to Clarke's and his prison comrades' claims that the Irish prisoners were treated more harshly than the prisoners who populated the general convict areas.

Clarke further mentioned how systematic methods and means were being employed by prison staff to make life for the Irish prisoners more intolerable within the confines of an already stern and harsh prison environment. Here, Clarke described how sleep deprivation was organized:

I could not go to bed before time as it would mean a bread and water punishment and I was already getting enough of their systematic starvation. When the bell rang I would turn into bed, sometimes to sleep, sometimes to lie awake for hours, with body too weary and nerves too shattered for any refreshing sleep to come. If came, I was awakened within an hour by a noise something like the report of a small cannon being fired close beside me. The officer was inspecting us, and had merely banged the heavy iron trap-door after him. With the same loud noise the trap door would be banged all through the night at hourly intervals. The prisoner might get a few short snatches of sleep between the inspections, or perhaps his nervous system was so shattered with this and other ingenious tortures that he would not be able to sleep at all.¹⁶

Clarke here speculated that this 'no sleep' ordeal had a shattering effect on prisoner's nervous systems with his own, no doubt, included. He mentioned that this

¹⁵ PRO HO 144/194/A46664A, *Chatham Visitor's Report*, Minutes of Evidence, qq 243-50

¹⁶ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 14

went on for four years and possibly contributed to the mental instability of some of his colleagues:

The horror of those nights and days will never leave my memory. One by one I saw my fellow-prisoners break down and go mad under the terrible strain—some slowly and by degrees, others suddenly and without warning. “Who next” was the terrible question that haunted us day and night—and the ever-recurring thought that it might be myself added to the agony.¹⁷

The no talking rule was the bed rock upon which the treatment of prisoners in Portland and Chatham was built. There were no exceptions to this rule and it was this unbending nature of enforcement that Clarke, could not quite negotiate but had to come to terms with. Clarke was paired with a ‘crazy character’, who imagined himself to be ‘an astronomer’, at the weekly haircutting sessions. Clarke doubted the man’s sanity by the look of his ‘tense-drawn’ face ‘and ‘his fixed lack-lustre eyes’. The putative star gazer began to cut Clarke’s hair but he took a chunk out of his ear which bled and Clarke spoke to him quietly, but severely, about his lack of haircutting skills. An officer immediately criticised Clarke for talking and would not listen to the proffered explanation. He quoted, instead, the rule about prisoners not being allowed to talk to fellow prisoners, ‘Under no circumstances must prisoners be allowed to speak to each other.’¹⁸ The silent rule nearly wore Clarke down to the point where toward the end of his prison term, he became aware that if he had to spend a further year or two in Portland, he too could possibly lose his sanity.¹⁹ Clarke recalled the price he paid for talking to his fellow prisoners:

For months I never spoke to a living soul except to my comrades a few times, and each time it brought me a term of bread and water punishment.²⁰

This rashness probably went some way in preventing Clarke from losing his ability to think rationally and clearly as he had a fresh dispute with the prison authorities to fuel his discontent. Clarke and the other prisoners were intimidated by the military demeanour, language and style of the prison officers. On occasion he

¹⁷ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 14

¹⁸ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 52

¹⁹ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 58

²⁰ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 15

would be brought before the Governor. The warder's style of addressing prisoners was not conversational but more military and abrupt:

"Wilson, attention!" "Quick march." Then as soon as I'd get outside the door he would order, "Right turn" or "Left turn" as the occasion required, and off I would march until such time as the Governor's room door was reached...When the Governor would have finished with me they would bring me back after the same manner, marching and counter-marching, marking time and all the rest of it, with as much fuss and noise of military command as if I were a whole regiment of soldiers. ²¹

This is an example of the military ethos and discipline experienced by the Irish prisoners in jail which was conducive to misuse and even bullying by warders if they were so inclined. This certainly bears out Clarke thoughts on how the penal system impacted on him and the terror, harassment and degradation that, in his eyes, he suffered. ²²

Nevertheless the prisoners were still capable of a degree of resistance. For instance Clarke recorded an incident when *The Times*-Parnell Commission visited Chatham in the late 1880s which he and his fellow prisoners must have viewed as a victory for them. He described how the prison authorities must have known that Clarke, Egan and Daly communicated with each other and of how they disposed of the hand written notes they exchanged. They put them into the air ventilators which were in each cell; a foot below the ventilators was a horizontal shaft that could not be seen from the cell out of sight of the prison staff but the authorities were very suspicious:

Finally they thought of the ventilator in the cells, and eager to find some scrap of evidence that could be used by the Government at the *Times*-Parnell inquiry they ordered the ventilators to be opened and searched. ²³

The resulting welter of paper was examined but to no avail because Clarke, Egan and Devoy had reduced the note to pulp by first chewing it and then rolling the resultant glob into a ball. Clarke jubilantly noted with a hint of irony:

²¹ Clarke, *Glimpses*, pp 56-57

²² Clarke, *Glimpses*, pp 36, 38, 42, 47, 57 et seq

²³ Clarke, *Glimpses*, pp 23-24

That is the history of the private and confidential correspondence of certain treason-felony prisoners in Chatham which the Government did *not* produce at the *Times*-Parnell Commission. Shortly after this incident came Pigot's visit to Daly and Inspector Littlechild's interview with the so-called Irish-American prisoners with a view to getting informers to give evidence before the Commission.²⁴

Clarke was interviewed by Littlechild for nearly three quarters of an hour and finally realising he would not get anything from him, Littlechild's mood changed from his bonhomie to harshness. Littlechild said to Clarke:

...am I to understand and report to those who sent me here that you refuse to give me any information to prevent the commission of a crime?" I replied: "Mr Inspector, you are to understand that I refuse to give you information for any purpose whatever."²⁵

The attitude of Littlechild, his superiors at Scotland Yard-and probably in political circles-was based on the possibility that one or several of the Irish prisoners would gladly swap the oppressive confinement of prison for freedom by testifying at the commission. They were wrong as neither Clarke, nor any of his comrades, obliged the representatives of the Government with any help.

The discovery of the detritus of the prisoner's communication system must have solved one issue for the prison authorities but Clarke still communicated with Daly and Egan through three distinct devices:

...by visible signals, the invention of which "Wilson" attributes to Egan; by a "letter -box" with which he credits Daly, and by a telegraphic system of which he avows himself the inventor.²⁶

Security was always an issue but Clarke, despite being heavily guarded managed to produce a newspaper, *The Irish Felon*²⁷ demonstrating that, 'Thomas Clarke was perhaps the most resolute and astute of all the prisoners...' ²⁸ Similarly, he managed to contact, through an intermediary, an old prison comrade James Egan and perhaps more importantly, Dr Mark Ryan, who was [to become] the

²⁴ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 24

²⁵ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 26

²⁶ Le Roux, *Tom Clarke*, pp 40-41

²⁷ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 30

²⁸ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, p 364

Chairman of the Amnesty Association. Clarke had been transferred from making bottles, canisters and tinware in the tinsmith shop to packing the finished articles for onward delivery. He established where the packed crates were bound for and he then asked John Daly for a piece of wood-something like a lath-painted it black and wrote on it with chalk, ' *For God's sake throw in a piece of newspaper-any old newspaper-and earn the gratitude of a long term convict.*' (Clarke's italics). ²⁹ Later, the crate was returned to the prison for re-filling and when John Daly asked him if anything had been sent Clarke replied, ' "Yes a donkey load"'. ³⁰ Clarke managed to secure the papers in a safe place by various sleights of hand and similarly managed to get the papers to his cell and then onto Daly and the others. Clarke does not state how long this arrangement continued but it must have been a long period of time:

From this time onwards newspapers of various kinds kept coming into me in fairly good numbers, and what a heavenly break it was on the hideous monotony of convict prison life! ³¹

Apart from the obvious enjoyment of being able to read a newspaper fairly regularly, it is possible that the spirits of those who shared in this reading rapture were lifted as they could view this as a secret victory over the prison authorities who held all the advantages over the inmates of convict prisons. Clarke received on a regular basis a bundle of newspaper clippings selected by Egan who knew what would be of interest to Clarke and Daly. Clarke even devised a plan to escape but this did not harden into a practical plan partly because of the need to have outside help and partly because Clarke was moved from his work at the tinsmiths to another work area of the prison. ³²

In prison, Clarke and the Irish prisoners were subjected to very tight observation, control and screening. The prisoners were subject to four pat down searches a day but it was the Special Search that was the most provocative. A prisoner was stripped naked and minutely searched for contraband and this involved a close inspection of the body but the search went further than external parts of the body:

²⁹ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 31

³⁰ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 32

³¹ Clarke, *Glimpses*, pp 32

³² Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 34

...to such a disgustingly indecent extent, that I must do no more than imply the nature of it. This search would sometimes be carried out to the officer's accompaniment of a running fire of comments in keeping with the nature of the work they were engaged in.³³

These searches were degrading but the prison authorities had a mandate to keep all prisoners, including the Irish ones, in prison and the secreting of materials in a bodily orifice, as demonstrated today by the smuggling of mobile phones and prohibited drugs into prisons, has a corrosive effect on the discipline needed to run such establishments. Clarke also felt extreme disquiet about the pat down searches which he thought were carried out in an extremely rough manner.³⁴ Further indignities were visited on the prisoners of which the rationing of toilet paper was one, they were supposed to be issued with fourteen sheets a week but often received only five and were put in a position where they had to frequently ask for more.³⁵

Clarke, Egan and Daly all testified to the *Chatham Visitors'* Inquiry³⁶ that they were singled out for ill treatment by prison warders as opposed to the general population of prisoners. The response from the Governor indicated that they were in the penal cells because of the need to provide safe custody, hinting at the possibility of attack if they were in the general population, and to mitigate the likelihood of possible escape or rescue, 'The lessons of Manchester and Clerkenwell show that there is good ground for taking extra precautions'.³⁷ This is undeniable and demonstrated that sensible precautions were put in place to minimise the chance of escape by prisoners. However, the evidence of the Governor and Deputy Governor to the Chatham Visitors demonstrated a propensity to rely on the rotten apple theory and circular thinking which the Visitors did not criticise in the report. They indicated that the alleged mistreatment of prisons happened not by design but was due:

...to the fact that among a large number of subordinate officers, drawn from the class from which assistant warders and warders are drawn, there must always, in spite of the care taken in selection, be some who possess in a less degree than others the qualities of self-control, impartiality, and tact in dealing with prisoners, and probably some who unfit for the posts which they occupy...

³³ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 34

³⁴ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 32

³⁵ *Chatham Visitors' Report*, April 19 1890, PRO HO 144/194/A46664C/27

³⁶ *Chatham Visitors' Report*, PRO HO 144/194/A46664C/27

³⁷ *Chatham Visitors' Report*, PRO HO 144/194/A46664C/28

and as such men cannot be always be under supervision of superior officers, they must from time to time have had opportunities of inflicting annoyance on the prisoners under their charge; and possibly the special prisoners have from time to time suffered in this way, as probably all or most of the other prisoners do.³⁸

The circumstances of how and why the Chatham Visitors were asked to inquire into the conditions of the Irish prisoners will be discussed later but these findings exonerated the authorities, the Visitors and most of the staff; responsibility was attributed to those on the lowest rung of the hierarchical ladder for the occasional off hand treatment of the Irish prisoners. A balance between the sensibilities of the Irish prisoners and the authorities who ran the Convict system in the last quarter of the nineteenth century in England must be drawn but it would seem that there is a strong possibility that the Irish prisoners were badly treated. It would appear that Whitehead and Gallagher lost their sanity while in prison but the prison authorities' did not official admit to this nor the prolonged suffering of keeping them in jail. After his release, Gallagher was examined by an American specialist, Dr Arthur Warren Ferris of New York, who reported on Gallagher's and Whitehead's condition. He noted that both Gallagher and Whitehead were 'demented' which would be very difficult to feign.³⁹

The harshness of prison life and the ambivalence of the warders to the plight of the Irish prisoners are only two factors behind their treatment of these prisoners. It cannot be categorically proven if the intent of the authorities was to drive these men to insanity, to leave them permanently physically impaired or to cause their early death but these were the results of protracted stays in Millbank, Chatham and Portland prisons and a degree of responsibility must rest with the prison service, including the Chair of the Directorate of Convict Prisons, Edmund Du Cane as well as successive Governments for neglecting to consider and improve conditions in the convict prisons. However, in 1890, a new chapter opened for Clarke and the other prisoners. News of the conditions under which the Irish prisoners were incarcerated began to reach a wider audience through the publication of the *Chatham Visitors' Report*, questions in the House of Commons, articles in journals and newspapers and, by 1892, through the Amnesty Association.

³⁸ *Chatham Visitors' Report*, PRO HO 144/194/A46664C/33

³⁹ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p 20, Medical report on Bernard Gallagher and Alfred Whitehead, Compiled by Dr Arthur Warren Ferris, Savoy Hotel, New York City, September 7th, 1896

The Chatham Visitors' Report, political pressure, the Amnesty Association and freedom, 1890-1898

The re-emergence of the Amnesty Association in 1892 in England had been preceded by several meetings in Limerick, John Daly's home town, in the spring of 1889. At a further meeting in the autumn of 1889, his treatment at the hands of the prison authorities was discussed with particular reference to the accidental administration to him of the powerful poison Belladonna.⁴⁰ However it was an article, issued by the Irish National League, describing the treatment meted out to John Daly and the other political prisoners which was widely covered in the Irish press that prompted the Irish administration to ask the Home Office to conduct an inquiry into these allegations and whether they could be substantiated. As a result of this agitation, the Government set up an inquiry into conditions at Chatham jail which resulted in the *Chatham Visitors' Report*.⁴¹

Clarke's evidence to the Chatham Visitors⁴² was extensive and took up a considerable period of time.⁴³ What is not clear from extant records in the National Archive is how often the Visitors visited Chatham, or other prisons, and if prisoners were interviewed to establish or verify the equitableness of their treatment in Convict Prisons. Clarke's complaints were relatively minor when looked at individually but the incidents he reported were of importance to him and reflected his struggle to survive with some dignity within the confines of the convict prison system. However, when placed in the context of the military attitude and discipline of the prison staff, the silent system which did not allow prisoners to talk to each other and the punishment of prisoners with bread and water and/or solitary confinement, a clearer picture of possibly less than fair treatment against the Irish prisoners begins to emerge.

Clarke described at length the difficulty he had seeing a doctor. The Irish prisoners had to wait for the doctor to visit and treat them in their cells while in the general prison population those with medical complaints could go straight to the infirmary. The system for Irish prisoners, Clarke maintained, was open to abuse to

⁴⁰ PRO HO 144/925/A46664/27 and 144/925/A46664/48-55 and /30

⁴¹ *Chatham Visitors' Minutes of Evidence*, PRO HO 144/194/A46664C, (qq 1696-2030) and *Chatham Visitors' Report*, PRO HO 144/194/A46664C(1-100)

⁴² These were, Judge W L Selfe and Colonel Sir J F Lennard, and two men of the respectable working class, C J Drummond and George Shipton and were helped by an independent medic, Sir James Risdon Bennett, PRO HO 144/925/A46664/42

⁴³ PRO HO 144/194/A46664C, qq 1696-2004.

the extent that a warden threatened Clarke with three days bread and water for telling lies to the doctor. Similarly, warders would forget to put names in the book and their defence was that only if a name was entered into the book would a prisoner be able to see the Doctor. As warders controlled this medium of medical communication with the Doctor, abuse was possible to the detriment of prisoners' health.⁴⁴ Clarke did draw some comfort from the Visitors when they noted that, '...he was not seen on the day when his name was put down, and we think that care should be taken to prevent such a thing from occurring again.'⁴⁵ Clarke also complained about the lack of light in his cell and the Visitors recommended that the glass covering of the light be altered to allow more light to be had in his cell. The more substantive complaint by Clarke to the Chatham Visitors on the harsh and unjust treatment suffered by him and the other political prisoners is covered above.

After dealing with the complaints of the Irish prisoners, the Visitors' report concluded with eleven points rejecting the prisoners' major complaints, grievances and criticisms of and against the system which they daily endured. According to their findings, the location of the prisoners in the penal cells and the accommodation were found not to be wanting. Similarly, prison staff did not treat them any differently because of the crimes they committed nor was there in existence an organised system of inhuman, brutal or illegal ill-treatment. The Visitors did find that on occasion the prisoners did suffer at the hands of lower or subordinate warders but this risk was always there and the Irish prisoners did not suffer more than the general population of prisoners. They also noted, 'That when they have from time to time made complaints, these have been investigated, and any real grievances have been as far as possible redressed.'⁴⁶

They further added that John Daly's treatment had not changed for the worse since he refused to give evidence to *The Times*-Parnell Commission and that the administration of Belladonna poison was not the fault of any prison staff member but the fault of the manufacturer who supplied a stronger dose than was usually the case. In other words, with some minor righting of wrongs, the report cleared the prison staff in the Convict Prisons, the Prison Directorate and the chair Edmund Du Cane and also the Home Office of any major mistreatment of the Irish prisoners. On

⁴⁴ PRO HO 144/194/A46664C, qq1734-1735 and 1758-1773

⁴⁵ *Chatham Visitors' Report*, PRO HO 144 194/A46664C/19

⁴⁶ *Chatham Visitors' Report*, PRO HO 144 194/A46664C/28

the balance of information available from extant primary sources, this would appear to be a whitewash of the actions and a diminution of the responsibilities of the aforementioned groups. Indeed, it has been shown that Du Cane managed to shield from the Home Office many of the more dubious treatments and practices inflicted on prisoners who were either in the general prison population or among the number of Irish prisoners held in Convict Prisons.⁴⁷

The Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) recognised the alleged ill treatment of Irish prisoners as an issue that Irish nationalists would be interested in following. After March 1890, even though the *Chatham Visitors' Report* was as yet unfinished, the IPP focussed their vocal volley of invective on successive Governments and did not cease fire until all of the Irish prisoners were released in September 1898.⁴⁸ The *Chatham Visitors' Report* was published by the Government because it thought its contents were relatively innocuous. They also saw it as an opportunity to underline the authority of the inquiry and to help to clear the air of misunderstandings, rumour and sympathy about and for the prisoners. The case forwarded by the IPP was that the dynamitards were no longer a threat on English streets, the use of dynamite was recognised as an act of folly and counter-productive and the further detention of the prisoners could be construed as an act of revenge by the Government. Most continental countries recognised political crimes but not so in England where the category did not apply to the Irish prisoners.⁴⁹ With some modifications, this was the line that John Redmond and the IPP would follow until all of the political prisoners were released. The Government rejected all of these claims and the Home Secretary Henry Matthews fully backed the Chatham Visitors' view that the prison staff and authorities did not perpetrate any of the inhumanities they were accused of and were fully vindicated in the report issued by the Visitors.⁵⁰ It was the *Chatham Visitors' Report* and its reception by the Government from which the journey to amnesty, release and freedom began.

In January 1892, people in Dungannon got together a petition to send to Queen Victoria asking for Clarke's early release. It was signed by the local Protestant gentry and T W Russell MP submitted it to the Home Secretary who

⁴⁷ McConville, *Irish Political Prisoners*, p 361

⁴⁸ Summary of Parliamentary Proceedings, *The Times*, 1st April 1890

⁴⁹ Summary of Parliamentary Proceedings, John O'Connor Power, *The Times*, 14 August 1890

⁵⁰ Summary of Parliamentary Proceedings, Henry Matthews, *The Times*, 14 August 1890

turned it down.⁵¹ This heralded the start of a much more vociferous and focused campaign by what became known as the Amnesty Association to get Clarke and the other Irish prisoners released. John 'Amnesty' Nolan, Secretary, and Isaac Butt, President, had founded the Amnesty Association, originally known as the Irish Liberation Society on 29th June 1869 to free men who were imprisoned under the 1848 Treason Felony Act. The Association continued its efforts until 1872 when the release of two noted Fenians John Devoy and Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa was achieved⁵² and the Association was resurrected by Dr Mark Ryan in London in March 1892 under the guidance of the IRB.⁵³ After an amalgamation of branches in Liverpool in August 1894 it became known as the Amnesty Association of Great Britain and stayed in operation until 1898 when the last Treason Felony prisoner, Clarke, was released.⁵⁴

Maud Gonne McBride was involved with the London Amnesty Association when she attended a committee meeting in 1892 where an old Fenian, Mr Sheridan, described the regulations governing visits. She wrote to the Home Secretary, '...in the guise of concerned lady who had met some of the prisoners' families, and requested a visit'.⁵⁵ She asked for and received permits to visit eight inmates and was accompanied, at the suggestion of Dr Mark Ryan, chairman of the Association, by a British journalist, Mr Smith. They had to sign a paper on the way in, which was not usual, and she was told that the governor insisted on her signing it as she may help the prisoners escape or tell them something she should not. The source does not discuss what the piece of paper contained in writing but it may have been some sort of gagging order to which Maud Gonne and Smith had to agree. However the prison warder informed her that:

"You won't be able to see the second prisoner on your list. He misbehaved and is in punishment and has forfeited his visit, but seven visits will take long enough: you'll be tired".

"What has he done?"

"I can't answer that question." I discovered later that what he had done was to become insane.⁵⁶

⁵¹ Le Roux, *Clarke*, pp 49-50

⁵² Hickey, D J, & Doherty, J E, *A New Dictionary of Irish History from 1800*, (Dublin, 2003), p 10

⁵³ Ryan, Dr M, *Fenian Memories*, (Dublin, 1945) pp 173-174

⁵⁴ Hickey & Doherty, *A New Dictionary of Irish History*, p 10

⁵⁵ Curtis, Liz, *The Cause of Ireland, From the United Irishmen to Partition*, (Belfast, 1994), p 167

⁵⁶ Gonne, *A Servant of the Queen*, (Chicago, 1994), p.126

Mr Smith and Maud Gonne were taken along a passage and shown into a cage which contained two chairs:

It was exactly like the cage of wild animals at the zoo, with iron bars in front giving onto a passage four feet wide. A similar cage with its iron bars faced us...As the door opened with much clanging and jangling of keys I saw a third warder in control of the door. The warders carried revolvers. The prisoner was dressed in faded yellow with broad arrows.⁵⁷

She then described how she got around the rule of not talking politics in front of a not too trusting prisoner; she spoke to her companion and not the prisoner. She tried to enquire about the health of Dr Gallagher-the Association had heard that he had gone insane-but was denied any information and she was informed that only the governor could give information on 'prisoner's healths.' The next prisoner she saw was in a dreadful state and found it very difficult to talk:

I was glad when the chief warder said "Time up," and felt guilty for being glad. The prisoner didn't want to go; he got out the words: "Will you help us?" as the door clanged on him. God, what these men had suffered and were suffering for Ireland and the struggle against the British Empire.⁵⁸

Maud Gonne's visit to the Irish prisoners was used for propaganda purposes by the Amnesty Association. An article by her appeared in the *Irish Daily Independent*⁵⁹ while a letter/pamphlet, dated June 1st 1893, was distributed by the London Irish Political Prisoners' Amnesty Association asking friends to remit subscriptions so the Association may send to Portland an 'eminent Oculist' and a 'Specialist on Insanity'. However, the Home Office barred Gonne from further visits to the prisoners⁶⁰ because she openly discussed the prisoners' welfare with the Press after agreeing not to: she indicated that the condition and treatment of the Irish prisoners:

...reveals to us facts which the Government deny. Five or six out of the sixteen political prisoners in Portland are suffering from Insanity, and another is suffering from the loss of an eye, the result of an operation performed in Prison, and the latter fears he will lose the other if the bad eye is not attended to.⁶¹

⁵⁷ Gonne, *Servant*. p.127

⁵⁸ Gonne, *Servant*, p.128

⁵⁹ PRO HO 144/195/A46664C/102, *Irish Daily Independent*, Monday 15th May 1893

⁶⁰ PRO HO 144/195/A46664C/102

⁶¹ PRO HO 144/194/A46664C/15

Maud Gonne not only visited and agitated for and on behalf of the prisoners she also took practical action. Tom Clarke's mother, Mary Clarke, wrote to Miss Gonne thanking her for the 'cheques' she had sent to her and expressed her gratitude for this. It is not clear whether this money was donated by the Amnesty Association or from Gonne's own funds for prisoner's families in distress.⁶²

The ramifications of her visit, the pressure applied by the Amnesty Association and the parliamentary pressure exerted by the IPP kept the issue close or near to the top of the political agenda. John Daly, while in Chatham, was elected MP for Limerick in 1895 but was disqualified as a treason-felon.⁶³ Maud Gonne built upon her visit to Portland by accompanying Daly, after his release, on a lecture tour of Britain. She went on a fundraising tour, by herself, to America and France where she received wide coverage in the press for her efforts and those of the Amnesty Association to free the prisoners. The large membership base, in England, of the Association was instrumental in campaigning for the Political Prisoners to the extent that two Liberal cabinet ministers were ousted from their parliamentary seats through defeat at the polls.⁶⁴ Later in 1895, Gonne presented an appeal for the release of the political prisoners with testimonials for Clarke that confirmed his good character before his departure for America in 1883. One of these, written by Clarke's old teacher, Cornelius Collins, bordered on the hagiographic.⁶⁵ Nevertheless times were changing and the reaction of people in Ireland and Britain was mellowing and moving toward an understanding that the Irish prisoners had served a considerable amount of prison time and the threat that they represented was now muted and even subdued.

After visiting Clarke on 1st March 1893, John Redmond, MP added his name to the list of clients he advised in Chatham jail which included John Daly, Henry Dalton, James Egan and John Curtin who had earlier retained his services.⁶⁶ The ramifications of this legal relationship were profound for Clarke, Daly and the other prisoners. Not only did they have legal representation but the lawyer was the leader of the nine MPs that constituted the membership of the IPP and this afforded

⁶² PRO HO 144/195/A46664C/310

⁶³ Hickey & Doherty, *A New Dictionary of Irish History from 1800*, p 104

⁶⁴ Curtis, *The Cause of Ireland*, p 166

⁶⁵ PRO HO 144/195/ A46664C/190

⁶⁶ PRO HO 144/925/A46664A/239 Visits to Treason-Felony Convicts Legal Advisers since 1st January 1890.

Redmond the right to see his client on a regular basis and also to be in a position to request from the Home Office access to documents relevant to the prisoners' cases. Redmond visited Clarke infrequently and on each occasion wrote to the Home Secretary, Sir Mathew Ridley, for permission to do so. The tone of Redmond's letters was deferential yet one in particular offered an insight into Clarke's personality while in jail:

I do not forget your statement to me that these visits seem to have had a disquieting effect upon some of the prisoners, but I think in the case of Wilson who is not at all of an excitable disposition a visit caused hardly any prejudicial effect.⁶⁷ (Wilson was the nom de plume that Clarke used in jail)

The IRB had not forgotten the IRB and Clan na Gael prisoners. Fred Allan, Secretary of the Supreme Council and manager of the Independent newspaper group fronted the campaign by prominent IRB figures for amnesty for political prisoners. [Subsequently and ironically, in 1911, the same Fred Allen, under pressure from Clarke, was one of the IRB Supreme Council members who resigned over the issue of who ran the newspaper *Irish Freedom* and consequently the IRB]. Allen spoke at amnesty meetings and was responsible for a series of newspaper articles about individual prisoners. In his first newspaper column, entitled 'Behind Prison Bars', Allan set out the *raison d'être* behind the articles:

I have been asked by the Editor of the Weekly Independent to write for him a short series of articles on the case for Amnesty, and think the most useful, as well as the most interesting, way to meet that desire will be to deal individually with our imprisoned countrymen. But, before entering into details of the cases of the men for whom Ireland is at the present moment claiming freedom...⁶⁸

He continued to give an instructive account of the progress of the movement and detailed those men who the articles were about, Tom Clarke (Henry Hammond Wilson), included. He visited Clarke in prison in 1893, and one of his articles incorporated a letter from Clarke acknowledging Allan's sympathetic interest in him. That meeting gave Clarke great heart as Fred Allan intimated that he knew who Clarke really was; that he, Allan, was from the IRB and that they would do everything

⁶⁷ PRO HO 144/195/A46664C/203 Letter from John Redmond to Sir Mathew Ridley, Home Secretary, 24th August 1896

⁶⁸ BLNC, Fred Allan, *The Irish Independent*, April 1894

in their power to get him out. Clarke's letter, dated 28th February 1894, written from Portland Prison, celebrated Allan's visit in no uncertain terms:

I am pretty much the same as when you saw me-in fair health, though feeling dull and lonely. But how could it be otherwise? How can one help feeling dull and lonely with this wretched existence? Dull day goes on succeeding dull day; nothing breaks the monotony excepting the "the letter from home" or a visit. Oh, you have no idea how welcome those breaks are. They are as welcome and as cheering as a bit of God's sunshine to us.⁶⁹

Furthermore, Clarke told Allan that it was extremely heartwarming to know that people on the outside were supporting the Irish prisoners and working hard to free them:

You already know how thankful I am to our friends of the Amnesty Association for the good work they are doing; and thankful and deeply grateful I have a right to be. What a difference it makes to the Irish Felon undergoing a life sentence to know that he has staunch, earnest friends doing everything in their power to set him free, and are determined to succeed.⁷⁰

When referring to the criminal Treason/Felony case and evidence against him and his comrades, Clarke referred to having strong feelings which he could not and did not express.⁷¹ This is an indication of the depth of feeling that Clarke experienced over his imprisonment. This, plus his relative youth in entering prison combined with the help from Daly and Egan were possibly some of the reasons why he survived the spartan and harsh conditions of the British Convict system. In 1896, William Field, an Irish MP, wrote to Sir Matthew White Ridley, the British Home Secretary, requesting that Clarke be released on health grounds. This was refused⁷² but the pressure was building on both sides of the Irish Sea with British and Irish Amnesty Associations fighting for the release of the prisoners. There also were meetings held in America and South Africa.⁷³ In this letter to her brother, Maria held out great hope that Clarke would soon be released but she would have to wait just

⁶⁹ CPP, Clarke to Allan, 28 February 1894

⁷⁰ CPP, Clarke to Allan, 28 February 1894

⁷¹ CPP, Clarke to Allan, 28 February 1894

⁷² Le Roux, *Clarke*, p 52

⁷³ PRO HO 144/195/A46664C/23, Copy of passage obliterated from a letter of Maria Clarke to her brother, treason felony convict J 464 Henry H Wilson, 22nd October 1896.

under two years to see her brother again despite the international profile the case of the Irish prisoners enjoyed.

Clarke was not as badly affected by prison as some of the prisoners but the years of mistreatment, physical and mental abuse left its scars and it was the Amnesty Association that eventually pushed hard enough to get the prisoners released with Clarke the last to leave. The most difficult time for him was from 1896, when John Daly was released, until his own release in 1898: a period of just over two years. Clarke somberly recalled those days:

In the early years there had been over twenty of us in Chatham prison, and I was one of the first of them convicted. In the latter days there were only two of us in Portland, Henry Burton and myself. He was ill and had been taken into the infirmary, and I was then the sole occupant of the Treason Felony section of the Penal Cells - I was then up against the dreariest spell of the entire imprisonment. It was then "strict silence" to the very letter-all the more keenly felt because of the contrast between then and the previous years, when staunch comrades were giving aid and comfort to me.⁷⁴

The agitation of the Amnesty Association, the political pressure applied in the House of Commons by the IPP and the possible embarrassment of a death in prison or the accusation that another prisoner had lost his sanity all combined to influence the Conservative Government that the surviving prisoners should be freed. Tom Clarke was moved to Pentonville prison from where he was released on 29 September 1898, having served fifteen and one half years, under license made out to Henry Hammond Wilson (Clarke).⁷⁵

Clarke was the last of the Treason Felony prisoners to be released and was the only one, apart from James Egan, to survive the convict prison system without dying, going insane or suffering lasting serious physical impairment. His long confinement had left mental scars which were not obvious but Kathleen Clarke later recorded how he looked physically, 'He was emaciated and stooped from the long imprisonment and hardship'.⁷⁶ Albert Clarke, Tom's brother, was informed by telegram that Clarke would be released, but Tom was met by Egan and Daly who kept a vow they and Clarke had made in Portland, that on the day of their release

⁷⁴ Clarke, *Glimpses*, p.61

⁷⁵ PRO HO 144/195/A46664C/ 28, 29 & 133

⁷⁶ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, pp.24-25

they would treat themselves to a hot drink of punch together. Tom Clarke, after having breakfast and sending a telegram to his brother telling him he was free, left for Ireland. He was received in Dublin at public receptions and after these he went to see his mother and sister who lived at Kilmainham.

Tom Clarke was again under surveillance by British and Irish authorities. Major Nicholas Gosselin, who was in charge of the Irish secret service at the Home Office, informed the Inspector General of the RIC that Clarke was an important man because a number of 'suspects' based in London gathered at Euston to see him safely off on his journey to Ireland.⁷⁷ Even though Clarke was out of the clutches of the prison warders, the Irish Secret Service, the Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) and the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) did not overlook him. Clarke came to the attention of Superintendent John Mallon, Head of G Division, Dublin Metropolitan Police, (DMP), the unit entrusted with investigating secret societies. Clarke was seen 'all over the place' stressing that work for Irish independence was more important than speech making. He was also overheard criticizing Daly in his choice of men he had around him.⁷⁸

Tom Clarke was a man of his word. His call for 'work' instead of speech making was not a shot in the dark or criticism for the sake of it. Clarke set about doing just that, working for the cause of Irish Freedom from the moment he stepped out of Pentonville Prison. Billy Kelly recalled some of Clarke's IRB activities:

When I returned from America to Dungannon I found that the I.R.B. organisation was non-existent. There was no effort made to revive it until Tom Clarke was released from prison about 1898. After his return from prison he lived off and on in Dungannon. He organised some circles of the I.R.B. in the locality, one in Dungannon, John McElvogue, Centre, and another in Donoughmore where James McElvogue was Centre. Later on another Circle was started in Coalisland – James Tomney was Centre. Another was organised at Ardboe-James Devlin was Centre of it. A Benburb Centre was organised with John Shields as Centre.⁷⁹

Clarke was feted by Limerick Corporation and was awarded the Freedom of the City. He journeyed to Dungannon soon after to attend several functions held in

⁷⁷ National Library of Ireland, (NLI), Gosselin to Inspector General, RIC, September 1898, 16160/S, State Paper Office

⁷⁸ National Archive of Ireland, (NAI) Colonial Office Papers (CO) 904/5, September 1898,

⁷⁹ CPP, Kelly Statement

his name. On Monday 24th October 1898, he attended two such receptions at the Commercial Hotel and the Forresters' Hall in Dungannon.⁸⁰

Clarke emerged from Pentonville prison in 1898 after fifteen and one half years of incarceration. There is little doubt that he was guilty of the charge of Treason Felony but was the system and treatment of prisoners in the convict system that so enraged Clarke and his fellow prisoners. They saw themselves as political prisoners whereas the administration of the system saw them as dangerous criminals which this echoed in the level of Government ministers. After the report of the *Chatham Visitors* was published in 1890, life in the system for Clarke and his prison colleagues became marginally better but by that time, several of the prisoners had either lost their mental stability, were poisoned or were physically maimed by the uneven application of the rules governing the imprisonment of the Special Men. Clarke's ingenuity, resilience and determination to survive the conditions of the system were amply demonstrated in the work he wrote on his time in prison.⁸¹ He was received very well in Ireland after his return but he needed to establish himself there on a sound economical basis. This looked increasing difficult but he did have time to re-establish an IRB in Dungannon and the surrounding area before his thoughts were once again turned toward America but this time with the possibility of some personal happiness.

⁸⁰ BLNC, Clarke, Thomas J, *The Tyrone Courier*, 27 October 1898

⁸¹ Clarke, *Glimpses*

Chapter 4

Release from Prison, America, Clan na Gael and *The Gaelic American*

1898-1907

Limerick Corporation voted him the Freedom of the City. He was to receive this honour on 2 March 1899, and he came to stay with us. It was my first time meeting him, and I was keenly disappointed. His appearance gave no indication of the kingly, heroic qualities which Uncle John had told us about; there was none of the conquering hero which I had visioned. He was emaciated and stooped from the long imprisonment and hardship...He stayed with us for a few weeks. As I came to know him, his appearance receded into the background, and the man Uncle John portrayed was revealed. By the time he left Limerick, to join his mother and sister in Kilmainham, we had become intimate enough to agree to correspond with each other. In the summer of 1899 Uncle John invited Tom to come and spend a month with us in Kilkee, Co Clare...We became engaged to be married during the first week he was with us, and received Uncle John's blessing but not my mother's or my aunt's.¹

Kathleen Clarke

¹ Clarke, Kathleen, *Revolutionary Woman*, (Dublin, 1991), p.23

Ireland 1898

Following his release from prison in September 1898, Tom Clarke began to re-integrate himself into society. In October 1898, Dungannon gave a public reception for him as did the Ulstermen's (Dublin) '98 Club. Limerick Corporation, on a motion introduced by John Daly, voted in favour of awarding Clarke the Freedom of the City. The ceremony took place in the Council Chamber on 2nd March 1899: John Daly in his speech noted romantically how Clarke put himself in danger's way for Ireland. Clarke replied by thanking the corporation for the honour of Freedom of the City.²

Clarke stayed with the Daly family for a few weeks after his release and again later in the summer of 1899 as Kathleen Daly recalled, '...Uncle John invited Tom to come and spend a month with us in Kilkee, Co. Clare, where he had taken a lodge...and Tom and I hailed this as a golden opportunity to meet.'³ Kathleen Daly was nineteen and Tom Clarke forty when they first met in the spring of 1899. In her mind's eye she had pictured Clarke as a 'noble, courageous, unselfish character'⁴ but after her first meeting with him, Kathleen was 'terribly disappointed as he was emaciated and stooped from long imprisonment and hardship.'⁵ She provided a further insight into the physical and mental state of Clarke after he left prison, 'Tom was in a pitiable condition on his release from prison; he was a walking skeleton and highly strung and nervous from the treatment he had received. I don't know how he kept his sanity.'⁶

Thus, six months after his release from prison, Clarke still suffered from the perceived brutality of the prison regime. Nevertheless, between March and October 1899, the relationship between Tom and Kathleen deepened; their mutual attraction developing into romance. Kathleen noted, 'We became engaged to be married during the first week he was with us.'⁷ Kathleen represented to him the opportunity of married life, a family and a future. The pair wrote letters to each other regularly throughout those first few months and the letter writing continued when circumstances forced them to be apart. The letters from Kathleen to Tom in March

² Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.25

³ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.25

⁴ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.25

⁵ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, pp. 24-25

⁶ British Library Newspaper Collection (BLNC), Kathleen Clarke, interview *Nenagh Guardian*, Saturday, October 14th 1972

⁷ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 25

1899 began 'Dear Mr Clarke' and ended 'I remain, your sincere friend, Kathleen' but by August she was writing to 'Dear Tom' but still finished them 'Your sincere friend, Kathleen.' Tom's letters from the start began 'Dear Kattie', and were full of news and emotion.⁸

Apart from the romantic connection he enjoyed with Kathleen, Tom Clarke needed employment to realize their marriage plans. He did not work from the time he left prison until he found employment in America, a period of thirteen months. During this time, except for the visits to the Daly's, he stayed with his mother and sister at Kilmainham. For income, he received a bag of sovereigns at an Amnesty Meeting held in his honour at Dungannon on October 24th 1898,⁹ but Clarke needed a regular income from employment if he was to stay in Ireland and marry Kathleen. This was not to be. He was not in full time employment and the odd lecture given on visits to London, Limerick and other places did not successfully bridge the gap. The Amnesty Association sent an application in Tom's name for the vacant post of clerk of the Rathdown Union, Co Dublin. He built on this opportunity by carrying out some research into the position on his own.¹⁰

Many prominent men promised their support including John Redmond, John Dillon and Timothy Harrington but Clarke was overlooked and another candidate was selected. This was a setback but he wrote to John Devoy asking him to arrange a lecture tour to enable him to amass enough money to start a business. Clarke mentioned in his letters to Kathleen that he had not received word from Devoy but when he did, he was devastated; Devoy turned him down.¹¹ Indeed, Clarke's expectation was built on a solid foundation as Devoy arranged a lecture tour for John Daly in 1896, after he was released from prison, and Clarke reasonably expected a similar offer.¹² Kathleen underscored the depth of their relationship by standing by Clarke and not acting downhearted over the news.¹³

While the prospect of employment in Ireland and a lecture tour in the USA were still in the offing, Clarke carried on making arrangements to travel to America.

⁸ National Library of Ireland, (NLI), Thomas Clarke Papers, ACC 6410, Box 1, I.i.1 Kathleen Daly to Clarke, 20 April 1899 and I.i.1, 1 August 1899: I.ii.1., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 1 April 1899, 10 June 1899

⁹ BLNC, *The Tyrone Courier*, Thursday 27 October 1898

¹⁰ NLI, Clarke Papers, ACC 6410, Box 1, I, ii.1, Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 21 May 1899

¹¹ NLI, ACC 6410, Clarke Papers, I.ii.1, Clarke to Kathleen Daly, undated but in the sequence of letters, it was probably written early August 1899

¹² Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 21

¹³ NLI, ACC 6410, Clarke Papers, I.i.2, Kathleen Daly to Clarke, August 1899

He told Kathleen the date when he would leave, September 1899, and how he would discuss the contents of Devoy's letter with her Uncle John (Daly) who was arriving in Dublin that following weekend. However, he also wrote about his love for her and how he felt.¹⁴ This was a pivotal point in their relationship as he had built a future for them both on a not too frivolous expectation of a lecture tour in the USA but the reality of a refusal did not set the couple back too much and they rallied their forces and looked to the future.

In August 1899, Clarke wrote to Kathleen explaining he was applying for another vacant position on the Dublin Council with a starting salary of '£150, a free house, garden, coal and gas.'¹⁵ He furthered mentioned that Clancy, as Chairman of the Committee, had no doubt that he would get the job but he still continued with his arrangements to leave for America. Again writing to Kathleen he demonstrated a realistic attitude to the vacant position by noting that the patronage of the Dublin Corporation could work for him in some circumstances and work against him in others.¹⁶

James Egan, a prison compatriot of Clarke, was one of the friends who Clarke thought could use his influence in the matter. He did a considerable amount of work, through the Amnesty Association, to get Clarke out of prison, but the reality of Dublin in 1899 was a long way from the confines and companionship of Portland jail. Egan's influence did not extend to influencing Dublin Council to employ Clarke and consequently, the possible employment came to nothing. In the letters between Tom and Kathleen from March – September 1899, there were oblique references to Clarke visiting London, possibly to give lectures on his time in prison, and meeting friends in Dublin which strongly suggested IRB connections. However, Clarke met the founder of the IRB:

I am in A1 health & with my sister Maria spent a nice day at James Stephens yesterday. This is Stephens the old Fenian, Chief Centre. We started off from Dublin, two brakes full of friends to pick up Stephens & his family at Blackrock & 9'o off picnicking...Of course, we had a good number of ladies – old, young & Midway but I didn't feel any of them attractive & so whiled away a good portion of the time talking politics, & rubbish to one or two old fossil gents.¹⁷

¹⁴ NLI, ACC 6410, Clarke Papers, I.ii.1., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 8 August 1899

¹⁵ NLI, ACC 6410, I.ii.1., Clarke Papers, I.ii.1., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 8 August 1899

¹⁶ NLI, ACC 6410, I.ii.1., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 27 August 1899

¹⁷ NLI, ACC 6410, I.ii.1., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, not dated but sent between 2 and 4 September 1899

Clarke played down his meeting with Stephens but it gave him the opportunity to talk to him and also to recall this meeting at a later date. Importantly, Devoy was Stephen's assistant and Clarke did not pass up the opportunity to meet one of Fenianism's founders. In connection with the earlier job offer, Clarke wrote to Kathleen telling her that Clancy, Chairman of the Works committee, was presenting a report to the Corporation as a whole and dependent on their decision, he would either stay or continue to plan for his journey to America and he mentioned, obliquely, the 'rising generation.'¹⁸ He was consistently upbeat about the rising generation mentioning it in America on several occasions and in Ireland before 1914. This observation did not reflect the reality of Irish people's politics either in 1900 or in 1914 and his remarks were made prematurely on those occasions.

