

Gearóid O' Sullivan

Gearóid O'Sullivan (1891-1994) was a native of Skibbereen, County Cork and a second cousin of Michael Collins. He qualified as a Primary Teacher in 1912 and was appointed to St Pauls N.S. Phibsboro, Dublin. He graduated with an MA from UCD in 1915. He followed his cousin into the Irish Volunteers, the IRB and the Gaelic League. During the Easter Rising he served in the G.P.O and was the youngest officer to serve there. He was given the honour to raise the tricolour over the GPO. Following the rising he was interned in Frongoch, Released in Dec of 1916. In 1917 he became Professor of Languages in Knockbeg College Carlow.

While there he continued his involvement with the Volunteers. Before long O'Sullivan was appointed OC of the 1st Battalion Carlow Kildare Brigade which was centred in Carlow town, but included Bagenalstown and Leighlinbridge. The active co-operation of the College President made it possible for O'Sullivan to be so involved in the local Volunteer movement.

When O'Sullivan was subsequently tried for making a seditious speech in his hometown of Skibbereen, Fr Doyle (College President) travelled south to give a character reference for him. It was to no avail however as O'Sullivan was found guilty and sent to prison. On his release he resumed his teaching job in Knockbeg College, all the time retaining an active involvement with the Volunteers.

In 1919 he was summoned to Dublin by Michael Collins to become the Adjutant General of the Volunteers. He was one of the Officers commanding the Dublin Brigade of the Volunteers from whose ranks members of the Famous Squad were drawn. On creation of the National Army in Jan 1922 Gearoid O'Sullivan was appointed Adjutant General of the Irish Forces. He left military life in 1923 to further his career as a teacher and politician.

There was a £3,500 bounty on his head during the War of Independence.

In 1919 he was elected to the Second Dáil Éireann, unopposed as a Sinn Féin TD for the constituency of Carlow /Kilkenny with W.T. Cosgrave. He was re-elected at the 1922 General Election as a Pro-Treaty Sinn Féin TD. During the Civil War he served as Adjutant General of the Irish Free State Army. He did not contest the 1923 General Election as he had been elected to Seanad Éireann in 1922. In Oct 1922 he married Maud Kiernan sister of Kitty Kiernan, Michael Collins sweetheart (this was planned as a double wedding of the Kiernan sisters to Gearoid and Michael). They had four children, Fr. Gearoid Jr (a Vincentian priest and noted academic.), Sibeal, Ann and Sr. Trina.

In 1927, after the assassination of the then Minister for Justice Kevin O'Higgins, O'Sullivan contested the resulting by-election in Laois/Offaly in August that year, he retained the seat for Cumann na nGaedhael. He was re-elected at the next three general elections for the party in the Dublin County constituency. He contested the 1937 General Election under the Fine Gael banner but failed to be elected. In 1938 he was elected to the Seanad, was unsuccessful in the 1939 Seanad Election. He qualified as a Barrister-at-law in that year and commenced a legal career. He died on Good Friday, 25 March 1948 and was given a State Funeral the following Easter Monday - exactly 32 years after the Easter Rising.