This observation by Clarke displayed his own feelings on how freedom for Ireland could be achieved, separation by physical force. Here, he was thinking about and promoting insurrectionary ideas to Kathleen who shared his belief in a free and independent Ireland. Clarke wanted to marry Kathleen before he left for America but John Daly disagreed. However, Daly received an invitation to speak at the St Patrick's Day celebration in New York and agreed to accompany Kathleen to America where she could marry Tom.¹⁹

America, Clan na Gael

Tom Clarke and his sister Maria left Ireland for America on 27th September 1899 in the SS *Servia* of the Cunard line and arrived in New York on 6th October 1899. Soon after landing, Clarke looked for suitable employment and was thinking about opening a shoe shop. He finally accepted that the idea of a lecture tour was dead as the Boer War was occupying everyone's thoughts. Clarke had mentioned in several letters he had written in Dublin to Kathleen Daly that he was busy writing letters but did not say to whom: it would seem they were to people in America that John Daly knew to whom he had advised Clarke to write to and make contact with. Clarke followed up on these letters after he arrived, 'I've seen O'Connor...I've also seen any amount of Uncle J's friends since I came; Captain Tracy Byrne among the

¹⁸ NLI, ACC 6410, I.ii.1., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 5 September 1899

¹⁹ NLI, ACC 6410, I.ii.1., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 5 November 1899

number. Devoy regards him exactly in the light that he suspects & for the reason that he imagined.’²⁰

The letter was written on 5 November 1899, a month after he arrived in America and O'Connor and Byrne were friends of John Daly but the reference to Devoy suggested that Clarke had renewed his friendship with him shortly after arriving in the country. This is significant: Devoy was the unofficial leader of the Irish-America community on the Eastern Seaboard of the USA and knew Clarke from his stay there in the early 1880s and they had probably exchanged letters before Clarke left for America that year. This reacquaintance led to a position for Clarke working as a clerk for Clan na Gael three nights a week which was in addition to his day job as a pattern maker at Cameron Pump Works, 23rd East Street - he secured the position through a Clan na Gael man, Maurice Allen. However, his part time position acquainted him with much of the Clan's business:

Tom's main duties at Clan headquarters were to act as private secretary to John Devoy. He had to look after Devoy's correspondence when the old man was away, and was au fait with all confidential questions submitted to Devoy for personal consideration or for the consideration of the Revolutionary Directory.²¹

This was underlined when Clarke commented in a letter to Kathleen that he saw a telegram on Devoy's desk that referred to the activities of John Daly while he was Mayor of Limerick. Maud Gonne, the Irish nationalist and suffragist activist, was mentioned several times in letters between Tom Clarke and Kathleen Daly. Kathleen wrote to Tom thanking him for the letter he sent to John Daly about Maud Gonne and John MacBride, who were going to America on a lecture tour. He referred to her as 'Maud' and this suggested they were on friendly terms particularly after she, through the Amnesty Association, highlighted the inhumane conditions that the prisoners in Portland jail endured.

The lecture tour was organised to raise money for Boer widows and orphans and it gave Clarke, Gonne and MacBride the opportunity to discuss events in Ireland, and the relevance of the Boer War in connection with the timing of an insurrection. MacBride and Clarke developed a close relationship to the extent that MacBride

²⁰ NLI, ACC 6410, I.ii.1., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 5 November 1899

²¹ Clarke Private Papers, Billy Kelly to Kathleen Clarke, September 1919

acted as Tom's best man at his wedding. Clarke and Gonne were also on friendly terms and they corresponded regularly 'on business affairs.'²² Clarke's relationship with Maud Gonne, as part of the broad spectrum of separatist politics, evolved further when Arthur Griffith and William Rooney founded Cumann na nGaedheal on 30th September 1900. *The United Irishman*, Griffith's paper, promoted the aims of the Cumann which intended, in Maud Gonne words 'to link up all existing National societies into an open Separatist movement.'²³

With John O'Leary as President and Tom Clarke, Maud Gonne and John MacBride as vice presidents and John Daly as a member, Cumann na nGaedheal largely became an open propagandist organization for the IRB. Clarke, as a vice president, heard of its affairs directly from Maud Gonne, MacBride and John Daly and later via couriers carrying information for Devoy, Clarke or the *Gaelic American*. The importance of the society was highlighted when the Dungannon clubs, Cumann na nGaedheal and the Sinn Fein League merged and formed Sinn Fein in 1908. Clarke remained a vice president of the Society up to this point and there was little doubt that with his connections in Ireland and America he had a 'finger on the pulse' of Irish Separatism and Nationalism in both countries.

Similarly, Daly knew John Devoy from the time he toured America lecturing in 1896. Indeed, the Clan was split at that time and Devoy used Daly's tour in an attempt to re-establish unity throughout Clan na Gael. Thus, Clarke was linked to John Daly and John Devoy through personal experiences and the relationship between the three men lasted until 1916. After his tour, Daly returned to Ireland and wrote to Devoy about an accident he had. He also mentioned IRB business:

I would like to tell you something about how Mr. Fred [Allan] is running things on this side, but it tires me so much to write even with pencil lying this way, that I must let it stand over until I am able to sit up.²⁴

Daly was receiving information on how the IRB in Dublin was run as early as 1896 and he shared this intelligence with Devoy on a regular basis. These sources were the core of the network of contacts that Daly bequeathed to Clarke and upon which he built up after returning to Ireland in 1907. Fred Allan was the one of the

²² NLI, ACC 6410, Clarke Papers, Box 1, I.ii.2., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 11 March 1900

²³ Gonne, Maud, in Curtis, Liz, *The Cause of Ireland*, (Belfast, 1994), p.186

²⁴ O'Brien, William, and Ryan, Desmond, (eds), *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, (Dublin, 1979), John Daly to John Devoy, p.340

IRB's main protagonists in Dublin and Daly and Devoy shared reservations about the lack of progress in organizing the IRB for armed struggle as early as 1896.

In May 1900, Clarke wrote to Kathleen Daly and discussed with her the doubts her mother had over Kathleen leaving for America to marry him. Kathleen's mother wrote to Clarke saying that she wished Tom was more settled than he was: Clarke agreed with this sentiment as it reflected her anxiety for Kathleen 'no matter how harsh it might be to me.'²⁵ Mrs Daly thought it important that Clarke should first get his own family settled in America and then talk about Kathleen. Tom advised Kathleen to make her own mind up.²⁶

Apart from the delicacy of Tom's feelings for Kathleen and his advice to her, the issue of going to South Africa was an attempt to put pressure on Kathleen and her family with the intent of getting her to America as quickly as possible. He laid out his options to Kathleen and demonstrated to her the depth of his feelings. He hoped she would make the right choice, as far as he was concerned, and join him in America. Clarke also mentioned the Boer War:

That must have been an interesting scene in the Dublin Council Chamber over Clancy's motion to present the Freedom of the City to Kruger. I see they are giving the old man a magnificent reception in France. I hope, but, no matter. Johnny Bull may get enough before the Boer War is over yet. By the way we had ninety of the Boys from the Transvaal Irish Brigade in New York last week. And I spent some very pleasant hours among them listening to their tales of war. They are a fine hardy lot of fellows & a credit to Ireland in every way. One young fellow, Kelly, who had left Dublin, got a French passport & got into the Transvaal after the war broke out & was in all the Fights of the Brigade since. Came up this day week & had tea with Maria, another friend and myself & spent the evening telling us of life in the Transvaal. He remains here in New York & has already got employment. Miss Gonne knows him very well. In fact t'was she managed to get him smuggled into Africa.²⁷

This clearly demonstrated that Clarke was interested in the Boer War. He was up to date with Irish-American business and with politics and events in Ireland and to a lesser extent in England through newspapers and his connections within Clan na Gael. This working knowledge of events beyond the confines of the Ireland-England-America axis broadened in time and provided Clarke with a wider understanding of international affairs. To amplify his knowledge of politics and international affairs, he

²⁵ NLI, ACC 6410, Clarke Papers, Box 1, I.ii.2., Clarke to Kathleen Daly 12 May 1900

²⁶ NLI, ACC 6410, Clarke Papers, Box 1, I.ii.2., Clarke to Kathleen Daly 12 May 1900

²⁷ NLI, ACC 6410, Clarke Papers, Box 1, I.ii.2., Clarke to Kathleen Daly 25 November 1900

mentioned Queen Victoria's last visit to Ireland in a letter to Kathleen, which was an attempt by the British Government to combat the successful anti-recruitment campaign waged there by Irish opponents of the Boer War.²⁸

In 1900, John MacBride stood as a candidate in the South Mayo by-election and was soundly trounced despite his reputation as a freedom fighter and Arthur Griffith's support. The fortunes of the physical force men were in decline and a police report compiled by Superintendent John Mallon of the Dublin Metropolitan Police noted that the physical force men had begun to pay attention to their personal positions and he quoted a reliable source who indicated that 'the fire-eaters were trying to gobble up everything for themselves' and he further noted that Clarke failed to obtain the post of superintendent of the Dublin abattoir.²⁹ Clearly, the tide was running against physical force men in Ireland and Clarke's decision to go to America was expedient as his background precluded him from obtaining worthwhile employment in Ireland. In America, he had the opportunity to make something of his life without the baggage of his past dragging him down. Paradoxically, it was just this baggage that justified Devoy's decision to make him his private secretary. Clarke commented on the mindset of people in Ireland after learning that John Daly had worked for MacBride at the by-election in South Mayo:

And so Uncle John was up in Mayo working for John MacBride. T'is disgusting to find how rotten the spirit of our people has become through the teaching of Parliamentarians moral force men.³⁰

Clarke found this 'spirit' difficult to understand. He had endured fifteen years in prison and his mind had developed along revolutionary rather than constitutional lines. Clarke's comment was somewhat naïve because he had not faced the daily realities of life or the changing political fortunes in Ireland. This naivety was his strongest motive for political change in Ireland; he wanted to overthrow British rule through action which equated, in his mind, to the use of physical force. It was exactly this spirit that Tom Clarke hoped to engender: a spirit of country, liberty and freedom for Irish people to choose their own destiny.

Clarke did not enjoy robust health and he came down with colds easily, one developing into pneumonia in the winter months of 1900.³¹ However, he was aware

²⁸ NLI, ACC 6410, Box 1, I.ii.2., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 12 May 1900

²⁹ National Archive of Ireland (NAI), Colonial Papers (CO) 904/27, Mallon's minute, 8 February 1900

³⁰ NLI, ACC 6410, Box 1, I.ii.2., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 11 March 1900

of the importance of diet and he referred to this in a letter to Kathleen, 'I still revel in fruit diet. Bananas, apples, pears & grapes in great abundance now & dirt cheap.' ³² John Devoy was also concerned with Clarke's health, 'Dear Clarke, I am sorry to hear you have been laid up. You must not run so much risk, and you must be more careful about buttoning overcoats, etc...' ³³

Kathleen Daly made tentative arrangements to travel to America in March 1901 with John Daly to marry Tom Clarke. However she was the principal witness to a street accident March 1901 that involved Mrs Egan and she and her husband (the Egan who was Tom Clarke's prison compatriot) promised to escort her to America when the court case concluded. In July 1901 the Egans and Kathleen Daly sailed for New York. The journey across the Atlantic was extremely rough and Kathleen suffered from seasickness and the landing was delayed by fog. However, despite lost luggage and the postponement of the wedding, the Reverend J A Talbot of St Augustine's Catholic Church officiated at the marriage of Tom Clarke and Kathleen Daly on July 16th 1901 in New York. Despite her luggage not having arrived in time for the wedding, Kathleen married Tom in clothes borrowed from his sister Maria and she dismissed this minor aberration and continued as planned. ³⁴

Tom and Kathleen Clarke initially lived in the Bronx but moved to Greenpoint, Brooklyn which was closer to his place of employment. It was in Brooklyn that their first child was born; Kathleen Clarke recalled Clarke's emotional state after the birth, 'and Tom's joy over the little boy was great.' ³⁵ Clarke demonstrated a flair for organization and in May 1900, The Tyrone Men's Association had voted him onto their Arrangements Committee. ³⁶ After moving to Greenpoint, Clarke transferred to the Clan na Gael club there and was elected President ³⁷ Kathleen Clarke recalled his enthusiasm for celebrating, encouraging and directly organizing all things Irish within the Irish clubs in Greenpoint, Brooklyn. ³⁸

³¹ NLI, ACC 6410, Box 1, I.ii.3., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 21 January and 25 November 1900

³² NLI, ACC 6410, Box 1, I.ii.3., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 13 November 1900

³³ Le Roux, *Clarke*, p. 61

³⁴ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.29

³⁵ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.30

³⁶ NLI, ACC 6410, Box 1, I.ii.2., Clarke to Kathleen Daly, 12 May 1900

³⁷ CPP, Facsimile of a leaflet promoting the Annual Picnic and Games of the Celtic Club, Clan na Gael, Brooklyn NY, Saturday September 10th 1904. Under the list of Officers, Clarke is named as President

³⁸ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.30

Clarke brought out a newspaper while in New York. By writing for and publishing *The Clansman*, Clarke was demonstrating his ability to use the available media to promote Irishness and to underline Ireland's separate and distinctive culture. His emphasis on the revival of Irish language in the article he wrote for the journal and his support for the Gaelic League demonstrated his intellectual reasoning on the need not only for a free Ireland, but for a Gaelic speaking Ireland. This was later emphasized in 1912 when Patrick Pearse launched a weekly journal, *An Barr Buadh* (The Trumpet of Victory) in Irish. Tom Clarke wrote an introductory piece and lauded Pearse's journal because it used the Irish Language as a medium to promote Irish independence through the use of armed force.³⁹ Culturally, Clarke was an Irishman and he celebrated this and helped others to celebrate their Irishness through picnics, dances and the written word. His attitude towards the expectations of women is highlighted when, as President of the Brooklyn Gaelic Society, Clarke organised a lecture to be given by James Reidy, a friend of his, on 'The Influence of the Irish Woman on the National Movement' to the Brooklyn Gaelic Society. Clarke readily agreed with the topic and Reidy spoke of women, through the ages, who had supported or took a leading part in attempting to free their country of foreign rule.⁴⁰

There existed a similarity of purpose between the New York Gaelic Societies and the Gaelic League in Ireland. The Brooklyn Gaelic Society promoted Irish language, music and dancing through lectures, debates, classes and social functions. Clarke did not confine his activities to Brooklyn alone as he often visited other districts, where Gaelic clubs were set up, as a guest or speaker. He was a member of the Lectures Committee of the Brooklyn Gaelic Club and he arranged fortnightly talks by Irishmen and friends of Ireland in the autumns and winters of the years 1903-1906. Kathleen Clarke recalled that as a member of Clan na Gael:

...Tom joined the military section called the Irish Volunteers, and became regimental adjutant. The body went regularly into the country for rifle practice. Sometimes, Baby Daly and I accompanied Tom on these jaunts, as a day in the country was a joy to me. I was not having good health in New York, so we decided to move to Brooklyn.⁴¹

³⁹ CPP, Emmet Clarke memorandum on Tom Clarke

⁴⁰ CPP, Facsimile of a pamphlet of a lecture given by James Reidy to the Brooklyn Gaelic Society, Saturday March 18th 1906, The Influence of Irish Woman on the Nationalist Movement

⁴¹ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.32

Shortly after moving to Brooklyn, Clarke founded the Brooklyn Gaelic Society with two Irish-American brothers named Bennett ⁴² and at meetings of the Society he expounded his views on how Ireland could gain its Independence. In a letter to John MacBride, Clarke described the personality of a fellow political prisoner because MacBride would certainly come across him on his lecture tour of the USA. Tom Clarke took the opportunity to describe events in New York thus, 'Things are now humming in this district... & physical force & physical force alone is the word that gets stronger day by day.' ⁴³

Throughout most of his adult life, Clarke was associated with the production of newspapers: *The Irish Felon* in Chatham jail, an almost impossible proposition for a prisoner so closely guarded, *The Clansman* in New York, 1902, the *Gaelic American*, 1903 and was the motivating and inspiring force behind the launch of *Irish Freedom* in Dublin, 1910. This was a crucial aspect of his life and demonstrated the breadth of his determination to spread the gospel of Fenianism and Republicanism whether it was in Chatham jail, New York or Dublin. Clarke saw newspapers as an ideal propaganda tool and he used them as a conduit to spread his views of Irish separatism and the means to achieve it-armed insurrection. By 1902, Clarke had established himself in Irish-American society in New York. He was well known in Clan na Gael and Gaelic Society circles and had contacts with separatists in Ireland. John MacBride underlined Clarke's success as an organizer, leader and activist in these circles when he wrote to John Devoy:

I am sorry you are thinking of retiring as I do not know anyone who will be able to do the work so well. Perhaps you may change your mind yet; but should you not, the Convention could hardly make a wiser or better selection than plucky Tom Clarke. I was thinking of applying myself for it until I thought of Tom, and of course his undoubted fitness for the task drove all thoughts of it from my head. ⁴⁴

Devoy did not retire but MacBride thought that Clarke had the organizational and political skills to further the cause of Irish Freedom in an American context. It was also recognition of Clarke's status in the Irish-American community and of his separatist politics. Thus, Clarke was in a good position; Kathleen joined him in

⁴² Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.33

⁴³ CPP, Clarke to John MacBride, 18 June 1901

⁴⁴ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, John MacBride to John Devoy, 10 June 1902 pp.349-350

America, they married and he was in steady employment: he was also promoting 'Irishness' actively through the Gaelic Societies and also spreading the word that physical force was the path towards Irish Freedom. However, in late 1902 or early 1903, Clarke was dismissed from the Cameron Pump Works. Maurice Allen, who was the foreman there and a Clan member, originally hired Tom Clarke but Allen rowed with the manager of the works and was fired with one week's notice after thirty-five years service. The manager also sacked all of the Irishmen including Clarke who had been hired by Allen.⁴⁵

The Gaelic American

In March/April 1903 Clarke was out seeking employment when he fell into conversation with two members of the Clan's Revolutionary Council who suggested he offer his services to Devoy for the long mooted scheme of starting an Irish Revolutionary newspaper in New York. Devoy accepted his offer and set him up in a full time paid position with sole responsibility for organizing the scheme and to produce a sound plan to put before the Clan leaders. Clarke took under six months to secure from the main Clan na Gael clubs on the Eastern Seaboard and other prominent Irish-American organizations cast iron motions of support.

While visiting Gaelic clubs on the Eastern Seaboard of the United States of America, he was in touch with Treasurers, Presidents and Secretaries of those clubs and did a lot of research into the project before putting his case before the Clan leaders. This work tested and honed Clarke's skills as a negotiator and his *raison d'être*, Irish Freedom. A committee was set up and in September 1903, the *Gaelic American* was launched. Devoy was Editor-in-Chief with Tom Clarke Assistant Editor and General Manager. The paper was launched on 13th September 1903 a week before the hundredth anniversary of Robert Emmet's death and the first edition pulled no punches in celebrating that anniversary and also by taking a hard line against Britain and her imperial domination of Ireland. The use of Emmet was propagandist and also a good idea for advertising the paper and putting over the message of physical force. It was not simply 'fire and brimstone' for Ireland: it avoided the daily trials and tribulations of the average Irish-American, assimilation,

⁴⁵ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.30

social and working conditions, and concentrated on wider political issues and was aimed at 'people who needed servants.'⁴⁶

The leader of the first edition ran with the title *The Gaelic American's Mission* and sought to deliver the message of Irish Freedom in an American context. It damned the British for its presence in Ireland and for interfering in American foreign and domestic policy issues:

The object of the paper will be to aid the cause of Irish National Independence as the term was understood by Wolfe Tone and the Emmets, by John Mitchel, John O'Mahoney and James Stephens. An Irish nation means Ireland governing herself according to the wishes and interests of her own people and without any interference whatever from any people, power or authority outside her borders.⁴⁷

The article did not mention how independence was to be achieved or on what terms but it indicated, in its view, the growing influence of Britain in American politics which foresaw the Clan's future role in blocking any proposed Anglo-American treaty:

This "Anglo-Saxon propaganda" has made considerable headway mainly because the true Americans, the Irish and the German citizen have been too preoccupied with local affairs to give proper attention to the foreign relations of the Republic.⁴⁸

The leader in the first edition was written by John Devoy and the mention of American citizens of German origin was relevant as this built on the mutual antipathy shown by Irish and German groups in America towards Britain which originated when both groups demonstrated against the Boer War. This loose and informal partnership demonstrated that Devoy recognized Germany was a growing threat to British economic and military supremacy and therefore a likely ally of Ireland. As Deputy Editor, Clarke fully realized the significance of cultivating German-American opinion on the side of Ireland's struggle against British rule. Devoy set out his nationalist stall not on a parochial level but on a much wider stage with the knowledge that Ireland could not win its independence without foreign aid. Similarly,

⁴⁶ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, Saturday 27 April 1907

⁴⁷ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, Saturday 13 September 1905, p.4

⁴⁸ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, Saturday 13 September 1905, p.4

he spread the Gospel of Irish independence, albeit through an Irish-American perspective, to a wider audience beyond the shores of America:

We want to create an organ of Irish American opinion that will command the respect of the American people and that will be recognized in foreign countries as speaking for the men who are determined to make Ireland a nation and who will never consent to a compromise.⁴⁹

'Men... who will never consent to a compromise', aptly reflected Devoy's own understanding of how and by whom, Irish independence could be achieved, people in Ireland. He was also making an early case for recognition of the fight for Ireland's independence by countries that were not under British rule. Clearly, this was newspaper rhetoric but Clarke's own philosophy of independence for Ireland largely mirrored Devoy's thinking on the subject.

A John Carroll called at the offices of the *Gaelic American* and suggested he write a series of articles on prominent men in the revolutionary movement in Ireland; Billy Kelly recalled how Clarke attempted to gauge the caller's depth of knowledge:

"Well" said Tom, get busy and bring me a paper on Thomas Devin Reilly" John did so and returned to Clarke with the finished article. "John," said he, "John Mitchel would turn in his grave if he knew you spell his name with two ll's." He was well pleased with the article otherwise. "John, go and bring me more like this," he said. He subsequently accepted fifty such articles on Irish Fenians, from Michael Doheny down to Sean Kavanagh and Mike Monks. Tom's idea was to educate the Irish-Americans in the work done by the revolutionaries from '48 on.⁵⁰

Importantly, Clarke decided the editorial content of the newspaper and with Devoy away from the office on a regular basis Clarke, as his assistant and Deputy Editor, made editorial decisions, e.g. commissioning John Carroll to write articles for the paper, on his own, and he also carried out Devoy's instructions. Devoy wrote this letter from St. Louis where a Clan delegate convention, coded as a picnic, was held:

Dear Tom

I find the picnic is tomorrow (Sunday) instead of Saturday, so I can't be back till Tuesday morning. I will try and send some copy this evening, but tell

⁴⁹ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, Saturday 13 September 1905, p.4

⁵⁰ CPP, Billy Kelly to Kathleen Clarke, September 1919, CPP

O'Reilly to give the Oireachtas matter to the printer and give it as much space as necessary. Tell Mr Freeman to give him all the Editorial he may have written, so that there may be no shortage of copy, and I will write all I can on the train.⁵¹

The newspaper venture allowed Devoy to achieve three things: first, after the re-unification of the Clan in 1900, an opportunity to further consolidate and shape the structure of the organization. Second, it facilitated the spread of the Clan gospel according to Devoy. Third it permitted him time away from the office to attend meetings and conferences in other parts of the United States. With Clarke as his deputy, Devoy left the day to day running of the paper to him and that enabled Clarke to gain valuable hands on experience and insights into the problems and issues dealt with by Clan na Gael.

Shrewdly, Devoy moulded the newspaper into a vehicle of anti-British rhetoric by merging his position as Editor of the newspaper and Clan secretary into one thus setting the agenda for radical nationalism in the *Gaelic American* and actively pursuing it as Clan secretary. By setting up Britain as the paper's whipping boy, he reached out to Irish-Americans who had not lived in Ireland nor experienced the humiliation of the workhouse or suffered the ravages of the Famine. He did this by making Britain the enemy of America and not Ireland.

Clarke played a full role in the re-establishment of a vibrant united Fenianism in America. However, working with Devoy was not easy. Sean McGarry noted:

For nearly four years from now Tom worked harder than ever he had done in his life. As well as writing himself he secured contributors, did press cutting, sub-editing and was general factotum. James Reidy said he was a slave to Devoy and the paper, that Devoy was a hard worker and saw to it that others worked hard also but that he, Devoy was the very devil to work with.⁵²

This experience demonstrated to Clarke the importance of a newspaper to publicize the beliefs of Fenianism and also for bringing together people with similar views who otherwise may not have had the opportunity to meet. The re-invigoration

⁵¹ Le Roux, *Tom Clarke*, p. 70

⁵² NAI, Bureau of Military History (BMH), Witness Statement (WS) 368, Sean McGarry, p. 13. The Bureau of Military History was established in January 1947 to 'assemble and co-ordinate material to form the basis for the compilation of the history of the movement for independence from the formation of the Volunteers on 25 November 1913 to 11 July 1922.' 1,770 statements were taken by Bureau officials from witnesses connected to events between the two dates. On 11 March 2003, the archives of the Bureau were opened to the public. (Ryan, Anne, *Witnesses*, (Dublin, 2005), p. 23

of Irish-America was a precursor to the changes that occurred in the IRB from 1905 in Belfast where Bulmer Hobson and Denis McCullough founded the Dungannon Clubs.

John Devoy personally breathed life into the Clan during the last five years of the 1890's until 1900 when the feuding parties met, to rebuild bridges, in Atlantic City where Devoy was elected the reorganized Clan's secretary. But whither the IRB in those barren years of the 1890s? In common with Clan na Gael and the Irish Parliamentary Party, the IRB endured its own split, which lasted until the reunification of the Clan obviated the need for separate physical force organizations in Ireland. When the split in the Irish Parliamentary Party healed in 1900, the cosy existence between the Redmondites and the IRB ceased.⁵³ Thus, after 1900, the context of Irish politics changed dramatically and became more polarized. On the one hand were the united constitutional IPP, on the other the IRB/Clan Na Gael, and in the middle were the non-political cultural organizations.

Clarke worked closely with John Devoy on the *Gaelic American*. Clarke spent three times longer in prison than Devoy and they shared an awareness of mutual suffering for a cause they both believed. In a letter to Clarke, Devoy mentioned his own trials and tribulations:

He spoke of his "awful drudgery, "which, with his stiff arm, "was tough."
 "Writing all day stiffened my arm and a jolt on an electric car as I was catching a strap set me back. I have just mailed forty-three letters, however, and am now nearly even."⁵⁴

This, however, demonstrated how busy Devoy was. Clarke and Devoy were temperamentally alike as they did not suffer fools or dreamers easily and the Clan and the IRB had plenty of both. They were hard headed men who regarded freedom for Ireland as the highest calling they could follow. Kathleen Clarke remembered Devoy as 'gruff' and 'unsociable' but in private she found him 'sociable, simple and kind.'⁵⁵ To further underline the importance of Clarke to the *Gaelic American* and thus the Clan, Kathleen Clarke related a change in accommodation arrangements

⁵³ Kelly, Matthew, 'Parnell's Old Brigade :the Redmonite-Fenian nexus in the 1890s, *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol XXXIII, November, 2002, p.231

⁵⁴ Le Roux, *Clarke*, Letter from John Devoy to Tom Clarke, undated, pp 61-62

⁵⁵ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 31

which reflected the higher social standing that the Clarkes enjoyed commensurate with Clarke's standing in the Clan:

When Tom was established in the *Gaelic American*, we sold our ice-cream and candy store and moved to 99th Street. John Devoy and his sister lived in the same street and many other friends lived near, amongst them the American born Irishman Daniel Cohalan, later Judge Cohalan.⁵⁶ (99th Street was, and is, in Manhattan, this author's note)

This was a practical arrangement because living close to Clan colleagues ensured easier access to them for business discussions during out of office hours with the added bonus of the possibility of socializing with families and friends connected to the Clan and the *Gaelic American*.

Political Activity, Irish and German-Americans

The Tyrone Men's Association, (a New York expatriate club affiliated to Clan na Gael for Irishmen either born in or associated with Co. Tyrone. Clarke joined as he regarded himself a native of Dungannon, Co. Tyrone) had appointed Tom Clarke as its delegate to the New York United Irish Societies Committee in 1900 and he noted in a letter to Kathleen, 'This is work I could shirk off if I feel inclined but I am not going to & it shows you I don't believe it will kill me.'⁵⁷ Kathleen Clarke later recalled that in 1902, '...All the Irish societies were brought together under the title United Irish American Societies, and Tom was Corresponding Secretary.'⁵⁸

In the same year, 1902, there was a proposal in USA government circles to sign an Anglo-American treaty with Britain. Secretary of State John Hay was a supporter of this and his time spent in Britain as USA Ambassador to the Court of St James may have influenced his position. Irish-America was organised and ready for the fray. Clarke, as Correspondence Secretary of the United Irish American Societies, attended important meetings on Society strategy: essentially, how to get their message across to the right people. Clarke was involved with the Brooklyn section of the United Irish American Societies and was involved with the Manhattan Central Committee, a small group of Clan leaders, which controlled the Eastern

⁵⁶ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 32

⁵⁷ NLI, ACC 6410, Box 1, I.ii.2., Clarke to Kathleen Daly 12 May 1900

⁵⁸ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 31

United Irish-American Societies. The background of individual committee members was varied but they shared a common ideal and policy, the independence of Ireland.

⁵⁹ By using connections in Clan na Gael, the committee lobbied Congress to explain Irish-America's grave reservations over the proposed treaty. As Correspondence Secretary, Clarke was involved in attempting to influence the collective mind of Congress. The treaty failed. Similarly, another treaty was mooted in 1905 and the Manhattan Central Committee was again organized for action. This time however, the German-American community was involved and the Clan joined forces with them to form a sub-committee under the Clan's guidance. This sub-committee comprising Irish and German Americans, of which Clarke was a member, lobbied Congress and influenced that body sufficiently for it to reject the proposals for the proposed Anglo-American treaty.

This defeat was welcomed and celebrated by Irish-America with the Clan jubilant and Tom Clarke's role in the diplomatic coup considerable. This was significant because Clan na Gael, and Tom Clarke, made contact with German-Americans prior to 1914. The work done in 1905 by Clarke, Devoy and the other committee members resulted in the rebuffing of the proposed Anglo-American Treaty and established a basis for further collaboration between the German and Irish exiles. More importantly, it indicated to the German government that Ireland and Irish-America were to be taken seriously.

In the *Gaelic American* of March 1905 Devoy celebrated the reversal of British Foreign policy when giving a detailed account of how the treaty with Britain would undermine the Constitution of the United States. He also underlined the role played by the Clan and mentioned, not by name, the many people who were involved:

...Clan na Gael...led the battle, supplied the corps and division commanders, its capable agents reached the Senators and ranged on the side of the old American ideals...⁶⁰

This newspaper rhetoric had an air of theatricality but Devoy mentioned the role played by 'capable agents' and Tom Clarke was one of those 'agents' who worked against the treaty with American-Germans. Apart from organizing Irish events and working for the *Gaelic American*, Clarke revived the fortunes of the IRB

⁵⁹ CPP, Emmet Clarke memoranda on Tom Clarke

⁶⁰ BLNC, John Devoy, The Clan na Gael's great work, *The Gaelic American*, 15 March 1913

Veteran's Association in New York. He found, via John Carroll, the location of forty Fenian graves which the Veterans maintained and laid wreathes annually thereafter. Similarly, Clarke inaugurated an annual pilgrimage to Matilda Tone's (the wife of Irish Revolutionary Wolfe Tone) grave in Greenwood Cemetery, on a date as close as possible to the pilgrimage in Ireland to Wolfe Tone's grave, at Bodenstown: (viz. the closest Sunday to June 20).

Bulmer Hobson visits America

Clarke laboured under a tremendous burden of work and this, in combination with his wife's continuing ill health, influenced his decision to move to the country. Kathleen Clarke noted:

Six months later, * I was again in poor health, and the Doctor advised country air and Country life for me. On hearing this, Uncle John sent us money to buy a small farm, and we bought a small market garden farm, Manor Culverton, in Manorville, Long Island. Tom resigned his position on the *Gaelic American* and we started off gaily on our farming career.⁶¹
(*Author's note; this was around November/December 1906.)

Kathleen did not mention Clarke's ill health but this was not the major issue. To infer that Clarke arranged his living and working arrangements in 1906-7 to fall in line with a timetable he arranged cannot be backed up by primary source evidence but he did not work on the farm all of the time. Around the same time that Clarke decided to take up farming, there were signs of a reinvigoration of the IRB in Ireland spearheaded by younger and dynamic members:

In 1906 Bulmer Hobson started a monthly paper, *The Republic*, in Belfast, and visited the United States the next year as the representative of the younger and more vigorous elements in the Irish Republican Brotherhood which was then mainly under the control of cautious and older leaders.⁶²

Bulmer Hobson indicated the nature of his visit to the United States: 'In the beginning of 1907 I set sail for New York to introduce the Sinn Fein movement to

⁶¹ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.33

⁶² O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, p.330

America.' ⁶³ Hobson then mentioned the people he met on the tour but excluded Clarke:

In America I renewed my acquaintance with O'Donovan Rossa, became friendly with Devoy, and met many others who had taken a prominent or active role in the Fenian movement. Amongst these was Ricard O'Sullivan Burke, who at the time was Harbor Master in Chicago. Burke was the organiser of the Manchester rescue in 1867. I also met P. J. Tynan, who was connected with the Invincibles movement. ⁶⁴

Kathleen Clarke gave a fuller picture of the importance of Hobson's visit to the USA by commenting on Clarke's connection with the Northern IRB members, Hobson included, before Clarke returned to Ireland in 1907:

Though very preoccupied with the struggle to make a living, Tom never lost sight of the purpose for which he had returned to Ireland. He had been in touch with the Republicans, or as they were then called, Separatists, in the North. One of them was Bulmer Hobson, with whom he had been in correspondence while in New York; he had sent him an invitation to address a Clan na Gael convention. He seemed to vision Hobson as another John Mitchel. ⁶⁵

Thus, Clarke respected Hobson and saw him as a disciple of Republicanism from the same mould as Mitchel and corresponded with him while in New York. This was more likely after Hobson's visit but letters were exchanged prior to the lecture tour. Clarke had found a theoretician and possible spokesman: but what sort of support did the IRB enjoy in Ireland at this time?

Roots of discontent, the IRB, Clan na Gael and the Irish Parliamentary Party

The period from 1900, when the IRB, IPP, and Clan na Gael healed the splits in their respective organizations, until 1907 saw the fortunes of the IRB at a low ebb. The days of cosy co-existence with the Parnellites of the IPP were over and the IRB now looked to its own resources to sustain its purpose and beliefs. IRB - Clan na Gael links were strengthened with the publication of the *Gaelic American* in 1903. Irish separatism, on both sides of the Atlantic but mainly in America, had a written

⁶³ Hobson, Bulmer, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow*, Anvil Press, Tralee, 1968, p.10

⁶⁴ Hobson, *Ireland*, p.11

⁶⁵ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.40

medium through which Irish independence was heralded. The IRB in Ireland was not flourishing as the three men who controlled the organisation in the early 1900s, Fred Allen, P. T. Daly and John Hanlon, were more involved with constitutionalist rather than revolutionary politics.

Clearly, the split between the IRB and the Parnell rump after 1900 did not immediately re-ignite dynamism within the IRB and particularly not with these three men. The McCullough–Hobson dynamic was effective through the Dungannon clubs in Belfast but not on the wider national scene and certainly not in Dublin. Control of the organization was still very much in the hands of the older more staid generation and there is evidence of a Dublin based, parochial approach:

I suppose you saw the fight we put up against [Timothy] Harrington [M.P.] at his last [Dublin Corporation] election. We would have whipped him twice over only for the rain. "Only" again stands Britain's friend.' ⁶⁶

This demonstrated the parochial nature of the politics the IRB were involved in. P T Daly did not relate to Devoy that they had arms stockpiled but it appeared that mediocrity and noise plus excuses were sufficient to satisfy the Supreme Council that they were really making a difference in the fight for Ireland's independence. However, John MacBride's letter to Devoy of 1902 was a shrewd analysis of the war prospects in Europe based on his reading of events. He ended underlining the need for decent leadership of the IRB:

So there is more need than ever that good men should be at the head of affairs. We are disgraced for ever if we miss another opportunity. Greetings to all. ⁶⁷

This was implied criticism of the three man executive of the IRB, Allen, Daly and Hanlon. Further evidence suggesting IRB affairs, nationally, were not on a strong footing was contained in a letter from Robert Johnson (Ulster Fenian leader and member of the IRB Supreme Council) to John Devoy in 1907:

I have frequently thought that if it were at all possible for you to pay a short visit to this country and carefully investigate the position of affairs in the

⁶⁶ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, P T Daly to Devoy, 18 April 1905, p.354

⁶⁷ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, John MacBride to Devoy, pp.348-349

leading centres, it would be fraught with results of the utmost benefit to us. In the event of your being unable to come, you should endeavour to have a properly accredited agent sent over with whom we could exchange ideas. This would be extremely beneficial.⁶⁸

The point of this letter is the invitation to Devoy to visit Ireland, or if not an agent of his, to 'investigate' leading centres which meant Allen, Daly and Hanlon. Clearly, the structure of the IRB in Ireland was loose and needed a person of the stature of Devoy to 'light a fire underneath it' but Devoy was reluctant. Hobson's lecture tour in 1907 had opened up a communications conduit between the vibrant elements of the IRB in Belfast and Clan na Gael represented by Devoy and Clarke in America. The issue was clearly when and not if a reorganization of the IRB was to be started. After Hobson returned to Ireland, the question of a reorganization of the IRB was still unanswered but the Revolutionary Council and Devoy counselled caution and they decided to wait until someone in Ireland initiated change.

Through his connection with the *Gaelic American* and through his representation on various Clan committees, including working directly with German-Americans, Clarke had a perspective on European and world politics. His understanding of political events outside the narrow context of Irish diasporic concerns was further underlined by reading dispatches, for publication in the *Gaelic America*, sent by correspondents from countries of the British Empire. He read enough of these dispatches and analyses to be aware that war could break out in Europe: a war that would possibly see Britain and Germany on opposing sides. Kathleen Clarke reflected how Tom Clarke felt that a European war which included Britain would be a chance for Ireland to strike for its Freedom:

Some of the well informed American journals began to talk of the inevitability of war between England and Germany for commercial supremacy; Germany was beating England out of many of the world markets, especially in some of the South American markets. It was suggested that war would occur within ten years. I could see that this talk of England being engaged in war in the near future was having an unsettling effect on Tom. Night after night, sitting down when work was done, he would revert to it, and the tragedy it would be if Ireland failed to avail herself of such an opportunity to make a bid for freedom.⁶⁹

⁶⁸ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, Robert Johnson to Devoy, 5 February 1907pp.357-358

⁶⁹ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.35

Whether the prospect of war inherent in this quote was feasible is a debatable question. France and Russia had a working alliance but Britain had become isolated diplomatically, in the 1890's. Britain had had a closer relationship with Germany in the 1880's but Salisbury, after 1895, worked on drawing Britain's relationship with France and Russia ever closer. This was not, of course, a precursor to war but the Entente of 1904 and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 suggested that Britain, instead of forming a direct alliance with Germany, would be allied to a buffer zone of countries east and west of her.

Clarke was worried about missing an opportunity to strike a blow for the independence of Ireland. He was mindful that in the event of a serious conflict, Ireland should be ready to respond and fight for its freedom through armed insurrection. Kathleen Clarke noted the domestic discussions on this topic.⁷⁰ Again, Clarke's knowledge of European and international affairs played a part in his final decision to return to Ireland and his knowledge of the importance of the Anglo-Russian Convention made his decision to return in 1907 all the more significant. Tom had decided, after consulting Kathleen, to 'go back' and they made arrangements to sell their things and plan for the journey.⁷¹ Devoy would have to be informed and:

Tom went to John Devoy and told him we were returning to Ireland, and the reason for it. There was not a more surprised man in the USA than Devoy. He promised him all the help in his power, a promise he kept faithfully. He also gave him credentials to introduce him to the IRB (Irish Republican Brotherhood) in Ireland, as Tom intended to start his campaign to prepare Ireland to take advantage of the coming war between England and Germany, and strike a blow for freedom, through the IRB.⁷²

Clarke was neither an envoy nor a representative of Devoy or the Revolutionary Council but he could rely on their full support if he organised the IRB towards breaking British rule in Ireland. This essentially, was the reason why Clarke returned to Ireland in 1907. The circumstances of his return are important but not as important as the reason why: he wanted to organize the IRB to be prepared to strike a blow for the independence of Ireland.

⁷⁰ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, pp.35-36

⁷¹ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.106

⁷² Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.36

This chapter examined Clarke's life from leaving prison in 1898 until he returned to Ireland in 1907. Tom Clarke left Portland prison a human wreck but with his sanity intact and mind undiminished. The world he last saw in 1883 had changed considerably but he adapted to the new one and was supported by his mother and sister and John Daly but it was his love for Kathleen Daly that made Clarke's rehabilitation into the world of 1898 and beyond, much smoother than otherwise would have been the case. He went to America, married and progressed into the higher echelons of revolutionary politics and society. Although he knew that talking was his weakness and working his strength, Clarke, through his time with Devoy and the *Gaelic American*, polished and honed his communication skills and became increasingly involved in Irish-American revolutionary politics, 1898-1907.

As Devoy's assistant, General Manager and Deputy Editor of the *Gaelic American* newspaper, Clarke had an appreciation of political events in the world as they affected Ireland: viz. possible war in Europe, nationalist opinion in Britain's colonies, the political scene in Britain and how effective the Irish Parliamentarians were in Parliament and Ireland. The fact that Britain was looking to make new allies up to 1914 (France became one while an alliance with America did not materialize because of the work of the Irish and German communities in America) influenced Clarke in his decision to return to Ireland to prepare the country for insurrection if a European war broke out. Clarke's personality has been examined through accounts of his contemporaries, friends and family but foremost through his own words. He was a hard working, home loving man who had no time for slackers but was also ruthless, scheming, devious, loyal, articulate, humorous and kind. Above all, he had an eye for maximizing the potential of a situation or person to the full to further the one cause that he held above all, the freedom of his country.

In the context of the thesis, this chapter examined how Clarke reintegrated himself into society and how he developed and expanded his skills in America. By working as John Devoy's assistant (Devoy was the assistant to James Stephens one of the founders of the IRB) Clarke made many friends and contacts and he also developed an in depth view of the workings of the Irish community in America. This, together with his organizational and editorial skills, furnished him with the necessary tools to re-establish or re-invent the IRB in Ireland in league with Bulmer Hobson, Denis McCullough and other like minded young IRB men.

Chapter 5

Return to Ireland, reintegration and revolutionary politics, 1907-1912.

1907-1912

The struggle for Irish freedom has gone on for centuries, and in the course of it a well-trodden path has been made that leads to the scaffold and to prison. Many of our revered dead have trod that path, and it was these memories that inspired me with sufficient courage to walk part of the way along that path with an upright head.¹

Thomas J Clarke

¹ Clarke, T J, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life*, (Dublin, 1971), p. 41

Return to Ireland

Tom and Kathleen Clarke arrived in Ireland at the end of November 1907 and were met at Cobh, County Cork by John Daly and Kathleen's sister Madge: they travelled directly to Limerick. However, the police watched Clarke's arrival and the authorities in Dublin Castle were made aware of it in December.² The Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC)/Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP) kept Clarke under surveillance from the moment he landed at Cobh in 1907 until his execution in 1916. Tom and Kathleen decided to open a tobacconist and newspaper shop in Dublin on the advice of Hannah Clarke, Tom's sister. John Daly would have preferred them to stay in Limerick, however, Kathleen Clarke noted, '...but from the point of view of the work Tom intended doing, to prepare the country to take advantage of the coming war, Dublin was best suited.'³ Clarke spent Christmas in Limerick-Kathleen stayed until July- but was in Dublin for the New Year looking for suitable premises to open a business. Writing to Kathleen he described his efforts thus:

I have had talks with a number of friends who know the city in order to get information as to the good locations for the business and I have myself gone over such locations as were spoken as good.⁴

The DMP noted that, 'Clarke has been observed frequently...and is booking up vacant shops in the City, evidently for the purpose of settling down in business as a stationer and bookseller.'⁵ Clarke opened his shop at 55 Amiens Street on 14th February 1908. With the railway station across the road and a large number of people passing the shop, he was confident the business would succeed. He also referred to some Irish/Ireland customers, when writing to Kathleen, who had agreed to hand out some of his business cards to friends. This was a coded reference to some IRB men.⁶ Early in 1909, Tom and Kathleen bought another shop at 75A Great Britain Street and in 1910 they rented a shop and house at 77 Amiens Street

² (NA), Colonial Office Papers, (CO) 904/117, December 1907

³ Clarke, Kathleen, *Revolutionary Woman, Kathleen Clarke, 1878-1972, An Autobiography*, (Dublin 1991) p. 36

⁴ National Library of Ireland, (NLI), Thomas Clarke Papers, ACC 6410, Box 1, I., ii., 10., 4 January 1908

⁵ PRO, CO 904/11, ff 334

⁶ NLI, ACC 6410, Clarke Papers, Box 1, I., ii., 10., Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, undated letter

and vacated the original shop at 55 Amiens Street.⁷ This suggested that by 1910, Clarke's business venture was thriving.

Even before Clarke secured a business outlet he was actively attempting to gather finance for a separatist and revolutionary newspaper although he had not as yet been co-opted onto the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) Supreme Council (SC). John Daly could be counted on to offer financial help but Clarke needed Daly's backing to start a business, and attempting to raise funds from him for a newspaper was premature. He knew from his experience of working on the *Gaelic American* in America how important a newspaper was in helping to spread the message of separatism: as a propaganda tool for the IRB it would be invaluable. To this end he journeyed to Belfast before Christmas to contact Seamus MacManus to arrange financial help for the proposed paper. MacManus had been in America previously and Clarke had arranged a lecture tour for him; MacManus indicated to Clarke that he would help him in the future if required. This was never forthcoming.⁸

Clarke had returned to Ireland with credentials from Devoy to introduce him to the IRB⁹ that effectively was a transfer from Clan na Gael to the IRB. These credentials enabled Clarke to get in touch with members of the IRB Supreme Council and through them other prominent separatists. He recorded how this helped him initially when he was setting up a business in a letter to Kathleen.¹⁰

This was in January 1908 before he had found premises but already he was planning to seek help from IRB connections to establish himself. His choice of business had a dual purpose. He did not have any depth of training in a trade or profession and a newsagents shop would provide a steady income. His sister Hannah had opened a similar shop in Dublin and Clarke was aware of the profit potential as much as the short period of time people would spend in his shop buying their requirements. The Amiens Street shop and later the Great Britain Street shop became a focal point for the IRB: people would cross the city to buy their paper and tobacco from Clarke and would listen to news or debate current issues. 'His shop was the central depot for the movement from all parts came men and women and

⁷ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 38

⁸ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 37

⁹ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 36

¹⁰ NLI, ACC 6410, Clarke Papers, Box 1, I., ii., 10., Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 4 January 1908

boys to discuss with him matters of national concern'.¹¹ Thus, as early as February 1908, Clarke was building a base of IRB men on whom he could depend and he went further by building on that base an organisation that largely by passed the existing and porous structure of the IRB.

Clarke was not only building a reputation with the IRB: as Dublin Castle put him on the B list of suspects whose names were telegraphed from place to place, because it was likely he would travel as the sole agent in connection with his newsagent's business for Colonel's Everard's tobacco. From the authorities point of view this was advisable as Clarke was in touch with John Hanlon and Fred Allen,¹² both members of the Supreme Council of the IRB-Allan asked him for a supply of business cards that he could hand out at City Hall to workers and 'others'. In a letter to Kathleen, he mentioned that he was also in contact with P T Daly, the third member of the executive that ran the IRB.¹³

Daly had been to New York to attend a Clan na Gael Convention in 1908 and Clarke was beginning to recognize and be recognized in the highest of Dublin separatist circles-but not yet as a member of the IRB SC. Diarmuid Lynch mentioned that 'Tom did not become a member of the S.C until 1909-two years after his return to Ireland'.¹⁴ Lynch established this because P S O'Hegarty wrote a letter to him confirming the same and O'Hegarty was on the SC from 1908 to 1914. Clarke was gaining the confidence of the members of the SC and indeed, through Bulmer Hobson, his range of contacts expanded. Kathleen Clarke noted that:

Through Hobson he got to know Ernest Blyth, Denis McCullough and Sean McDermott; Dr Pat McCartan and Diarmuid Lynch he had known in New York. All these gathered round him, and some came to live in Dublin. P S O'Hegarty was also in touch with him at a very early stage.¹⁵

In a letter to Kathleen, Clarke mentioned how he fielded enquiries for advertising rates in the *Gaelic American* from the owner of the Hotel Galway in Dublin and she suggested to Clarke that he could refer visiting Irish-Americans to her

¹¹ Clarke Private Papers: Anonymous Deposition these papers were accessed whilst still in the possession of Tom Clarke's son Emmet before they were sold to the NLI. This deposition was not included in the NLI material.

¹² NLI ACC 6410 Clarke Papers, Box 1, I., ii., 10., Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 18 January 1908

¹³ NLI ACC 6410 Clarke Papers, Box 1, I., ii., 10., Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, Undated, possibly February, 1908

¹⁴ Lynch, Diarmuid, *The IRB and The 1916 Rising*, Florence O'Donoghue, (ed), (Cork, 1958), P S O'Hegarty to Diarmuid Lynch p 95

¹⁵ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 40

hotel if accommodation was required. In the same letter, written on St Patrick's Day 1908, he referred to his own standing, 'So you see I am getting known all round and seem to be considered of some importance; a good thing though.'¹⁶ Clarke was not a vain man but this observation was accurate in the context of his connections with separatist politics and in the wider world of Irish nationalism. As a demonstration of his growing influence, Clarke was elected one of four Honorary Secretaries of the Wolfe Tone Clubs at their annual convention on 29th August 1908 at the Council Chambers of City Hall, Dublin. This was a start as Clarke, by elected right, attended meetings of the governing committee where he gauged how the clubs worked and also mingled with other committee members.¹⁷

Around late April or early May, Bulmer Hobson called in to Clarke's shop on Amiens Street. They talked about arranging a meeting with Hobson, Arthur Griffith and C J Dolan, the ex Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) MP for North Leitrim and at that time the Sinn Fein candidate for the seat, to discuss a proposed American lecture tour by Griffith and Dolan. He noted in a letter to Kathleen that Bulmer Hobson:

...is staying in Dublin for a week & he is anxious to bring Dolan (Dulain), Arthur Griffith & myself together to have me give my ideas to them regarding their going out to America on a lecture tour (that is Dolan and Griffith). It seems they have erroneous ideas about the matter & if they go without arrangement before hand with the other side they'll be flat failures & all concerned do not wish this.¹⁸

Clarke was also a vice president of Cumann na nGaedheal by 1902 and while in America, like John MacBride before him, secured financial help for Griffith's paper Sinn Fein. Griffith was a frequent visitor to Clarke's shop but even though Sinn Fein was not a political force big enough to take on the Irish Parliamentary Party, Clarke maintained a connection with Arthur Griffith. Griffith professed a great regard for Clarke and tried to persuade him to stand as a Sinn Fein candidate for the Dublin Corporation. Clarke was not interested and in a letter to John Daly wrote, 'Griffith wanted Sinn Fein having a candidate in me for the corporation, but none of that for

¹⁶ NLI, ACC 6410 Clarke Papers, Box 1, I., ii., 11., Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 17 March 1908

¹⁷ PRO, CO 906, ff 409-410

¹⁸ NLI, ACC 6410 Clarke Papers, Box 1, I., ii., Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, Undated, 1908

me.’¹⁹ However the IPP re-gained the seat in North Leitrim and on the surface John Redmond’s writ once again ran through nationalist Ireland.

Tom Clarke met Sean MacDiarmada before the Leitrim by election²⁰ where he was the Sinn Fein organizer for the candidate C J Dolan. The latter and MacDiarmada visited Clarke in his shop soon after the election and regaled him with stories of the dubious tactics used to contest it. Clarke rebuked MacDiarmada for acting in such a manner and he promised Clarke he would not use similar tactics in the future. The relationship between them, which was more like father and son than fellow revolutionaries, grew and matured after this. Clarke left prison on a ticket of leave which essentially meant he was out on parole. The authorities put him on the B list of suspects which meant his movements were noted and the relevant RIC station was notified by telegraph of his arrival [where known]. This, and his business, restricted his movements and largely precluded him from recruiting or visiting IRB men outside Dublin as the authorities could then have an excuse to revoke his parole and return him to prison at any time for separatist activity.

Clarke’s health also restricted his ability to travel around Ireland: he caught a cold on arrival at Cobh in November 1907 and did not shake it off until February of the following year. Similarly, he suffered with various minor ailments from the long hours he worked in the shop and his attendance at meetings. MacDiarmada was not so restricted. He was single, in good health and travelled the country on his bicycle, 1908-1910, spreading the gospel of separatism under Clarke’s guidance. He identified and recruited the right ‘people’ for the IRB. Denis McCullough commented on Clarke and MacDiarmada’s role in creating the organization for insurrection:

Tom Clarke’s reputation enabled the younger men, Sean MacDiarmada, Bulmer Hobson, Diarmuid Lynch, P S O’Hegarty, etc. to move forward with his backing in organising, preaching and teaching the value and necessity of a physical force movement. It protected them from the usual charges of youthful over enthusiasm and of insincerity. I say with every confidence that Tom Clarke’s person and Sean MacDiarmada’s energy and organising ability were the principal factors in creating a group and guiding events to make the Rising possible.²¹

¹⁹ Le Roux, *Clarke*, Letter from Tom Clarke to John Daly, 5 March 1909, p.83

²⁰ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 40

²¹ NLI, MS 31,653, Denis McCullough Papers

This aptly described the relationship between Clarke and the younger men of the IRB who, under his guidance, recruited for the IRB and spread the word on the efficacy of physical force to gain political and cultural freedom. McCullough's point about Clarke's patronage of these men underlined his growing influence and power in the IRB.

In March 1908, Clarke attended a Sinn Fein National Council meeting where Sean MacDiarmada, in his capacity as Sinn Fein organizer, gave the lecture. The newspaper *Sinn Fein* carried a report of this meeting and noted that Clarke had set up a newsagent's shop which sold stamps for Sinn Fein. Clarke mentioned the meeting in a letter to Kathleen:

There is to be a Sinn Fein meeting in the rotunda tomorrow night. Hobson (who was also in today with another friend) & some of the others have been wanting me, if possible, to be at the meeting to meet Sweetman, Dolan etc. If I can get Hannah to come down by 9 o'clock, I'll go...²²

The inference here is that Hobson and others wanted Clarke to attend this meeting of the Sinn Fein National Council as a guest and this was up a level from meetings in his busy shop. Dolan was the ex-MP for North Leitrim and Sweetman was John Sweetman, MP for Wicklow East, 1892-1895, a joint founder of the Gaelic League, and a benefactor of Sinn Fein, of which he was president, 1908-1911.²³ Clarke commented on the meeting with, characteristically, a low key remark on his involvement:

I didn't write last night for the reason that I closed the shop at 9 o'clock went to the Sinn Fein meeting, but God bless you, soul, I couldn't get within a 100 yards of the Rotunda. Not till I engineered my way in about ½ past ten after some people had left. The place was packed an immense crowd was packed around it outside. I never saw such a meeting & never saw such enthusiasm. I was delighted with everything. I waited till the meeting was over & went to the stage anti room & chatted with a number of fellows.²⁴

The 'fellows' were Charles Dolan, John Sweetman and Arthur Griffith and other members of Sinn Fein National Council. This was an introductory meeting between Clarke and Sinn Fein officials but he was regarded with enough importance

²² NLI, ACC 6410 Clarke Papers, box 1, I., ii., 11., Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 15 March 1908

²³ Hickey, D J, and Doherty, J E, *A New Dictionary of Irish History, from 1800*, (Dublin, 2003), p.464

²⁴ NLI, ACC 6410, Clarke Papers, Box 1, I., ii., 11., Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 24 March 1908

to be invited to the meeting. He did show reluctance to attend but this may have reflected his natural caution and antipathy towards public speaking: if he had arrived earlier he might have been asked to say a few words.²⁵

On a practical level Clarke, after arranging to rent the shop at 55 Amiens Street from a Dr Cremin, noted in a letter to Kathleen that he arranged for a telephone to be installed in the Amiens Street shop.²⁶ Purely on a business footing this was a decision that eased ordering newspapers, tobacco and other commodities and it allowed Clarke time to respond quickly to non-delivery of goods or any other business problem. For his work with the IRB, this was inspirational as there was a network of both public and private telephones in Dublin and in other large cities in Ireland.²⁷ Meetings could be arranged or cancelled at short notice, thus reducing the need for face-to-face contact and limiting the time he was under observation by the DMP. Although there is no evidence to suggest that a telephone was installed in Great Britain Street, one probably was for the same reasons that governed the installation of one in Amiens Street. By the spring of 1908, under Clarke's guidance, MacDiarmada spoke on a regular basis to Sinn Fein clubs in the Dublin area. After arriving back in Ireland, Clarke was indeed 'to be considered of some importance'²⁸

Establishing a platform, Sinn Fein, the Wolfe Tone Committees and the IRB

Part of the process of integration into Irish revolutionary politics for Clarke was his involvement with visitors from America. As early as June 1908, he was seen in the company of a 'Returned American named Maurice Fitzgerald'.²⁹ The authorities kept Fitzgerald under observation and noted that he visited Limerick, saw John Daly and Clarke there, returned to Dublin where several meetings took place including one at City Hall, one in Clarke's house and further meetings at his Hotel-where Clarke and Hobson and P T Daly visited him and lastly, Fitzgerald visited the MP David Sheehy at his house in Dublin.³⁰ Clarke was included in the discussions and

²⁵ NA CO 904/11/409,

²⁶ NLI ACC 6410, Clarke Papers, Box 1, I., ii., 10., Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 15 January 1908

²⁷ Litton, A J, *The Growth and Development of the Irish Telephone System*, (Dublin, 15 December 1961), paper given to the Royal Society, Dublin

²⁸ NLI ACC 6410, Clarke Papers, Box 1, I., ii., 11., Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, March 17 1908

²⁹ NA CO 904/11/117/118: extracts from précis of information received in the Crime Special Branch, R.I.C. July, 1908. CO 904/11/381 & 388, DMP, Précis of Information July 1908

³⁰ NA CO 904/117/118, July 1908

visits because of his Clan connections and there is evidence to suggest that Clarke was much more than the obligatory Fenian ex-prisoner recently returned from America but now residing in Dublin and rolled out to meet old American comrades.

Clarke returned to Ireland not as an envoy or representative of Clan na Gael, but he was promised their support and backing through John Devoy and the Revolutionary Council: he was free from any obligation to the Clan.³¹ This gave him the freedom to join any organization which would support his efforts and to use his discretion to establish a new organization that would work toward Irish independence.³² Clarke did not risk splitting the IRB and Irish nationalism generally by setting up new and rival organizations: he worked from within existing structures replacing men in key positions therein with people loyal to him and the IRB, who were trustworthy and who would not be inclined to talk out of turn. In addition to this he had an 'external association' with James Connolly and the Citizen Army and he could rely on Arthur Griffith of Sinn Féin to be very sound on the national question. Thus he and his more secret version of the IRB influenced a large sway of nationalist opinion in the years leading up to 1916.

Although Clarke had fully accredited transfer papers from John Devoy, there are no extant sources to explain how he joined the Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee but on June 12 1908, he reported to their Annual Convention held at City Hall, Dublin³³ on the validity of reports suggesting financial impropriety. *The Gaelic American* noted the proceedings.³⁴ Clarke was asked to audit the books in response to letters in the national press suggesting financial irregularities: he proved these allegations to be baseless. Following this, the Committee published widely, both in American and Irish newspapers, the financial accounts of the Wolfe Tone Memorial Fund. Thus Clarke began to establish a role as a financial auditor/treasurer using his staunch Fenianism, prison past and friendship and work relationship with John Devoy as a foundation for such work. This reputation of financial rectitude would become more evident as he was elected Financial Secretary of the Wolfe Tone Clubs in 1908³⁵ and later became the Treasurer of IRB.

³¹ Clarke, Kathleen, *Revolutionary Woman*, (Dublin, 1991), p 36

³² Le Roux, Louis, *Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement*, (Dublin, 1926), pp 80-81

³³ NA CO 904/11/408 DMP, Précis of Information, July 1908

³⁴ British Library Newspaper Collection, (BLNC), *The Gaelic American*, June 27 1908, p 8

³⁵ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, September 19 1908, p 2

The IRB had a history of forming committees which were ad hoc in nature but very effective.³⁶ This was the pattern of IRB activity prior to P S O'Hegarty time and little changed in this respect during his spell on the IRB Supreme Council, (SC) 1908-1914. The status of the North Dock Ward Committee, and Clarke's role on it, appeared to fall inside the parameters described by O'Hegarty as there is little information on it after 1909 and it is difficult to assess its exact status. There seems little doubt that a position on the executive was regarded as meritorious within labour circles as John Redmond was Vice President of the committee in 1892.³⁷ However, in an article entitled 'Wolfe Tone Memorial, Work of Organizing the Movement in Dublin Goes Steadily On' in *The Gaelic American* it is stated that 'The Sub-Committee of the North Dock Ward Committee met in 4 Summerhill on Wednesday November 4'.³⁸ Reports on a variety of social activities were heard and an invitation sent to residents of the North Ward to attend a public meeting on Sunday November 15 and collections were organized in conjunction with this and if contributors were in any doubt as to the veracity of the collector, 'The Honorary Treasurer, Mr. Thomas J. Clarke, 55 Amiens street, will supply any information required'.³⁹

This clearly establishes two things, first, the North Dock Ward Committee's sub-committee was a success and that, at a meeting of the full Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee it was noted that further ward sub-committees, '...on the lines of that which has been so successful in the North Dock Ward', were under consideration.⁴⁰ Second, that Clarke was clearly identified as the Honorary Treasurer of the committee and this was the beginning of his control of the funds that would be needed to finance work toward insurrection and which largely came from Clan na Gael in America. However, the branch was identified as a fully fledged affiliate of the Wolfe Tone Clubs' wider organization:

On November 15 a public meeting under the auspices of the North Dock Ward Branch of the Wolfe Tone and United Irishmen Memorial was held in the Carpenters' Hall Lower Gloucester street, Dublin, to inaugurate a house to house collection in aid of the memorial fund.⁴¹

³⁶ O'Hegarty, P S, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, (Dublin, 1924)

³⁷ Freeman's Journal, 4, 11, May, 1 June 1892, in, Waldron, Fionnuala, 'Statesman of the street corner': Labour and the Parnell split in Dublin, 1890-1892, *Studia Hibernica*, 2006/7, No 34, pp 151-172

³⁸ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, November 28 1908, p 3

³⁹ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, November 28 1908, p 3

⁴⁰ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, January 30 1909, p 8

⁴¹ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, December 6 1908, p 5

The issue is further complicated by Le Roux referring to the 'North Dock Ward Branch of Sinn Fein,' when it passed a resolution tabled by Tom Clarke for Irish trade unionists to break all connections with English trade unions and to establish independent union bodies in Ireland instead.⁴² Different sources identified the committee differently but the confusion can be cleared up as the North Dock Ward Branch committee was one of the thirteen clubs affiliated to the Wolfe Tone Clubs Central Committee.⁴³

Revolutionary Politics-the View from Great Britain Street

From 1909-1916 the newspaper shop at 75A Great Britain Street was a thriving cell of revolutionary activity, discussion and thought. To all intents and purposes Clarke acted as the IRB's agent provocateur in his shop, which became the fulcrum of knowledge, information and action, for and by the IRB in Dublin and across the nation. With his name above the shop in Gaelic, Clarke worked there from early morning till late at night. The number of people who frequented his shop was endless and ranged from the everyday citizens of Dublin, to people who contributed their time, money and lives for the cause of Irish Freedom: Sean MacDiarmada, Joseph Plunkett, Thomas MacDonagh, James Connolly, Patrick Pearse, Ned Daly, Con Colbert, Roger Casement, Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith, Liam Mellows, Countess Markievicz, Sean McGarry, Denis McCullough, Bulmer Hobson, Diarmuid Lynch, Eamonn Ceannt. Clarke was in contact with all of these people at different times within a wide range of intimacies. His shop had a foot fall of customers who spent less time purchasing their requirements than in other shops and this provided excellent cover for others to converse with people who shared the same revolutionary mindset. Pat McCartan, a friend and contemporary of Tom Clarke, described how Clarke acted with ordinary customers as well as with fellow IRB men:

He was a lean or thin type of man who wore glasses and smoked many cigarettes. If he did not know a person he pretended to know nothing about Ireland or Irish organizations and seemed just a businessman. To those he knew well – mostly I.R.B. men – he talked freely and liked a joke and could enjoy one heartily. He knew what was taking place in all Irish Organizations as

⁴² Le Roux, *Clarke*, pp 84-85

⁴³ Fitzpatrick, David, *Harry Boland's Irish Revolution*, (Dublin, 2003), p 32

the I.R.B. had members in all but to the stranger he knew nothing outside the news in the press. He looked straight into a customer's eyes if one spoke to him and seemed to study them with those piercing eyes of his.⁴⁴

This description of Clarke is more positive than that offered by Barton and Foy, '...physically old before his time, suspicious, introverted and virtually tongue tied...' ⁴⁵ His reticence was entirely justified as Clarke was wary of strangers who took an overt interest in his business or his politics. Clarke maintained the facade of a dour businessman to the world, but in the reality behind the facade, he manipulated revolutionary politics in Dublin and Ireland to suit his and the IRB's agenda: organizing for insurrection. His ordinariness cannot be overstated: the Castle Authorities knew of his background but perception and appearances are very powerful and most customers who patronised his shop were totally unaware of his role in the IRB. Similarly, his outward dourness and taciturn nature precluded his appearance on most public stages. This aspect of his personality was rooted in his experiences in prison. Nellie Gifford, under the pseudonym of John Brennan, penned a revealing piece on Clarke after being introduced to him. She was attracted to his shop by the then display of 'daring' pro-Irish placards outside and was sure she would find a warm welcome within. She did not. He was laconic in the extreme but when Clarke wanted to meet her, through Pat McCartan, she found him to be totally different.⁴⁶

Nellie Gifford met Clarke in 1910 and during the next six years, he stood in his shop dispensing newspapers to ordinary customers but preaching revolution to those like minded souls who thought that insurrection was the only way forward in establishing Ireland's independence. Tom Clarke's attitude to women is an important issue here. Nellie Gifford noted:

Though quiet, reserved and self effacing, Tom Clarke had some innate ability to draw people to him, and win their complete trust, for his manner was more like that of a kindly elder brother than a Fenian veteran. Enthusiasts of all ages and both sexes sought him out in his little shop, and it soon became his home port.⁴⁷

⁴⁴ CPP, Pat McCartan to Leon O'Broin, 31 March 1960

⁴⁵ Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, p. 4

⁴⁶ CPP, article by Nellie Gifford writing as John Brennan

⁴⁷ CPP, Gifford article

He was friendly with Madge Daly, Kathleen Clarke's sister, who acted as his courier between Dublin and Limerick carrying messages for John Daly. He evaluated people for their worth to the IRB and the national struggle ignoring issues of religion, gender or age.

The shop on Great Britain Street was, like his first shop on Amiens Street, very brightly illuminated, orderly and clean. From behind his shop counter, Clarke noted in the years following his return to Ireland, the changing attitudes of people in comparison to his own youth.⁴⁸ The shop was much more than a talking and meeting place as many men were sworn into the IRB there. The IRB Supreme Council met every quarter with the SC Executive scheduled to meet every month, and this gave Clarke, after 1912, long periods between meetings to discuss the future direction of the organisation with other IRB men and to sanction action without referring it to the SC. His shop was the centre of revolutionary politics in Dublin and Ireland between 1910 and 1916. A friend of his, Francis Jones, described the shop in detail:

The store was of a size that did not permit more than half a dozen men to stand in front of the counter at a time. There was just about enough space between the counter and the wall for two men to walk in together. Along the wall were arranged all the important Dublin and Irish newspapers, weekly, and monthly periodicals, and so forth. Behind the short and narrow counter was a large assortment of brands of tobacco, cigars, pipes and cigarettes, with a side line of stationery. The window was occupied mainly by a cardboard representation of an Irish Round Tower, advertising the Banba brand of Irish tobacco. Both the window and the store itself were brilliantly lighted, and the whole place suggested care and attention and spotless cleanliness. But the store and its attractiveness were forgotten after the first glance at the man who stood behind the counter. Of medium height, with grey hair thinning away from the temples, with dark-blue eyes deeply sunken under shaggy brows and his high cheek bones standing up in startling prominence from thin, sunken and emaciated cheeks, the general appearance of the man was keenness personified. Seemingly nearing his seventies, he was, nevertheless, possessed of a force and vigour that might have been envied by men in their early thirties. The truth was that the man was in the prime of life. Brutality and confinement, however, had left on his features a mark that death alone could remove, but had been powerless to subdue the fire that glowed within and animated every thought and action of his life.⁴⁹

⁴⁸ (BLNC), MacManus, M J, *Limerick Leader*, March 30 1937.

⁴⁹ Jones, Francis, *History of the Sinn Fein Movement and the Irish Rebellion of 1916*, (New York, 1917), pp. 3-4

This description of Clarke's shop gave several indications of his temperament, habits and physical appearance. The shop/cell was kept clean and brightly illuminated and reflected his time in prison: he had sat in very dimly lit cells and light had been at a premium in the establishments that he frequented 1883-1898. His patronage of Irish goods coincided with the Aonach na Nollag, an annual exhibition and sale at Christmas of Irish goods ran by Sean MacDiarmada. This indicated that Clarke not only talked and prepared for revolution; he actively demonstrated a commitment in furthering Irish industries, their products and manufactures. The shop was a rendezvous point for IRB men from Dublin and the rest of Ireland. He stocked newspapers from all thirty-two counties and the Kerry IRB man as much as the IRB man from Cork found this a good enough reason to enter Clarke's shop to exchange knowledge with the man at the heart of IRB information.

Clarke was co-opted onto the Supreme Council of the IRB in 1909 and was at 41 Rutland Square on 29th April 1909 at 'a secret meeting...which saw Mr Cummings, McBride, Clarke, P T Daly, F T Allan etc. attend.'⁵⁰ [Before his co-option, it would be safe to describe Clarke's role within the IRB and the Wolfe Tone Clubs as expanding, growing and becoming more generally than directly influential⁵¹]. This was a meeting of the IRB Supreme Council (SC) but no primary sources detailed what was discussed. Soon after this, he began to press for a newspaper as his experience on the *Gaelic American* in New York had demonstrated to him the importance of starting an IRB paper in Dublin. Before doing so, Clarke recognized that the inward looking attitude of the SC had to be changed and it was to the younger men of the IRB that he turned to. Sean McGarry observed this when he noted Clarke's feelings on the depth of apathy within the SC:

...but he was dissatisfied with what he found there. The members were not alive. He felt that the organization was still in the rut out of which it could not see in 1900 and turned his attention to the younger men in whom he could see a spirit of restlessness and impatience and a growing sense of impotence imposed from the top. This became very evident after a meeting of the organization in Clontarf Town Hall at which Fred Allan presided.⁵²

⁵⁰ NA PRO, CO906/11/42

⁵¹ Kelly, Matthew, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916*, (Woodbridge, 2006) p 184

⁵² NAI, BMH, WS 368, Sean McGarry, p. 14

Leon O Broin's suggestion that Clarke was co-opted onto the IRB SC because P T Daly was dismissed for misappropriating IRB funds was not accurate. The facts suggested that Daly had neglected his own job in Ireland, eventually losing it while in America on IRB business, and spent £300 of IRB money on his own family's expenses incurred on the trip. However, he was well known to the rank and file as a leader of the IRB and because of this, the £300 not accounted for was not reclaimed from him. According to O Brion, Clarke was co-opted onto the IRB SC in place of Daly.⁵³ O Broin was not accurate because P T Daly was not removed from the SC until 1910 and Clarke's co-option occurred in 1909. It was more than a placatory gesture to Clan na Gael as his letter to John Devoy in 1910 suggested. Clarke also discussed the impact of a visit from a Clan member who supplied information on how much money had been sent and Clarke noted that his 'friends' on the SC were worried by this.⁵⁴

In 1910, another visitor from the Clan met with the SC and conveyed to them exact details of the amounts sent. P T Daly, Secretary of the SC, did not attend the meeting but submitted a letter in which he admitted receiving the missing £300 while on an official visit to the Clan in the USA in 1908: he subsequently was removed from office. Later, Daly broadcasted a distorted version of events to fellow IRB members and because of the commotion he caused, was expelled from the organization.⁵⁵

Apart from this serious matter, Clarke's letter⁵⁶ revealed how the SC approached Clarke to attend the meeting because of his connections with the Clan and John Devoy. He carried a lot of influence not only through his Fenian past but also because of his wide contacts and experience in America and most importantly, because of his relationship with John Devoy. This was the reason why he was co-opted onto the SC and not because Daly was ejected. Similarly, Clarke noted that he had become aware of one or two things before the Clan visitor arrived and this strongly suggested that his connections on the SC were extensive before he joined it. Also, the 'principal' he mentioned in his letter to Devoy and who asked him to write to Devoy, was Fred Allan, Secretary of the SC. In October 1910 several prominent

⁵³ O Broin, Leon, *Revolutionary Underground*, (Dublin, 1976), p. 134

⁵⁴ O'Brien, W, and Ryan, D, (eds), *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, (Dublin, 1979), Tom Clarke to John Devoy, 25 May 1909, p. 382

⁵⁵ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, p. 570

⁵⁶ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, p. 570

Clan men came to Ireland: James Reidy, James Mark Sullivan and J.J. Teevens visited and stayed with John Daly in Limerick. It is possible they discussed the launch of the proposed new IRB newspaper *Irish Freedom*. However, there is not enough evidence to suggest that they came to oversee the launch of the paper as many of the decisions affecting the content, editorial direction and finance of the paper were taken in Ireland and the money to run the new venture was raised in Ireland.

The investigation and the removal of P T Daly from the SC heralded a struggle between the constitutionalists and progressives of the IRB SC. With Daly gone, a start was made but Clarke and the young men of the IRB needed to go further if they were to gain the upper hand and, ultimately, control of the organization. Without doubt, the younger generation of IRB men were growing impatient with the older generation, but there was another reason why Fred Allan in particular was not universally liked and Tom Clarke tapped into this seam of discontent within the wider membership of the IRB. Fred Allan had been appointed Private Secretary to Lord Mayor Thomas Pile in 1900. Allan arrived at a '98 Centenary Committee meeting early in 1900, with cheques from Pile and a colleague of his. Maud Gonne was not convinced of their sincerity because she thought that neither of the benefactors was behind Irish independence. She was no friend of Allan but her motion not to accept the contributions was voted down after Allan assured the committee that both men had converted to the national cause.

Clarke became aware of the depth of animosity held against Allan but Sean McGarry related how Clarke urged restraint on the progressives who sat on the IRB SC, 'Tom was delighted that things were livening up but urged patience and caution. The time was not ripe for action.'⁵⁷ Tom Clarke viewed Allan's action in 1900 as a betrayal of the cause of *Irish Freedom*. This was understandable as he had spent over fifteen years in several of Queen Victoria's penal establishments. Most historical accounts of the reorganization of the IRB 1907-1912 cite generational issues as the driving force for change. These played a part but Allan's loyalty to the crown was an issue which a significant minority of IRB men could neither forgive nor forget and it was Tom Clarke's skilful use of this raw feeling, which was still evident in 1909, that eventually brought to an end the self serving era of Allan Daly and Hanlon on the

⁵⁷ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p.15

IRB SC. It also demonstrated to the IRB rank and file that Clarke meant business and would not condone disloyalty to the precepts of the IRB.

Irish Freedom

Clarke believed in spreading the separatist message through any medium but the essential task facing him in 1910 was the establishment of a newspaper that could spread the gospel of national independence for Ireland to a wider audience.⁵⁸ The complex nature of events within the IRB in the years 1910-1912, which amounted to internecine warfare, hardly registered in constitutional politics but their ramifications were profound for the future of Ireland. A secondary implication of starting a newspaper was to establish another focal point for IRB thought and action other than Clarke's shop. In a newspaper office, people who shared republican views, or did not, could mingle and have their ideas published in the IRB organ.

The main issue facing Clarke was how to set up a newspaper that would carry the 'right' message, attract the 'right' people and be financially solvent. The early 1900s were littered with failed newspapers of one hue or another but Clarke had had experience setting up the *Gaelic American* and knew what was involved to start up a newspaper, from the initial idea to the printing of the first edition and also to keep a paper going. The question of who first suggested the idea of a newspaper for the IRB in Ireland can be answered thus: Tom Clarke. He had the experience and intellectual attributes needed to get the idea off the ground. However, Hobson said he started *Irish Freedom*⁵⁹ and was associated with the newspaper 'As Editor of *Irish Freedom*, the unacknowledged organ of the IRB...' ⁶⁰ Moreover, in his recollections, he related events from the inception of *Irish Freedom* to the resignation of Allan and Hanlon from the SC without mentioning Clarke. The ground work for setting up a newspaper occupied much of Clarke's time from May – October, 1910.

The paper was to be nationalist, separatist and republican and should set the highest possible journalistic standards with Wolfe Tone's principles as a guiding light.

⁶¹ This was agreed by the group of IRB men Clarke set up, under the umbrella of the Wolfe Tone clubs but still under Allan's control, to examine the proposal. The group,

⁵⁸ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 41

⁵⁹ Hobson, Bulmer, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow*, (Tralee, 1968), p.13

⁶⁰ Hobson, *Ireland*, pp. 28, 42, 53

⁶¹ BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, 15 November 1910, p. 4

known as the Publications Committee, included, Dr Pat McCartan, Bulmer Hobson, Sean MacDiarmada, Ernest Blythe, Denis McCullough and Piaras Beaslai.⁶² Once the editorial policy was established, the idea was laid before the SC and was debated at several meetings. The motion for setting up a paper was passed by the SC with support from McCullough, MacDiarmada and O'Hegarty but Allan and Daly had misgivings about the whole idea and about Clarke, who was the proposed paper's main proponent. The next step was to find financial backing for the paper and to that end, Pat McCartan donated £40, and John Daly offered the balance, which Tom Clarke fixed also at £40. Also, a membership levy was ordered by the SC on IRB members of one shilling a month to cover the costs of running the paper.⁶³

This clearly was a big step for Clarke in the IRB; he was Chairman of the committee which over looked the setting up of a newspaper, not Allan or Hanlon. There is little primary source material detailing the activities of the Wolfe Tone Clubs but they were non-sectarian and the public face of the IRB.⁶⁴ In October 1910 he wrote to John Daly about the new publication:

...the starting of a paper in Dublin in November – a monthly – on the same line as *The United Irishman*, or rather on a higher level. Pat McCartan will be Editor: Hobson, Hegarty, P.Lynn, and all the good writers of *The Republic*, *The United Irishman* (Griffith excepted), and *The Irish Student* will be contributors. It certainly will not lack literary ability. It will ring true to national principles. The scheme has been organized on the basis of a few hundred people guaranteeing to put down 1s. per month as a fund to put the paper in the field. Already far more than had been calculated upon have responded. Of course, I put your name down, I know you'd kick me if I didn't. Sean MacDiarmada is employed on the business end to look after advertising, etc.⁶⁵

Here, Clarke gathered opinion and journalistic talent from different newspapers under *Irish Freedom's* banner and consequently under his and the IRB's influence. This gathering of diverse opinions demonstrated how Clarke recognized talented people and how he used those people to further the IRB's aims and objectives. He mentioned Arthur Griffith not writing for the paper but did not give a reason. If there were tensions in the IRB over Griffith, Clarke minimized these

⁶² Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 41

⁶³ Cronin, Sean, (ed), *The McGarrity Papers*, (Tralee, 1972), Pat McCartan to Joe McGarrity, 4 September, 1910, pp.27-28

⁶⁴ CPP, Facsimile of the Constitution of the Wolfe Tone Clubs, 1910

⁶⁵ Le Roux, *Clarke*, Letter from Clarke to Daly, 5 October, 1910, p.91

because he did not want to completely alienate a man of his standing and wide influence and he further realized that in the future, Griffith's connections and abilities might be useful. The first issue of *Irish Freedom* was sold in Dublin on 15th November 1910 and in the same month the Chief Commissioner of the DMP described it as representing 'the most extreme section in the country'.⁶⁶ This comment was accurate as the leading article advocated separatism and separatism alone as the answer to Ireland's problems:

We stand not for an Irish Party, but for National tradition-the tradition of Wolfe Tone and Robert Emmet, of John Mitchel and John O'Leary. Like them, we believe in and would work for the Independence of Ireland and we use the term with no reservation. Stated or implied we stand for the complete and total separation of Ireland from England and the establishment of an Irish Government untrammelled (sic) and uncontrolled by any other Government in the world.⁶⁷

It continued by repudiating the legality of English legislation for Ireland as 'foreign interference'.⁶⁸ The leader finished on a prophetic note 'The big and successful tyrannies will not last for ever – they are already crumbling – and the task before you is to plant the standard of Irish Freedom on the ruins of English rule in Ireland.'⁶⁹ The rhetoric of the article was not only aimed at the British rulers, but also at ordinary Irish people, 'Relying on yourself – on the strength and courage – on the manhood and womanhood of Ireland you can go forward in spite of England – you can found a free nation.'⁷⁰ Here, the idea of nation building was the intent of the article. Clarke was involved in this nation building despite the virulent anti-British tone of *Irish Freedom* as he demonstrated by selling Irish goods in his shop.⁷¹

The launch of the paper was a victory for Clarke, and the younger republicans on the SC, and his influence steadily grew from this point on. Kathleen Clarke noted the extent of his editorial influence over what was to be published in *Irish Freedom*:

Tom had very little time to give to the working of the journal, as we were running two shops at the time, but by common consent he had a veto on everything that went into it. Usually, there was a meeting once a month, when

⁶⁶ PRO, CO/904/12, DMP, précis of information, November 1910

⁶⁷ BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, 15 November 1910

⁶⁸ BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, 15 November 1910

⁶⁹ BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, 15 November 1910

⁷⁰ BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, 15 November 1910

⁷¹ Jones, *History of the Sinn Féin Movement and the Irish Rebellion of 1916*, pp. 3-4

selections were made from the many contributors, all free.⁷²

Even though Pat McCartan was editor, and later Bulmer Hobson, Clarke, in conjunction with the Publications Committee, had the final say over what was or was not included in *Irish Freedom*. However, the editorial content of *Irish Freedom* summed up the forward thinking of Clarke and the Publications Committee of the Wolfe Tone Clubs. The idea was to educate the IRB with this forward policy and also to inform the Irish people that there still existed a movement that was working for Irish Independence despite the minimal impact the paper made nationally.

Tom Clarke and Home Rule

In 1910, Home Rule once again took centre stage in Irish politics. The likelihood of a Bill being introduced was not welcomed by the IRB in general and Clarke in particular. *Irish Freedom* condemned the first general election of 1910 in trenchant terms: it did not matter to them what the outcome was because 'whoever wins, our country will suffer from foreign rule, after the election as before it; we will be governed by the English, fleeced by the English, gulled by the English.'⁷³ Tom Clarke was not in favour of any measure of Home Rule as Emmet Clarke recalled:

When my Father read the financial provisions of the Home Rule Act he told my Mother that Ireland would be back connected to England within twenty years. In other words it was never intended to work to the advantage of Ireland.'⁷⁴

This, and his deeply felt conviction that the complete separation of Ireland from Britain was the only policy that would allow Ireland to develop as an independent nation, reflected Clarke's thinking on separatism. *Irish Freedom* echoed these feelings when asserting:

Home Rule is no settlement of the national demand. The danger is that some may mistake it for such. There can be no final settlement between Ireland and England short of the complete and absolute independence of this country.'⁷⁵

⁷² Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 41

⁷³ BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, 2 December 1910

⁷⁴ Clarke, Emmet, in conversations with this author, 19 December 1992

⁷⁵ BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, 3 February 1911

John MacBride wrote to John Devoy in 1911 inviting him to Dublin to a meeting on George V's coronation day. He also mentioned the change in people who were once 'strong and independent' but who had become 'akin to blithering idiots, and hold up their hands in holy terror if one ventures to question the good faith of the Liberal Government and the great *British Democracy*. However, there is good material here still, and the younger men are inclined to be sturdy.' ⁷⁶ Home Rule was not favourable to the IRB or Clarke as it cut the separatist ground from underneath their feet. MacBride's comment on the 'younger men' demonstrated that not all of nationalist Ireland thought Home Rule was the answer to Ireland's woes, especially the 'younger men' on the IRB SC.

The visit to Ireland of George V in 1911 presented an opportunity to demonstrate that constitutionalism was not the only political view or organization active in Ireland. The IRB, through the Wolfe Tone Clubs joined temporarily with the United Irish League, the Ancient Order of Hibernians and Sinn Fein to form the United National Societies Committee. The purpose of the committee was to influence the Dublin Corporation's attitude concerning the King's visit. This was successful due to the lobbying of the Corporation by the two honorary secretaries, The O'Rahilly, leading Sinn Fein member, and Sean MacDiarmada, influenced the Corporation to such an extent that they voted against presenting a loyal address to the King. Tom Clarke was kept fully informed by MacDiarmada and this demonstrated how the influence of Clarke and the IRB was steadily growing. The SC of the IRB responded to the King's visit by banning anti-British resolutions from being considered or passed at meetings. This was the same SC that agreed to start an extreme separatist monthly newspaper but blanched at endorsing anti-monarchy proposals at meetings under IRB auspices. The decision was the work of Fred Allan and P T Daly acting as the Executive of, and not the whole, SC.

Tom Clarke and Patrick Pearse

In February 1911, Tom Clarke met Patrick Pearse. This meeting had a significant impact on revolutionary politics and was a further development in the IRB's policy of widening its influence among nationalist organizations through people

⁷⁶ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, John MacBride to Devoy, 6 May 1911, p. 397

who would deliver its message to audiences the organization could not reach directly. Pearse was an educationalist and through his Irish-Ireland school, St Enda's, the idea of revolution was propagated and taught. Clarke wanted him mainly as an orator/spokesman and later theoretician for the IRB and their partnership was fundamental to the expansion of revolutionary thought and doctrine. 1916 came about because of the organisational ability of Clarke, the negotiating skill of MacDiarmada, and the demagoguery and writing skills of Pearse.

Clarke saw the potential of Pearse; he sponsored, mentored and guided him. People did not easily impress Clarke but he was always looking out for opportunities and people to promote the revolutionary ideals of the IRB as well as those of Irish-Ireland. On his own level, he was already doing this in his newsagent's shops by promoting Irish goods and he did not pass up lightly the opportunity of using Pearse for the advancement of Ireland. Clarke was involved, at a grass root level, in nation building. He promoted physical force as one means of building, but was aware that force and force alone could only achieve so much and ideas and manifestations of Irishness were just as important.

In 1910, St Enda's was in financial trouble. Pearse wrote to Patrick McCartan and he suggested that Pearse should contact the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH) in America for financial support. McCartan told Pearse that he would seek the advice of Clarke on the matter but Clarke had heard rumours about Pearse and did not help him financially on that occasion. These rumours probably emanated from members of the Teeling Branch of the IRB. Teeling was officially known as the Bartholomew Teeling Literary and Debating Society but in reality it was a branch of the IRB that dealt with recruitment. Candidates for membership of the IRB, who drank or were related to policeman or supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party, (IPP), were usually rejected. Pearse aroused suspicion because of his public support for the IPP and home rule. However, the IRB were looking for a speaker to give the oration, on 3rd March 1911, at the Emmet commemoration meeting. The Rotunda, Dublin's premier entertainment venue, was hired for the event. Sean MacDiarmada suggested to Clarke that Pearse was the man they were looking for to deliver the speech.⁷⁷

⁷⁷ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.43

Clarke was not convinced and it would take something significant from Pearse to change Clarke's mind:

It was in connection with the Emmet concert that Tom first met Pearse. A speaker was being sought, Pearse was suggested. Tom would not agree. Pearse, he said, might be a good Gaelic Leaguer but he never identified with the separatists. Moreover, he had appeared on the public platform with John Redmond in support of I think the Irish Councils Bill. McDermott pressed for Tom to see Pearse and have a talk with him. He agreed and McDermott brought them together. After a long chat in which Pearse said he supported Redmond and this bill because it gave us control of Education and, he added "If we get complete control of Education we can get a Republic" Tom withdrew his opposition and Pearse spoke at the concert in the rotunda.⁷⁸

This new and unpublished source of information on the relationship between Clarke and Pearse is important. It clearly demonstrates that by 1911, Pearse had convinced Clarke that he should be the speaker at the Emmet Commemoration because his attitude and thinking were developing along separatist lines. However, Clarke was not entirely convinced as Pearse was not sworn into the IRB until December 1913 and then with objections from certain quarters of the IRB. However, Clarke was impressed with Pearse's speech and discovered there was more to him than he had at first thought. Significantly, Clarke increasingly thought that Pearse could be the IRB's spokesman and through this, the message of separatism would achieve a higher and more intellectual level. Clarke had spread the influence of the IRB outward by persuading Pearse to speak on a platform sponsored by the Wolfe Tone clubs.

In 1912, Pearse launched an Irish language newspaper, *An Barr Buadh*, (the *Triumph of Victory*.) It ran to eleven issues and the launch was announced in *Irish Freedom*. Clarke wrote a piece welcoming the new journal and was happy that it 'should be the first periodical to use exclusively the Irish Language in advocating the cause of sovereign independence for Ireland, backed by physical force.'⁷⁹ Despite Clarke's patronage of Pearse at IRB functions, Pearse was still involved in constitutional politics. After the Home Rule Bill was introduced, he spoke at a huge demonstration on 31st March 1912 in Dublin just weeks after his oration at the Emmet Commemoration rally. Other speakers were John Redmond and Joseph

⁷⁸ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p. 15

⁷⁹ Le Roux, Louis, *Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement*, Dublin, 1936, p. 121

Devlin. Pearse, speaking in Irish, warned the British against trickery or deceit over the home rule question.

He mentioned a 'party' in this speech. He did have an association through Clarke with the 'party' but Pearse was not a member of the IRB. His association with Parliamentarians held back his chances of joining the IRB and Clarke knew that Pearse was an energetic and fiery public speaker but he was still unsure of his politics and temperament for further work for the IRB. Neither Pearse nor Clarke realized that the Emmet commemoration was a turning point in both their lives. Pearse either spoke at or attended most of the prominent nationalist commemorations or gatherings over the next five years and Clarke fully realized the effect of Pearse's demagogic speech making but his separatist credentials were weak. Indeed, it was his ability to move an audience that prompted Pat McCartan to cast a dissenting voice against IRB policy because the IRB SC, in early 1911, passed a motion that the Executive should discourage, or in some cases forbid, motions at meetings where the King's visit might be discussed. This also applied to the Emmet Commemoration meeting:⁸⁰

The oration like all of Pearse's set orations electrified the large audience and in the enthusiasm which followed McCartan jumped on the platform, proposed a resolution condemning the proposed visit of the King of England to Dublin. Tom Clarke followed McCartan and the resolution was passed by a cheering audience.⁸¹

It is difficult to judge if the actions of McCartan and Clarke were wholly spontaneous but Pearse's speech was a catalyst for action by Clarke and McCartan. They had worked together to get Irish taught at the National University in 1909 and Pat McCartan saw Tom Clarke on a daily basis in his shop on Great Britain Street and consulted him on what was being done and what could be done to further their argument.⁸² There may well have been an element of premeditation but either way, the motion was carried. The IRB SC was enraged by these actions and vengefully removed McCartan from the editorship of *Irish Freedom*. Events during the period from the Emmet Commemoration Meeting, 3rd March 1911 until Fred Allan's letter of resignation to John Devoy of 4th March 1912 are unclear and to establish a reliable

⁸⁰ NLI, MS 17,666, Pat McCartan Papers, statement by Pat McCartan, 2 November 1938

⁸¹ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p. 15

⁸² Le Roux, *Clarke*, p 114

chronology is difficult because of the dearth of primary sources. However, Clarke and the younger members of the IRB/SC managed to oust the entrenched time servers of the organisation eventually.

The young separatists' efforts to spread IRB views and ideas were opposed by the older leadership of the IRB and this clash of conservatism and dynamism eventually led to a showdown between the two sides. Denis McCullough, a Senior Northern IRB man, related the depth of antipathy between the rival factions:

The crises on the S.C. came to a head over control of *Irish Freedom* & its general policy. Allan & his immediates –Jack O'Hanlon, Stritch etc. were chaffing at the increased control over the policy & activities of the Organization, being exercised by the group surrounding Tom Clarke - Pat McCartan, Bulmer Hobson & Sean McDermott, backed by P.S.O'H (O'Hegarty) & myself. Something moved them to seize the (I think) December issue of Freedom.⁸³

Thus the battle lines were drawn up and the fight for the future direction of the IRB commenced. Allan, O'Hanlon and their associates were determined to undermine the paper and regain control over its content and therefore policy-making on the IRB SC. However, this control was gradually slipping away from them. Pat McCartan, a SC member, in a letter to Joe McGarrity of Clan na Gael in America, described the extent of the schism:

The newspaper committee suspended. Tom (Clarke) asked to resign his position and threatened with trial for refusing to do so. All is the work of Windows (Allan). The work at present is to kill the paper. We may want money for a few months' work, though we have collared the purse. Don't know what we may do, but you can tell all concerned that it would be a fight to a finish – may even be public. Shares will fall but the Co. may have to be reorganised.⁸⁴

By mentioning 'we have collared the purse', McCartan was obliquely referring to Clarke's position as Treasurer of the SC but there is no extant primary source material covering his election to this position. Hobson wanted to start a newspaper but Clarke and Pat McCartan disagreed with him and the newspaper was printed by Devereux and Nueth who were threatened with legal action and received £100 as a deposit to cover likely court costs before they printed the paper. McCartan had only

⁸³ NLI, MS 31,635, Denis McCullough Papers, McCullough letter to un-named recipient, 2 August 1960

⁸⁴ Cronin, *McGarrity Papers*, Pat McCartan to Joe McGarrity, 2 December 1911, p.30

£25 in his account but knew Clarke would put up the rest. Clarke did not have enough money in his account either but had sufficient funds if the organization's money was used. There was a risk attached to this as an audit of the account would provide further ammunition to the old guard to use against Clarke and his group. Pat McCartan again related vital information on Clarke and his role in saving the newspaper:

I begged him to lend me the money and I would go it alone and go up to Tyrone and get the loan of his share from my brother. Tom said: "Don't say that Pat it hurts" turned and lifted the keys of the shop from a nail and came to the Bank and drew the balance of the £100. Having deposited the £100 with Devereux and Neuth I came to the G.P.O. and cabled Joe McGarrity for £100 which I got within two days and two issues of *Irish Freedom* were published. On ours my name was printed on the front page as Editor.⁸⁵

The conflict was out in the open with the publication of the two papers and a meeting of the SC was called to discuss the situation. P S O'Hegarty later noted:

I remember that it did come out clearly enough that Pat had been in the wrong, but there was some brilliant dialectic (sic) by Hobson, some very clever leading questions by Clarke, and some very clever answers by MacDermott, the upshot of which was to confuse Allan and O'Hanlon, so that at the end of the day they found themselves agreeing to whitewash everybody concerned, on the grounds that the whole business was a misunderstanding.⁸⁶

McCullough, however, defended and justified Clarke's action of using IRB money to fund the second issue of *Irish Freedom* by stating that:

Tom Clarke, as Treasurer of the Organisation, was perfectly within his rights, in an emergency and knowing that the second issue had the approval of a majority of the members of the S.Cin advancing the money necessary to procure the publication of the second issue of *Freedom*.⁸⁷

Interestingly, McCullough described Tom Clarke as the Treasurer of the organization: which meant that he was one of the Executive of the SC. He probably was elected sometime in 1911 and Allan, Hanlon and Stritch took their case to the full SC as they did not have complete control of the Executive. With Clarke on the

⁸⁵ NLI, MS 17,666. Pat McCartan Papers, McCartan letter to un-named recipient, 10 May 1960

⁸⁶ NAI, BMH WS 26, P S O'Hegarty

⁸⁷ NLI, MS 31,653, Denis McCullough Papers, McCullough Letter, 2 August 1960

Executive of the SC, it was only a matter of time before Allan resigned and in a letter to John Devoy, 3rd March 1912, he gave his reasons and a date two weeks hence when his resignation would become effective.⁸⁸ Allan did not however go quietly or quickly. Tom Clarke would not accept a compromise, Allan was going and should go immediately and he noted this in a letter to Pat McCartan; here 'Windows' was code for Allan:

Windows hasn't made the final jump, unless he does it very shortly he won't get a chance to finish he will be flung down. You can't realise what a thorough (indecipherable) change has taken place it has (indecipherable) every mother's son.⁸⁹

Allan was replaced as Secretary of the SC by MacDiarmada and Hanlon, who also resigned, lost his place to Seamus O'Connor. By resigning from the SC, Allan and Hanlon thought most of the Dublin IRB would follow their lead but this did not happen although there were some resignations. With Clarke as Treasurer and MacDiarmada as Secretary, control of the SC passed definitively to the progressives. Similarly, control of the Wolfe Tone Clubs, once governed by Allan, was also in the hands of the progressives but notably, only two of the SC were on the Executive of the Wolfe Tone Executive Committee, Tom Clarke and Sean MacDiarmada.⁹⁰

Thus from 1912, Clarke and MacDiarmada ran the IRB; as two-thirds of the executive they could decide on relevant action between meetings of the SC. They also were the only two SC members on the Executive Committee of the Wolfe Tone Clubs they could propose a course of action as the SC Executive and then ensure it was carried out, where necessary, by the Wolfe Tone Clubs. Denny McCullough reflected accurately upon the implications of this: 'Tom Clarke was a member of the W.T. Comm. & acted as a watchdog on it for the S.C....Tom Clarke's actions on the Wolfe Tone Comm. were never reviewed by the S.C. Tom was his own master there.'⁹¹ On April 27 1912, *The Gaelic American* ran a report that the adjourned convention of delegates from the affiliated branches of the Wolfe Tone and United Irishmen Memorial Association:

⁸⁸ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, Fred Allan to John Devoy, 4 March 1912, pp. 401-2

⁸⁹ NLI, Pat McCartan Papers MS 17,666, Clarke to McCartan, 19 April 1912

⁹⁰ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, 27 April 1912, p.2

⁹¹ NLI, MS 31,653, Denis McCullough Papers McCullough letter, 2 August 1960

...was held at 41 Rutland Square on Thursday 11 April for the purposes of electing officers and a new committee. The following were elected: President, Mr. T. J. Clarke, Trustees, Messrs T. J. Clarke...Treasurers, Messrs Sean Mac Diarmada and James Stritch.

Two years before this, in 1910, the Wolfe Tone Clubs had thirteen affiliated clubs ⁹² which is an explanation as to why the meeting in June 1912 was very well attended. ⁹³ Concerts and money raising events were the outward manifestations of the work of the Wolfe Tone Clubs. On another level, the objects of the clubs were also disseminated and they included the advancement of the teachings of Tone and others since his time, encouragement for all Irishmen to unite for the freedom of their country and lastly:

To promote the advancement of National thought, and to inculcate the spirit of self-sacrifice and self-reliance by which alone true liberty can be attained. ⁹⁴

The clubs effectively represented the public face of the IRB. There appears little or no source material in police records on the workings of the Clubs. ⁹⁵ However, research undertaken for this thesis in newspapers and some secondary works has uncovered some interesting material on the working of the clubs and Tom Clarke's role in them. All of this activity represented a new beginning for Clarke as he was at last in control, with Sean MacDiarmada, of both the IRB and the Wolfe Tone Clubs. It was ironic that Clarke, who had a working veto over the editorial content of *Irish Freedom*, ⁹⁶ should write to the paper as President of the Wolfe Tone Clubs: Clarke issued a public thank you to people who had made large donations, he mentioned how the memorial work was going on in large American cities and he described how the Executive Committee had arranged for a series of sub-committees to look into different aspects of the Memorial work including one central sub-committee responsible for planning and designing the memorial:

On this sub-committee are Messrs W. J. Ryan, Seaghan Mac Diarmadha, Bulmer Hobson, James Deakin, Wm Pierce, Jack Morrow, Dr. Pat MacCartan and Major McBride. The standing and ability of every member of this sub-

⁹² Fitzpatrick, *Harry Boland's Irish Revolution*, p 32

⁹³ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, June 29 1912, p. 3

⁹⁴ BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, December 1911, p 7

⁹⁵ Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*, p 191

⁹⁶ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p 41

committee is a guarantee that the work entrusted to them will be effectively attended to.⁹⁷

Including Clarke, five of the nine mentioned above also sat on the IRB SC. This was significant because it begins to erode the theory put forward by some historians that the actions of Clarke when making arrangements for insurrection were not known by the IRB SC. Not only were they aware of his actions, some members of the SC were complicit with them. If details of membership of the IRB SC contained in the Witness Statements collected by the Bureau of Military History⁹⁸ is compared with the extant evidence of the members of the Wolfe Tone and United Irishmen Memorial Executive Committee, it may become clearer to what extent the IRB SC were aware of the plans established by Clarke and MacDiarmada in the years leading up to 1916.

As part of the new IRB regime introduced under Clarke, Sean MacDiarmada went to the 1912 Clan Convention which was held in Atlantic City, NJ, on September 23rd travelling under the name Burke. Joe McGarrity took rough notes on MacDiarmada's report to the Foreign Relations Committee: the strength of the IRB was reported, 1,660 in Ireland and 367 in Britain. He also gave the circulation figures for *Irish Freedom*: 6,000 copies per month.⁹⁹ However:

Under the heading 'Blocks in the Way,' McGarrity's notes list the following without further explanation: Hibernians, the Parliamentary Party, clergy, spy system, want of employment, want of money. Presumably MacDermott developed these points. Another sheet carries the notation 'Dropping of Allan (sic) and H.' a reference to the leadership struggle and there is a request for "\$1,500 per year to be sent by hand."¹⁰⁰

Clarke, the 'blocks' as described by MacDiarmada notwithstanding, breathed new life into the IRB in Ireland and in America. Clan na Gael was also influenced by the Clarke dynamic: 'The new leadership of the IRB and Sean MacDermott's presence at the convention in Atlantic City put new life in the Clan.'¹⁰¹

This chapter has examined how Clarke, by 1912, had reorganized the SC of the IRB, established himself as one of the more important people in Irish separatist

⁹⁷ BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, June 1912, p 1

⁹⁸ Please see the appendices for a fuller discussion of the Witness Statement collection programme conducted by the Bureau of Military History 1947-1959.

⁹⁹ McGarrity, Cronin, *The McGarrity Papers*, p. 32

¹⁰⁰ McGarrity, Cronin, *The McGarrity Papers*, p. 33

¹⁰¹ Cronin, *The McGarrity Papers*, p. 34

circles and managed to establish a successful business. The key to his strategy of developing a separate organization within existing organizations worked and he prevented the splitting the IRB. Clarke and MacDiarmada, as Treasurer and Secretary of the IRB Executive were quorate whenever they met because they consisted two thirds of the executives' officers. With Clarke as President of the Wolfe Tone Clubs and MacDiarmada as Treasurer, they formed the Executive of that organisation. This centralization of control of the IRB created a power base and platform for Clarke to advance the ideals of Fenianism. This chapter also investigated and demonstrated that by 1912, Clarke was largely in a position of almost complete control of separatism in Dublin and through IRB intermediaries, much of Ireland. After 1912, he was in a position to direct IRB propaganda, expenditure and policy towards the use of physical force if the possibility of war in Europe became a reality.

Chapter 6

Ireland, steady progress and organizing for insurrection

1912-1914

1912 was a year of comparative quiet, but under the surface things were moving steadily in preparation for the blow to be struck for freedom. The IRB was marshalling all its forces to secure a position of influence in all the nationalist organisations. They were educating them along the line that force was the only thing that got anything from England, and showing them the futility of the Irish Parliamentary Party in the British House of Commons. It was not easy to wean the old supporters from the belief that the Party could get anything they wanted from England, if only those hotheads would keep quiet; any little concession was hailed as a great victory. The young had little faith in them, and were easily led to the belief that the Fenian way to get freedom was the only one to fight for it.¹

Kathleen Clarke

¹ Clarke, Kathleen, *Revolutionary Woman*, (Dublin, 1991), p 43

Steady progress: the IRB at a low ebb

During 1912, Tom Clarke was involved with the Wolfe Tone Clubs Committee. At a meeting on 7th June 1912 with Clarke in the chair, it was proposed that a pilgrimage to Bodinstown should take place on Sunday 23rd June. A report was given on a concert, held the week before the meeting, to raise funds for the memorial to Wolfe Tone and the *Gaelic American* reported that, 'A brief address by Mr Thomas J. Clarke, President of the Committee, on the object of the concert was a feature of the evening, and was received with loud and prolonged cheering by the big audience.' ² Clarke, through the committee, resurrected the annual 'pilgrimage' to Wolfe Tone's grave. Later in 1912, the *Gaelic American* reported on a meeting of the Wolfe Tone Monument Association. This was described as an annual convention and 'There was a large attendance of delegates, the president, Mr T. J. Clarke being in the chair.' ³ It was at this meeting that Clarke was re-elected President of the Committee; the implication being that Clarke had been elected President at the previous convention in October 1911.

A commemoration of the Manchester Martyrs was held in Dublin on 30th November 1912 arranged by the Wolfe Tone Committee. This was not the only commemoration as the *Gaelic American* noted many more were held across the country and a march to Glasnevin by IRB veterans was also organised. The main event of the evening was an oration by William J Ryan, 'a well known Dublin journalist. He was instructed not to speak too long, but the spirit of the audience almost carried him away, and though he exceeded the time limit nobody seemed to realize it.' ⁴ The article mentioned that 'Mr Thomas J Clarke, 'who spent sixteen years in British prisons, presided.' ⁵ Thus in 1912, Clarke played a role in public life but it was relatively minor when compared to the roles of John Redmond, Patrick Pearse or Arthur Griffith. By virtue of the Presidency of the Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee, he would have been rated highly in separatist circles but less so in major political circles.

Clarke had laid the foundation of a new organization by Christmas 1912 and he and MacDiarmada exercised tight control over it. The authorities did not have a

² BLNC, *Gaelic American*, June 29th 1912, p. 3

³ BLNC, *Gaelic American*, October 26th 1912, p. 1

⁴ BLNC, *Gaelic American*, December 14th 1912, p. 1

⁵ BLNC, *Gaelic American*, December 14th 1912, p. 1

clear picture of the inner workings of the IRB because Clarke and MacDiarmada, and their immediate circle, were at the heart of all IRB decisions and they were not easily drawn. However, the Castle did have an opinion upon a revival of the IRB, 'a hopeless proposal'; moreover, Chief Secretary Birrell was more interested in developments in Irish Literature than police reports. However, the artistic and literary themes flourishing at that time should have alerted him to the fact that the value of police reports was not to be underestimated.⁶

Clarke and MacDiarmada overhauled the higher echelons of the IRB in Dublin while leaving the structure beneath it largely intact. Clarke built up, through the tireless efforts of MacDiarmada in his role as IRB organiser, a network of men throughout Ireland who were loyal to the IRB, to MacDiarmada and to himself. By 1912 his role in the IRB was more significant and evident. IRB men from the provinces visited Clarke's shop in Dublin and reported to him news of events happening around the country. Through these visits Clarke built up a picture of the strength of the IRB and he also gauged the extent of the influence of local IRB cadres within nationalist organizations.

Through *Irish Freedom*, Clarke kept the message of separatism before the Irish people. In February 1913 it opined: 'We want a kind of spiritual dynamite to blow sky-high the chains of England on our minds and hearts and souls. And I see such dynamite at hand whose usefulness is hardly recognised by many of us, the Irish language'.⁷ The association of the Irish language with separatism was another attempt to push the message through on as many fronts as possible. In February, March and April 1913, Pearse contributed articles to *Irish Freedom*; his 'From a Hermitage', June 1913 – February 1914, demonstrated his increasing attachment to revolutionary politics.⁸ He still supported Home Rule but his enthusiasm was leaning towards more overt revolutionary action, which 'began to reinforce his mystical yearnings for martyrdom'.⁹ The IRB were also involved in minor political initiatives such as MacDiarmada and Pearse's failed attempt to establish an Irish-Ireland benefit society, following new legislation on insurance, and Hobson's involvement as a member of the Jones's Road Fete organizing committee.

⁶ O'Broin, *Revolutionary Underground*, p. 139

⁷ BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, February, 1913

⁸ BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, February, March and April, 1913, June 1913-February 1914

⁹ Edwards, *Pearse*, p. 173

The Jones's Road Fete organizing committee was a front for the IRB. There was a sports field close to the parish church where the GAA played most of its major championship games. The GAA bought the ground, which later became Croke Park, in 1913. Clarke mentioned Jones's Road in a letter to John Devoy in connection with the GAA. A majority of the Central Council were either IRB men or sympathetic to its views. ¹⁰ P S O'Hegarty, a member of the IRB SC from 1908-1914 underlined the extent of the IRB's reach and its financial power when he stated:

It had members everywhere, its tentacles went into everything, it maintained a footing in every organisation and movement in Ireland, which could be supported without doing violence to separatist principles. Everywhere it pushed separatist principles. And when money was needed at a pinch for any of the organisations which it regarded as key organisations – the Gaelic League, Sinn Fein, the Gaelic Athletic Association, the Fianna, and the Irish Volunteers – it found the money. Strange and transient Committees and Societies were constantly cropping up, doing this and that specific national work. The I.R.B formed them. The I.R.B. ran them. The I.R.B provided the money. The I.R.B dissolved them when their work was done. ¹¹

This work can be treated as an original source because P S O'Hegarty was a member of the IRB SC, 1908-1914. ¹² The money largely came from Clan na Gael in America 'to which no appeal for money for an object even remotely separatist was ever made in vain'. ¹³ As Treasurer of the Executive of the SC, Clarke sanctioned all IRB expenditure. His position gave him unrivalled power in decision making over what schemes were to be funded. He was the crucial link with John Devoy and the Revolutionary Directory of Clan na Gael and it was Clarke who approached Devoy for funding for these schemes.

The 1913 Wolfe Tone Procession to Bodenstown

Historians generally describe the oration by Patrick Pearse at the 1913 'Pilgrimage' to Wolfe Tone's grave as the most significant part of the event. Indeed, the delivery was very powerful and evocative and the message was clear,

¹⁰ Letter from Tom Clarke to John Devoy, 18th June 1913, William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan, Eds, *Devoy's Post Bag, 1871-1928*, Dublin, 1979, p. 410

¹¹ P S O'Hegarty, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, Dublin, 1924, pp. 13-14

¹² O'Hegarty, *Sinn Fein*, p. 14

¹³ O'Hegarty, *Sinn Fein*, p. 1

separatism through physical force. The message was put across but... 'The speech at Tone's grave was no masterpiece...'¹⁴ Clarke and the IRB used the 1913 ceremony as a set piece and an opportunity to widen the appeal of separatism, having the event filmed and shown in cinemas in Dublin and other large cities. Clarke, in a letter to Devoy, described how he managed to arrange this:

The cinematograph picture showing in the various towns (Pilgrimage procession, etc) will count for much in getting the project, etc., before the minds of the younger people... Jameson the picture show man was very reluctant to touch the [Bodenstown] pilgrimage-didn't think it would be so very popular. I went up and had a talk with him. The argument that carried weight with him was that I would be able to get an advertisement about the film in *Irish Freedom*, *Sinn Fein* and *Gaelic American*. Will you give him a reading notice and have a copy of the paper mailed onto him... I forgot to say Jameson has a number of picture show places in a number of towns in Ireland. He is an Irishman and the only man in the business in a big way in Ireland.¹⁵

Clarke's visit to Jameson¹⁶ is highly significant. Initially, Clarke sent an intermediary to Jameson with whom he was reluctant to do business with. However, Clarke swayed him with free advertisements for the shows in three newspapers. His connections to *Irish Freedom* and the *Gaelic American* are understandable but it was his ability to offer free advertising in *Sinn Fein* that was important. This illustrated that he had a strong working relationship with *Sinn Fein's* editor, Arthur Griffith. Clarke wrote to Devoy after the commemoration to update him on the event and other news:

Don't publish anything yet about Pilgrimage to Bodenstown until you hear from me by next mail. Will have good report and pictures for you. 'Twas an immense, success, at least 5,000 people around the grave. The march was very imposing, inspiring. Went off with military precision all the way to the graveside. Jameson, Cinematograph man, there, took pictures, these have been exhibited twice or thrice nightly since (22inst.), in Rotunda and Rathmines. No pictures he has ever shown (and he has been 14 years in the business) ever received such tremendous applause. The old round room appeared to shake. The pictures are grand. He is to show them next in Galway, then in Tralee. Afterwards Queenstown, then Cork, then the Curragh, then back to Rathmines and the Rotunda. I would like you to give him a write up advt. I'll send copy. He and I are now good friends and I'm glad. He with his

¹⁴ Edwards, *The Triumph of Failure*, p. 174

¹⁵ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, Letter from Tom Clarke to John Devoy, 18th June 1913, p.410

¹⁶ Jameson's Company, Irish Animated Picture Company, operated three of the nine cinemas in Dublin in 1913: the Rotunda, Theatre de Luxe and Volta Picture Theatre: *Cinema and Ireland*, Kevin Rockett, Luke Gibbons and John Hill, (Beckenham, 1987) p 33

ring of pictures houses showing our pictures will do good business and the Dublin newspapers may go to hell or the Empire...I have just got a message from Jameson that the Pilgrimage picture is such a success that he will continue it here for the remainder of the week and not end with to-night.¹⁷

According to Clarke the march to Tone's grave and the silent pictures of it were a great propaganda success for the IRB and he was understandably elated with the outcome. This was a great publicity coup for Clarke and the IRB as the IPP were still in a good position with Home Rule steadily making its way through the imperial Parliament in London. The report and pictures he mentioned formed the basis of an article, which appeared in the *Gaelic American* in July. The report gave a fuller version of events including the number of people that set out from Dublin, 2,000, how they were met by large crowds from several parts of the country, including bands and pipers, and the speeches made. Tom Clarke spoke briefly at the beginning of proceedings:

On arrival at Bodenstown Michael O'Colgain of the O'Toole Pipers played a dirge over the grave, after which Mr Thomas J Clarke, President of the Wolfe Tone and United Irishmen Memorial Committee, who does not seem to be much the worse for his 16 years' imprisonment, received a great reception when he came forward to speak. Addressing his hearers as fellow countrymen and countrywomen and the Fianna, he said these boys would have something to say in the future. They stood for Irish Nationality of the stamp that Wolfe Tone fought and labored for, and that they there that day still stood for-Ireland a free nation, owing no allegiance to any power outside her own shores. That was Wolfe Tones programme in a nutshell. The rising generation was swinging back to the old fight. Young Ireland still took pride in the principles of '98, '48, and '67. (Loud applause). His duty, Mr Clarke said, was not to make a speech. He had merely to introduce to them a man whose name was well known throughout the length and breadth of Ireland, and not only that, but wherever Irishmen of the National faith were living, as a man who was doing splendid work on the high plane of National effort-P.H.Pearse. He had great pleasure in introducing Mr P.H.Pearse.¹⁸

Pearse gave the oration, but Clarke introduced him. This important element of occasion has been overlooked and not commented on by historians. Clarke disliked public speaking but as President of the Wolfe Tone Clubs, he spoke publicly and briefly on several occasions. This event was one of the first at which the intellect of Pearse and the organisational skill of Clarke worked in tandem to further promote the

¹⁷ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, Clarke to Devoy, 25th June 1913, pp. 410-411

¹⁸ *The Gaelic American*, July 12th 1913

independence of Ireland through separatism under the auspices of the Wolfe Tone Clubs, the public face of the IRB. Pearse was not a member of the IRB, yet Clarke persisted in using him as his spokesman at keystone events in the IRB year. In a post script to his letter to Devoy, Clarke mentioned how he felt ten years younger and how 'The tide is running strongly in our direction. *We have the rising generation*' (Clarke's italics).¹⁹ In his letter to Devoy of 18th June 1913, Clarke mentioned Arthur Griffith in connection with the arrangements for the Bodenstown event:

I saw A. Griffith the other day and he was pleased to stand in with us on the General Purposes Committee and also to give us whatever space we need for reports of meetings, etc. I saw him again to-day bringing an advance copy of *Irish Freedom* and asked if he would give us a note on it. He did willingly. I know it will please you that there is a good spirit amongst the workers of the Committee in charge of the memorial work.²⁰

The reference to 'space for reports' meant that Griffith was willing to cover the activities of the Wolfe Tone Clubs in *Sinn Fein*. Clarke also noted the morale of non-IRB people well as IRB men who all were doing 'memorial work' but whose political approach to Irish independence, and the achievement of it, was very different to that held by Clarke.

Tom Clarke, the IRB and the Irish Volunteers

The formation of the Irish Volunteers in 1913 was a turning point for the IRB in its pursuit of an independent and republican Ireland. The IRB was aware of the foundation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in Ulster by Unionists in January 1913. By April, the UVF had enrolled 40,000 men and by November it numbered 76,000 and the threat of physical force and the encouragement of it became the policy of Bonar Law, Carson, F.E. Smith, and others. Unionists had organised and, to a limited extent, armed themselves to resist Home Rule. One of the two major parties in England, the Conservative and Unionist Party, backed the Unionists of the North with money, ideas and military and civil support in their attempt to fight Home Rule.

¹⁹ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, Clarke to Devoy, 25th June 1913

²⁰ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, Clarke to Devoy, 18th June 1913

To the IRB, the formation of the UVF was a golden opportunity. Tom Clarke, Sean MacDiarmada and the rest of the IRB saw events in the North as a precedent and slowly began to ponder the possibility of a similar force in the South. P S O'Hegarty detailed the IRB's reaction:

These things were not without their reaction in the South. The I.R.B had watched the movement with the greatest interest...Any move by known physical force men in the direction of a Volunteer Force would be certain to be stopped, notwithstanding the precedent established by Carson, and the IRB therefore confined itself to encouraging the expression of the opinion that we, too, ought to organize a Volunteer Force for the defence of Ireland.²¹

Thus the genesis of the Volunteers began. The sources bifurcate here as to who was responsible for the creation and formation of the Volunteers. Largely, Bulmer Hobson drew the most credit from historians for his role in their formation but this reflected only part of the story. Sean McGarry met Tom Clarke in 1907 and from then until 1916, he acted as Tom's right hand man, bodyguard, and general factotum. The twenty five page statement he submitted to the Bureau of Military History is full of information on Clarke and his reaction to events in the period. He stated that he did not have any idea of the many statements and claims made on whom started the volunteers:

...but I do know that while the idea was in the air and everybody was talking about it the decision to write the letter which was brought by Seamus O'Connor to the Leader was taken in Tom Clarke's shop and that to the day of his death the late D.P.Moran believed that the credit was due to himself and Seamus O'Connor.²²

The Leader, edited by D P Moran, mentioned in its editorial of November 1913 the need for the foundation of a volunteer force, 'The important thing is to get Volunteer companies started',²³ To suggest that a letter written in Tom Clarke's shop was the genesis of the foundation of the volunteers is facile but it set the process in motion. Additional work was required but the IRB provided a solid basis upon which volunteering, as an idea, would become acceptable to constitutional

²¹ P S O'Hegarty, *Ireland*, P 669

²² NAI, BMH, WS 368 McGarry, p 18

²³ BLNC, *The Leader*, November 8th 1913

organisations and to ordinary people, who could look at the concept in relation to the prompt delivery of Home Rule. Sean McGarry in his witness statement indicated: -

The feeling that Volunteers should be started here was universal and there was some impatience shown in the Circles in Dublin but the S.C. had the matter well in hand. A decision had been made but it was not intended that Volunteers should be started under the sole aegis of the I.R.B. Tom Clarke, McDermott and Pearse had been for some time working quietly and patiently interviewing people representing different aspects of National life including the labour movement; the object being to be ready to propose a provisional executive that would be a cross section of the people. This took time and tact and was successfully accomplished.²⁴

Bulmer Hobson's recollection of informing the Dublin Centre of the IRB that the time was 'fast approaching' for the start of a volunteer movement in Dublin suggested he had knowledge of wider events²⁵ but he omitted to mention that the IRB Executive were in overall control of the project with specifically Clarke, MacDiarmada and Pearse heavily involved in delicate negotiations. He mentioned secret drilling of the IRB in Dublin²⁶ to be ready 'with men who, to a great extent, would officer the new movement when it started.'²⁷ This fitted with the plans already put in motion by Clarke, MacDiarmada and Pearse. The idea that Clarke used Pearse as a non-IRB man in negotiations was plausible as the IRB did not want to be directly associated with the formation of a volunteer force because they wanted a genuine nationalist movement free from separatist connections.

However, the signatories of the Proclamation expressed no such qualms in 1916 when the Irish Volunteers were manipulated to fight in Dublin. Pearse had not been sworn into the IRB as yet and his status as a constitutionalist public speaker went a long way to ensure that non-physical force people looked more kindly on the idea if he, rather than say Clarke, Hobson or MacDiarmada, arrived to discuss the implications of the founding of such an organisation. Clarke directed the IRB toward the creation of a volunteer force. Once having prepared the ground for a respectable non-physical force man to advocate a volunteer force and then wait and hope for it to happen was too simplistic. Eoin MacNeill, historian and politician, was invited to

²⁴ NAI, BMH, WS 368 McGarry, p 18

²⁵ Bulmer Hobson, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow*, (Tralee, 1968), p. 43

²⁶ BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, June 1912, No 20, p 1. The Irish Foresters' Hall opened at 41 Rutland Square and was spacious enough to be used for the secret drilling of recruits.

²⁷ Hobson, *Ireland*, p. 43

attend a meeting to discuss the formation of a volunteer force: he claimed later that he was under no illusions from which organization the people he was going to meet, Hobson and The O'Rahilly, came from as he later recalled 'I had no doubt that both these men came to me from the old physical force party whose organisation was the IRB and I have little doubt of the part I was expected to play.' ²⁸

The O'Rahilly was not an IRB man but an active Sinn Féiner. MacNeill knew in advance what the meeting was about and he was primed, indirectly by the IRB, to write the article, the North Began, which called for the foundation of a southern Volunteer force. The link from Tom Clarke to Eoin MacNeill is not difficult to establish. Pearse, through St Enda's, knew Tom MacDonagh who knew MacNeill at University College Dublin. What is difficult to establish is if a meeting actually happened? The connection is there, the IRB were looking for a person with the right credentials to lead constitutionalists into their arms, and it is plausible that the IRB indirectly eased MacNeill toward writing the article. Hobson disavows this theory, 'This article of McNeill's was certainly not inspired by the IRB. McNeill...was never a member of the IRB and was not in any way in touch with them. His article was for that reason the more important and opportune.' ²⁹ Sean McGarry ³⁰ mentioned only Clarke, Pearse and MacDiarmada in the group established to lay the ground work for the establishment of the Volunteers. He did not mention Hobson (although Hobson did have a role but a more minor one than these three) but the link to MacNeill from Clarke cannot be disputed.

In summation, the formation of the Volunteers was inspired by the IRB under the tutelage and guidance of Clarke. Who actually first spoke the words IRB and Volunteers in the same sentence cannot be asserted, but the IRB was associated with the idea from the beginning and Tom Clarke was in a position to promote it, guide it and bring it to fruition. The formation of a Volunteer movement in the South was not mentioned at the September meeting of the IRB SC, ³¹ however, Diarmuid Lynch did talk to Clarke on the matter:

²⁸ Eoin MacNeill, "How the Volunteers Began", in *The Irish Volunteers, Recollections and Documents* (ed F X Martin), (Dublin 1931), p. 72

²⁹ Hobson, *Ireland*, p. 43

³⁰ NAI, BMH, WS 368, McGarry, p. 18

³¹ NAI, BMH, WS 150, Gregory Murphy

I have no recollection of a meeting of the Supreme Council held in the early formative period of the Irish Volunteers... I do, however, recollect informal talks with Tom Clarke bearing on that question, and was aware that the "Executive" was quietly suggesting and directing various developments from the I.R.B. standpoint.³²

This reflects the reality of the division of power on the IRB SC. Clarke and MacDiarmada, acting as the Executive, were staging and manipulating events to the best outcome for the IRB, to the best possible position for them to manipulate further the outcome of any such gathering or founding of an organization with the name of Volunteers.

On 11th November 1913, a meeting was held at Wynn's Hotel where a provisional committee was established. Twelve of its 30 members were in the IRB, though their allegiance was not publicly known. The IRB did not have a majority on the committee but they could influence events from within without revealing their plans to use the Volunteers in an offensive rather than a defensive role. After several meetings, a manifesto was agreed and a meeting on 23rd November in the Rotunda was arranged to present the document and to launch the Volunteers. The manifesto pointed an accusatory finger at the Tory party blaming them for adopting 'military force as the determining factor in future relations between this country and Great Britain'. The manifesto also described the formation of a defensive and protective force to secure the rights and liberties common to all people of Ireland but not through aggression or domination.³³

To a certain extent, this style of rhetoric would not have been out of place in *Irish Freedom*. The preference for defensive and or protective action outlined by MacNeill was, and would be, the hurdle which Clarke and the IRB wanted to take MacNeill and the Volunteers over. Clarke and the IRB were elated at the creation and foundation of the Volunteers. Even though arms were scarce, Clarke and the IRB turned the idea of a volunteer force into a reality and their influence on the Executive, even at one third of that body, was demonstrable and clear. The meeting at the Rotunda attracted large crowds of men willing to sign up and, despite some agitation from followers of Larkin, around 4,000 men signed up to the volunteers that evening. [By May 1914, 75,000 had enrolled.] Tom Clarke saw the effect of the

³² Diarmuid Lynch, *The IRB and The 1916 Insurrection*, (Cork, 1957)

³³ Martin, *The Irish Volunteers, 1913-1915*, p. 64

formation of the volunteers on ordinary people first hand and reported the phenomenon in a letter, dated 8th December 1913, to Joseph McGarrity of Clan na Gael in America in buoyant and exhilarating terms.³⁴

Clarke witnessed the enrolment of volunteers at the Rotunda from his shop on Parnell Street and mentioned this in the letter. His enthusiasm was very evident but he detailed a sound and solid analysis of events such commenting on the ban of importing arms into Ireland which he hoped would not have happened so soon. He commented on 'packed drill halls' which indicated that three weeks after the formation of the Volunteers, information flowed from the executive of the Volunteers to Clarke.

At the beginning of 1914, Clarke, as President of the Wolfe Tone Clubs, organised commemoration meetings and attempted to raise money for arms through the use of the cinema. He made arrangements with J T Jameson, who had taken and distributed cinema pictures of the 1913 Bodenstown march, for a Wolfe Tone Fund benefit. Clarke wrote to John Daly on 26th January 1914 informing him of the details: -

I am just after a chat with Jamieson, the cinema Picture show man, who had the Rotunda all the year for his cinema pictures. I have arranged that he will give us a benefit on March 4th for the Wolfe Tone Fund. We arranged our programme and work in some of his Cinema pictures such as the Bodenstown Pilgrimage, and the Manchester Martyrs procession in Dublin last November. The affair to be run under the auspices of the Wolfe Tone Committee.³⁵

In 1913, John Daly had paid for the construction of a meeting hall at the back of his town house on Barrington Street, Limerick. There is an alley behind the house where access can be gained to the meeting hall.³⁶ This was the scene of many Nationalist meetings and in January 1914, Patrick Pearse and Sir Roger Casement went to Limerick to address meetings at the Barrington Street Hall and other venues. Tom Clarke wrote to John Daly about a caller he received in his shop on 26th January 1914: -

Sir Roger Casement called this evening & told me of the meeting yesterday & how delighted he was with his stay with you. Both he & Pearse say your

³⁴ Cronin, *The McGarrity Papers*, pp. 37-38

³⁵ UL, Madge Daly papers, Letter from Tom Clarke to John Daly, January 26th 1913

³⁶ O'Keeffe, James and E A, Visit to Limerick, 30th June 2006

Limerick meeting was the best in many respects of any they have been at yet. That's grand. The various Companies here during the last week & tonight have been out route marching & the members are delighted at the way they have acquitted themselves-their instructors-mostly ex army non commissioned officers also speak in high terms of the extraordinary progress the men have made in learning the drill-they say they have made more progress in a couple of weeks than the ordinary British Army recruits would make in 6 or 9 months.
³⁷

The quality of Clarke's intelligence about the Volunteers was excellent: his information was up to date as he mentioned companies drilling the night he wrote the letter. The reference to Casement was intriguing as the relationship between the two was less clear than Clarke's relationship with Pearse, Connolly, MacDiarmada or Hobson.

Redmond approaches

After the foundation of the volunteers, MacNeill wanted John Redmond and the IPP to become involved with the running of the Irish Volunteers. The first steps in this process began in April 1914 with an approach from some members of the Volunteer Provisional Committee to Redmond.³⁸ Clarke wrote to John Daly on this matter.³⁹ This letter further underlines the depth of Clarke's influence in non-IRB circles. First, he and the IRB guessed correctly that a rapprochement between Redmond and the constitutionalists on the Volunteer Provisional Committee was possible. Second, he was made aware of this through channels close to the centre of both organizations. Third, through his country wide connections, he organized moves to counter the IPP's/AOH's influence in the enrolment of boys in a junior Volunteer group in direct competition to the IRB controlled Fianna na Eireann. Fourth, he influenced IRB members of the Volunteer Committee to adopt a policy of not allowing any further co-options onto that committee. Even though this was influence by proxy, Clarke could rely on his connections in nationalist movements to follow the IRB line on this and other matters.

Clarke wrote to Devoy in May 1914 but the tone of the letter was very different to the letter he wrote to Daly. The issues were similar but it was Clarke's opinion that

³⁷ UL, Daly Papers, Letter from Tom Clarke to John Daly, January 26th 1913

³⁸ Le Roux, *Clarke*, PP 130-131

³⁹ Le Roux, *Clarke*, Letter from Tom Clarke to John Daly, April 29th 1914, pp. 131-132

differed and it demonstrated a subtle variation of expression regarding different people and issues including John Redmond, the Volunteers, Home Rule, the Ancient Order of Hibernians, the United Irish League, the Citizen's Army, the morale of young male volunteers and the health of his family and Devoy's well being. He also discussed the IRB's impact on events and gave his own opinion on those disparate assemblages.⁴⁰ Clarke produced a detailed word picture in this letter on the political state of Ireland in May 1914 from his and the IRB's perspective. Clarke accurately described events that were taking place: an amending Bill to the Home Rule Act was introduced into the House of Lords but was wrecked under the leadership of the Earl of Selborne and the Marquess of Lansdowne with amendments that saw the exclusion of Ulster's nine counties. His account of the Volunteers and the private talks with the IPP as an ongoing situation showed he had his finger on the pulse. Similarly, he saw a great change in the ordinary male population with regard to nationalism and patriotism, they were actually proud to do something for Ireland. The Citizen Army was more of a problem but the relations between the two organizations would fluctuate wildly up to February 1916.

The biggest issue as viewed by the IRB was the attempted realignment of the Volunteers away from a nominally independent committee toward financial support from the IPP and the patronage of twenty five of its delegates on the governing committee. Redmond supported this realignment and grew tired of the many delays and perceived obstacles placed in his way. This was caused partially by the rear guard action carried out by the IRB who worked tirelessly by issuing orders to all IRB men telling them that Redmond's attempted takeover of the Volunteers must not be allowed to go ahead. Clarke made his position clear to his IRB comrades; he thought that if a split came, it would be better to face it sooner rather than later. Sean McGarry related how Redmond and the IPP approached the Volunteers for representation on the Executive: -

The phenomenal success of the Irish Volunteers excited the jealousy and fears of Redmond and the Party who saw the youth of the country rushing to the militant organisation and out of their influence... Finally a public demand was made. Nobody worried about this as it was known that the majority of the executive were against the interference of any outside body and it was

⁴⁰ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, Vol II, Thomas J Clarke to John Devoy, 14th May 1914, pp.444-446

believed would not tolerate it. However, when the Executive met to consider the matter Hobson announced that he was going to vote for the proposal of Redmond. Some of those present (who should have known better) because of Hobson's position in the I.R.B. seemed to regard his attitude as official voted with him and Redmond's proposals were accepted.⁴¹

The Provisional Committee met on the evening of 16th June 1914 and voted on the issue. Hobson had persuaded Casement to vote to accept the Redmond proposals despite a last minute plea from Clarke and MacDiarmada to vote against the proposal. In the name of unity, Redmond's proposals were carried by 18 votes to nine. The IRB men on the committee voted against, except MacDonagh who sent a letter explaining his position, and Mellows who abstained. Clarke was distraught by the news when it reached him. Sean McGarry described his reaction:

I was with Tom when the news came and to say he was astounded is understating it. I never saw him so moved. He regarded it from the beginning as cold-blooded and contemplated treachery likely to bring about the destruction of the only movement in a century which brought promise of the fulfilment of all his hopes.⁴²

Later on that same day, Roger Casement and Bulmer Hobson called on John Daly who was staying in Dun Laoghaire to explain their position: they were joined by Clarke. Daly exploded and accused Hobson of treachery to the IRB. Clarke stopped the conversation as it reached a dangerous level of rhetoric. Madge Daly travelled into town with Clarke on the tram later that same day. She asked him why he was so bitter against Hobson. Was it a possibility that his action was an error of judgement? Clarke replied: -

...that he could over look an error of judgement, but that was not the real point. For years the little group of I.R.B. men in Dublin had worked together loyally, meeting to discuss anything of national importance, and after free expressions of opinion, agree to take unanimous action. Yet, when the last question of the Redmond nominees arose, Hobson could not be got to discuss it with his old comrades, avoided them, and used his position as a well known I.R.B. man to influence men inside and outside that organisation to vote with him.⁴³

⁴¹ NAI, BMH, WS 368, p. 19, McGarry

⁴² NAI, BMH, WS 368, p. 19, McGarry

⁴³ UL, Daly Papers, Undated, Folder 77, pp. 5-6

Hobson was duly eased out of the higher echelons of the IRB by Clarke and the IRB SC. He was fired from his journalist position with the *Gaelic American* but reinstated after appealing to Devoy directly. Hobson's version of events was not in keeping with the facts. 'But if I could not work with them anymore the possible alternatives were to resign or to start a struggle for power within the IRB which would have split that organisation from top to bottom...I chose to resign rather than render the IRB impotent.' ⁴⁴ Hobson here over rated his own capabilities and his following in the IRB. There were some rumblings on the Central Dublin Committee he sat on as centre but these quickly diminished. The split between Clarke and Hobson was as much to do with not obeying IRB orders as Hobson feeling he had outlived the IRB and had a more important role within the broad church of constitutionalist opinion. However, loyalty to his IRB comrades was not high on his agenda as he mistakenly thought that Redmond's brand of Irish nationalism would achieve Irish independence rather than Clarke's brand. Either way, Clarke never spoke to Hobson again. It was evident in Clarke's eyes, and in the eyes of the wider IRB, that Hobson was a traitor to the organization.

The 1914 Pilgrimage to Wolfe Tone's Grave at Bodenstown

The IRB slowly drew the Volunteers closer. Certainly, that was the plan Tom Clarke had prepared. In a letter to John Devoy dated 3rd June 1914, about another IRB Clan na Gael matter, Clarke added a post script, 'P.S.-Eoin MacNeill will be speaker at Bodenstown, June 21.' ⁴⁵ The invitation to speak was sent by Tom Clarke as President of the Wolfe Tone Clubs. This second layer of revolutionary skin gave Clarke and MacDiarmada almost untold power when viewed in relation with their position on the IRB Executive. They could propose a course of action as the Executive of the IRB SC, commit IRB funds to it if necessary and use the manpower of the ten clubs affiliated ⁴⁶ to the Central Wolfe Tone and United Irishmen Memorial Committee to bring the idea to fruition. This was the heart of Clarke's power within Irish revolutionary politics and the IRB.

⁴⁴ Hobson, *Ireland*, p.53

⁴⁵ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag*, Clarke to Devoy, p. 448

⁴⁶ Fitzpatrick, David, *Harry Boland's Irish Revolution*, (Dublin, 2003), p 32

The publication of Redmond's ultimatum on 12th June, together with the Executive Committee voting on 16th June, were uncomfortably close to the Annual IRB Pilgrimage to Wolfe Tone's grave on 21st June, where the Chief of Staff of the Irish Volunteers, Eoin MacNeill, was scheduled to give the oration. Announcements were published in *Irish Freedom* and other like minded journals. Redmond timed his ultimatum to head off the catastrophe, for the IPP, of the Chief of Staff of the Volunteers giving the oration at Bodenstown, with its separatist connotations, and with the future of the Volunteers still unresolved.

However, MacNeill now incurred the lighter wrath of the IRB when they cancelled his oration at Bodenstown. Kathleen Clarke described the meeting between Tom Clarke and Eoin MacNeill: -

John MacNeill had been selected that year by the Wolfe Tone Memorial Committee, all IRB men, to deliver the oration at the pilgrimage to Wolfe Tone's grave at Bodenstown. Tom sent word to MacNeill that he wished to see him, and when he came told him that owing to his action in voting for the Redmondites, he would not be permitted to speak at Wolfe Tone's grave as had been arranged. MacNeill expressed regret, but asserted that in voting as he did, he thought he was doing what the IRB wanted. He looked on Hobson as representing them, and was guided by his actions. ⁴⁷

Madge Daly recalled how Kathleen Clarke later related to her that 'the interview between MacNeill and Tom took place in her house while she took Tom's place at the shop'. ⁴⁸ This reflected the status of the visitor but nevertheless, if MacNeill had made the speech, the Volunteers and the IRB would have moved closer together. Clarke was acting as President of the Wolfe Tone Clubs when the interview took place and with this demonstration of decision making, it is quite possible MacNeill took away the idea that Clarke was more heavily involved in IRB policy making and implementation than Hobson or any other IRB member connected with the Volunteers.

The Pilgrimage took place as planned on 21st June without MacNeill. Clarke had written to Devoy to establish if Colonel Ricard O'Sullivan Burke, of Manchester Martyr fame, would speak but the answer was negative. W.P Ryan, a renowned

⁴⁷ Kathleen Clarke, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 46

⁴⁸ CPP, Madge Daly, undated memorandum

Dublin journalist, gave the oration after Tom Clarke gave the presidential oration. The *Gaelic American* reported that he, Clarke...:

...told the assembly that the spirit of Wolfe Tone was moving through the length and breadth of the land. The tramp of marching men eager to grip the rifle was evidence of that spirit. They were there to honour the memory and the principles of Wolfe Tone, who worked for the union of all Irishmen and for the independence of Ireland. The time of speechmaking was rapidly passing-the drilling and arming of the people was what was going to count.⁴⁹

The Howth Gun Running

Historians have viewed the Howth gun running in July 1914 in a similar manner. A group of 'Anglo-Irish' people put up the money to buy arms; they arranged for the shipment of the guns from Hamburg to Dublin; the Volunteers picked them up and later in the day, British troops returning from Howth, shot at heckling crowds on Bachelor's Wharf, killing three people. Some historians go further by suggesting that the IRB had little or nothing to do with the whole incident. This standard narrative failed to answer one question, why Tom Clarke was on the East Pier at Howth talking to Darryl Figgis (who was deeply involved with purchasing the guns with Roger Casement, Alice Stopford Green and Erskine Childers) and a fisherman about the use of one of his boats on Saturday 25th July, a full day before the consignment was due to arrive?⁵⁰

The events surrounding purchasing and shipping of guns is covered in many historical works but it was the period just before the guns were landed that was relevant to Clarke. One reason why Clarke was there was the weather. Thirty-six hours before the rendezvous at Howth, the *Asgard* hit the worst storm in the Irish Sea since 1882. On the evening of Saturday 25th July, Sean McGarry arrived at Howth with four IRB men and a large hamper, ready to unload arms from the *Asgard* if required. Seamus Daly, an IRB man, in his witness statement recorded a very perceptive account of events during the two day period of 24th/25th July that he both witnessed and took part in: -

⁴⁹ BLNC, *Gaelic American*, July 15th 1914

⁵⁰ NAI, BMH, WS 360, Commandant Seamus Daly

We arrived at Howth about 4 p.m. McGarry remained at the station telling us to go on down to the end of the East Pier and wait there for him and to take the hamper with us. We went ahead, and later McGarry came along with a fisherman, a middle-aged man dressed in a blue jersey and a peaked cap. The fisherman asked us if we knew how to manage a boat, and we told him we did. At this time the wind was blowing hard with a high sea running. It was raining hard at times.⁵¹

This eye witness account verified the severity of the storm raging in the Irish Sea. Seamus Daly further related how the truth of the mission was revealed to him and the other IRB men who were there:

We told the fisherman we were out to do some fishing and he told us this was impossible as no one could go out in a boat on an evening like that. After some argument about this with McGarry, the fisherman and McGarry walked away, but McGarry came back to us in a short time and asked us if he could get a boat would we be afraid to go out. We said we were waiting to go. We knew then for the first time what the job was. McGarry told us that we were to go out to meet a boat which was expected in with arms and that he had the necessary arrangements made. We were to contact the boat and stay out with her.⁵²

The *Asgard* was ahead of schedule and if it could not make land, then a boat to ferry weapons ashore was required otherwise, the ship, crew and cargo were at the mercy of the very stormy elements. McGarry was Clarke's right hand man and he could be trusted to undertake and complete sensitive missions. However, the argument concerning the availability of a boat was not concluded:

About two hours later, we were surprised to see Darrell Figgis coming down the Pier with the fisherman, and they started to walk up and down having an argument. Whilst this argument was going on McGarry arrived on the scene accompanied by Tom Clarke, the executed leader of 1916. They joined in the argument with Figgis and the Fisherman and eventually McGarry came back to where we were, took away the hamper and told us to remain where we were and not to leave the Pier until we got a message from him. He gave us to understand they were going to make other arrangements for another boat to go out, possibly from Dun Laoghaire. We were very down-hearted at the failure to get the boat.⁵³

⁵¹ NAI, BMH, WS 360, Commandant Seamus Daly

⁵² NAI, BMH, WS 360, Commandant Seamus Daly

⁵³ NAI, BMH, WS 360, Commandant Seamus Daly

Clarke was informed of the boat's early arrival and had time to organize a landing party to unload the ship a day prior to its proposed landing time.

The question of how communications were established and maintained between Hobson, MacNeill, The O'Rahilly, Figgis, Clarke and the IRB is paramount but there is little extant primary source material available in connection with this facet of the gun running. Many accounts of the Howth gun running related the carrying of batons as a precaution against police or army attack. Hobson alluded to this when he related 'In preparation for the gun-running, I got the carpenter members of the IRB to make about two hundred oak batons which were to be used in case we were attacked by the police.'⁵⁴ However, 'Sean T O'Kelly had called at the house of IRB member John Tobin where he found both Tobin and MacDiarmada superintending the construction of police-style batons.'⁵⁵ The money for buying materials and paying workmen to make the staves would have come from the IRB as Hobson did not have any spending powers and this meant that Tom Clarke was involved. As IRB Treasurer, he sanctioned all and any expenditure. The connection and the source material to verify it, between Clarke and the group who financed the gun running, remains elusive.

Clarke and MacDiarmada spent the 26th July at Clarke's home, 77 Amiens Street, waiting for news of the Volunteers and food prepared by Kathleen. They were kept informed of events by runners from Cathal Brugha, in charge at Howth, and Ned Daly, in charge of the advance column marching on Howth. Once again, Darrel Figgis was deeply involved with the illegal importation of guns because:

On 26th July, 1914, the date of the Howth gun-running he was seen motoring towards that place with Thomas J. Clarke and John McDermott, who were since executed in the 1916 Rebellion. Later, he was seen in conflict with the Police and Military on that day, at Clontarf where he was in command of a section of the Volunteers who were conveying the imported rifles into Dublin.⁵⁶

The role of Darrel Figgis needs to be reassessed in the light of his involvement with Clarke, the IRB and the Volunteers and his role in the landing and disbursement

⁵⁴ Hobson, *Ireland*, p. 60

⁵⁵ BLNC, Memoirs of Sean T. O'Kelly, *Irish Press*, 7th July 1961

⁵⁶ NA CO 904/201/7&8, Personality File, FAR-FOR, 1918

of the smuggled guns. Clarke and MacDiarmada, on viewing events in town, decided to lend a hand:

During the day, special trams chartered for the purpose, passed along Amiens Street, carrying British Soldiers toward Howth...evidently the authorities got wind of what was happening...Clarke and MacDiarmada promptly hired a taxi and went off to meet the Volunteers, and gave them all the help they could. They made several journeys back to Amiens Street with cases of rifles, and other Volunteer offices also brought in cases of rifles under Clarke's direction.

⁵⁷

The fooling of the authorities on the Howth Road by the Volunteers which saw most of the smuggled guns landed safely was a stroke of luck. However, not all was straight forward as there was some pistol fire and skirmishes between the Volunteers and Fianna and the police and army. None of these were very serious but on their way back to barracks, a Company of British Soldiers of the Kings Own Scottish Borderers, under the command of a Major Haig, opened fired on unarmed civilians killing three and wounding, from the use of bayonets, thirty eight. The subsequent official enquiry into the shootings found that the British soldiers involved open fired as a result of inaccurate orders. This whitewash of British military behaviour was meat and drink to the IRB. Clarke and MacDiarmada, despite the loss of life, regarded the gun running as successful. Clarke cabled Devoy via the *Gaelic American* with the following 'The authorities outwitted. Two thousand rifles landed at Howth yesterday. Slight skirmish returning to Dublin. Lost twenty rifles. Otherwise all well.' ⁵⁸ Similarly, Sean MacDiarmada wrote a letter to John Daly describing the incidents of the day: -

77 Amiens Street, Dublin

Here I am at the above address. Mrs. C. is getting tea for Tom and myself, so I give you a line on things up to the present. Just a very rough outline-that's all I can give you...The crowds in the street have been charged several times by the military. It will do good and all is well. This ought to open the eyes of the fools as to what Liberal Government is.

Pardon this line, the tea is ready, and here it is.

⁵⁷ Le Roux, *Clarke*, p. 140

⁵⁸ NLI, Tom Clarke, Special Cable to the *Gaelic American*, Devoy papers, 18,137 (4), 27th July 1914

Your friend

SEAN MACDIARMADA ⁵⁹

The day after the gun running, Clarke took the train to Limerick to meet John Daly. Madge Daly described events after he alighted:

Next day Tom came to Limerick bringing one of the rifles. The first three landed were specially reserved, one for my Uncle. I met Tom at the Limerick Station. He walked like a soldier from the train to our home in Barrington Street carrying the gun on his shoulder. I could see the police and G men at the station staring with astonishment, such a sight had not been seen for ages: they did not know what to do. Tom and his friends in Dublin got the gun inscribed "To John Daly of Limerick from his friends in the Cause." Tom stayed with us for a few days and the talk between the old Comrades went on from morning to night and often until the small hours of the morning. ⁶⁰

Celebration of the gun running coup was short lived as Britain declared war on Germany. In the imperial Parliament, on 3rd August 1914, John Redmond pledged the Volunteers to the Empire. Tom Clarke, on the other hand, made plans to use those very same Volunteers to take Ireland in exactly the opposite direction, out of the Empire.

For a period after 1912 the fortunes of Tom Clarke and the IRB were at low ebb. The third Home Rule Bill was wending its way through parliament and toward the end of the time frame under discussion in this chapter, 25th May 1914, the bill became an Act and Home Rule for Ireland became a reality. John Redmond and the Irish Parliamentary Party could rightly claim responsibility for this momentous event. However, events in Ireland would shape the country's future much more than events in England. Although Tom Clarke and the IRB were still banging their separatist and revolutionary drum, it was somewhat parochial. The Irish nation could ignore and dismiss the IRB's newspaper *Irish Freedom*, while parades to Bodenstown were no more than rallies for the minority. However, the foundation of the Volunteers and the gun running at Howth were events on a national scale which gave a strong indication to the population at large that there were indeed movement in Ireland capable and willing to present the case for separation with more behind them than an Act of

⁵⁹ Le Roux, *Clarke*, Letter from Sean MacDiarmada to John Daly, 26th July 1914, pp. 141-142

⁶⁰ UL, Madge Daly Memoir, Daly Papers, folder 77, p 7

Parliament passed in the London Parliament. Tom Clarke was heartened by the events surrounding the foundation of the Volunteers and the incident at Howth but it was the commencement of hostilities on the continent that gave Clarke and the IRB the opportunity to put into practice their revolutionary theories.

Chapter 7

War, the Rising and Revolution

1914-1916

It was the happiness of Tom Clarke to have linked up in his person two such uncompromising groups, to have been on the one hand a young man in the fighting forces of Fenianism after '67, and on the other hand a (comparatively) old man in the fighting forces of 1916. As a man who had spent fifteen of his best years in prison for Ireland, nobody could have cavilled at him had he left the work to younger men, but in heart and in mind he was as young as the youngest, and no man of them made the supreme sacrifice more proudly or wholeheartedly. He had the great gift of great faith in his country, and he held firmly to the principles that are now proclaimed by the majority of Nationalists at a time when they seemed for ever snowed under. It has been recorded by one of the survivors that he addressed the men before the surrender at the G.P.O., and reconciled them to the surrender by giving it as his opinion that the fight which had been made had saved Ireland, and that he, after his life's work, was satisfied. And he has been proved right. Ireland to-day places him and his comrades in that Valhalla where sit Tone, Emmet, and Fitzgerald; they have an indelible place in the memory of the Nation.¹

P S O'Hegarty

¹O'Hegarty, P S, Introductory remarks, in Clarke, Thomas J, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life*, (Dublin, 1922)

Organizing for Revolution

England declared war against Germany on 4th August 1914. The commencement of hostilities transformed the IRB's and Clarke's position in relation to organising an uprising against English rule in Ireland. With Home Rule postponed, the most important question Clarke had to face was how to bring about insurrectionary action. In the September issue of *Irish Freedom*, a warning was sounded, 'The time will quickly come, perhaps in a month, when Ireland's honour and Ireland's cause will demand action.'² Arthur Griffith's newspaper *Sinn Fein* declared that Ireland was not at war with Germany and that a full measure of Home Rule should be passed by the British Government which would see greater involvement in the war effort by Irishmen.³ This was too constitutional for Clarke's taste but a form of separatism was referred to and this was encouraging. James Connolly however, was openly calling for insurrection and in a speech in Dublin on 30th August 1914 he exhorted his audience to take action and make up their minds one way or another.⁴

By encouraging people to make up their minds, Connolly was prompting separatist organisations to decide on action or lose the chance to do so. This was not lost on Tom Clarke and the IRB but the question here is what steps did Clarke and the IRB take to move the issue of rebellion from theory to practice? How did Clarke organize the movements he controlled or heavily influenced towards the IRB's stated goal of insurrection? The article in *Irish Freedom* calling for action within a month was optimistic but Clarke and the IRB were determined to organize for a rising. This was the reason why Clarke returned to Ireland in 1907. He was aware then that England was being caught up economically and militarily by Germany and it was only a matter of time before war broke out between the two rival countries and their respective sets of allies. Clarke was the epitome of the IRB and believed the only way to save Ireland's soul was through physical force and this, to his way of thinking, equalled insurrectionary action. He was aware that in 1914, by and large, the mass of the nationalist population in Ireland was behind John

² BLNC, *Irish Freedom*, 15 September 1914

³ BLNC, *Sinn Fein*, 7 August 1914

⁴ BLNC, *Irish Worker*, 8 August 1914

Redmond, the IPP and Home Rule but in spite of this, Clarke was determined to push through the planning for an insurrection.

To fully understand how Tom Clarke organized the IRB, and other organizations for insurrection, it is necessary to examine how and through what means the IRB planned such action. Hitherto, historians have suggested that the Military Council of the IRB was largely responsible for preparing and carrying forward plans for insurrection and was formed in May/June 1915: no grouping of IRB men existed under this title. The source of this information is Diarmuid Lynch who was not included in Clarke's inner most circles. In *The IRB and The 1916 Rising*, he referred to the Military Committee as a council, 'At this stage the term "Military Council" may be said to be appropriate.'⁵ However, it seems that a group was formed in August 1914 at the behest of Clarke and MacDiarmada to examine and formulate plans for a Rising: Sean McGarry recalled the circumstances:

In 1914 the Executive of the I.R.B. decided that arrangements for a Rising should take definite shape. They formed what was called the Augmented Executive by adding to themselves, Pearse, MacDonagh, Plunkett, Ceannt, Tom Hunter, Sean Tobin and myself. Connolly came in later in this way.⁶

The Augmented Executive of the IRB and this primary source has not been referred to in works relating to 1916. The creation of a wider IRB executive by Clarke and MacDiarmada was a logical step to take because it brought together a dedicated group of men and ensured that all of its proceedings would not be known outside of the group. The Augmented Executive therefore was the citadel within which Clarke and his fellow revolutionaries orchestrated the 1916 Rising and the decisions taken by this group had a profound effect on IRB policy. The group did not act in isolation as ideas generated at this level were put into practice through the Wolfe Tone Clubs, the Irish Volunteers, the Gaelic League, the GAA, Na Fianna Eireann, and was supported and financed by John Devoy and Clan na Gael in America. Sean McGarry was Clarke's aide de camp, right hand man and to a certain extent, problem fixer.⁷

⁵ Lynch, D, O'Donoghue, Florence, (ed), *The I.R.B. and the 1916 Insurrection*, (Cork, 1957), pp. 25, 102, 131 & 132

⁶ National Archive of Ireland (NAI), Bureau of Military History, (BMH), Witness Statement, (WS), 368, Sean McGarry, p. 20

⁷ NAI, BMH WS 367, Joseph Gleeson, p. 7

He had been deeply involved with the Howth gun running and had first met Tom Clarke through a close friend of Clarke, Pat McCartan, in 1907.⁸

The date when the wider IRB executive was created is not as important as its composition and purpose. Tobin and Hunter played lesser roles on the IRB SC: Hunter was elected to replace Hobson but only attended one meeting where he handed over £80 in donations and was then replaced by Sean Tobin.⁹ This certainly suggests sleight of hand by Clarke as both Tobin and Hunter were on the wider IRB executive and one replaced the other on the SC. However, the remaining six members would make up the Provisional Government of the Republic in 1916. But P S O'Hegarty recalled that, 'The seventh, James Connolly, though not an I.R.B. man, had been working with them for some time beforehand, in what might be termed "external association."'¹⁰

Clarke and MacDiarmada brought together the wider IRB executive without the knowledge of the IRB Supreme Council (SC) and an examination of extant primary source material cannot substantiate if the members or the significance of the group was ever revealed to the SC. The wider IRB executive acted as the Executive of the IRB, made decisions and planned events that affected the IRB; but the real power remained in Clarke and MacDiarmada's hands and of these two, because of his control of the purse strings, Clarke had greater potential power and it significant that the expanded IRB executive worked as a group on plans for a Rising under the leadership of Clarke earlier than hitherto thought. John Devoy knew of the existence of this group and saw through the charade of the Military Committee:

The title "Military Committee" was a camouflaged one-this body was in fact the Revolutionary Council, the existence and personnel of which were known to very few. It consisted of the seven men who signed the Proclamation of Independence issued on Easter Monday and were the real leaders and strategists of the Insurrection... I may also state that Clarke and MacDermott represented a majority of the "Executive" of the Supreme Council of the I.R.B.; they therefore acted and spoke with full power and authority for the I.R.B on the Revolutionary Council.¹¹

⁸ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry

⁹ NAI, BMH WS 367, Gleeson p. 5

¹⁰ O'Hegarty, P S, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, (Dublin, 1924), p. 3

¹¹ Devoy, John, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, (Shannon, 1969), p. 459

Devoy clearly underlined the existence of the wider IRB executive even though he referred to it as the Revolutionary Council. He also underlined that it was the seven signatories who largely brought about the Rising and by inference, diminished the claims of other historians that other people, such as Hobson, were central to the planning of the Rising. The speed by which he and MacDiarmada assembled the group suggests a degree of sophistication in their pre-August 1914 discussions and planning for the formation of such a body. Plunkett arrived with a solid plan for insurrection in Dublin. Clarke probably established the wider Executive in case the IRB SC did not agree, or could not be forced, persuaded or goaded into establishing a similar grouping.¹²

This fear was unfounded as the IRB SC did indeed agree to the setting up of a 'standing committee' at a meeting in August 1914 in the Clontarf Town Hall library where an old Fenian friend of Tom Clarke, Mick McGinn, was the Librarian.¹³ The decision to stage a rising was sponsored at this meeting by Tom Clarke and Sean MacDiarmada. The ostensible purpose of the meeting was to revive the national spirit and to promote Ireland's drive for independence on the wider international scene with the intention of gaining some form of representation at a peace conference at the war's end. To establish the grounds for this, the SC set up '...a small military committee for this purpose and determined to use the Irish Volunteers' organization, equipment, and, training, without the knowledge of the Executive of that body.'¹⁴ Whether Clarke at this meeting informed the SC that he and MacDiarmada had already created a secret group to oversee plans for a Rising is not known but the SC did sanction a standing committee as P S O'Hegarty described it, a Military Committee.

Another view of the same SC meeting came from Richard Connolly, SC member 1912-1916. He mentioned that Clarke was determined that force would be used at some stage and the Council agreed with Clarke that before the war ended, war action should be taken.¹⁵ This clearly went against the constitution of the IRB but Clarke and MacDiarmada were aware that, in their eyes, the national spirit needed to be revived but the initial positive reaction of Irish people to the war demonstrated that the work of de-anglicising Ireland by the Irish-Ireland movement

¹² NAI, BMH, WS 368, McGarry, p. 20

¹³ NAI, BMH WS 367, Gleeson, pp 5-6

¹⁴ O'Hegarty, P S, *A History of Ireland Under the Union, 1801-1922*, (New York, 1969), p. 697

¹⁵ NAI, BMH WS 523, Richard Connolly, pp.5- 6

had barely scratched the surface. This meant to Clarke that to save Ireland, a demonstration of physical force was needed. This, however, was a minority view in the context of wider nationalist opinion.

The term Military Council was used by Diarmuid Lynch who traced the evolutionary path of this non-existent body. In 1915 the IRB appointed Pearse, Plunkett and Ceannt as a Military Committee and after MacDiarmada was released from prison, he and Tom Clarke were added to the group:

When Clarke and MacDiarmada came to act as ex-officio members of the Military Committee...the body may be said to be a "Military Council"-by which title it was styled in post-Easter times...At this stage the term "Military Council" may be deemed a more fitting term, though as a matter of fact I never heard the term "Military Council" applied to them until it was used by post-Easter writers.¹⁶

Here, Lynch, in no uncertain terms, explodes the myth of the Military Council. Yes, a Military Committee was established but essentially, this was with approval from the IRB SC. This and the implications in a letter from Denis McCullough (to an unidentified recipient),¹⁷ suggested that the Military Committee/Council was charged with planning and making arrangements for a Rising. However, Plunkett's plan for a Rising had already been discussed by the wider IRB executive but this was not known to either Lynch or McCullough thus demonstrating the effectiveness of the Clarke's and MacDiarmada's policy of secrecy. P S O'Hegarty, (IRB SC member 1908-1914), wrote:

When I passed through Dublin on the first Sunday in August, (*Sunday 2nd August 1914*), immediately after Germany moved and before England declared war, Tom Clarke told me there would be a Council Meeting as soon as ever they could manage it, to consider the situation. When I saw MacDermott in May 1915 in Welshpool, he told me that the Council at that meeting had decided to launch a Rising before the War ended, and had established a Military Committee to plan and organise it. He told me who they were, told me the plan, with the various buildings to be held, and said that the plan was Plunkett's, that when they put him in the Military Committee they found that he had had such a plan prepared for some time, and it was adopted without alteration. He said that he had been working at such a plan "for years"

¹⁶ Lynch, *The IRB*, pp. 131-132

¹⁷ NLI, MS 31,653, Denis McCullough Papers, McCullough letter to anonymous recipient

as a hobby.¹⁸ (The italics are by this author to establish the date.)

However in a later statement to the Bureau of Military History, Hegarty disputed the title of the committee and indicated that the committee was wound up once plans had been formulated.¹⁹ O'Hegarty suggested that the impression he got from MacDiarmada was that the 'standing committee' (once having achieved its aim of drawing up plans) stopped functioning was entirely consistent with Clarke's style of managing events within the IRB,²⁰ but the IRB wider executive was not disbanded. He remarked that the 'Supreme Council' was in charge of events was not accurate: Tom Clarke and the wider IRB executive were in charge not the SC. Between August 1914 when Deakin resigned his position on the SC as President and November 1915 when Denis McCullough was voted in as President, Clarke and MacDiarmada had had a free hand to implement wide ranging decisions that affected the future actions of the IRB. Even with McCullough as President, the two continued making decisions without informing him or the SC. The habit of power once exercised was difficult to relinquish. The reality of how and why a committee with military responsibilities came into existence was described by Alec McCabe, SC member in 1915:

A military committee was established at this meeting consisting of Pearse, Ceannt and Plunkett. The purpose of this committee was to look after the military organisation. I understand the appointments were to be in the nature of a Military staff.²¹

The implication of setting up a Military Committee to look after the Military Organisation is very different from a Military Committee/Council set up to 'formulate plans for an Insurrection' as Lynch stated. The plans for a Rising had already been agreed by the wider IRB executive in August 1914. This committee was charged with organising staff on a military basis for active service in the event of either offensive or defensive action. There is no mention of a Military Council in any of the Witness Statements seen in connection with this thesis. The term Military Council, and the connotations flowing from it, was coined by post-Easter 1916

¹⁸ NAI, BMH, WS 27, P S O'Hegarty, p.1

¹⁹ NAI, BMH, WS 841, O'Hegarty, p 1

²⁰ See the discussion later in this Chapter re the O'Donovan Rossa funeral and O'Hegarty, P S, *The Victory of Sinn Fein*, pp 13-14

²¹ NAI, BMH, WS 277, Alec McCabe, p.2

writers and not used by Clarke and the other revolutionaries any time before 1916. The term is a misrepresentation of what actually happened and is not consistent with original source evidence from people directly connected with events as they unfolded 1914-1916.

Clan na Gael and Advanced Nationalism

Tom Clarke kept John Devoy and Clan na Gael aware of events in Ireland and money was raised in America for use in Ireland. An Irish Volunteer Fund was started in 1914 which eventually raised nearly \$50,000 and was an integral part of the \$100,000 sent to help Clarke and his colleagues finance a rising.²² Some of the Clan money was cabled across the Atlantic: some \$5,000 was cabled to MacNeill, while other sums were carried across the Atlantic by Thomas Ashe, Diarmuid Lynch, Pat McCartan and John Kenny in 1914. 'But the largest portion of the Clan-na-Gael money was carried by Tommy O'Connor, who held a position on one of the White Star steamers which enabled him to make regular and frequent crossings.'²³ Clarke used this money primarily to organize the buying of arms through the Irish Volunteers, but also to fund meetings and projects that enhanced the prospect of a rising. The question of obtaining arms for the Volunteers was addressed by the Clan in a time honoured fashion; Devoy noted:

When war broke out, the Clan therefore sought German help, as our forefathers had sought Scottish, Spanish and French assistance, and as the living organization had tried for French and Russian aid in case of war. The Supreme Council of the I.R.B. in Ireland had determined that when the war offered an opportunity they would seize it and strike a blow for Freedom, and we were in constant communication with them, through Tom Clarke, who availed himself every chance of sending me a letter by hand.²⁴

Clan na Gael considered before war broke out, visiting the German Embassy once hostilities commenced because they were of the mind, like Clarke, that a war for economic and military superiority between Britain and Germany would occur sooner or later.²⁵ The spokesman for the Clan delegation spoke to the Ambassador,

²² Devoy, John, *Recollections of an Irish Rebel*, (Dublin, 1969), p. 393

²³ Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 393

²⁴ Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 401

²⁵ Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 401

Count von Bernstorff, and laid out Ireland's case for military (but not financial) help to sustain a Rising against British rule in Ireland. The Count assured the Clan he would contact Berlin and make them aware of their approach to him.²⁶ Tom Clarke was kept informed of this development by John Devoy.²⁷

Devoy kept Clarke informed of this and in return, probably by action of the Executive, Clarke 'empowered' Devoy to carry on with further negotiations with Germany over the supply of armaments and to keep the IRB SC informed.²⁸ It is not clear how much information Clarke shared with the IRB SC but he was more likely to discuss these matters first with Sean MacDiarmada when the opportunity arose. As back up to the communication sent by the German Embassy in New York to Berlin via wireless, copies of written statements were sent via couriers. John Kenny was one of these and he eventually presented his message to Prince Bernard von Beulow, the German Chancellor, in person in Berlin. To complete the circle, Kenny visited Clarke in Dublin and informed him of the details of his time spent in Berlin.²⁹

After the IRB SC meeting in mid-August 1914, at which insurrection was agreed on, meetings with other advanced nationalists were arranged. The meeting on 9th September at Sean T O'Kelly's office in the Gaelic Building on Parnell Square agreed that a rising against England should take place. Sean T O'Kelly later recalled, how, 'There were eight or nine people at that meeting, including Tom Clarke, Padraic Pearse, Sean MacDermott, Eamonn Kent, Arthur Griffith, William O'Brien, Sean McGarry, a man named Tobin and myself.'³⁰ Six of the eight members of the wider IRB executive attended this meeting with only Plunkett and MacDonagh not present. The meeting agreed the conditions needed to rise were: a German invasion, conscription being enforced or the war coming to an end. The revolt would hopefully earn Ireland a place at the peace conference as a belligerent nation. This was far from ideal for Clarke but steps were taken to move the nationalist mind set towards action, the only problem for Clarke and the IRB was whether it was to be defensive or offensive action. Still, all the people there agreed to carry out the agreement:

All present at that meeting, which was representative of all shades of Advanced Nationalist thought in Ireland, pledged themselves and their organisations to do all in their power to carry out the agreement arrived

²⁶ Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 404

²⁷ Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 404

²⁸ Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 404

²⁹ Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 404

³⁰ BLNC, Sean T O'Kelly, *An Phoblacht*, 30 April 1926

at, and to prepare the public mind for the great event that was to come.³¹

The agreement called for defensive action and not offensive action-a policy followed, favoured and espoused by Eoin MacNeill and the Executive of the Irish Volunteers after they re-formed in Sept/October 1914. This was a very astute move by Clarke and the IRB as they had set policy, with other leading nationalists, which the Executive of the Volunteers followed later as its own.

The Irish Volunteers 1914

Clarke recognized the fact that IRB men voting to accept Redmond's nominees on the Volunteer Committee in June 1914 merely papered over the cracks of the divisions between the IRB and Redmonite Volunteer executive members. Although Hobson was relieved of his duties on the IRB SC, a split in the Volunteers occurred soon after John Redmond's speech following a parade of Volunteers in Woodenbridge near his Co Wicklow home on 20th September 1914. He called on the Volunteers to:

account yourselves as men, not only in Ireland itself, but wherever the firing line extends, in defence of right, of freedom, and of religion in this war.³²

This message essentially asked Volunteers to fight for the British in the European war. Four days later, twenty members of the original committee issued a manifesto signed by Eoin MacNeill condemning John Redmond in trenchant terms; five members of Clarke's group signed the document, Sean MacDiarmada, Patrick Pearse, Joseph Plunkett, Thomas MacDonagh and Eamonn Ceannt. The manifesto opposed partition, military involvement of Ireland in wars not sanctioned by a National Government and called for British rule in Ireland to be replaced by that National Government. The volunteers split into two factions: the National Volunteers stayed loyal to Redmond and numbered 180,000 leaving the Irish Volunteers around 12,000 strong.

The split echoed throughout the movement but well placed IRB men began to regroup the meagre forces that sided with the Irish Volunteers into a semblance of a

³¹ BLNC, O'Kelly, *An Phoblacht*, 30 April 1926

³² Gwynn, Denis, *The Life of John Redmond*, (London, 1932) p 392

volunteer force. Clarke and Connolly now looked for a way to demonstrate Volunteer military power and proposed a military attack on a Mansion House recruitment meeting and the taking of the Volunteers HQ. The two military actions they were involved in were connected and would reinforce Clarke's confident belief that military action if properly organized could be harnessed not only to capture buildings but also to confront the British authorities in Ireland.

On 25th September 1914, John Redmond and the British Prime Minister, Herbert H Asquith addressed a recruitment meeting at the Mansion House, Dublin. Clarke, Connolly and MacDiarmada saw this as an opportunity to goad the authorities into military action. The three, intending to use the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, devised a plan to stop the meeting taking place. They intended to seize the hall by force and hold it until the recruitment meeting was called off.³³ The plan was abandoned because armed troops were already guarding the Mansion House. Those troops included five hundred National Volunteers who marched through O'Connell Street to the Mansion House, with rifles and bayonets fixed, to act as marshals at the meeting.³⁴ The Citizen Army did not let the opportunity go completely and set up a counter demonstration on Stephen's Green.³⁵

The noise of the demonstrators at times overwhelmed the speakers inside the Hall where the meeting was largely attended by 'the Dublin pro-British section and the supporters of the Irish Parliamentary Party.'³⁶ On the same night, a further military action was executed that Clarke and MacDiarmada had planned.³⁷ A 'group of Irish volunteer officers (mostly I.R.B. men, and all members of the Provisional Committee before the Redmonite nominations) seized the Volunteer Headquarters at 41 Dawson Street'. Directly after this, 'M.J. Judge appeared on the platform of the hall and read the manifesto',³⁸ denouncing Redmond and announcing a convention to elect a new Executive Council. Robert Monteith received orders from the Provisional Committee to escort the remains of the last of the Bachelor's Walk victims to his home in Dublin. After this, he asked his company to parade in the Foresters Hall in Parnell Square in case they were needed to support provisional

³³ Greaves, C Desmond, *The Life and Times of James Connolly*, (London, 1986) p 362

³⁴ BLNC, *Freeman's Journal*, 26 September 1914

³⁵ Marreco, Anne, *The Rebel Countess, The Life and Times of Constance Markievicz*, (London, 1967) p 185

³⁶ Monteith, R, *Casement's Last Adventure*, (Dublin, 1953) p 26

³⁷ Le Roux, Louis, *Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement*, (Dublin, 1936) p 145

³⁸ Monteith, *Casement*, p 27

committee members who may have picketed the Mansion House.³⁹ Clarke's hand was evident in the seizure of the Volunteer Headquarters as he informed Robert Monteith two or three days before the exercise to hold his men on parade as long as possible.⁴⁰ These incidents are an indication of Clarke's thinking: he fully understood that cooperation between the Volunteers and the Citizen Army would enhance the prospect of successful insurrectionary action. It also demonstrated to him that large elements of the Volunteers could be persuaded to take offensive action rather than be limited to the defensive duties envisaged by MacNeill.

In the months following the outbreak of war, Clarke and the Citizen Army, under Larkin and later Connolly, worked closely together. Clarke and MacDiarmada met James Larkin, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union Leader in Liberty Hall. [He left for America in October 1914 after which Connolly led the union movement.] At the meeting they discussed the possibility of an alliance between the Citizen Army and the Irish Volunteers, which did not materialise, but Larkin appeared and spoke later at IRB meetings attended by Clarke and other senior IRB men.⁴¹

The use of force in Dublin by Clarke, Connolly and MacDiarmada was also intended to spur the authorities to react with any means at their disposal: this did not happen. Chief Secretary Birrell, and to a lesser extent Under Secretary Nathan, adopted a seemingly relaxed approach towards separatism. This was only superficial: Piaras Beaslai, a contemporary of Clarke, saw Birrell's policies from another perspective. Wide spread arrest and suppression would have played into the hands of the IRB but the softly, softly approach of the Castle negated wide spread opposition to its actions. Printers of seditious material were prosecuted rather than the publishers.⁴²

Birrell's policy of containing separatist expression succeeded but the authorities in Dublin Castle did not have much intelligence to work with. The Dublin Metropolitan Police (DMP), under the Inspector-General of the RIC, Neville Chamberlain, had planted two spies, Chalk and Granite, in the ranks of the Irish Volunteers,⁴³ who were of limited value. Clarke's policy of secrecy in the higher echelons of the IRB was evident because the group Clarke worked with did not have

³⁹ Monteith, *Casement*, p 27

⁴⁰ Monteith, *Casement*, pp 27-28

⁴¹ National Archive (NA) Colonial Office Papers (CO) 904/25

⁴² Piaras Beaslai, *Michael Collins and the Making of a New Ireland*, (Dublin 1926), p.28

⁴³ NA War Office Papers (WO) 904/99

any British spies in its number and consequently its deliberations were confined to whomever they wished to share them with.

The first Annual Convention of the Irish Volunteers was held in the Abbey Theatre on October 25 1914, two weeks after a meeting to ratify the Volunteer Constitution. Eoin MacNeill was elected Chairman and The O'Rahilly Treasurer amid scenes of excitement and enthusiasm. The old committee became the General Council of the new body and the IRB were well represented on it: Bulmer Hobson, General Secretary, Eamonn Ceannt, Financial Secretary, Patrick Pearse, Press Secretary, Patrick Ryan, Publications secretary and Seamus O'Connor, Musketry Training Officer; the last two were influenced by Hobson. With MacDiarmada on the General Council, Clarke could rely on this group of four to wield influence whenever it could and to persuade the committee members' to adopt insurrectionary offensive action rather than the defensive action already agreed to. One of the many things Clarke could not control but only seek to manage from a distance was the constitutional action/IRB physical force action split within the General Council of the Volunteers. This policy dichotomy was not satisfactorily resolved and would later influence events in a way that (not even the most carefully crafted plans) could ever have envisaged.

In a letter to John Devoy of 7th November 1914, John T Keating, leading Clan member in Chicago briefly offered his opinion on the situation in Dublin and a reference to the influence and authority Clarke held in the IRB:

I hope the Dublin men will escape arrest. Caution is not cowardice and Tom [Clarke]-whose judgement is excellent, will I hope continue to control. The [Irish Volunteer] convention-this mo [nth]-will be a great test.⁴⁴

The first comment by Keating reflected the introduction of the Defence of the Realm Acts (DORA's) which did not result in wide spread arrests but was used to close down *Irish Freedom* in December 1914. By referring to Tom Clarke in such terms, Keating was possibly reflecting the Clan view of who actually was in charge of the IRB in Dublin.

⁴⁴ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag, Vol II*, John T Keating to John Devoy, 7 November 1914, pp.468-9

The inner workings of the IRB SC

It is difficult to gauge where Tom, Kathleen and the Clarke boys stayed for Christmas 1914. It would be either 'at home' or in Limerick with John and the Daly clan. After the festivities, around the middle of January 1915, the IRB SC held a meeting at Mick McGinn's place, the library, Clontarf Town Hall. At this juncture it may be worthwhile to examine Bulmer Hobson's reflections on the SC meeting in autumn 1914 when it was decided to rise against British authority in Ireland:

A small committee, of which McDermott and Clarke were the effective members, was appointed with instructions to examine the project, and to report back to the Supreme Council. They never reported back. The Supreme Council met seldom after this and were never informed what their committee was doing. The Supreme Council was, in effect, superseded and ceased to count. The committee proceeded to co-opt whom they pleased and to consult whom they pleased, and they were very careful to conceal their proceedings from any members of the Supreme Council who could not be counted on to approve their actions.⁴⁵

The small committee mentioned by Hobson co-opted whomever they liked because Clarke and MacDiarmada were assured of the allegiance and loyalty of Pearse, MacDonagh, Plunkett and Ceannt and these made up the wider IRB executive. He was also correct in saying that Clarke effectively sidelined the SC and did not keep informed those who would raise objections to the fuller activities under discussion by the Clarke group. However, Hobson was inaccurate with his comment on how often the SC met after August 1914; they met close to a quarterly basis as possible until 1916, in August 1914, January 1915, July 1915, August 1915, September 1915, November 1915 and January 1916.⁴⁶

Hobson's view on the regularity of IRB SC meetings is mistaken despite his accurate summation of the role of the SC. Indeed, nothing of real consequence happened at meetings of the SC because Clarke, MacDiarmada and the wider IRB executive dictated policy that was carried out by the legion of officers and rank and

⁴⁵ Hobson, Bulmer, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow*, (Tralee, 1968), pp 71-72

⁴⁶ NAI, BMH WS 523 Connolly and WS 367 Gleeson

file of the IRB. SC member Richard Connolly noted that SC meetings were usually short, one day, with a lot of routine committee work such as tabling of reports.⁴⁷

IRB SC meetings lasted all day and proved to be a commitment to the men who travelled from all over Ireland or came over from Scotland and England. The socio-economic position of SC members is not known but they were probably small businessmen like Clarke and not from academia or the professions. The reading of reports by men from different areas in Ireland and the UK gave those who attended a broader grasp of events in individual areas. Clarke was aware of the issues being reported if not the actual people in those reports. Richard Connolly also noted important developments concerning standing committees, their composition and the interaction of SC members:

Until 1915, when the military committee was formed, there were very few military discussions. That is why the military committee was formed, and that was the first time I knew Pearse was in the organization. The only curb on the military committee was the Executive. The Supreme Council did not count so much at all in 1914 and 1915-it was the Executive that counted. Deakin resigned at the end of 1914 and his resignation was accepted at the January 1915 meeting. Pearse, Ceannt and Plunkett were present as the military committee. McCullough would have been in touch with the military committee from November until Easter Week.⁴⁸

It is ironic that one of the participants at Hobson's non-existent SC meeting should prove Hobson's point about the lack of effectiveness of that body. Many inferences can be drawn from the Witness Statement of Richard Connolly. First, Clarke and MacDiarmada were in total control of the IRB because the SC accepted Deakin's resignation as President of the SC and the post was not filled until November 1915 when Dinny McCullough was elected President. Second, the military committee was recognised by the SC and it looked at military organisation and appointed military staff;⁴⁹ this was the fine detail as the overall plan of action had been agreed by the group Clarke had gathered around him and MacDiarmada in August 1914. Joseph Gleeson's account of the January 1915 SC is also very informative about a contingency plan he was informed of in the event of an insurrection starting without some members of the SC being there:

⁴⁷ NAI, BMH WS 523, Connolly

⁴⁸ NAI, BMH WS 523, Connolly

⁴⁹ NAI, BMH WS 277, McCabe, p.2

At the January meeting of the Supreme Council in 1915, there was a discussion about the insurrection, that it could happen without us being there. Tom Clarke and Sean McDermott called Dick Connolly, Charlie Carrigan and myself after the meeting and told us that if it did happen and we were not in it that we were to get in communication with Mrs. Clarke to keep up the threads of the organisation.⁵⁰

As early as January 1915, Kathleen Clarke was the link between the leaders of a rising, whom Clarke estimated would be executed, and those who were left standing after action. Also, the fact that Clarke and MacDiarmada called the three representatives of IRB constituencies in England and Scotland was indicative of forethought and careful planning.

The organization, symbolism and propaganda of Diarmuid O Donnabhain Rossa's Funeral

Both Tom Clarke and John Devoy were concerned about the health of O'Donovan Rossa in the years preceding 1915. Clarke had been incarcerated in the cell made especially for Rossa in Chatham Prison, 1883, and had known him from his times in the USA. Devoy had been involved with Rossa since the Fenian days of '65, was imprisoned with him, travelled to America and disputed the leadership of the Clan through rival groups. He also paid tribute to Rossa's longevity.⁵¹

Devoy wrote to Mrs Rossa enclosing twenty dollars for the Rossa Fund and she thanked him in her letter of 24th February 1913.⁵² She also mentioned his physician 'gives no hope of ultimate recovery though he thinks he may live indefinitely in his present condition.'⁵³ Mrs Rossa also wanted a rapprochement between the two men and included a letter from Rossa to that end.⁵⁴ Devoy responded in kind and visited Rossa on 17th March 1913, St Patrick's Day, and the two made peace. Rossa was very well versed in the Irish language: he could read,

⁵⁰ NAI, BMH WS 367, Gleeson, p.6

⁵¹ Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 331

⁵² O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, Mrs Mary O'Donovan Rossa to John Devoy, 24 February 1913, pp 406-407

⁵³ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, Mrs Mary O'Donovan Rossa to John Devoy, 24 February 1913, pp 406-407

⁵⁴ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, O'Donovan Rossa to John Daly, 24 Feb 1913, p 407

write and speak it fluently.⁵⁵ In further letters to Devoy, Mrs Rossa mentioned Rossa's health which was deteriorating both mentally and physically.⁵⁶ News of Rossa's ill health was not exclusively the Clan's concern in May 1914 because 'Parliamentarians', as Devoy described them, vied with the Clan for the right to organize Rossa's funeral. Devoy won the day yet he was concerned with getting funds to pay for the funeral.⁵⁷

Devoy wrote this letter in May 1914 over one year before Rossa died and this reflected the thinking of Devoy and Clarke. They both wanted to use the funeral as symbolism and a propaganda exercise for separatist ideals. Rossa died more than one year later on 29th June 1915. Tom Clarke responded to the call from Devoy in New York as Kathleen Clarke later recalled:

Devoy cabled Tom, 'Rossa dead, what shall we do?' Tom cabled back, 'Send his body home at once.' He immediately began to organise the funeral, and said, 'If Rossa had planned to die at the most opportune time for serving his country, he could not have done better.' He planned to rouse the country by making the funeral a pageant representing all Ireland, and through it he hoped to revive all the glory and enthusiasm of the Rossa period. The story of Rossa was printed in pamphlet form, and a beautiful Souvenir Programme was issued.⁵⁸

Mrs Rossa wrote to Tom Clarke in July 1915, asking him to do whatever he could to assist her with the funeral arrangements in Ireland.⁵⁹ He referred to this in a letter to Madge Daly while detailing how;

Mrs Rossa has written me placing in my hands the matter of funeral arrangements and giving me general authorisation... 'we have 11 sub-committees at work up to the present the whole supervised by the Executive of the Wolfe Tone Memorial Association.'⁶⁰

The letter contained a full description of the arrangements for Rossa's funeral. The overall plan was conceived by Clarke and with Tom MacDonagh; they finessed

⁵⁵ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, Mrs Mary O'Donovan Rossa to John Devoy, 3 February 1913, p. 423

⁵⁶ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, Mrs Mary O'Donovan Rossa to John Devoy, 7 November 1913, 30 November 1913, pp. 416-418

⁵⁷ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, John Devoy to Patrick O'Mara, 8 May 1914, p. 438

⁵⁸ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 56

⁵⁹ O'Brien and Ryan, *Devoy's Post Bag Vol. II*, Mrs Mary O'Donovan Rossa to Tom Clarke, July 1915, p. 472

⁶⁰ UL, *Daly Memoirs*, Clarke to Madge Daly, 18 July 1915

the finer details of the arrangements. They developed a friendship while working on plans for the funeral and as Kathleen Clarke noted, Clarke became aware of MacDonagh's leadership abilities and their shared experience of organizing big processions.⁶¹

With men coming in from all over Ireland, the logistics of making sure that each company of the Volunteers, the Irish Citizen Army and Hibernian Rifles etc. knew their individual tasks and allotted places, took a considerable amount of planning and implementation and is reflected in the number of sub-committees set up to supervise the funeral arrangements.⁶² Clarke's experience of organizing large processions for Clan na Gael in New York proved invaluable.⁶³ Pearse was not an automatic choice to give the Oration as Tom Clarke thought Father Michael O'Flanagan would also be suitable. He, however, decided on Pearse as Kathleen Clarke recounted:

When Pearse was made acquainted with this decision, he sent a note to Tom, asking how far he would go. The answer to Pearse was verbal, one which I delivered: 'Make it as hot as hell, throw discretion to the wind.' The reason for Pearse's query was that Sean MacDermott was in prison for a speech he had made, and it had been decided to refrain from speechmaking, the loss of such men as Sean MacDermott being too high a price to pay for a speech at such a critical time.⁶⁴

Clarke could not pass up the chance of arousing the people of Ireland and making them aware of the need for sacrifice if Ireland was to be free. James Connolly was approached by Sean McGarry, editor of the Rossa funeral souvenir, to write an article on the ICA for inclusion in the souvenir guide. McGarry had known Connolly for a long time but McGarry recalled that Connolly castigated the IRB and how later McGarry:

...told Tom Clarke how Connolly was feeling. Tom saw him and shortly afterwards he became a member of our committee.⁶⁵

⁶¹ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.56

⁶² [Htp://www.theeasterrising.eu/090RepublicanBrotherhood/IRB.htm](http://www.theeasterrising.eu/090RepublicanBrotherhood/IRB.htm), p 2. O'Donovan Rossa Funeral Committee: sub-committees: this is a full guide to the membership of the thirteen sub-committees that were charged with the planning for the funeral and the implementation of that plan on the day of the funeral.

⁶³ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p 57

⁶⁴ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p.56

⁶⁵ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p.20

The committee was the group that Clarke and MacDiarmada established in August 1914, the wider IRB executive. It seemed Clarke and the IRB were fond of setting up groups which they called committees and this underlines the civil and non-military structure of the IRB. Connolly would not have been made aware of all of the Executive's secrets but further and more serious discussions between the IRB and him took place in January, 1916. The success of the Rossa funeral gave Clarke the perfect back drop to bring Connolly closer to the IRB but on Clarke's terms even if this meant enduring the foibles of his character. Sean McGarry further noted that he was of 'immense value to the committee'.⁶⁶

A detailed account of the day of the funeral was given in the *Gaelic American* by Mrs Rossa.⁶⁷ Patrick Pearse gave the oration at the graveside first in Irish and then in English and Mrs Rossa further noted how, 'In silence intense we listened and at the close *thunders of applause* burst from the electrified hearts of the hearers.'⁶⁸ Pearse's speech is significant not only for his 'the fools' statement but also for the association of the Irish Volunteers and other quasi-military groups, who attended that day, 'in brotherly union for the achievement of the freedom of Ireland.'⁶⁹ Pearse was trying to mould the thoughts of those who attended the funeral towards a common goal of insurrection despite the allegorical nature of the delivery. Similarly, he directly referred to the IRB when he mentioned, in quasi-religious terms, the renewal of the Fenian faith through baptism.⁷⁰

Thus, Pearse's oration was part of a successful propaganda exercise in symbolism for the IRB. Clarke wanted a national pageant to re-invigorate the nation with the Fenian ideal and spirit. Largely he succeeded in this. The funeral demonstrated IRB/Fenian intent and demonstrable co-operation between the various armed and local civic political elements in Dublin and other areas of Ireland. It was a coup for him personally and for the IRB. The Rossa funeral came at the right time for Clarke and the IRB. With the war not going well in Europe and the need for more and more men to fight for England, anti-recruitment sentiment and speeches abounded but which were dealt with promptly by the Castle authorities; MacDiarmada was the

⁶⁶ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p.20

⁶⁷ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, 25 December 1915, p.1

⁶⁸ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, 25 December 1915, p.1

⁶⁹ Pearse, Patrick, *O'Donovan Rossa's Funeral Address at Graveside* by P.H. Pearse, The Office of Public Works, pamphlet, (Dublin 1993)

⁷⁰ Pearse, *O'Donovan Rossa's Funeral Address at Graveside*

prime example while Deportation Orders were served on Denis McCullough, Herbert Moore Pim and Ernest Blythe. It is possible that this clamp down was hurting the efforts of the IRB to spread its revolutionary gospel but the Rossa funeral gave it, its supporters and Clarke a huge psychological fillip.

After the funeral, Mrs Rossa wrote in *The Gaelic American* a series of articles about her recent experiences. In the October issue she told the story of how she nearly was interviewed by a journalist from the *Freeman Journal* and how Tom Clarke was clearly annoyed by the incident. The discussion went on but Mrs Rossa sounded a note of warning in closing:

More to the same effect until the smile broadened and Mrs. Clarke, with her three lovely boys in costume, Donal, Emmet and Daly, came in to banish the last vestige of displeasure. Mrs Clarke is a young woman of great delight and personal grace, with beautiful hair, large serious eyes and a very gentle manner...Her children are beautiful, docile and intellectual. Mr Clarke has much to live for. May God be kind to him. ⁷¹

The IRB SC July 1915-January 1916

Clarke and MacDiarmada continued to plan in secret for a rising during this period but they did not share all of these plans with the IRB SC. However, they did enjoy the confidence of the SC and sought approval from that body on motions linked to the possibility of a Rising without revealing the extent or importance of their planning. The July 1915 meeting of the IRB SC was the last of the 1913 elected council. The council was informed that Rossa was dying and it was decided to have the funeral without delay. The results of the biennial elections, carried out between July and August were available and at a meeting in September, 'we co-opted Tom Clarke, Sean McDermott, Patrick Pearse and Pat McCartan.' ⁷² The IRB SC met after this in November and Denis McCullough was elected President, 'McCullough had been released from prison and was in attendance. He was unanimously elected President and Chairman of the Executive. It was decided then that the next meeting would be held after Christmas.' ⁷³ Squeezed in between this frenetic revolutionary

⁷¹ BLNC, *The Gaelic American*, 2 October 1915, p.8

⁷² NAI, BMH WS 367, Gleeson

⁷³ NAI, BMH WS 523, Connolly

activity, time was found to celebrate Christmas and Tom Clarke and family were in Limerick.⁷⁴

With McCullough residing in Belfast, Clarke and MacDiarmada continued to be the real power in the IRB through their position on the Executive. Thus, Joseph Gleeson, IRB SC member, met Clarke and MacDiarmada in December to arrange the movement of Volunteers from England to Kimmage, owned by Count Plunkett and to be used as a munitions factory and 'barracks' for a fluctuating population of fifty men:

I think everything was to be left in the hands of MacDermott, Clarke and Pearse, but I know Sean McGarry was in their confidence. McGarry was a right-hand man of Tom Clarke.⁷⁵

Richard Connolly, SC member for south-east England, could not attend the January 1916 meeting of the SC IRB. Conscription was a very real political issue and permits from the police at Scotland Yard were needed to travel to Ireland.⁷⁶ Diarmuid Lynch suggested that the actions of Clarke and MacDiarmada at the January meeting had the backing of the Supreme Council:

Clarke and MacDiarmada-accepted as leaders and known to be the two members of the "Executive" resident in Dublin and in closest contact with events which would govern decisions of the I.R.B.-had the entire confidence of the Council. At that meeting they initiated all the leads to the principal matters discussed; Pearse had little to say on any subject.⁷⁷

Pearse may have been an electrifying orator and excellent teacher but he was not a committee man. He did not think very quickly on his feet and meetings of the IRB SC were not the arena for set piece speeches or rhetorical accounts. Lynch further noted that the plans for the rising were not fully revealed to the Council because of the need for secrecy and not a question of lack of confidence in the SC. The meeting also agreed, unanimously, that arrangements for a Rising were to be pushed forward. Denny McCullough also noted a date was to be arranged if any of three contingency criteria were met: 'Any attempt at a general arrest of Volunteers,

⁷⁴ UL, Daly Memoirs, Folder 77, p.90

⁷⁵ NAI, BMH WS 367, Gleeson

⁷⁶ NAI, BMH WS 523, Connolly

⁷⁷ NAI, BMH, WS 4, Diarmuid Lynch

especially the leaders. Any attempt to enforce conscription on our people and if an early termination of the war appeared likely.’⁷⁸

This must be placed in the context of MacDiarmada’s motion “we fight at the earliest date possible”⁷⁹ as noted by Lynch, and the two are not incompatible as one of the three contingencies could have led to the outbreak of a rising. However, the ambiguity of the motion was such that Clarke and MacDiarmada could use this to go out knowing they had the backing of the SC even if that body was not fully aware of all the germane facts concerning the use of different bodies in the name of the IRB for revolutionary ends.

Clarke had the backing he needed for this motion. No date for the Rising was fixed and if it had been, it seems highly unlikely that the IRB SC would have been informed. By agreeing to this action, the whole of the IRB SC acted outside the IRB Constitution. Moreover, the SC had confidence in Clarke and MacDiarmada in January 1916 but could not express any further opinions on the matter at future meetings as the next meeting was called, prophetically, for Easter Sunday 1916. Also discussed was the use of Kimmage by the volunteers: this reflected the decisions and actions already taken by Clarke and MacDiarmada as they presented this idea to the SC for validation. Joseph Gleeson recalled, ‘It was at a January meeting 1916 of the Supreme Council that we decided on Kimmage and I was sent to Eoin MacNeill and Fitzgibbon to make things right in Kimmage to send the men over.’⁸⁰

Even if the IRB SC had not set a specific date for the Rising, Tom Clarke was aware that it had to occur before America joined the war on Britain’s side. Sean MacDiarmada discussed this with Joseph Gleeson in May 1915 on a visit to London. He also talked about Clarke’s determination that the IRB/Volunteers should take offensive action before the war was over.⁸¹

Apart from American interest in the European war, the other issue which was crucial to the timing of a rising was the arrangements for German military support in the shape of arms. Once this issue was moved to a point of acceptability by Clarke, and his group, arrangements could begin to be finalised for a rising. In January 1916, Clarke and MacDiarmada were in that position. Madge Daly was the courier between

⁷⁸ NAI, BMH, WS 915, Denis McCullough

⁷⁹ NAI, BMH WS 4, Lynch

⁸⁰ NAI, BMH WS 367, Gleeson

⁸¹ NAI, BMH WS 523, Connolly

Clarke and John Daly in Limerick and she travelled to Dublin, late in January, after Clarke asked her to go up. She found Tom and Sean deciphering a code brought from America by Tommy O'Connor-the conduit through which messages were delivered from John Devoy to Clarke and the home organisation. Based on information from John Devoy, the date for a rising, and the confirmation of German military assistance was agreed. It was this message that Tom Clarke despatched to John Daly via Madge:

When Sean left the house, Tom told me that the date of the Rising was fixed for Good Friday, and gave me all the details and plans for my Uncle... Tom told me that the Germans were sending guns and ammunition. The amount he stated was exactly what was sent. He also said that if the fight continued the Germans would try and send more; that they would attack on the east coast of England to divert forces: that they regretted they could do no more at the moment, owing to the war requirements for their own country.⁸²

With this knowledge and the backing of the IRB SC, Clarke could bend his mind towards delivering military action in the shape of an insurrection against British rule in Ireland. There were still many matters that required his attention before a rising could be effected. One of these concerned James Connolly but a plan was laid to persuade him not to take any action with the Irish Citizen Army (ICA) ahead of the IRB's plans which were now becoming clearer.

Joseph Plunkett, Germany and the IRB

Clarke was not in favour of Roger Casement making the trip to Germany via America because Casement was not an IRB man, did not know the inner workings of the organization nor was he aware of the then current thinking of the IRB.⁸³ Whether Casement did travel with the covert blessing of Hobson and McNeill is outside the scope of this thesis but Clarke distrusted constitutionalists: this may have fed into his fear of being undermined by informers, alleged or real. Foy and Barton further added that:

⁸² UL, Daly Memoirs, Folder 77, pp.93-94

⁸³ NAI, BMH, WS 368 McGarry p. 21

Casement and Plunkett shared the same broad ideological outlook; they sought an Irish rebellion and German assistance. Accordingly, during Plunkett's stay in Berlin the two men co-operated in composing a 32-page memorandum for submission to the German Government.⁸⁴

Indeed they had much in common but it was the means by which a rebellion could be secured that divided them. Casement was not mentioned in the Plan of Campaign in relation to Plunkett's visit and indeed, Plunkett referred to not being able to carry in his head exact details of the orders and regulations for the organisation of the Volunteers.⁸⁵ Sean McGarry offered another view on whether Casement and Plunkett ever met: 'Casement was ill with malaria when Plunkett reached Berlin so they never met.'⁸⁶ This evidence seriously undermines Foy and Barton's theory that Casement and Plunkett colluded on the Plan of Campaign upon which Plunkett based his appeal to the German Government and High Command for arms and military assistance for the coming Rising. Plunkett's information and trip was thought of, arranged and funded jointly by the IRB in Ireland and the Clan Na Gael in America. In the context of Casement's visit to Germany, Joseph Plunkett's visit to Germany was an attempt by Clarke and the IRB to get their views presented to the German Government by someone who was conversant with their thinking and intended plans. The IRB grudgingly endorsed Devoy's approval and facilitation of Casement's trip to Germany but Clarke wanted his own man on the spot to put negotiations for military assistance on an IRB footing. Sean McGarry's view of the efficacy of Plunkett's trip is very revealing:

When it became known here that Casement had gone to Germany Tom proposed that Plunkett should attempt to get there. Plunkett agreed to go, became very ill in Spain and it was a long time before word came from America that he had arrived. He found that Casement's idea given to the German Government was that there could be no rising here unless the Germans landed an Army. Plunkett was able to tell them that the possibility of a German invasion was not even considered and there would certainly be a rising. He asked for arms, was told at first that none could be spared but eventually agreed to forward a cargo of Russian rifles with ammunition.⁸⁷

⁸⁴ Foy and Barton, *The Easter Rising*, p. 14

⁸⁵ National Library of Ireland, MS 13,085 (5), Roger Casement Papers, Joseph Plunkett's Plan of Campaign, Abschrift (Duplicate))

⁸⁶ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p.22

⁸⁷ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p.21

Clarke proposed Plunkett for the trip as the extended IRB executive 'thought Plunkett the cleverest from the point of view of military organisation'⁸⁸. He had put together a plan for a Rising and through this, demonstrated a sound, if amateurish, grasp of military tactics. McGarry's use of the word 'proposed' demonstrated a degree of collective decision making among the wider IRB executive. Clarke did not think that Casement represented the aims, thoughts and ideas of the IRB and Clarke wanted these aims expressed to the German Government by someone they could trust and who understood them. However, Plunkett did ask for military assistance in the form of a German invasion of Ireland⁸⁹ and McGarry's view probably reflected Clarke's and the extended IRB executive's thinking. If the British uncovered the real intent of Plunkett's journey, the IRB men would certainly be tried for treason. More importantly Irish public opinion was not yet on the side of the IRB and would have been alienated by the discovery of a pact with Germany.

The information that Plunkett supplied to the German High Command was carried in his head and dictated to typists.⁹⁰ The document, Joseph Plunkett's Plan of Campaign, consisted of three sections, i) a history of the Irish Volunteers, ii) a break down, by Irish counties, of the quality and details of the available manpower available to the Volunteers; and iii) a strategic outline of the strength of British Forces in Ireland. The plan was an attempt to convince Germany that a military invasion linking up with armed Irish Volunteer battalions would open up a third front in Ireland with the possible effect of drawing British troops away from the European front. To a certain extent Casement's visit to Germany forced Clarke and the extended IRB executive to initiate contact with Germany. Further questioning of how the Plan of Campaign was researched and put together revealed collusion between disparate sections of Irish society to forward Clarke's plans.

The history of the Volunteers in the Plan of Campaign would appear to have been compiled and based on the knowledge and experience of Clarke, MacDiarmada, Pearse, Connolly, Ceannt, Plunkett and MacDonagh. They were actively involved in the formation of the Volunteers and their knowledge was used to inform the detailed, concise and explanatory history. The political background surrounding the formation and eventual split, training and organization of the

⁸⁸ NAI, BMH, WS 209, Madge Daly, p.4

⁸⁹ NLI, MS 13,085 (5) Roger Casement Papers, Joseph Plunkett, Plan of Campaign

⁹⁰ BLNC, *The Sunday Press*, 31 March 1991

volunteers was also covered. However, it is the second and third parts of the plan, detailed county by county information on the strength and weaknesses of the volunteers and a strategic sketch of the British forces in Ireland, that are relevant to Tom Clarke. How was the information gathered to provide evidence for the writing of the plan? One answer could be the network of IRB men ensconced under the umbrella of the Volunteers. This network of IRB connections was largely established by Sean MacDiarmada and interlinked with the connections that Clarke made through John Daly and also his own associates within the IRB. The detailed descriptions of troop placements and numbers were probably arrived at by observation, local knowledge of troop movements and possibly from Irish informers in British Army regiments. Similarly a civil servant, based in Dublin Castle and sympathetic to the IRB, may have provided information and this theory cannot be completely ruled out. The effort to obtain this information must have been huge and messengers from Clarke and MacDiarmada could very well have fanned out across the country requesting IRB circle heads to supply information. The plan detailed the number of troops in Ireland between 1st and 12th March 1915, 40,000 and mentioned the three sites where heavy artillery were located.⁹¹

If Clarke and MacDiarmada did use their network of IRB connections across the country, which is a highly likely and plausible explanation for such a detailed information gathering exercise, then the resulting raw data needed to be taken to Dublin for processing and writing up. It is entirely possible that Clarke's tried and tested method of communication with IRB men in the country was used again. Tom Clarke could well have stood behind the counter of his shop re-directing the incoming flow of information to safe locations, probably via the newspaper delivery boys, where possibly Plunkett and other members of the wider IRB executive analyzed and shaped the information for inclusion in the plan of campaign.

A smoke screen was thrown up by Plunkett after he returned from Germany. He was reported by Sean Fitzgibbon, a moderate on the executive of the Volunteers, to have said that, 'the Germans were not interested in Ireland...in reality they were trying to arrange a compromise peace with Britain.'⁹² This black propaganda was a further attempt to keep the truth from becoming general knowledge; the non-IRB

⁹¹ NLI, MS 13085 (5), Joseph Plunkett, Plan of Campaign, B, Strategical Sketch, p. 1

⁹² British Library Newspaper Collection (BLNC) S Fitzgibbon, *The Irish Times*, 18 April 1949,

men on the Volunteer Executive could surmise or guess the real reason why Plunkett went to Germany but did not have any concrete information to act on.

Plunkett went to see John Devoy in September 1915 to convey information about the procurement of arms from Germany, the general condition of events in Ireland and quite possibly discussed a date for the Rising. He was detained at Ellis Island because of his TB but Devoy managed to arrange entry for him for two months 'to do literary work' but only if a thousand dollar surety was paid: 'I provided the thousand dollars, and during his stay ashore introduced him to all the men whom it was necessary for him to see.'⁹³

Clarke, Devoy and German Arms

There is no original source material extant to indicate if the question of obtaining arms from Germany was satisfactorily resolved in the IRB's favour either after Plunkett returned to Ireland neither in July 1915 nor after his visit to Devoy in September 1915. The major drawback encountered by Plunkett, despite the depth and breadth of the Ireland Report presented to the German Government in 1915, was the absence of a date to rise. This was resolved in January 1916. At the IRB SC meeting in January 1916, MacDiarmada proposed that, '...we fight at the earliest date possible...'⁹⁴ Clarke and MacDiarmada knew the date of the Rising but did not share this with the SC. Diarmuid Lynch argued that Clarke, Pearse and MacDiarmada did not fully share the extent of their progress, '...not, I am satisfied, because of any lack of confidence in their colleagues but for the obvious reason that the secret decisions and plans of the Military Council had better be kept within as narrow a circle as possible.'⁹⁵ This contention has merit but it did not fully explain a more germane reason for limiting the sharing of information.

The IRB SC met around the same time Connolly was detained ⁹⁶ by the IRB and MacDiarmada's proposal must be read in this context. After his detention, Connolly became a member of the extended IRB executive and after this, became fully aware of discussions, decisions and relevant details of the Rising. This was significant for several reasons; Connolly would not now rise on his own (if he did, a

⁹³ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.460

⁹⁴ NAI, BMH, WS 4, Diarmuid Lynch, p.8

⁹⁵ NAI, BMH, WS 4, Lynch, p.8

⁹⁶ NAI, BMH WS 915, Denis McCullough, p.14

decision would have to be made whether to support him with the Volunteers or not), and in the context of this, a premature rising by Connolly would have jeopardised Clarke's and the extended IRB executive's own plans.

The date for the Rising, therefore, was influenced by MacDiarmada's proposal to fight and Connolly's membership of the extended IRB executive. Clarke informed Devoy by messenger, Tommy O'Connor, that the Rising was scheduled for Easter Sunday, 23rd April ⁹⁷ and that the IRB wanted German military help but only after they had struck the first blow. ⁹⁸ Pearse sent Diarmuid Lynch in September 1915, to survey likely points to land a consignment of arms in Kerry: Pearse favoured Ventry Harbour but after Lynch consulted the Tralee Centre of the IRB, Fenit was chosen. He reported this to Clarke and MacDiarmada but noted he had no recollection of discussions of this matter at any meeting of the IRB SC. ⁹⁹ Clarke sent this information to Devoy, with Robert Monteith acting as messenger, in August 1915. Clarke also sent sections of the Ordnance Map of Ireland. Devoy recalled:

I could not spare any of them these, but I took a county map of Kerry, drew a blue pencil mark around Fenit Pier, enclosed it with a memorandum containing Clarke's information and Captain Von Papen forwarded it to Berlin by messenger. ¹⁰⁰

However, on the 15th February 1916, Devoy received a reply to his message to the German Government from Von Papen (Captain Franz, Military attaché to the German Embassy in New York) in New York, giving Fenit as the landing point:

It is possible to send two or three small fishing steamers, with about ten machine guns, twenty thousand rifles, ammunition and explosives, to Fenit Pier in Tralee Bay. Irish pilots should wait north of Inishtooskert Island from before dawn of April 20, displaying at intervals three green lights. Disembarkation must be effected immediately. Let us know if this can be done. ¹⁰¹

The Germans, in a further communication to Devoy, altered the type of vessel to be used to ship the arms, 'Instead of three fishing vessels, we will send one

⁹⁷ Devoy, *Recollections*, p.458

⁹⁸ Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 458

⁹⁹ Lynch, Diarmuid, O'Donoghue, Florence (ed), *The I.R.B. and The 1916 Insurrection*, (Cork, 1957), pp. 29-30

¹⁰⁰ Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 462

¹⁰¹ German High Command to Devoy, 14 February 1916, p. 461 *Devoy's Post Bag*.

mercantile steamer of 1,400 tons.¹⁰² Devoy mentioned that Dublin was notified by O'Connor who left New York a few days later.

The IRB rank and file

Around 30th January, Tom Clarke was involved in a shooting accident which left him without the use of his right arm but he learned to shoot with his left.¹⁰³ He did not work for several weeks and Frank Thornton filled his pipe for him each morning.¹⁰⁴ The IRB continued to build up vital stores to be used in the Rising. Even though Clarke and MacDiarmada's actions were secretive, when it was necessary, the work they asked IRB men to perform left no doubt in their minds that planning for a demonstration of force was in progress. MacDiarmada was in a position to impart such information more frequently than Clarke simply because he was Clarke's roving ambassador and had the freedom to exercise his own judgement on the matter. This can best be demonstrated by the work ordinary people carried out to make the insurrection a practical reality as they knew a Rising was forthcoming based on information supplied by MacDiarmada.

The Witness Statements gathered by the Bureau of Military History are a source of much relevant and detailed information on ordinary men and their role in the preparations for Easter 1916. Francis Daly worked on the site of a new reservoir at Roundwood and he mentioned to MacDiarmada that blasting was going on there and his involvement in it. He was sent to see Eamonn Ceannt and was asked to go to Dolphin's Barn Brick Works to work with explosives; he agreed.¹⁰⁵ Daly found premises near Clontarf and started to make bombs on a part-time basis. In January 1916, he was asked to make this his full time job and to seek other well trusted men to help him.

Before this, however, a census was conducted to establish the employment of every man in the rank and file of the volunteers. As a result of this metal was forthcoming from men working in dockyards around Dublin and coupled with a 'general call-round at that time for lead scrap and tin cans'¹⁰⁶, premises in Dublin,

¹⁰² Devoy, *Recollections*, p. 462

¹⁰³ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Women*, p. 65

¹⁰⁴ NAI, BMH, WS 510, Frank Thornton

¹⁰⁵ NAI, BMH, WS 278, Francis Daly

¹⁰⁶ NAI, BMH WS 278, Daly

Grogan's in Parnell Street, McEvoy's in North King Street and a stable in Henrietta Lane were all used to store the 'volunteered' metal. Similarly, some IRB members held positions of greater responsibility and could provide greater facilities, e.g. John Cassidy was an IRB member and managed the Dolphin's Barn Brick Works as was the manager of the Irish Cutlery Company on Merchant's Quay; they produced bayonet blades for the IRB.¹⁰⁷

The IRB, Irish Volunteers and mounting tension

In February 1916, Clarke was in a position to look forward to a Rising with more confidence than at any time since the start of the war. Connolly was largely mollified by the extended IRB executive when they revealed to him that a shipment of arms from Germany was a reality and he became a fully integrated member of the group rather than working with them, loosely, through external association.¹⁰⁸ However, events in the Irish Volunteers HQ and specifically on the Volunteer Executive needed careful handling. The IRB revolutionaries needed to maintain their façade of agreement with the Volunteer policy of defensive action for their own plans to work effectively.

Essentially, the Volunteer Executive was split between the constitutionalists (Bulmer Hobson, J J O'Connell and Eoin MacNeill) and the revolutionaries (Sean MacDiarmada, Patrick Pearse, Eamonn Ceannt and Joseph Plunkett). When the Volunteer movement split in September 1914, the Irish Volunteers, by not siding with Redmond and the British war effort, were viewed by Clarke as a revolutionary army in waiting. The major difference between the two wings centred on how and under what conditions the Volunteers should be called into action. MacNeill saw them as a purely defensive force to be used only if the Government either introduced conscription in Ireland or British forces attempted to disarm them. Similarly, he envisaged at war's end, a strong volunteer force backed up by returning Irish soldiers which could act as a bulwark against anything the British offered short of Home Rule. Clarke, in league with MacDiarmada and Pearse wanted to use the force as an offensive unit in Dublin in line with the amended plan of campaign that

¹⁰⁷ NAI, BMH WS 278, Daly

¹⁰⁸ NAI, BMH WS 230, John Southwell, p. 9

Joseph Plunkett had produced. Both sides were aware of each other's feelings and motives: Bulmer Hobson recalled Patrick Pearse's mind set in early 1916:

I remember having a discussion with Pearse in a Dublin restaurant at this time, which ended with Pearse saying as he rose from the table, 'I cannot answer your arguments, but I *feel* that we must have an insurrection.' ¹⁰⁹

This goes to the heart of the bifurcation between the two wings of the Volunteer Executive Council. It would appear that MacNeill saw himself as a moderator or break on the revolutionaries and their actions but he, and his colleagues, occupied a half way house between the policies of Redmond and the policies of Clarke and the extended IRB executive. To Clarke and MacDiarmada, the war presented an opportunity to rise against British power in Ireland; to Pearse a missed opportunity would bring down shame on his generation. MacNeill argued very incisively against these two strands of thought ¹¹⁰ but Clarke and his fellow revolutionaries were as convinced that their arguments were the way forward for Ireland. Dublin Castle did have an idea of this tension between the different wings of the Irish Volunteers as there two main informants in the Volunteers, Chalk and Granite gave very different reports to the Castle. ¹¹¹ Solid intelligence on the IRB and their plans for a rising was not available but the Castle was very aware who personified the central threat to the stability and maintenance of British rule in Ireland:

Memorandum of Conference at Dublin Castle on March 17th, 1916

Present

Major General L B Friend
Major I H Price, Intelligence Officer
Mr John Gordon, K.C., Attorney General
Col Edgeworth Johnston, CL, DMP
Sir Matthew Nathan

¹⁰⁹ Hobson, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow*, p. 74

¹¹⁰ Martin, F X, *Select Documents: XX Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising*, *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol XII. No. 47, (Dublin, March 1961), p.91

¹¹¹ Public Record Office (PRO), Colonial Office Papers (CO) 904/23.3, G Division GMP, 16th March 1916

2) Reports were read with regards to T.J. Clarke, Fenian & convict whose shop was now the meeting place of the more violent revolutionists and the advisability of his reincarceration under his former sentence discussed. The Attorney General was on the whole against this unless some new offences could be proved. The papers were handed on for future consideration.¹¹²

This demonstrated that the Castle knew who the central threat was but not when, how or where the threat-as personified by Clarke-would manifest itself. Also, the lack of intelligence in the hands of the authorities revealed the paucity of solid and reliable inside information on the inner workings of the IRB available to them. The secrecy practiced by Clarke, MacDiarmada and the higher echelons of the IRB/Irish Volunteers paid off as the plans for the rising were not leaked from this wider grouping of revolutionaries.

St Patrick's Day Parade of the Irish Volunteers

On the same day as the civil and military servants of British Imperial rule in Ireland were meeting in Dublin Castle to review the actions, influences and contacts, of the extremists, the Irish Volunteers paraded in Dublin. Neither the St Patrick's Day event, nor who organized it, is often mentioned in secondary works of the period. It is entirely possible that Tom Clarke and Tomas MacDonagh were involved in the planning of the parade in Dublin by the Irish Volunteers as they both had experience of organizing similar events.¹¹³

It must be remembered that Clarke influenced the Executive of the Volunteers through the members of the extended executive of the IRB; MacDiarmada, Pearse, MacDonagh, Ceannt and Plunkett were members of both executives. The movement of volunteers on St Patrick's Day was more than a military gesture as leaflets, reflecting the propaganda of the IRB/Volunteers; 'Twenty plain facts for Irishmen'¹¹⁴ were distributed to spectators as volunteers paraded. The event was a 'field day',¹¹⁵ held in Dublin, of the Dublin Battalions of the Irish Volunteers. They 'paraded and marched to S.S. Michael and John's Church, Exchange Street, where the men

¹¹² NLI, MS 31,700, Memorandum of Conference, 17th March 1916

¹¹³ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 56

¹¹⁴ *1916 Rebellion Handbook*, (First published Dublin 1916, this edition Dublin 1998) with an introduction by Declan Kiberd, p.1

¹¹⁵ *1916 Handbook*, p.1

assisted at military Mass, celebrated by the patriotic Father Costello.¹¹⁶ The mass was celebrated at 09:00.¹¹⁷ The Catholic and conservative nature of the Volunteers is amply demonstrated here because before they paraded, they attended mass to celebrate St Patrick's Day. Despite the Catholic Church's threats of excommunication, these IRB men/Volunteers were unafraid to demonstrate not only their Catholicism but also their revolutionary nationalism:

No one who attended at that Mass can forget the wonderful scene, when at the Elevation of the Sacred Host and Chalice, the guard of honour presented arms with clockwork precision, the Brigade colours were dipped and trumpeters sounded a salute from Dublin's citizen soldiers to the Lord of Hosts.¹¹⁸

Once Mass was over the Brigade marched to College Green where they 'gave a display of military manoeuvres, concluding with a march past Mr John MacNeill, the President (whose name was printed Eoin MacNeill in most documents issued by the Volunteers).¹¹⁹ Also in attendance were Commandants Patrick Pearse and Thomas McDonough and 'This was the first occasion after over one hundred years that a body of Irish Volunteers were reviewed in the capital city of their native land.'¹²⁰ The centre of Dublin was taken over by armed Volunteers and traffic was diverted. Around 3-4,000 volunteers took part while 'pipe bands of the 2nd and 3rd Battalions discoursed music.'¹²¹ The leaflets that were distributed called, essentially, for freedom for Ireland and the right of the Irish people to obtain the same. One of the twenty facts is a barely disguised reference to the IRB, their power and their role in promoting their own values through the Irish Volunteer organisation: 'In raising, training, arming and equipping the Irish Volunteers as a military body, the men of Ireland are acquiring the power to obtain the freedom of the Irish Nation.'¹²²

This is a finely nuanced 'fact' and it can be read several ways. Superficially, it demonstrated that the people of Ireland, through the Volunteers, were getting the power to obtain their freedom. Of course, what it does not give is a definition of who

¹¹⁶ NAI, BMH, Historical Sketch of "A" Company, 1st Battalion, Dublin Brigade, I.R.A. by an un-named Volunteer

¹¹⁷ NAI, BMH, WS 264, Aine Ceanttt, p.15

¹¹⁸ NAI, BMH, Historical Sketch, un-named Volunteer

¹¹⁹ 1916 Handbook, p.1

¹²⁰ NAI, BMH, Historical Sketch, un-named Volunteer

¹²¹ 1916 Handbook, p.1

¹²² 1916 Handbook, p.1

the 'men of Ireland' were and to what organisation they belonged to. This is an indirect reference to the IRB and how they raised, trained, armed and equipped the Volunteers to fight for Ireland in concert with Clarke and the wider IRB executive.

St Patrick's Day to Holy Week

Commandant Seamus Daly, who was involved with the gun running at Howth, accurately described the atmosphere in Dublin in the weeks before the Rising; 'Between Patrick's Day and Holy Week, there was a term of tense excitement amongst the boys'.¹²³ Thus, at rank and file level there was a sense of expectation, a sense of approaching action. This was also reflected at the level of the Irish Executive who were split over how to treat Irish 'extremists'. Lord Wimborne, Lord Lieutenant, General French, Commander of the British Army in Ireland, and Major Ivor Price, Military Intelligence Officer did not agree with the softly, softly approach of Nathan and Birrell and wanted stronger and more direct action against 'Sinn Fein' than either Nathan or Birrell contemplated.¹²⁴

The extended IRB executive met on 18th March,¹²⁵ and orders for the mobilisation of the Irish Volunteers on Easter Sunday were discussed. These were secret orders which were sent to Brigade Commandants, through IRB connections, and were issued by Pearse in his role of Director of Operations of the Irish Volunteers. Neither the approval of Eoin MacNeill nor the approval of the Volunteer Executive was sought and they were unaware of the intent of these orders, simply, to be prepared to Rise. Conversely, Pearse's orders that were approved by the Volunteer Executive were couched in language that suggested the manoeuvres were to 'test mobilisation with equipment'. The orders were published in the *Irish Volunteer* of 8th April 1916 and noted therein that Commander's reports on the event were to reach Pearse by 1st May.¹²⁶ Two sets of orders were issued to ensure the involvement of the entire Volunteer force to avoid an open split in the Volunteer Executive but most importantly, to avoid the revelation of the secret intent of Clarke

¹²³ NAI, BMH, WS 360, Seamus Daly, p.9

¹²⁴ O Brion, Leon, *Dublin Castle & The 1916 Rising*, (New York, 1971), pp 82-87

¹²⁵ Le Roux, L, *Tom Clarke and The Irish Freedom Movement*, (Dublin, 1936), pp.184-5

¹²⁶ Lynch, D, *The IRB*, p. 48

and the wider IRB executive to rise on Easter Sunday.¹²⁷ Thus the Rising was set in motion.

Diarmuid Lynch was also involved with planning, but at another level; he and Sean MacDiarmada convened a Committee on Telegraph-Telephone Manholes 'which met for the first time on 1 April 1916.'¹²⁸ The other members were Sean Byrne and Andy Fitzpatrick, both Post Office engineering staff, outdoor service, and Richard Mulcahy, a GPO clerk in the annex building. This group reconnoitred manholes 'in the entire field' and reported the exact location of each manhole. Duplicate keys were made and each battalion were supplied with a set of demolition tools.¹²⁹ Michael Staines, Volunteer Quarter Master, IRB Quarter Master General of Easter Week and later the first Garda Commissioner, obtained guns from 'various sources' and also detailed sketches of Islandbridge Barracks. He also bought equipment to break down walls and also 'wire cutters, sandbags and incandescent paraffin lamps in case the electricity was cut'¹³⁰ which were stored at a variety of premises in Dublin. These detailed actions and procurements reflected how much thought went into the planning of the Rising. At the beginning of April, Tom Clarke could feel reasonably pleased with the secret arrangements that he had put in place. Plans for a nationwide Rising were already circulated to IRB men in senior Volunteer positions and the Volunteers had been put on alert for Easter Sunday, 23rd April, with the backing of Eoin MacNeill and the Irish Volunteer Executive.

Sunday 9th April was an eventful day as a car bound for Wexford was stopped by the DMP in College Green and ammunition was found and the two men in the car were later sentenced to three months imprisonment.¹³¹ The report in the *Irish Times* covered the bare facts and the wider implications are worth examining and analysing. The men were Wexford Volunteers and the car was stopped in a traffic jam having been followed from where the ammunition was collected, Liam Cullen's house which was adjacent to the HQ of the 2nd Battalion Dublin Irish Volunteers in Father Mathew Park. Soon after, the DMP raided the HQ in the park where a large number of Volunteers had gathered to use the miniature rifle range. Oscar Traynor barred the gate and told police that any attempt to enter would be met by gun fire. In

¹²⁷ Lunch, D, *The IRB*, p. 48

¹²⁸ Lynch, D, *The IRB*, p. 31

¹²⁹ NAI, BMH, WS 4, Diarmuid Lynch

¹³⁰ NAI, BMH, WS 284, Michael Staines

¹³¹ *1916 Handbook*, p. 2

the meantime, word was sent to Volunteers and the majority of Companies of the 1st & 2nd Battalions arrived as well as Tomas McDonough. Captain Frank Henderson noted events:

I myself was in Parnell Street, round about the Rotunda, when I heard about the raid. I got the word from a Volunteer who is now a priest in England, Father Tom Donoghue. There were calls to Tom Clarke's shop, which was quite close, and some men were picked up there. We proceeded to Father Mathew Park. The police retreated after a while and did not attempt to force their way in.¹³²

This is highly significant; Captain Henderson went straight to Tom Clarke's shop where he received help and instructions. This strongly indicated Clarke's senior status with IRB members of the Irish Volunteers. The action of the police in not attempting to effect an entrance to the HQ reflected the softly, softly approach of Nathan and Birrell and was further demonstrated by their 'retreat'. This event gave the Volunteers great heart and a feeling of one up for the Volunteers against the DMP and the authorities in Dublin Castle as Frank Henderson jubilantly noted, 'That raid was another of the events which helped to throw (sic) them down'.¹³³

On the same day, about 1,500 Irish Volunteers paraded through the streets of Dublin in protest against the deportation of two IRB organizers, Earnest Blythe and William Mellows.¹³⁴ That evening a Grand Concert was arranged for the Antient Concert Rooms in Parnell Square. The address was given by Eoin MacNeill with proceeds going to the 1st Battalion Irish Volunteers to help with equipment needs. The concert was arranged by and with compliments of Cumann Na Mban and Tom Clarke: Kathleen Clarke attended as she was heavily involved with the women's organisation.¹³⁵ Similarly, executive members of the IRB and Volunteers attended. The personal sponsorship of this meeting by Tom Clarke and Cumann Na Mban¹³⁶ was the closest the IRB came to actually announcing that they were in control of the Volunteers.

In addition to this, the day before, Saturday 8th April, orders for manoeuvres at Easter in Dublin and the provinces were issued by Pearse and printed in the *Irish*

¹³² NAI, BMH, WS 249, Frank Henderson, p.18

¹³³ NAI, BMH WS 249, Henderson, pp18-9

¹³⁴ 1916 Handbook, p.2

¹³⁵ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Women*, pp. 48-50

¹³⁶ NLI, Piaras Beaslai Papers, MS 33,911, (i)

Volunteer. Separately, these incidents do not amount to much. Added together, and of course with hindsight, they spelled trouble. An astute observer with a military intelligence background would have put two and two together but this did not happen. Even without the messages the British intercepted from the Clan to Germany via the German Embassy in New York, the events depicted appear to be a *prima facie* case of intent to do serious damage to the well being and fabric of British Imperial rule in Ireland. Nathan still did not believe that a Rising was imminent. As late as Monday 17th April 1916, he regarded the situation as unproven but he had the County Inspectors in the southern and south-western put on alert. Similarly, the Chief Commissioner of the DMP was notified to keep watch on 'turbulent suspects' in Dublin.¹³⁷

The mood of Clarke and the IRB changed from one of overt defiance in August 1914 to one of circumspect behaviour in April 1916. Certainly with his intent of disrupting the recruitment drive at the Mansion House in September 1914 and at O'Donovan Rossa's funeral in August 1915, Clarke and the wider IRB executive would have welcomed action from British forces in Ireland. This reflected his desperation, and to a certain extent Connolly's, in attempting to stage some form of armed opposition to British rule. Clarke knew that in September 1914, armed separatism was at very low ebb and a gesture, and that is all it would have been, was required to keep separatism alive in people's minds. At the Rossa funeral in July 1915, however, he thought any attempt to disarm the Volunteers would play into the IRB's hands. By April 1916, the reverse was true. With the Rising about to happen, Clarke and the wider IRB executive feared arrest and suppression. To avoid this Clarke and his fellow revolutionaries moved around with bodyguards: Tommy O'Connor and Sean McGarry were appointed as his aide-de-camps but effectively they acted as body guards to prevent his arrest.¹³⁸

Around this time, Tom Clarke visited Belfast to attend a meeting of the Northern IRB. John Southwell, Secretary of the Ulster Council of the IRB recalled how Clarke indicated that the Rising was imminent with joint action by Volunteers and the Citizen Army proposed:

Mr. Clarke also stressed the importance of the I.R.B. and the Irish Volunteers being on the alert against surprise action by the British.¹³⁹

¹³⁷ O Brion, *Dublin Castle*, p 79

¹³⁸ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 75

¹³⁹ NAI, BMH WS 230, John Southwell, p. 9

This demonstrated that Clarke was important in IRB circles outside of Dublin which was underscored by armed Volunteers protecting the meeting and 'scouts posted to prevent a surprise raid on the hall.'¹⁴⁰ The Belfast RIC was aware of the movements of the IRB and they questioned the driver of the car taking Southwell from Newry to Belfast.¹⁴¹ The message that 'the Rising was imminent' was delivered by Clarke personally and this indicates the sensitivity of the message as much as Clarke's position as the putative nationwide head of the IRB.

In a report on the activities of political and secret societies, 13th April 1916, the Inspector General of the RIC, Neville Chamberlain, thought the leaders of the Irish Volunteers were a 'pack of rebels' who given the right support and backing would revolt and proclaim their independence. He further noted that, 'These observations however are made with reference to the provinces and not the Dublin Metropolitan Police Area, which is the centre of the movement.'¹⁴² The Castle authorities drew some comfort from this because Chamberlain further reflected that with 'their present resources, and without substantial reinforcements, it is difficult to imagine that they could make even a brief stand against a small body of troops.'¹⁴³ On the surface this was valid but the RIC did not have informers in the higher echelons of the IRB and therefore were unaware of the existence or location of stores of weapons, explosives and other relevant materials in Dublin which could be used to hold off 'a small body of troops.' Nathan would have been relieved and his sense of security bolstered further by the intent of this report. However, he seriously miscalculated the situation and his reports to Birrell in London were meant to assuage him and to demonstrate that he-Nathan-had the situation well in hand. On other events, he felt that 'things are going better for the moment.'¹⁴⁴ But not all of the Castle's responses to the Irish Volunteers/IRB threat were softly, softly. As Christopher Brady, one of the printers of the Declaration of the Republic makes clear:

¹⁴⁰ NAI, BMH WS 230, Southwell, p. 9

¹⁴¹ NAI, BMH WS 230, Southwell, p. 9

¹⁴² Chamberlain, N, Inspector General, RIC, report on Activity of Political and Secret Societies, 13 April 1916 in Mac Giolla Choille, Brendan, *Ireland. Chief Secretary's Office, Dublin Castle [Intelligence notes, 1913-1916]*. (Baile Atha Cliath, 1966), p. XXXV

¹⁴³ Chamberlain, N, Mac Giolla Choille, *Intelligence Notes*, p. XXXV

¹⁴⁴ O Brion, *Dublin Castle*, p 74

On the week before Good Friday the police came on from a raid on Joe Stanley's printing works to Liberty Hall. They rushed into the shop and proceeded to seize copies of the "Gael" which was usually printed at Stanley's works. This was regarded by those in the hall as merely an excuse for a general survey for the feeling of an approaching crises was then in the air.¹⁴⁵

Nathan and the Castle authorities were much more concerned with impounding propaganda from the IRB/Volunteers/Citizen Army than taking the bull by the horns and introducing mass arrests of Clarke and the other known revolutionaries. Nathan, as opposed to Wimborne, French and Price, did not want to be seen as an instigator of a Rising by acting incautiously and the standoff and eventual retreat by police at Father Mathew Park on 9th April fully reflected this.¹⁴⁶ If the police had called for army back up that Sunday and a fire fight had ensued, then the boil, as far as the British authorities were concerned, would have been lanced. MacNeill had clearly stated that any military action by the authorities against the Volunteers was to be met with stiff resistance and Clarke and MacDiarmada gambled that they could persuade him to change his defensive mindset to an offensive one, in line with their own thinking, and rise with them. They held onto this idea until Easter Sunday when MacNeill's countermanding orders were published in the *Sunday Independent*.

The web that Clarke, MacDiarmada, Pearse and Plunkett had spun to deceive MacNeill, elements on the Volunteer Executive and some IRB members was extended further by Clarke on Saturday 15th April. Denis McCullough, President of the IRB and a member of the Executive that controlled the IRB in between SC meetings, heard that the Rising was imminent. He had not been given two weeks' notice as promised and made haste to Dublin. His messages to MacDiarmada went unanswered so he went to Tom Clarke's house where Clarke indicated that he was in the dark about detailed arrangements and that McCullough should see either Pearse or Connolly for further details.¹⁴⁷

Why Clarke was secretive with McCullough is not clear because MacDiarmada informed McCullough¹⁴⁸ on Monday 17th April that a Rising was going ahead on

¹⁴⁵ NAI, BMH, WS 705, Christopher Brady, p. 2. One of the printers of the Proclamation of The Irish Republic; he was a printer on the staff of the *Workers Republic*

¹⁴⁶ O Brion, *Dublin Castle*, p 74

¹⁴⁷ NAI, BMH, WS 915, Denis McCullough, p. 19

¹⁴⁸ University College Dublin (UCD), Richard Mulcahy Papers, P7/D/14 & 15

Easter Sunday morning but a deception it was as Clarke was fully aware of and completely involved in the planning of the Rising. However, as President of the IRB SC, McCullough was fully entitled to be consulted about relevant events but the situation had developed beyond the point of his influence and under MacDiarmada's questioning, he agreed to 'turn out my men and do my best.'¹⁴⁹ But on Palm Sunday 15th April, McCullough returned to Tom Clarke's house during the afternoon and recalled what transpired there:

...Sean arrived in a cab. He was evidently surprised and very upset at finding me there...He refused to talk to me then and left almost immediately, stating that he had yet to see McNeill and had an appointment with him, which he must keep. I am of the opinion that he intended to spend some time at Tom Clarke's, but changed his mind when he found me there.¹⁵⁰

The nature of the relationships between Clarke and MacDiarmada, the IRB, the wider IRB executive and MacNeill, Chief of Staff of the Volunteers, became very significant during Holy Week. At the last moment, McNeill scuppered the plans for a Rising on Easter Sunday: a Rising Clarke and MacDiarmada had worked toward for the majority of the opening years of the 20th Century.

Holy Week

As Holy Week began, Clarke was aware that his planning, hard work, IRB and Clan na Gael connections and luck had brought him to the threshold of insurrection. The plan for revolutionary action in Ireland was complete and the Irish Volunteers in Dublin and across the country were in a state of readiness. Madge Daly recalled Clarke's state of mind at this time:

I was in Dublin again the week before the Rising. Tom was in great spirits; he believed the youth of the country would flock to their standard; that the fight would develop into a guerrilla war-fare all over the country; that England could not spare sufficient forces to put down a general Rising, for at that time the French were pressing the English to increase their forces in France and to take a larger part in the war. So they were told by friends returning from Europe.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ UCD, Mulcahy Papers, P7/D/14 & 15

¹⁵⁰ NAI, BMH WS 915, McCullough, p. 19

¹⁵¹ University of Limerick (UL) Madge Daly Memoirs, Folder 72, p. 95

As events developed, Clarke's vision did not materialise but his belief in the people of Ireland fighting for their freedom under certain conditions was unshakeable. The reference to Clarke and the Augmented Executive receiving information from 'friends returning from Europe' is intriguing. This clearly was not Monteith or Casement but who were they? The friends may have been servicemen returning to Ireland on leave but this is too random as leave from the war front would not have been guaranteed. It is feasible that the IRB used Irish exiles living in Europe to report to Dublin any information useful to the IRB. To describe these people as an intelligence network is fanciful but the IRB received vital intelligence on the war which was timely and underlined the decision to rise.

Min Ryan noted that Dublin was in a state of flux, 'For little more than a week before the Rising there was a tremendous excitement – a sort of undercurrent. You felt that something was going to happen, but what it was you did not know.'¹⁵² Min Ryan was romantically involved with Sean MacDiarmada, a member of Cumann na mBan and was aware of a change in the temperature of the revolution. Similarly, Fionan Lynch, an IRB member who took part in the Rising, noted something similar, 'During the last three or four days before the Rising the excitement was at fever-height, and rumours were rife as to a general round up by the British, and so on.'¹⁵³ However, Madge Daly recalled that she met MacDiarmada at 'Clarke's' and he 'was in good spirits but he looked worn out.' He asked her to call at the offices of Irish Freedom the next day where he handed over to her in front of Michael Colivet, the Commandant of the Irish Volunteers, £300 to hold for him. She further noted how busy the office was, 'It was like a miniature war office, men from all parts of the country coming and going.'¹⁵⁴

Thus the pressure on those involved with the planning for the Rising was extreme. Irish Volunteers met every evening during Holy Week and Brigid Martin, a member of the women's organization Cumann na mBan, remembered how '...the excitement was intense.'¹⁵⁵ Thomas MacDonagh was very close to the men under his command and felt he could confide in them. Volunteer Seamus Daly indicated that he told his battalion to take three days rations with them for the following

¹⁵² NAI, BMH, WS 399, Min Ryan, p. 6

¹⁵³ NAI, BMH, WS 192, Fionan Lynch, p. 10

¹⁵⁴ University of Limerick (UL) Madge Daly Memoirs, Folder 72, p. 95

¹⁵⁵ NAI, BMH WS 398, Brigid Martin

weekend and he gave them further details, 'We are not going out on Friday, but we are going out on Sunday. Boys, some of us may never come back.'¹⁵⁶ The following day at another meeting he was more explicit. Seamus Daly further indicated that MacDonagh would usually finish off a parade with comments on how efficient the battalion was and remarks to that effect but on this occasion he spoke with gravity and for a much longer period 'He reminded us we were standing on historic ground in Clontarf where Brian Boru had defeated the Danes in 1014. Easter was the time of the battle of Clontarf...when big things happen like this, there is very often confusion of ideas; you may get an order over the weekend, and I want every man to obey it implicitly.'¹⁵⁷

Tom Clarke, the IRB and Eoin MacNeill

Eoin MacNeill explained his activities during Holy Week in two memoranda which the historian F X Martin has analysed and interpreted.¹⁵⁸ It was clear that IRB representatives on the Volunteer Executive acted secretly in their dealings with McNeill and it wasn't until Maundy Thursday, 20th April, that he said he was aware that a Rising was going to happen 'Then for the first time I learned by Pearse's admission that the rising was intended.'¹⁵⁹ However, the accuracy and intent of McNeill's admission must be balanced against other primary sources which indicated a more inclusive role for McNeill in the IRB's plans for a Rising. Sean McGarry noted the extent of McNeill's collusion with the IRB, 'McDermott called to my office on Wednesday in jubilant mood. He told me that everything was going well, that McNeill had agreed to everything.'¹⁶⁰ McNeill did not mention in either memoranda that he sanctioned a Rising or that he had thrown his hand in with the IRB. The outcome of the meeting of the Irish Volunteer Executive on Tuesday 18 April was a general order which Madge Daly noted as, 'ordering Volunteers to prepare themselves against suppression.'¹⁶¹ The difference between MacNeill's version of events and

¹⁵⁶ NAI, BMH WS 360, Seamus Daly

¹⁵⁷ NAI, BMH WS 360, Seamus Daly

¹⁵⁸ Martin, F X, *Select Documents: XX Eoin MacNeill on the 1916 Rising*, *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol XII, No. 47, (Dublin, March 1961)

¹⁵⁹ Martin, *MacNeill on the 1916 Rising*, p. 248

¹⁶⁰ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p.22

¹⁶¹ Martin, *MacNeill on the 1916 Rising*, p. 248

McGarry's is heightened by Madge Daly's recollection of proceedings during Holy Week, 1916:

During Holy Week 1916, we had many visitors in Barrington St. My sister, Mrs Clarke brought down her three children on Holy Thursday—she hoped they would be safer in my uncle's home. She also brought a definite message from Tom Clarke and Sean MacDermott that Eoin MacNeill was going the whole way with them, that Sean and some others had been with him; that he felt sore when told that the Rising was definitely fixed without consulting him, but that when everything was explained, he agreed to resign his position as Chief of Staff in favour of Joe Plunkett and acted splendidly; that everything was going well. This message was a great relief to my Uncle, as he was always uneasy about MacNeill, especially as he was not a member of the IRB.¹⁶²

Whether MacNeill did or did not align the Irish Volunteers with the IRB towards a Rising is not in question. What is doubtful is the timing of his acquiescence. McNeill stated that MacDiarmada visited him on Saturday 22 April and he agreed to fight:

I was in bed and sent for him to my bedroom. He led me to believe that hostilities were now inevitable, and I said that if that were so and we had to fight or be suppressed I was ready to fight. He said 'Thank God!' ... This incident is the sole foundation for the statements afterwards circulated about my change of attitude.¹⁶³

The ambiguity surrounding McNeill's stance on fighting with the IRB and Citizen Army is further muddled by the visit of Joe Plunkett to him the same day. MacNeill appeared to be standing with Tom Clarke and the IRB; MacNeill remembered, 'I told him about the conclusion I had come to, and that it was a great relief to me after all the anxieties I had felt.'¹⁶⁴ Plunkett wanted MacNeill to sign a proclamation but he demurred saying it would 'depend' on the terms of the proclamation. Plunkett did not elaborate on the contents of the proclamation and the convoluted ruse of deception was out in the open; Clarke and the wider IRB executive wanted to back MacNeill far enough into a corner where his only option was to agree fully with the revolutionaries, cede his Chief of Staff status in the Volunteers to either Plunkett or Pearse, and not disrupt the 'manoeuvres' planned for Easter Sunday.

¹⁶² UL, Daly Memoirs, folio 77, pp. 101-02

¹⁶³ Martin, *MacNeill on the 1916 Rising*, p. 249

¹⁶⁴ Martin, *MacNeill on the 1916 Rising*, p. 249

On Palm Sunday, Tom Clarke, Sean MacDiarmada and Tom MacDonagh met an IRB man, Patrick Daly, in Clontarf Town Hall. Mick McGinn, an old Fenian friend of Tom Clarke, was the Librarian there and he arranged for the premises to be used for IRB meetings. Daly sat outside the Town Hall and watched for detectives; he saw Clarke, MacDiarmada and MacDonagh enter the town hall and was then called in and further recalled that:

Sean McDermott said on my arrival, "Paddy here has some great ideas about the Magazine Fort and I would like you to hear what he has to say." Then Tom Clarke asked me to explain all about the matter.¹⁶⁵

The mission to detonate with explosives the ammunition in the Phoenix Park Magazine Fort was not entirely successful as the British had removed all of the high explosives to use on the European front. The relevance of Patrick Daly's testimony is that Sean MacDiarmada brought Daly to speak to Tom Clarke knowing that any and all movements of guns etc, missions by IRB men and other diversionary operational actions needed to be sanctioned first by Clarke. It was Clarke's idea to use a football match as cover to get men close enough to the Fort without arousing suspicion. The operation was set to take place at 12:00 on Easter Sunday but early that morning, Daly received a dispatch from Tom MacDonagh cancelling the mission but telling him not to leave the city and to be on standby. On Monday morning, Daly received a dispatch ordering him to Liberty Hall where:

I saw Connolly and Tom Clarke. This must have been around 10:30 or 11 o'clock. Connolly spoke to me about the job and expressed the opinion that the team selected for the job was very light and that I wanted more weight in it...A chap named Paddy Boland was then brought in and I remember Tom Clarke saying, "These boys may be light but they are great boys." Then Connolly asked me not to enter the Fort before 12 noon but to be there on the point of 12.¹⁶⁶

Clarke and Connolly wanted to start the Rising with a literal bang by blowing up a strategic building such as the Magazine Fort. Events leading up to Easter Sunday began to accelerate and the news for Clarke and the wider IRB executive was not good. As a precaution, Bulmer Hobson was persuaded on Good Friday

¹⁶⁵ The Allen Library, Statements relating to 1916, Patrick Daly, PP3

¹⁶⁶ The Allen Library, Patrick Daly, PP3

morning to attend a meeting of the Leinster Executive of the IRB by Sean Tobin, an IRB man with connections to Clarke and MacDiarmada. When he arrived at Martin Conlon's house in Phibsboro, several armed IRB men informed him that he was their prisoner and could not leave. He was eventually released on Easter Monday evening, 24th April 1916.¹⁶⁷

Eoin MacNeill read the Castle Document on Tuesday 18th April and this was instrumental in influencing him to the point that he agreed with the revolutionaries and decided not to stop them in their attempt to stage a rising. The document envisaged wholesale arrests of all members of the Sinn Fein National Council, the Central Executive, General Council, and County Boards of the Irish Sinn Fein Volunteers, Executive Committee of the National Volunteers, and Coisde Gnotha Committee of the Gaelic League. Citizens were to be confined to their houses until the Competent Military Authority decided otherwise. Also, a number of premises were to be taken over by adequate forces-Liberty Hall, the Sinn Fein office at 6 Harcourt Street, the Volunteer HQ at 2, Dawson Street, the Gaelic League and Irish National Foresters, 25 and 41 Rutland Square, while other premises were to be isolated; these included the Archbishop's house in Drumcondra, the Mansion House, the O'Rahilly's House at 40 Herbert Park, Larkfield, Count Plunkett's home at Kimmage-used as a barracks for men who came over from England to fight in the Rising-and Patrick Pearse's school, St Enda's College. The effect on MacNeill was electrifying; he immediately issued orders to volunteers sanctioning defensive measures against arrest.

On Wednesday 19th April, Alderman Tom Kelly read to the Dublin Corporation the same document the validity of which is supported by the evidence given in a Witness Statement to the Bureau of Military History by Eugene Smith.¹⁶⁸ He noted that the document he saw in the Castle was 'practically identical with that read out by Alderman Kelly.'¹⁶⁹ It was authorised by the Chief Secretary and General Friend in a letter to the Irish Office in London and the measures were to be implemented only if conscription was introduced in Ireland. This suggested that the document was genuine but the revolutionaries used it for their own ends and it was probably

¹⁶⁷ Hobson, Bulmer, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow*, (Tralee, 1968), pp.76-77

¹⁶⁸ NAI, BMH, WS 257, Eugene Smith

¹⁶⁹ NAI, BMH, WS 257, Smith

doctored by MacDiarmada and Plunkett to impact more precisely on its intended target, MacNeill.

The die was cast. With MacNeill travelling in the same direction, albeit on a different road, Clarke and the wider IRB executive were very confident of launching a Rising on Sunday in Dublin and the country. However, between Holy Thursday and Easter Saturday, MacNeill, it seems, changed his mind daily¹⁷⁰ but was finally persuaded to oppose the Rising on Easter Saturday by Sean Fitzgibbon and Colm O Lochlainn. Fitzgibbon told MacNeill that the orders he received to rise had been sanctioned by MacNeill and that the Government would have acted on Friday if the Castle Document was true: the only offensive planned was by the IRB and they had certainly not told MacNeill about it. MacNeill, with O Lochlainn and Fitzgibbon, went to St Enda's to see Pearse. Pearse told MacNeill that he had been used and they had no further use of him. MacNeill said he would stop the Rising and Pearse said 'our men' would disobey him. MacNeill sent messengers to all units: 'Volunteers completely deceived. All orders for special action are hereby cancelled, and on no account will action be taken. Eoin MacNeill, Chief of Staff.'¹⁷¹ He also placed an announcement in the *Sunday Independent* on 23rd April 1916 underlining the orders he dispatched to Volunteer units the previous evening.

Clarke's was appalled by the countermanding order on Easter Sunday, 'He regarded MacNeill's action was of the blackest and greatest treachery.'¹⁷² Of the other wider IRB executive members, only two have left first hand documentary evidence on the subject: Pearse's final bulletin from the GPO and the letter written by Thomas MacDonagh on Easter Sunday night.

There is little primary source evidence indicating Tom Clarke's role in the evolving debacle with MacNeill during Holy Week. On Sunday 16th April, however, MacDiarmada told Sean T Kelly, 'that Pearse after lengthy discussion with MacNeill had persuaded him to promise his support for the rising on Easter Sunday; Tom Clarke had already received the same report about MacNeill when he spoke to S.T. O'Kelly early in Holy Week.'¹⁷³ This is a clear indication that Clarke and Pearse were confident that MacNeill would not stand in their way when they launched the Rising.

¹⁷⁰ Martin, *MacNeill on the 1916 Rising*, pp. 248/50

¹⁷¹ Lynch, Diarmuid, O'Donoghue, Florence, (ed), *The IRB and the 1916 Insurrection*, (Cork, 1957),

p.51

¹⁷² NAI, McGarry, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p.23

¹⁷³ Martin, *MacNeill on the 1916 Rising*, p. 263

MacNeill's countermanding order overturned Clarke's and the wider IRB executive's planned use of the Irish Volunteers in an IRB inspired Rising. But to what extent did the secrecy of Clarke and MacDiarmada and the other IRB Executive members, push MacNeill to issue the orders? Maureen Wall in her work ¹⁷⁴ on events leading up to the Rising suggested that 'absolute secrecy' across Ireland was difficult to maintain whereas in Dublin it was easier as the men involved in the planning for the Rising were based there. She also mentioned a combination of secrecy, the negative connotations drawn from the loss of the German arms and the conflicting orders from Dublin all combined to off balance the IRB/Volunteer men outside Dublin.¹⁷⁵ Secrecy of purpose and intent was carried out by Clarke because he was aware of the damage that spies, informers and traitors could inflict on his (and the wider IRB executive's) plans for a Rising. He personally dreaded a return to prison as he believed he was put there by informers. Clarke's reasonable fear of informers was not considered by Wall. She also did not include in her analysis MacNeill's hesitancy on whether to join with the IRB ¹⁷⁶ or to stand aside as Chief of Staff in favour of Pearse or Plunkett.

Tom Clarke, Liberty Hall, Easter Sunday, 1916

The Provisional Government of the Irish Republic were guarded by armed volunteers as they met before 09:00 in Liberty Hall on Easter Sunday. The proclamation had been signed on Tuesday 18th April ¹⁷⁷ and was ready for printing in the machine room of Liberty Hall. 'The machine was ready for first printing at about 8.30pm on Easter Sunday night and the job was finished between 12 and 1 on Easter Monday morning. We had then run off 2,500 copies. I gave the first proof to James Connolly at 9 p.m. and he checked in with the manuscript and I never saw the manuscript again.' ¹⁷⁸ The manuscript contained the proclamation, hand written, that 'proclaimed an Irish Republic.' ¹⁷⁹ The proclamation reflected the views of Pearse and Connolly but Clarke and the other members of wider IRB executive were

¹⁷⁴ Nowlan, Kevin B, ed, *The Making of 1916, Studies in the History of the Rising*, (Dublin, 1969), Wall, M, (VII), 'The Plans and the Countermand: the Country and Dublin'.

¹⁷⁵ Nowlan, (ed), *The Making of 1916*, Wall, The Plans and the Countermand, p. 218

¹⁷⁶ Martin, *MacNeill on the 1916 Rising*, pp. 248/50

¹⁷⁷ Clarke, Kathleen, *Revolutionary Woman, O'Brien*, (Dublin, 1991)p. 69

¹⁷⁸ NAI, BMH WS 705, Christopher Brady, p. 5

¹⁷⁹ NAI, BMH WS 705, Brady, p. 4

involved with the drafting of the document. Kathleen Clarke recorded her version of events:

On the Tuesday of Holy Week, 1916, Tom left the shop in Parnell Street to go to a Meeting... On reaching home we settled down to supper... Then he told me how the proclamation was drawn up. Some time before. Pearse had been asked to draft it on lines intimated to him and submit it to the Military Council. He did and some changes were made.¹⁸⁰

This reflected the wider IRB executive's collegiate approach to problem solving. Pearse was the most gifted writer of them all and the drafting of the proclamation was entrusted to him. Connolly's socialist views were incorporated in the Proclamation and MacDonagh's experience as a writer and English lecturer at University College, Dublin was not overlooked. Clarke's input was minimal but he ensured that the Executive all agreed with the contents of the document. However, Kathleen Clarke's view on this needs to be considered; after the document was signed, '...it represented the views of all except one, who thought equal opportunities should not be given to women.'¹⁸¹ This was an intriguing view of the inner workings of the wider IRB executive. When the meeting adjourned around 13:00, the Provisional Government made two decisions, they agreed to send dispatches to various Commandants confirming MacNeill's orders and more importantly, despatches were sent to IRB/Irish Volunteer commandants confirming that the Rising would start the next day.¹⁸² Messengers were sent on Sunday at 13:00 from Liberty Hall with the confirmation of MacNeill's countermanding order but, as Diarmuid Lynch describes, the more important despatches, as far as Clarke and the Provisional Government were concerned had yet to be delivered:

Couriers were notified to be present that Sunday evening at the rooms of the Keating Branch of the Gaelic League North Fredrick Street. Pearse arrived there about 8p.m. He had ready on small slips of paper a brief despatch which read: "We start operations at noon to-day, Monday. Carry out your instructions." Signed either P.H.P. or P.H.Pearse. Some of these left Dublin that night; others not until the next day. The opportune moment had arrived. No human act could now stop the Rising.¹⁸³

¹⁸⁰ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 69

¹⁸¹ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 69

¹⁸² Lynch, *The IRB and 1916*, p. 53

¹⁸³ Lynch, *The IRB and 1916*, p. 53

However, Gregory Murphy, IRB Centre and member of the Volunteer Executive, commented on this event and indicated briefly Clarke's role as IRB Treasurer:

On Easter Sunday I went to an office over Hyland's shop in Fredrick St. Pearse, McDermott and Willie Pearse were there. Sean McDermott gave me typewritten mobilisation orders to be given to J.R. Reynolds who was in charge of the Special Unit of Civil Servants, etc. These I delivered. They were to the effect that the unit was to assemble at 41, Parnell Sq. on Easter Monday at 11a.m. I was also instructed to get money from Tom Clarke for the expense of the couriers to go to the country. I went to Tom Clarke at his home in Philipsburgh Avenue and on his instructions Mrs. Clarke gave me the money. It amounted to about £300 (three hundred pounds).¹⁸⁴

Easter Sunday was a black day for Tom Clarke; Sean McGarry commented on Clarke's state of mind, 'I found Tom Clarke afterwards and for the first time since I knew him he seemed crushed. He was weary and seemed crestfallen. The shock of the morning's blow had been terrific. I accompanied him home that evening.'¹⁸⁵ Kathleen Clarke was sitting at home unaware of these events waiting for the first shot and diverting herself by walking from room to room and looking out of the windows expecting to see a messenger. However, it was Tom himself that appeared:

To my amazement, Tom turned into the avenue...Tom looked old and bent, and his walk, which was usually very quick and military, was slow. I rushed to open the door, overjoyed to see him, but fearful of the reason. He looked very ill, and seemed scarcely to speak.¹⁸⁶

Kathleen Clarke prepared for him an alcohol drink [he was usually teetotal] and some food but 'He did not eat anything up to the time he left the house next morning.'¹⁸⁷ McGarry described him as being very quiet, 'He was very silent. After a while he recovered and discussed the affair. He regarded McNeill's action was of the blackest and greatest treachery. But having said all he wanted to say about it he did not refer to it again.'¹⁸⁸ However, Kathleen Clarke's account of events in the Clarke household is much more extensive than McGarry's and she indicated that 'Sitting around the fire that night, Tom told Tommy O'Connor and Sean McGarry...and

¹⁸⁴ NAI, BMH, WS 150, Gregory Murphy, p. 6

¹⁸⁵ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p. 23

¹⁸⁶ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 75

¹⁸⁷ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 75

¹⁸⁸ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p. 23

myself, what had happened.’¹⁸⁹ Of the points she related, the discussion on when rather than if the Rising should take place are relevant here. Clarke argued that the Rising should carry on that day as planned; others argued for a postponement with messengers sent to inform the IRB/Volunteers to proceed with their original orders. Kathleen Clarke paraphrased the arguments put forward by Tom Clarke:

Tom maintained that if they struck that day in Dublin as planned, news of it would reach the country faster than messengers. Those in the country would then assume that the orders they had received from MacNeill were forged, or anyhow not genuine, and would act on the original orders, signed by Pearse, as far as possible. If the Rising was delayed until Monday, Tom argues, the men in most places would be demobilised and unable to do anything, as the British would by then be on guard to prevent any mobilisation.¹⁹⁰

Clarke’s arguments and efforts to go ‘out’ that day were futile. All of the Provisional Government opposed him, ‘To Tom’s surprise, even Sean MacDermott was against him in the matter. Up to that point Sean had seen eye to eye with him in everything.’¹⁹¹ It was clear all of his colleagues thought Rising on Easter Monday was more appropriate but Charles Townsend attributed this decision solely to Pearse, ‘Pearse...preferred to wait till next day. The others agreed.’¹⁹² The elevation of Pearse, by Townsend, to a facilitator of decisions within the Provisional Government is an extension of fact that is not underpinned in primary sources. Ruth Dudley Edwards¹⁹³ in her biography of Pearse believed he had a messianic streak in his personality but she did not elevate his influence over the Provisional Government to heights of power that he never reached. Clarke, even though he was in a minority of one, feared that the Rising would not go ahead and his life’s work would be ruined: however, with the support of Sean McGarry and Tommy O’Connor, who were Clarke’s body guards, and Kathleen, he realised that delay was inevitable. The night of Sunday 23rd April was the last night that Tom and Kathleen spent together and Kathleen noted rather poignantly, ‘I slept in my husband’s arms for the last time that night, and slept soundly.’¹⁹⁴

¹⁸⁹ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 75

¹⁹⁰ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Women*, p. 77

¹⁹¹ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Women*, p. 77

¹⁹² Townsend, Charles, *Easter 1916*, (London, 2005), p.138

¹⁹³ Edwards, Ruth Dudley, *Patrick Pearse, The Triumph of Failure*, (Swords, 1990), p. 273

¹⁹⁴ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Women*, p. 77

However, during the night of Saturday 22nd April, a message was sent from the radio station on Valentia Island:

On Saturday night 22 April (early Sunday in Ireland), Judge Cohalan telephoned McGarrity in Philadelphia. He had a message from Valentia Island: "Tom successfully operated today." It was signed 'O'Sullivan,' a prearranged code that the Rising had started or was about to start. "Thank God," McGarrity said. Burning with anxiety and excitement he left his house to walk the streets of Philadelphia alone.¹⁹⁵

Judge Daniel Cohalan, Joseph McGarrity and John Devoy were the members of the Revolutionary Directory that ran Clan na Gael and the cable from Ireland informing them that a Rising had or was about to start is surprising as hitherto, little has been known about who controlled the radio station on Valentia island. However, there can be little doubt that Tom Clarke is the 'Tom' in the message and partially explains his defiance and determination to start the Rising on Easter Sunday. Clarke sent this message without informing the other members of the wider IRB executive and this partly explains why he argued so passionately against coming out on Monday rather than Sunday. With Devoy and the Clan informed of the Rising, Clarke felt obliged to Rise on Sunday and not wait another day. But the wider IRB executive did not agree with him: even MacDiarmada, his closest ally, was against him. Clarke feared he and his revolutionary colleagues would be rounded up before they had a chance to strike for Ireland's freedom.

The Republic Declared, Easter Monday 24th April 1916

At 09:45 on Easter Monday morning, Tom Clarke left his house and made his way to Liberty Hall. Before he left home, Kathleen Clarke attempted to dissuade her husband from leaving her. She was unsuccessful.¹⁹⁶ However, the day was fine, which Kathleen Clarke thought bode well for the enterprise that Tom was about to undertake, 'Easter Monday was a day of brilliant sunshine, and this we hoped was a good omen.'¹⁹⁷ During the night men arrived at Liberty Hall in preparation for the day's activities; Christopher Brady, the printer of the proclamation noted, 'In the early

¹⁹⁵ Cronin, S, *McGarrity Papers*, p. 62

¹⁹⁶ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 78

¹⁹⁷ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 78

hours of the morning large bodies of Volunteer and Citizen Army men were arriving at Liberty Hall. They were fully armed. They were accommodated there.¹⁹⁸ Tom Clarke met the other members of the wider IRB executive who were going to be stationed in the GPO. Clarke had not regained the full use of his right arm after a shooting accident earlier in the year and it was still in a sling on Easter Monday: Volunteer Patrick Daly remembered helping Clarke that morning, 'I saw Connolly and Tom Clarke. This must have been about 10.30 or 11 o'clock...I remember Tom Clarke had his arm in a sling and I held his tunic whilst he got into it.'¹⁹⁹ His almost monk-like appearance was in complete contrast to the dramatically dressed Pearse.²⁰⁰ This sartorial division notwithstanding, Diarmuid Lynch recalled the scene at Liberty Hall:

Forenoon. The memorable scene at Liberty Hall this Easter Monday morning was tense but serene. Members of the Military Council, the officers and men (and a few women) of the "Headquarters Battalion" quietly attended to final details preparatory to the launching of an epoch-making venture.²⁰¹

The 'epoch-making venture' Lynch describes can be largely attributed to hindsight as he was not then in a position to know to what extent the Rising would change public opinion in Ireland. As the small band of Hibernian Rifles, Irish Volunteers and Citizen Army assembled in Beresford Place, motor cars were guarded by a detachment of Volunteers which included Denis Daly who was involved in the disastrous attempt to use radio equipment to contact the arms ship in Cahirciveen. Daly recalled who the cars were for:

On Easter Monday we were mobilised in front of Liberty Hall. I was in charge of the Section which acted as a guard for the car in which members of the Provisional Government travelled from Liberty Hall to the G.P.O. There may have been two cars, I am not certain on the point, but the car on which my Section acted as guard was an open touring car driven by The O'Rahilly. Pearse and Connolly were seated in the front, and Tom Clarke, Sean MacDermott and Joseph Plunkett in the back.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ NAI, BMH, WS 305, Christopher Brady, p.6

¹⁹⁹ The Allen Library, Patrick Daly, PP3

²⁰⁰ Edwards, *Pearse*, p. 275

²⁰¹ Lynch, *The IRB and 1916*, p. 137

²⁰² NAI, BMH WS 110, Denis Daly

This information refutes the reported omission of Clarke, MacDiarmada and Plunkett from the car in a recently published work on the Bureau of Military History Witness Statements.²⁰³ It similarly and finally dispelled the description of the members of the Provisional Government and how they made their way from Liberty Hall to the GPO as outlined by Ruth Dudley Edward:

Behind Pearse, Connolly, a squat figure in impeccable uniform and highly-polished leggings, strode beside the emaciated Plunkett, his chief-of-staff, whose throat was enveloped in bandages and whose hands glittered with rings. Close to death, he was flamboyant to the last, and had unsheathed his sabre before the group advanced. Clarke walked apart from the column, a spare grey man, side-by-side with his friend MacDermott, who leaned heavily on his cane.²⁰⁴

Both of these quotes attempted to marginalise Clarke and MacDiarmada but the reality was that the Provisional Government acted in concert. To say there were no arguments or squabbles about tactics, strategy or policy is naïve (as demonstrated by the decision not to rise on Easter Sunday) but to place greater emphasis on an individual or a group of individuals at the expense of Clarke is unfounded and inaccurate and not backed up by information from primary sources; or if consulted, pertinent information omitted.

Michael Staines, QM, Dublin Brigade Irish Volunteers, 1913-1916 QM General, Easter Week, 1916 and later First Commissioner of the Garda Síochána, was responsible for ordering cars to be available at Liberty Hall on Sunday 23rd April. Few cars were available for Monday 24th April as most were used to transport people to the Fairyhouse races. 'Willie Cullen was also to send me a number of horse lorries from Thompson's, the carriers, to be used as the situation demanded.'²⁰⁵

Indeed, the British authorities, Army and Establishment were much more interested in the raising of horses' legs at Fairyhouse race course than the raising of revolutionists' arms in Dublin that brilliant and sunny Easter Monday.²⁰⁶ The races at Fairyhouse were eclipsed by the actions of the IRB and Clarke. At approximately 11:50, on that fateful Easter Monday, the assembled armed groups of around one hundred men received their orders; 'Commandant Connolly's order rang out;

²⁰³ Ryan, Anne, *Witnesses, Inside the Easter Rising*, (Dublin, 2005), p153

²⁰⁴ Edwards, Pearse, p. 278

²⁰⁵ NAI, BMH, WS 284, Michael Staines

²⁰⁶ McKenzie, F A, *The Irish Rebellion*, (London, 1916), p. 47

"Column, Attention! QUICK MARCH!" The column marched down Beresford Place, along Abbey Street and turned into O'Connell Street, (then known as Sackville Street). Spectators presupposed that this was another route march but with the Irish Volunteers dispatched to several key points around the City, North and South of the Liffey, this was no ordinary route march or practice drill. Commandant Seamus Daly, Dublin IRB, was one of those who marched to the GPO that day:

I remember well marching along O'Connell St. Charlie Saurin was ahead of me in the ranks, and he turned around and in a most excited voice said to me; "Seamus, Seamus look at our flag up on the Post Office." The flag was on the G.P.O.–the Republican Flag; and from the corner, the big green flag with a green harp on it was flying.²⁰⁷

In a tribute to the rank and file of the Irish Volunteers IRB, John J Styles describes the plain working men who populated their ranks thus:

I often wonder if the people of Ireland know of the great sacrifices this band of noble Irishmen made the two years previous to Easter Week, some of them mere boys, and the vast majority just plain working men, many with families, in many cases depriving their wives and families to enable them to pay for rifles and ammunition. I have marched with these men many times on cold and wet days; many without overcoats and some hardly had a boot on their feet, but none heard complain. They were fortified by the great love they had for their country which they hoped to free from Saxon rule. Of these with whom I had the privilege to work-they never thought of themselves; everything they possessed they gave to the volunteers.²⁰⁸

These are the real heroes of the Easter Rising, Dublin, 24th April 1916.

Tom Clarke understood the sentiments expressed here as he regarded and described himself as 'one of the mere units of the Irish rank and file.'²⁰⁹ When the column reached the GPO, the order, "Left Wheel! CHARGE!"²¹⁰ rang out. The Rising had begun. Once in the GPO, the contents of desks and valuables were entrusted to Tom Clarke for safe keeping. 'Bank notes, postal orders, and other securities of value were handed over to Thomas Clarke, one of the members of the

²⁰⁷ NAI, BMH, WS 360, Seamus Daly, p. 8

²⁰⁸ NAI, BMH, WS 175, John J Styles, pp. 11 and 12

²⁰⁹ Clarke, Thomas J, *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life*, (Dublin, 1922) p. 41

²¹⁰ Lynch, *The IRB and 1916*, p.158

Provisional Government, in the dining room on East. (Sic) Monday.' ²¹¹ On Lynch's suggestion, he and Tom Clarke read some letters containing reports from the RIC on the:

...strength of armament activities over the previous week, etc of the Irish Volunteers...We chuckled at the fact that all their spying was now in vain, and that neither they nor their superiors realised the imminence of the climax.²¹²

The seriousness of the event had not passed either Tom Clarke or Diarmuid Lynch by as they fully realised that they were making a stand for Ireland's freedom. Shortly before 12:45, Tom Clarke handed the Proclamation of the Republic to Patrick Pearse who then, 'surrounded by an armed guard emerged into Sackville Street and read the Proclamation of Independence.'²¹³

Details of the broader picture of events and fighting that took place in Dublin during Easter Week are fully explored and debated in several studies on the Rising.²¹⁴ However, many incidents linked to Tom Clarke are not fully discussed in these works and they will now be examined. In the first hours of the new Republic as proclaimed, Clarke was in the GPO and Sean McGarry recalled his state of mind:

I was with him continually for the first few hours of the occupation and I never knew him to be cooler. His normal air of business seemed to have been accentuated and he gave his orders decisively and as calmly as if he were in his own shop. As to complaints, I heard him discourage someone who spoke disparagingly of McNeill and he ended up by saying; "The fight is on, forget it now." I was out of the G.P.O. from Monday evening until Tuesday evening and several times later in the week and I found no change in Tom during all that time.²¹⁵

McGarry was in and out of the GPO all week and 'he found no change in Tom all that time.'²¹⁶ Clarke maintained his business like demeanour throughout Easter Week and was in fact much more jubilant than McGarry remembered; he had achieved a burning ambition to literally strike a blow at British power in Ireland. He

²¹¹ *1916 Rebellion Handbook*, (First published Dublin 1916, this edition Dublin 1998) with an introduction by Declan Kiberd, p. 11

²¹² NAI, BMH, WS 4, Diarmuid Lynch, Supplementary Statement

²¹³ Lynch, *The IRB and 1916*, p. 159

²¹⁴ Lynch, Diarmuid, *The IRB and 1916*, Caulfield, Max, *The Easter Rebellion*, (Dublin, 1995), *1916 Rebellion Handbook*, (Dublin, 1998) and Foy, Michael, and Barton, Brian, *The Easter Rising*, (Stroud, 2000)

²¹⁵ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p. 24

²¹⁶ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p. 25

had worked for over thirty-five years for that moment and at last, he was personally involved in the physical fight for Irish Freedom.

The role of women in the Rising should be noted and members of Cumann na mBan and the Fianna acted as:

...messengers, nurses orderlies and stretcher bearers. None of them were given a commission in the Volunteers. In the Citizen Army many of the women soldiers were armed and Con, (Constance Markievicz) Dr Kathleen Lynn and Helena Moloney were commissioned. James Connolly told them that the moment the first shot was fired 'there will no longer be Volunteers or Citizen Army, but only the Army of the Irish Republic.'²¹⁷

This clearly demonstrated Connolly's feminist politics. The Irish Volunteers were male dominated and saw women in a more traditional role. Connolly, through the Citizen Army, determined that women were equal to men and thus his attempt to equalise their standing with men in the Army of the Irish Republic.

One of the many under researched questions of Easter 1916 was the choice of the GPO on Sackville Street as the Headquarters of the Provisional Government of the Irish Republic. Other buildings including Liberty Hall, Bank of Ireland, Four Courts and the Mansion House would have sufficed but there is very little primary source material that reflected the thinking and reasoning of Clarke and the wider IRB executive in their choice of the GPO. However, there are several reasons why the GPO might have been chosen. First, it was the centre of the telegraph system in Dublin and therefore contact with all regions of Ireland was in the hands of the Provisional Government. Second, of all of the locations listed above, none had a warren of streets behind them through which an evacuation could be staged; the GPO did. Third, the GPO was a landmark building in Dublin and one which Tom Clarke passed on a daily basis after 1910. The telegraph system was used on Tuesday 25th April between 07:00 and 09:30 and it was established that Volunteers were not active in many areas including Cork, Limerick and Thurles among others.

²¹⁸

This was the clearest proof the Provisional Government had that the Rising was all but confined to Dublin. It is not known if this information was shared with the

²¹⁷ Norman, Diana, *Terrible Beauty, A Life Of Constance Markievicz*, (Dublin, 1991), pp. 128/9

²¹⁸ NLI, MS 33,912 (4), Piaras Beaslai, Papers, p. 14

garrison of the GPO by the Provisional Government but it would seem highly probably that it was not. Clarke was in contact with five people who worked at the GPO and he used the information about the communications therein to good effect. Con Collins, Thomas Dolan, P J O'Keeffe, J McKenna and T Jordan were all warned about their association with the Irish Volunteers and particularly with Tom Clarke but there is little evidence to suggest they were dismissed from Government service.²¹⁹ The telegraph was not the only means of communication at the disposal of Tom Clarke and the Provisional Government. In the Reiss building on the corner of Abbey Street and O'Connell Street, dismantled apparatus from the wireless school was reassembled and operated by Republican forces. Broadcasts were now possible as Piaras Beaslai recalled:

Tuesday 25th April, 5.30. The wireless apparatus in Reis's was now in working order. During the ensuing 20 hours, communiqués, signed by Commandant Connolly, pertaining to the Proclamation of the Republic and the progress of the fight were broadcast.²²⁰

This was the first radio broadcast in communications history and the Irishmen and Irishwomen fighting for Irish freedom in Dublin proclaimed their Republican independence to anyone who had the right equipment to listen in. However, the counter attack by British forces, as Diarmuid Lynch indicated, meant that the radio broadcasts were halted and further ones were impossible because all of the equipment could not be transferred to the GPO.²²¹

However, the night before (Tuesday) Eamonn Dore, who acted as Sean MacDiarmada's bodyguard, was sent with two female companions to deliver messages to Cork and Limerick. He got as far as the bridge leading to Kingsbridge Station but saw a detective who would recognise him and after making sure his two companions entered the railway station, turned and made his way to the GPO. He travelled through Dublin on Wednesday morning and heard Liberty Hall being shelled by the Helga and arrived amid a hail of bullets, slightly wounded, at the GPO. There he reported to Tom Clarke and Sean MacDiarmada that the British were getting close, were in the Rotunda, in Parnell Square, and in the bank on the corner of Great Britain Street and Sackville Street. Dore volunteered to take ten men to hold

²¹⁹ PRO, CO 904/196/62, F 99,

²²⁰ NLI, MS 33,911, (1), Piaras Beaslai, Papers, p. 16

²²¹ Lynch, *The IRB and 1916*, p. 168

up the British advance but Clarke replied, 'We have no authority. Connolly is in charge here and we will report what you have said.'²²² It was at this point that James Connolly went out into O'Connell Street, after Clarke had told him of Dore's observations, and received a flesh wound. On Wednesday night Michael Staines managed to get some sleep:

On Wednesday night I got a sleep in a room set aside for the staff. When I awakened on Thursday morning I saw Tom Clarke lying on another bed. He appeared to be very cold. I remonstrated with him for not taking one of my blankets and he replied that as I was sleeping so soundly he did not wish to disturb me. I gave him one of my blankets.²²³

Michael Staines' account of Tom Clarke's action is very relevant here. Clarke's personality did not change after he and his comrades constituted the Provisional Government and the IRB, the Citizen Army and Irish Volunteers evolved into the Army of the Irish Republic. Indeed, he continued to hold meetings with the other members of the Provisional Government from Monday:

That such meetings took place during Easter Week is not in doubt because Eamonn Dore, Sean MacDermott's bodyguard, saw one in progress on Easter Wednesday in a room at the front of the Post Office with Clarke presiding and MacDermott apparently acting as Secretary.²²⁴

This is highly significant bearing in mind Clarke's earlier statement to Eamonn Dore that Connolly was in charge.²²⁵ Further, after Connolly was shot, The O'Rahilly took control of Military proceedings but the mantle of overall civilian power rested on Clarke and MacDiarmada's shoulders as it did from Easter Monday and as early as 1910 when they wrested power from the older men of the IRB. Clearly, Tom Clarke and Sean MacDiarmada exercised Civilian power and The O'Rahilly exercised a form of Military power which was subordinate to the Civilian power exercised by Clarke and MacDiarmada. Piaras Beaslai underlined the devolvement of power eloquently:

Though neither Clarke nor MacDiarmada held any formal military position,

²²² NAI, BMH, WS 153, Eamonn Dore pp. 1-4

²²³ NAI, BMH WS 384, Staines, p. 17

²²⁴ Mannix, Joyce, *The Story of Limerick and Kerry in 1916*, (Dublin, 1968), p. 352

²²⁵ NAI, BMH WS 153, Dore, p. 4

both, by virtue of their membership of the Provisional Government (and to a greater extent perhaps because of their leadership in the I.R.B.) received recognition as among the commanders in the G.P.O. While in no way encroaching on the prerogative of Connolly as Commandant-General of the forces in Dublin (to whose appointment as much they had been a party) a greater share of directions in the fight devolved on them. Tom was active throughout in that impetuous fashion characteristic of him, and Sean with his usual geniality, thoroughness and imperturbability. Commandant Plunkett lay seriously ill most of the week.²²⁶

Clarke and MacDiarmada organised the IRB on the road to the GPO and they organised the Army of the Irish Republic within the GPO and outlying posts. The argument put forward by Charles Townshend in his recent work on 1916²²⁷ that 'both civil and military supremacy was vested in Pearse-who became a kind of generalissimo-and that the military function was given primacy. Connolly and the other Government members seem to have seen their function as military'²²⁸ is flawed. To establish this logic, Townshend cites the single issue of *War News* wherein Pearse describes himself 'Commanding (sic) in Chief of the Army of the Republic and President of the Provisional Government.'²²⁹

Pearse did not act as a 'generalissimo'. The reality in the GPO was that Connolly commanded military operations while Clarke and MacDiarmada were responsible for civil matters but increasingly took over military operations after Connolly was wounded. Townshend also quoted Sean T O'Kelly who was asked by 'Sean MacDermott' (sic) to act as 'Civil Administrator of the Government of the Republic with a group of others including William O'Brien, Alderman Tom Kelly, and Hanna Sheey-Skeffington.'²³⁰ If this were the case, it cuts across his own argument that Pearse held joint civil and military authority. MacDiarmada asked them to act thus only in the unlikely scenario that he and the other members of the Provisional Government escaped from Dublin to continue the fight across Ireland in a guerrilla war. This would lend credence to the Provisional Government's claim at a peace conference after the war that they controlled the territory they were fighting on.

²²⁶ NLI, Piaras Beaslai Papers, MS 33,912 (4), p. 30

²²⁷ Townshend, *Easter 1916*,

²²⁸ Townshend, *Easter 1916*, p. 161

²²⁹ Townshend, *Easter 1916*, p. 161

²³⁰ Townshend, *Easter 1916*, p. 161

However, by Easter Saturday the plans for a nationwide Rising were in ashes and that was probably why O'Kelly 'heard nothing more of the matter.'²³¹

By Friday 28th April it became increasingly obvious that further use of the GPO as Headquarters was becoming impossible. In the midst of mounting gloom, fire and the inevitability of defeat, Eamonn Dore recalled an incident on Friday afternoon that lifted spirits temporarily:

On Friday Sean MacDiarmadha (sic) called me and said he and Tom Clarke and a few others were going to have something to eat. It was about three o'clock. I went with him upstairs and seated at that table were Tom Clarke, Sean MacDiarmadha, Diarmuid Lynch, Sean McGarry and myself. We had a fried mutton chop each-where they came from I do not know-but I was hungry, it was the first real meal in days. While we were eating Fr. O'Flanagan, Pro-Cathedral, who had come in earlier to attend to the wounded, came into the Room and Sean McGarry said, "Hello Father, would a fellow go to hell for eating meat on this Friday?" "Why, Sean," said he. "Because, Father, I am going to chance it". It was the last joke for a good while.²³²

Tom Clarke, the evacuation of the GPO and surrender

The situation in the GPO became hopeless: the premises were evacuated on Friday 28th April at around 8.40pm. John Twamley related the retreat from the GPO:

When we were retreating from the G.P.O. there was a stampede in Henry Place as the British were machine gunning up Moore Lane from the Rotunda direction. When he got to the corner of Moore Lane and Henry Place, Tom Clarke put up his hand and shouted "One more dash for Ireland"²³³

The new Headquarters of the Provisional Government was now Connolly's 'billet' in a back room at 16 Moore Street. It was here that the decision was taken to negotiate with the British. Civilians, even under a white flag of truce were being shot and killed by the British as they tried to escape from a burning house close to the Republican HQ. This was known to Clarke and the Provisional Government and was one factor in the decision to cease hostilities. Once the decision to surrender was reached, Sean MacDiarmada asked for a white flag and one was hung from the window. Elizabeth O'Farrell was chosen to take a verbal message from Pearse to

²³¹ Townshend, *Easter 1916*, p. 161

²³² NAI, BMH WS 153, Dore, p. 4

²³³ NAI, BMH, WS 629, John Twamley, p. 5

the British. Pearse, Commandant of the Irish Army of the Republic, wanted to negotiate with the British. This was greeted with astonishment by the British who thought she meant the Sinn Feiners but she stuck to her task. The Colonel in charge thought she was a spy and housed her in Tom Clarke's shop which was used to hold prisoners earlier in the week: Sean T O'Kelly was one of them. Elizabeth O'Farrell returned to Moore Street with the news: General Lowe would only accept an unconditional surrender and delivered by Pearse who was to be included in the surrender: essentially, no amnesty.

In the ensuing period, Connolly, Pearse and Plunkett were 'talking quietly and occasionally laughing' and asked Volunteer Joe Good ²³⁴ to find Tom Clarke and bring him to them:

'I went and found Tom. He was standing near a window, silent and alone. A quiet, gentle little man, there was nothing in his appearance to suggest he was an old Fenian of the earlier generation. And, yet, he was the Revolution.'²³⁵

This description epitomised Clarke and the reasons why he succeeded in bringing about the Rising. His persona of drab newsagent disguised the ardent revolutionary who literally conceived and realized insurrectionary action in the years 1907-1916. Good was not in the confidence of the Leaders and did not mention why he was sent to find Clarke. Sean McGarry reported that Clarke and MacDiarmada, realising the futility of further fighting, suggested escape for the GPO garrison:

While negotiations were going on Tom seconded by McDermott suggested that some of us could escape. I decided to stay but I passed the word to several, that there was a way out. I remember telling Luke Kennedy who availed himself of what he regarded as permission and escaped. I do not know how many or if any others did the same.²³⁶

²³⁴ Good, Joe, *Enchanted by Dream: the Journals of a Revolutionary*, (Kerry, 1996). Volunteer Joe Good was born in Dublin in 1895 and died in Dublin in 1962. He wrote *Enchanted Dreams* in 1946 at the behest of his son, Maurice. Despite being written thirty years after the event, I consider the work as a primary source not because Good was in the GPO and worked with Michael Collins in the War of Independence but because the work is relevant. His personal recollections of Clarke's character are believable because they reflect attributes mentioned in other accounts, notably Sean McGarry's evidence contained in BMH WS 368.

²³⁵ Good, *Dreams*, pp. 63-4

²³⁶ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry

This is an indication that Clarke and MacDiarmada were still thinking and finding solutions to overwhelming problems and were not as yet overawed by the prospect of surrender. The inference from McGarry's statement is that Clarke and MacDiarmada were fully aware of the situation and certainly, Clarke was not isolated, acting in despair or lonely. However, after the return of Elizabeth O'Farrell, the Leaders sent her back to General Lowe with a query and at 3.30pm she accompanied Pearse to General Lowe where, outside Tom Clarke's emporium of revolution which the British used as an operations base, Pearse surrendered to Lowe on behalf of the Irish Republic and the Irish Republican Army. Pearse signed the instrument of surrender first and later Connolly added his own statement of surrender. Connolly agreed because he wanted to avoid senseless slaughter but this only applied to his own men in the Citizen Army. The news of the surrender was greeted with open hostility and passion by the men who had fought in the GPO.

No man wanted to surrender but in their hearts they knew that this was the end. The ecstasy, expectation, and confidence of earlier in the week had slowly evaporated and now all that was left was defeat, dejection and despair. This affected Tom Clarke deeply but the suggestion that a story going round in Moore Street of Clarke wanting to fight to the finish can be discounted.²³⁷ A more accurate reflection of the mood of both Tom Clarke and Sean MacDiarmada can be gleaned from Sean McGarry. Despite his closeness to Clarke, McGarry's summations on him, his mood, demeanour, emotional state and general bearing were accurate. Other Witness Statements have underscored McGarry's views but he also revealed aspects of Clarke's, and therefore the Provisional Government's, thinking, discussions and actions. McGarry summed up Clarke's mood once the decision to surrender had been finalized:

The G.P.O. evacuated we found ourselves in Moore St. On Tom's orders I stayed behind with O'Rahilly to make sure the building was cleared. When I got to Moore Street, it took me some little time to locate him. He was then like everybody else very tired and deplored the fact that the burning of the building had deprived us of a glorious stand up fight, in which he felt that even with our limited resources we could give as good as we got. I left him resting and did not see him again until McDermott sent for me. They were both together. Tom was very quiet, McDermott on the verge of tears. McDermott said; "We have to ask the lads to give up themselves and their guns to surrender". There was

²³⁷ Ryan, Desmond, *The Rising*, (Dublin, 1949), p. 253

anguish and bitterness in that speech.²³⁸

Most of the GPO garrison who stayed with the Provisional Government in Moore Street did not want to surrender. With Connolly and Pearse behind British lines, four of the leaders spoke to the garrison in an attempt to demonstrate to them that it would be surrender or annihilation. Tom Clarke was first to address the waiting men:

He did his best to persuade us, and I was impressed by his eloquence. He insisted that only himself and the other leaders would be shot by the British. He mentioned his fifteen years in English jails for his Fenian activities. He told us that there was no need for us to fight to the death, that we had done well already. He said he was confident that as a result of our action the Irish people would now assert themselves. Because of us he claimed, 'Ireland's future has now been secured.'²³⁹

Clarke failed to dissuade the men. Mick Collins also failed, as did Joe Plunkett. Sean MacDiarmada did not. He limped forward and gathered the men into one group. Joe Good recalled how:

MacDermott released his astonishing wide smile, cobalt blue eyes shining into every face. 'Now, what exactly is it,' said he, leaning on his cane like any civil servant in his still entirely civilian suit, 'that you all want to do?'²⁴⁰

He was greeted with silence then questions poured in from the garrison. When everyone had finished saying their piece, he spoke and convinced the men that the way forward was to save Dublin from further destruction and to save the lives of the many poor people who lived close by. Good indicated how MacDiarmada speculated that Volunteers would serve two or three years in English prisons but:

He said we'd 'fought a gallant fight' and we'd only lose now by fighting further. He told us that our only remaining duty now was to survive. He used the word '*survive*', I remember, several times; 'The thing that you must do, all of you, *is to survive!*' He ended by insisting quietly, and still smiling, that 'We, who will be shot, will die happy-knowing that there are still plenty of you around who will finish the job.'²⁴¹

²³⁸ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry

²³⁹ Good, *Dreams*, p. 67

²⁴⁰ Good, *Dreams*, p. 68

²⁴¹ Good, *Dreams*, p. 69

This speech by MacDiarmada was important on two levels. He spoke with the knowledge of the partnership he had forged with Tom Clarke since meeting him in 1908. He spoke powerfully and eloquently to persuade the garrison to stand down and not sully the 'gallant' fight they had been involved in. Realistically, the garrison would have been slaughtered which would have lessened the impact of the trials and executions of the Leaders on public opinion. MacDiarmada gambled on this. He and the other leaders gambled on the Rising, and the forfeit of their own lives, as a spur to Irish people. They wanted to reignite the desire within Irishmen and Irishwomen to live in freedom or to die attempting to achieve that status.

On another level, MacDiarmada encouraged those present, including Michael Collins, to think and realise that the Rising was only the beginning of the struggle. MacDiarmada indicated that those present should continue and finish the job after surviving the punishment meted out by the British for their part in the Rising. At this point, the Rising was a success. Successful because the IRB inspired Irish Republican Army had survived in the field against overwhelming odds and had demonstrated that the British, and their empire, were not omnipotent, all conquering and unbeatable. Successful because the men who marched out of the GPO towards death or imprisonment took with them in their minds and hearts a vision of a Republic declared but not fulfilled. Successful because Tom Clarke and Sean MacDiarmada worked together and inspired, enthused and led a conspiracy within a conspiracy that opened the door to Ireland's future.

Execution

Tom Clarke marched out with the rank and file of the Irish Republican Army from Moore Street, into Moore Lane, along Henry Place, onto Henry Street, up the right hand side of Sackville Street to within one hundred yards of the Parnell Monument.²⁴² Clarke was at the rear of the column which after arriving at the designated spot, laid down their arms. However, Tom Clarke was spotted; Julia Grenan, a nurse in the GPO, described the circumstances:

Two officers came down and one said to the other, 'There's Tom Clarke.' One

²⁴² Mac Lochlainn, Piaras F, *Last Words*, (Dublin, 1990), p. 39

of them called Mr Clarke out of line and several officers came to have a look at him. Another officer looking at Sean MacDiarmid said, 'You have cripples in your army,' and Sean replied, 'You have your place, sir and I have mine, and you had better mind your place, sir.'²⁴³

Tom Clarke was recognised and identified but MacDiarmida's remark reflected the anguish and defiance of defeat and it heralded an implicit warning to the British. The mood of the British was dreadful when they discovered that only around 150 men and women paraded along Sackville Street in the act of surrender. The Irish Volunteers were dishevelled and viewed by the British as traitors: this was the root of the ugly behaviour of the British Officers, NCOs and other ranks which later became evident. Similarly, the approach of Ned Daly and the Four Courts garrison smoking and looking very confident and professional further disturbed the equilibrium of the British. Ordered to stop smoking, the column carried on doing so; Joe Good further recalled:

They were an incorrigible bunch-most of them continued smoking. Then came an order in an unmistakable Etonian accent, 'Stop that smoking.' Some wag in the Daly ranks repeated the order-and accent-with perfect cadence, and this was followed by a peal of laughter from the other side of the street.²⁴⁴

This was probably the last opportunity to let off steam by mocking the English, their authority and pomposity. Their names and addresses were taken and the garrison moved off towards the end of Sackville Street past the GPO. Frank Henderson recalled how:

We were marched over to the green plot inside the railings of the Rotunda Hospital, in front of the main entrance. We were not long there until we were joined by the garrison of the Four Courts area, amongst whom was Ned Daly, the Commandant of the area, and Fionan Lynch. The area of the green plot was extremely small, and we were ordered on no account to stir off the grass but to keep lying down there. Accordingly, we were actually on top of one another. The night spent there can be described without any exaggeration as a night of horror.²⁴⁵

²⁴³ Grenan, Julia, *Story of the Surrender*, *The Catholic Bulletin*, June 1917

²⁴⁴ Good, *Dreams*, p. 75

²⁴⁵ NAI, BMH, WS 249, Frank Henderson, pp. 59-60

However, not all was horror and despite the accumulation of increasingly bitter memories by the survivors of the Rising outside the Rotunda, Tom Clarke displayed a level of humanity consistent with his previous dealings with others and his way of life. James Ryan, the Medical Officer in the GPO, recalled an event during his stay in the Rotunda which fully demonstrated this:

One incident remains clear in my mind. I awoke towards morning and found my head was resting on Tom Clarke's shoulder. 'Are you awake?' he whispered. I said 'Yes.' 'I was waiting,' he said, 'for an opportunity to turn.' I shall always remember this consideration for a tired young man who indeed might easily have been disturbed without suffering any loss of sleep²⁴⁶

Clarke was singled out for particularly brutal treatment by the British forces. He was well known to Dublin Castle and the 'G' men, who served in the political branch of the Dublin Detective Division and were aware of who he was. If they hadn't been information was readily available on him at the British operations centre set up in Tom Clarke's shop on Great Britain Street. One British officer in particular, Captain Lee-Wilson was 'brutal' and a 'maniac'. Eamonn Dore witnessed his brutality in action, 'This devil in human form observed Frank Henderson urinating at day break on Sunday and he snatched a rifle from a Tommy and struck him on the head, knocking him back on the grass.'²⁴⁷ This was only a prelude to further degradation and Clarke, Ned Daly and Sean MacDiarmada were not overlooked. Lee-Wilson took the three to the 'Rotunda Picture House (now The Ambassador),'²⁴⁸ where he proceeded to heap humiliation upon degradation:

Clarke had an old pre-Rising bullet wound in the elbow which healed partly, making it difficult to flex the elbow. Wilson, finding it difficult to take off Clarke's coat because of the stiffness, just forcibly straightened the arm and so reopened the wound, causing terrible pain. Not satisfied with this he stripped all three to the skin in the presence of us and, being broad daylight, in the presence of those nurses etc. looking out of windows.²⁴⁹

²⁴⁶ Ryan, James, *Capuchin Annual*, (Dublin, 1966)

²⁴⁷ Mac Lochlainn, *Last Words*, Eamonn Dore in a letter to the Editor, p. 42

²⁴⁸ Mac Lochlainn, *Last Words*, Dore in a letter to the editor, p. 42

²⁴⁹ NAI, BMH WS 153, Dore, p. 6

Liam Tobin, later one of Mick Collins' men, looked up at Wilson and 'vowed that I would deal with him some time in the future.'²⁵⁰ For physically abusing Clarke, Lee-Wilson put himself in the path of extreme danger:

Some years later, the Collins intelligence network, developed with the aid of Tobin and another 1916 man, Frank Thornton, discovered that Lee-Wilson was acting as a District Inspector of the RIC in County Wexford. He was shot dead.²⁵¹

Tom Clarke was not forgotten by Michael Collins, Liam Tobin, Frank Thornton and other IRB men who served with him in the GPO Garrison. At dawn, Tom Clarke was again taken away again for further interrogation:

At dawn, a posse of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, unarmed, were marched in and placed around us in a cordon, between us and the soldiers... Then...the G-men...recognised some well-known faces in our midst. Very soon Tom Clarke was pointed out to the British officer...who immediately had him hauled off and searched in the usual British fashion, and the Dublin Castle history of his whole life was recounted for his benefit. He came back, cool, careless, dignified, a smile of contempt on his worn face. They hadn't overawed *him* at all events.²⁵²

The British, who were using Clarke's shop as an Operations Base, took him there to question him. The extent of the knowledge that the British had accumulated on him was detailed by Julia Grenan, '...the record of his whole life had been read out to him. His life in prison, his conduct there, his life in the U.S., even to the cut of his clothes he wore there; his life from his return to Ireland up to the present day. Everything, they had everything, he said.'²⁵³ Clarke marched to Richmond Barracks on Sunday 30th April and upon his arrival, wrote a letter to Kathleen Clarke:

Dear K

I am in better health and more satisfied than for many a day-all will be well eventually-but this is my good-bye and now you are ever before me to cheer me-God bless you and the boys. Let them be proud to follow

²⁵⁰ Coogan, Tim Pat, *Michael Collins*, (Reading, 1991), p. 44, Liam Tobin supplied a letter to the author detailing events that occurred in the Rotunda Hospital on Saturday/Sunday 28 April-29 April, 1916

²⁵¹ Coogan, *Michael Collins*, p. 45

²⁵² O'Higgins, Brian, *Wolfe Tone Annual*, (Dublin, 1935)

²⁵³ Grenan, *Story of the Surrender*

same path-Sean is with me and McG, all well-they all heroes. I'm full of pride my love.

Yours

Tom

Love to John a Madge &c.²⁵⁴

Sean was Sean MacDiarmada; McG was Sean McGarry while John was John Daly and Madge, Madge Daly. Clarke wrote this to Kathleen because he thought it would be his last letter to her as he feared that he and the other Leaders would be shot out of hand upon arrival at Richmond Barracks. They were not and Liam O Briain, who was an Irish Volunteer and fought with Mallin and Markievicz in Stephen's Green, recalled how Clarke seemed outwardly to be his usual self:

Tom Clarke was sitting there just as we had seen him twenty times in his shop in Parnell Street, with the same clothes, the same look, quiet, silent, with the suspicion of a smile on his lips now and then. Tom was very satisfied with himself and the situation.²⁵⁵

The anti-climax of Richmond Barracks provided little solace for those who had fought in the GPO. The visions of burning buildings and other un-named horrors disturbed Sean MacDiarmada's sleep but Clarke continued his role of mentor to his protégé. O Briain further recalled that:

After a while Sean fell asleep with his head on Tom's chest...I don't think Tom slept at all-nor did I for a long time...Sean would start a little and we would hear a mutter from him saying "The fire! The fire! Get the men out!" Then you would hear Tom's quiet voice saying gently, "Quiet, Sean! We're in the barracks now. We're prisoners now Sean."²⁵⁶

As prisoner 31, Tom Clarke was tried by court-martial in the afternoon of Tuesday 2nd May 1916 at Richmond Barracks. The presiding judge was Brigadier-General C G Blackadder.²⁵⁷ Tom Clarke pleaded not guilty to the charge that he:

Did an act to wit did take part in an armed rebellion, and in the waging of war against His Majesty the King, such act being of such a nature as

²⁵⁴ Mac Lochlainn, *Last Words*, p. 42

²⁵⁵ O Briain, Liam, *Cuimhni Cinn*, (Memoirs), (Dublin, 1974), pp. 151-2

²⁵⁶ O Briain, *Cuimhni Cinn*, pp. 151-2

²⁵⁷ PRO, WO 71/347, War Office Papers, Trial Proceedings

to be calculated to be prejudicial to the defence of the Realm and being done with the intention and for the purpose of assisting the enemy.²⁵⁸

Sean McGarry saw Tom Clarke when he received notice that he would be tried before a court-martial. This was on Monday 1st May, the day before his trial, and it was the last time McGarry saw him:

The last time I saw Tom Clarke he had received his court martial notice. He regarded it as a formality so far as he himself and the other signatories were concerned but it contained a clause charging him with taking up arms for the purpose and with the intention of helping the enemy. He asked me to point out to everyone that this gave him a truthful plea of not guilty and to plead accordingly. This was passed round and I am sure most of the men who were tried did so plead. On the Tuesday he was taken away. I did not see him again.²⁵⁹

Clarke saw a loophole in the charge and decided that all of the men should plead not guilty. This was a technicality but an important one as the Army of the Irish Republic did not take up arms to assist the enemy, they took up arms to win freedom for their country. The only witness called at Clarke's trial was Second Lieutenant S L King, Enniskillen Fusiliers. He testified that in the GPO, Clarke 'appeared to be a person in authority although he was not in uniform.'²⁶⁰ Clarke asked him a question (unreadable in the file) to which he answered, 'Whilst I was in the Post Office I was very well treated.'²⁶¹ However, it is surprising that none of the DMP Detectives who closely monitored Clarke after 1907 were called to give evidence. After King's response to Clarke's question, 'The prosecution closed. The accused does not call any witnesses and makes no statement.'²⁶² The Prosecutor, William G Wylie later recalled his impression of Tom Clarke. Wylie:

...remember distinctly... Thomas J Clarke. He was the oldest of them and had been a Fenian and a member of the IRB all his life... He did not defend himself either and was perfectly calm and brave throughout the proceedings. He struck me as a particularly kindly man, who could not injure anyone.²⁶³

²⁵⁸ PRO, WO 71/347

²⁵⁹ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry, p. 25

²⁶⁰ PRO WO71/337, NAL, Clarke trial proceedings

²⁶¹ PRO WO71/337, NAL

²⁶² PRO WO71/337, NAL

²⁶³ Wylie, William, Handwritten autobiography, PRO 30/89/1; and also WO71/347, NAL

Wylie professed knowledge of Clarke's background and probably had access to his intelligence file before the trial started. Clarke was taken to Kilmainham Gaol that evening ²⁶⁴ where, in his cells he was told that Maxwell had confirmed the verdict of the court; it was Death by firing squad. Kathleen Clarke was herself a prisoner in Dublin Castle from where she was brought under Military escort to see her husband in Kilmainham. He talked about family matters, the trial, the investment of the GPO and other topics. Kathleen described his state of mind and also, how he saw the struggle for Irish Freedom developing after the Easter Rising:

All through our interview, I was conscious of the exalted, very exalted state of mind he was in. Looking into the future he saw suffering, but at the end freedom. He said, 'My comrades and I believe we have struck the first successful blow for freedom, and so sure as we are going out this morning, so sure will freedom come as a direct result of our action. It will not come today or tomorrow, and between this and freedom Ireland will go through Hell, but she will never lie down again until she has attained full freedom. With this belief, we die happy and satisfied at what we have accomplished.' ²⁶⁵

Thomas J Clarke was shot between 3.30am and 4am on the morning of Wednesday 3rd May 1916. ²⁶⁶ Sean McGarry paid this tribute to his friend and fellow revolutionary:

It is not for us who were the contemporaries of these seven gallant men who signed the proclamation in 1916 to apportion greatness nor indeed to say if any of the seven signatories were great. But, if one may hazard a guess, it is that history will write Tom Clarke as a great Irishman-great in his love for Ireland, great in his faith in her destiny, great in his purpose, great in his achievement and great in his death. ²⁶⁷

Tom Clarke died for what he lived for-Irish Freedom.

²⁶⁴ Barton, Brian, *From Behind a Closed Door, Secret Court Martial Records of the 1916 Easter Rising*, (Belfast, 2002), p 143

²⁶⁵ Clarke, K, *Revolutionary Woman*, p. 95

²⁶⁶ PRO WO35/67, Certificate of execution

²⁶⁷ NAI, BMH WS 368, McGarry

Conclusion

This thesis set out to attempt a revision or re-evaluation of Thomas J Clarke's role in the 1916 Rising within the context of the IRB. I have largely, within the confines of availability, relevance and limited resources adhered to the remarks of the external examiners and made the necessary improvements to be my original thesis. I fully agree with those conclusions and this thesis re-write has benefited substantial from the application of those remarks.

Research objective and aims

In this thesis, I have essentially told Tom Clarke's story. This was the objective of this thesis: to establish his place in Irish history because the only work of any note on Clarke was published in 1936.¹ The work was commissioned by Tom Clarke's widow Kathleen and while it has some very solid information, the tone used by Le Roux is largely hagiographic. I have attempted to avoid the same problem and described Clarke's abilities, personality, habits, weaknesses and strengths, were available, through primary and secondary sources. By doing this, I have attempted to show that opinion on Clarke was based on primary sources and not only on supposition or inference. These tools are indispensable to a historian but they can often convey a message that is on occasion not strictly in line with the primary source evidence. I have used essential dates as a chronology and then overlaid this skeleton of time with analysis, debate and solid research to demonstrate his effectiveness in revolutionary politics and in the IRB during the period under discussion.

I feel that I have demonstrated the aim of this thesis. That is to establish the extent of Clarke's influence and authority in relation to the six other signatories of the 1916 Proclamation, other leading nationalist form varying organizations and to the rank and file of the IRB/Irish Volunteers. Of course his shield of small business man respectability was a charade but only to the general population of Dublin as he was widely known in the Irish-Ireland movement and in separatist and revolutionary political circles. He was also very well known to the Castle authorities who never managed to discover the plans for a Rising from within his circle of revolutionaries.

Research Themes

The research themes in the thesis examined some important aspects of Clarke's life: most of these were apparent throughout his life. These themes included: membership of the IRB for over thirty six years: his early life and parental influences, his almost arrogant belief in himself which saw him travel to England in 1883 where he became involved in a misconceived dynamite plot that cost him over fifteen years of his life. He never really lost that egotism in jail as he broke prison rules often enough to warrant draconian punishment from an unbending system supervised by unbending staff. This theme of prison life was as important to his character as his time in the USA working for John Devoy as his assistant and deputy editor of *The Gaelic American*. His work and leisure experiences in America added a layer of culture and respectability to Clark: his marriage to Kathleen gave his added

¹ Le Roux, Louis, *Tom Clarke and the Irish Freedom Movement*, (Dublin, 1936)

responsibility. The spread of his influence in the IRB and the wider nationalist community is an all embracing theme of his time in Dublin after 1907.

Primary source material

In an attempt to establish a revisionary narrative and analysis of Clarke and his effectiveness in and with the IRB and the Rising of 1916, I managed to find new material in the shape of the Clarke Private Papers before they became the property of the National Library of Ireland. The papers of Madge Daly in Limerick University were an underused primary resource: they contained information which underlined the new information available from the letters of Clarke. Similarly, the Witness Statements of the Bureau of Military History were invaluable because they gave vital clues and hints of Clarke's movement, motives and machinations 1907-1916. The time frame that witnesses were given, 1913-1921, was not strictly adhered to because many of the statements began when they became involved with either Clarke or the IRB which was often before 1913.² The information on the meetings of the Supreme Council was particularly important as it debunked the myth that the SC met rarely after 1914 but it underlined Clarke's authority on the IRB executive as they rarely discussed anything but reports from the districts of that SC members represented.

Summary

In this thesis, I achieved what I set out to accomplish. A thorough investigation and re-evaluation of Tom Clarke's life and effectiveness in the planning, organization and implementation of the 1916 Rising. I have established that he, and to a lesser extent Sean MacDiarmada, was the mainspring, driving force and living exemplar and embodiment of Fenianism that brought about the Rising. He did not do this alone: while Tom Clarke could have started insurrectionary action without Pearse, Connolly, Ceannt, MacDiarmada and MacDonagh, the reverse was highly unlikely.

² Bureau of Military History,(BMH), Witness Statements,(WS), 368, Sean McGarry, 367, Joseph Gleeson, 523, Richard Connolly, 27 & 841, P S O'Hegarty, 277 Alec McCabe, 4 Diarmuid Lynch, 915 Denis McCullough

Appendix

Box list

Thomas Clarke Papers

(ACC 6410, 3 boxes)

(Compiled by Fergus Brady, November 2010, National Library of Ireland)

BOX LIST**THOMAS CLARKE PAPERS**

(ACC 6410, 3 boxes)

(Compiled by Fergus Brady, November 2010)

Box 1 of 3**I. CORRESPONDENCE****I.i. Kathleen Clarke To Tom Clarke, 1899-1908**

- I.i.1.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, March-June 1899
(10 sheets)
- I.i.2.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, August 1899
(7 sheets).
- I.i.3.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, September 1899
(5 sheets)
- I.i.4.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, October-
December 1899
(7 sheets)
- I.i.5.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, January-March
1900
(8 sheets)
- I.i.6.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, April-July 1900
(8 sheets and 2 envelopes)
- I.i.7.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, August-October
1900
(11 sheets)

- I.i.8.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, November-December 1900 (6 sheets)
- I.i.9.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, January-March 1901 (8 items)
- I.i.10.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, April-June 1901 (9 sheets and 2 envelopes)
- I.i.11.** Letters and postcards from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, 1904 (3 letters, 1 postcard and 1 envelope)
- I.i.12.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, 1905 (12 sheets)
- I.i.13.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, 1906 (2 sheets and 1 envelope)
- I.i.14.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, January 1908 (15 sheets)
- I.i.15.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, February 1908 (11 sheets)
- I.i.16.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, March 1908 (16 sheets)
- I.i.17.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, April 1908 (11 sheets)
- I.i.18.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, May 1908 (12 sheets)
- I.i.19.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, May 1908 (12 sheets)
- I.i.20.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, May 1908 (11 sheets and 5 photographs)
- I.i.21.** Letters from Kathleen Clarke to Thomas Clarke, September 1908 (10 sheets)

I.ii. Correspondence: Tom Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 1899-1915.

- I.ii.1.** Letters from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 1899 (45 sheets)
- I.ii.2.** Letters from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, January-August 1900

(22 sheets)

- I.ii.3.** Letters from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, September-December 1900 (17 sheets)
- I.ii.4.** Letters from Thomas Clarke in New York to Kathleen Clarke, January-June 1901 (18 sheets)
- I.ii.5.** Letters from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, including one advertising rate card for *The Gaelic American*, 1904 (25 sheets)
- I.ii.6.** Letters from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, July-August 1905 (20 sheets)
- I.ii.7.** Letters from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, September-October 1905 (19 sheets)
- I.ii.8.** Autograph signed letter from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 9 July 1906 (2 sheets and 1 envelope)
- I.ii.9.** Letters from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 1907 (14 sheets)
- I.ii.10.** Letters from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, February 1908 (10 items)
- I.ii.11.** Letters from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 7 March-29 March 1908 (12 items)
- I.ii.12.** Autograph letters signed from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, March 1908 (11 items)
- I.ii.13.** Autograph letters signed from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 3 April – 30 April 1908 (18 items)
- I.ii.14.** Autograph letters signed from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 1 May-5 May 1908 (4 items)
- I.ii.15.** Autograph letters signed from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 8 May-19 May 1908, with an additional card to 'Mrs J. Wyse-Power' (8 items)
- I.ii.16.** Autograph letters signed from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 20 May – 27 May 1908
- I.ii.17.** Autograph letters signed from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 13 July 1908-Sept 1908 (18 items)
- I.ii.18.** Autograph letters signed from Thomas Clarke to Kathleen Clarke, 1912 and 1915 (5 items)

Box 2 of 3

I.iii. General Political Correspondence of Tom Clarke and Associates

- I.iii.1.** Autograph letter signed to Tom Clarke from John Devoy, 1906 (1 sheet)
- I.iii.2.** Autograph letter signed from Edward Daly to his sister Kathleen Clarke in the USA, 16 February 1907 (2 leaves)
- I.iii.3.** Autograph letters signed and four typed letters signed to Kathleen Clarke from John Devoy 1920-1921.
Autograph letters signed from Devoy to Hon Jeremiah Lynch of Butte, Montana, 20 Jan 1921. (6 items)
- I.iii.4.** Telegram dated 13 December 1921 addressed to Mrs Kathleen Clarke by Diarmuid Lynch, secretary of the Friends of Irish Freedom USA, and Daniel Colahan, chairman (10 pages). Page 1 is separated in two parts, and page 3 is missing.
- I.iii.5.** Autograph signed letter from Thomas Clarke in New York to 'Jim' [Birmingham], 28 January 1900 (4 pages).
- I.iii.6.** Collection of documents including a printed statement of account for *Irish Freedom* (IRB newspaper) for the year 31 October 1911 (12 items)
- I.iii.7.** Typescript carbon copy of letter from Padraig Pearse to Joseph Plunkett, February 1916 (2 pages)

II. THE 1916 RISING, THE EXECUTION OF TOM CLARKE AND THE SETTLEMENT OF HIS ESTATE

- II.i.** Three pencilled sheets regarding the 1916 Rising torn from a small lined notebook by Kathleen Clarke, with a note from her (3 items)
- II.ii.** Legal correspondence from Henry Leman and letters in connection with articles in Thomas Clarke's possession at the time of his death (15 items)
- II.iii.** Original grant of letters of administration in Thomas Clarke's Estate to Kathleen Clarke, 23 June 1916 (1 item).
- II.iv.** Items relating to the settlement of the Thomas Clarke estate (10 items)
- II.v.** Manuscript letter to Tim Healy KC MP signed by five leaders of the Republican internees at Frongoch in October 1916 including

Michael Staines (camp leader), Richard Mulcahy, James Murphy, E.A. Morkan and Thomas D. Sinnott (5 items)

- II.vi.** Manuscripts of payments to Irish Volunteers Dependants Fund etc (30 items)

III. KATHLEEN CLARKE PAPERS, POST 1916

- III.i.** Postcard and five letters (6 items)
- III.ii.** Typed signed letter from Murrays of Belfast, tobacco manufacturers, to Kathleen Clarke, 6 March 1917 (1 sheet)
- III.iii.** Five autograph letters signed and a signed greeting card with covers separated sent from Kathleen Clarke to Holloway to her son John Daly Clarke with two envelopes, September 1918-February 1919 (11 items)
- III.iv.** Autograph letter signed from Mrs Margaret Pearse (mother of Patrick) to John Daly Clarke, January 1919 (1 sheet)
- III.v.** Short cryptic autograph signed letters from Austin Stack to Kathleen Clarke, December 1922-June 1923
Printed copy of 'Dáil Éireann Republican Courts', February 1921.
Printed copy of 'People's Court'. (6 items)
- III.vi.** Cumann na mBan typed letters signed to Mrs T Clarke signed by Bláithnead Ní Charthaigh and Bríd Ní Chongaile (6 items)
- III.vii.** Three page cyclostyled statement 'War on Women in Ireland'.
Three page typescript statement by Úna O'Daly.
Typescript copy of Madge O'Daly cyclostyled statement regarding conditions in Limerick Jail, 1923 (3 items)
- III.viii.** Political documents relating to Kathleen Clarke. (4 items)
- III.ix.** Recollections of Thomas Clarke's commandant Ned of Limerick in Kathleen Clarke's hand, c.1922-1934.
Typescript character sketch of Thomas Clarke attributed to Kathleen Clarke (3 items)
- III.x.** Typed letter signed (3 page folio on official paper, with manuscript amendments dated 20 April 1940) from Eamon de Valera as Taoiseach replying to representation from Kathleen Clarke as Lord Mayor of Dublin.
Typed letter (unsigned) of Kathleen Clarke's letter to Eamon de Valera resigning from Fianna Fáil, May 1943.
3 page reply (signed) from Kathleen Clarke. (8 sheets in total)

Box 3 of 3**IV. JAMES CLARKE, THE FATHER OF THOMAS CLARKE.**

Photo of Sergeant James Clarke.
 British army discharge (1 item)
 Pension certificate (1 item)
 Fragment of service record (1 item)
 Copy of marriage certificate to Mary Palmer. (1 item)
 Page from the book of Maccabees of the Bible with annotations
 recording the birth of James Clarke's four children. (1 item)

V. IMPRISONMENT AND RELEASE (1883-1900)

- V.i.** Letters exchanged between the organiser of the petition to free Thomas Clarke and T O'Neill Russell MP who submitted the petition etc
 Autograph Letter Signed from the Duke of Abercorn declining to support the release of Thomas Clarke.
 List of the prisoners who were in prison with Thomas Clarke. (11 items)
- V.ii.** Manuscript copy of petition to free Thomas Clarke, 1892 (5 items)
 Leaflet from Irish National Amnesty Association, October 1898 (1 sheet)
 Newspaper cuttings, September 1898 (2 items)
 Minutes of evidence, March 1890 (5 items)
- V.iii.** Telegram from Thomas Clarke to his brother Albert in Dublin announcing his release, sent from Bethnal Green, 29 September 1898. (1 item)
 Card advertising Ulstermen's (Dublin) '98 Club's reception to Mr. H. Wilson (Thomas Clarke), in Verdon Hotel, Talbot Street, 23 November 1898 (1 item).
- V.iv.** Report of the Visitors of Her Majesty's Convict Prison at Chatham as to the Treatment of Certain Prisoners convicted of Treason Felony; with Minutes of Evidence and Appendix, London, 1890 (1 item).
- V.v.** Typescript of *Glimpses of an Irish Felon's Prison Life* (20 pages)
 Manuscript draft of P.S. O'Hegarty's introduction (11 pages, missing page 2).
 Maunsel's publishing contract with Mrs. Clarke, 1917.
 Letter from Maunsel's receiver, 1925.
- V.vi.** Collection of documents concerning Thomas Clarke's application for two municipal posts in Ireland: the clerkship of

Rathdown Union, 1899, and a post as supervisor of an abattoir, 1900 (17 items).

VI. ACTIVITIES IN DUBLIN (1907-1916)

- VI.i.** Wolfe Tone Memorial Fund (45 items)
- VI.ii.** Accounts in Thomas Clarke's handwriting (3 pages)
Contemporary trade photographs of continental rifles and bayonets (3 items)
- VI.iii.** Business ledgers containing daily cash and order records for his newsagent and tobacconist shops in Dublin, 1909-1916 and 1915-1916 (2 items)
- V.iv.** Report of the Visitors of Her Majesty's Convict Prison at Chatham as to the Treatment of Certain Prisoners convicted of Treason Felony; with Minutes of Evidence and Appendix, London, 1890 (1 item).

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Report on the Royal Commission on the Rebellion in Ireland; 1916
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National Archives, Dublin

Bureau of Military History Personal Witness Statements

National Library, Ireland

Fred Allan Papers
Thomas Ashe Papers
Piaras Beaslai Papers
Joseph Brennan Papers
Roger Casement Papers
John Devoy Papers Diarmuid Lynch Papers
Pat MacCartan Papers
Joseph McGarrity Papers
Denis McCullough Papers
Leon O'Brion papers, material for a proposed biography of Thomas J Clarke by P J Madden
Sean O'Luing Papers
John Redmond Papers

O'Fiaich Library and Archive, Armagh

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Clarke Private Papers

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O'Donovan Rossa Funeral Committee: sub-committees: this is a full guide to the membership of the thirteen sub-committees that were charged with the planning for the funeral and the implementation of that plan on the day of the funeral.

<Http://www.theeasterrising.eu/090RepublicanBrotherhood/IRB.html>, p 2.