

MacBride

SNATCH UP THE TORCH FROM THE SLUMBERING FIRE

TIMELINE

- 1868** Born in Westport, Co. Mayo
- 1883** Went to work in Castlerea, Co. Roscommon
- 1891** Attended the funeral of Charles Stewart Parnell in Dublin
- 1895** Joined the Irish National Alliance
- 1896** Travelled to South Africa to work in the gold mines
- 1898** Took part in the centenary celebrations of the 1798 rising in Johannesburg
- 1899** Commissioned with the rank of Major in the Irish Transvaal Brigade
War declared on October 11th
- 1900** Irish Transvaal Brigade disbanded on 23rd September
MacBride met Maud Gonne in Paris
- 1902** Engaged to Maud Gonne
- 1903** Married Maud Gonne
- 1904** Sean MacBride was born
MacBride returned to Ireland as the marriage had broken down
- 1906** Agreed the legal separation with Maud Gonne
- 1908** Secured employment with Dublin City Council
- 1913** 26th August The Dublin lock out began
Irish Volunteers launched
- 1914** 4th August World War 1 declared
MacBride joined the Irish Neutrality League
- 1915** Joined the committee for the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa
- 1916** 24th April The Easter Rising commenced
30th April, MacBride captured
5th May, MacBride was executed in Kilmainham Gaol



19
2016

Clár Coimhortha
Céad Bliain
Centenary
Programme

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EXHIBITION



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Introduction



Most people know that Major John MacBride was Yeats's rival for Maud Gonne, and that he was executed in Kilmainham Gaol in May 1916, but there is surprisingly little else known about the man who, together with Dr. Kathleen Lynn, made a significant Mayo contribution to the 1916 Rising. Yet Major John MacBride was a household name in Ireland, as a result of his exploits in The Boer War, when many of the leaders of the 1916 Rising were relatively unknown. His name was further enhanced after his lecture tour across the United States, a trip which served to raise awareness of the blow that had been struck against the British Empire. His marriage to Maud Gonne, and their subsequent bitter separation, led to further notoriety. This booklet, and the accompanying exhibition, are an attempt to unravel the complexities of the man that Yeats had once described as a... *"drunken, vainglorious lout"*.

The Westport native has certainly earned his proper context in Irish history. The exhibition is part of Mayo County Council's programme of events to commemorate the 1916 Rising. As well as devising our own programme of exhibitions, talks and artistic responses, we have encouraged communities to become involved by creating their own commemorative events. Our emphasis has been on supporting communities in telling their own stories and re-inforcing a sense of local identity.

I wish to compliment the Mayo County Library staff, under the leadership of County Librarian Austin Vaughan, researcher Pauline Scott, and Hugh Trayer Design Management on producing an accessible, informative and highly colourful exhibition on the life of a Mayo hero, Major John MacBride.

Peter Hynes,
Chief Executive,
Mayo County Council



Early Years

JOHN MACBRIDE WAS BORN ON 7TH MAY 1865, THE YOUNGEST OF FIVE SONS BORN TO PATRICK MACBRIDE AND HONORIA GILL.

By the mid-1890s MacBride was serving on the executive committee of the Young Ireland League which had emerged out of the Young Ireland Society. At that time the movement had about 2,000 members nationally. He also attended meetings of the Celtic Literary Society which aimed to promote Irish cultural expression and the Irish language.

In 1895 MacBride joined the Irish National Alliance, a radical organisation which brought together various strands of Fenianism. MacBride was constantly under surveillance from Dublin Castle detectives and it may have been their unwanted attention that prompted him to leave Dublin in early 1896 to travel to South Africa to work in the gold mines.



John MacBride with his mother Honoria Gill. Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.



Westport Mall (c.1900). Image courtesy of Mayo County Council.



Westport Quay (c.1900). Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

Boer War

IT WAS HIS INVOLVEMENT WITH THE IRISH TRANSVAAL BRIGADE IN THE SECOND BOER WAR THAT BROUGHT MACBRIDE TO NATIONAL ATTENTION.

While events on the ground in Africa had their own significance, the degree of support which the Brigade enjoyed in Ireland and the various efforts to support the Irish Transvaal Brigade would also form part of the lasting legacy of ‘MacBride’s Brigade’.

On December 23rd, eight days after the battle at Colenso, the Irish Brigade was presented with a new flag sent out by the Irish Transvaal Committee on the initiative of Maud Gonne.

MacBride and his brigade fought in the inconclusive battle of Diamond Hill on June 11th and 12th, and by early July they were constantly moving from place to place. On Saturday 1st September, Lord Roberts announced the annexation of the Transvaal and almost three weeks later John MacBride and as few as 20 comrades crossed the Komati out of the disputed territory, marking the end of a 375 day campaign.



Major John MacBride, Irish Transvaal Brigade (1900). Image courtesy of the National Museum.



Illustrated London News (1900) Image courtesy of Hugh Trayer.



Maud Gonne



Maud Goone (c.1890).
Image courtesy of the
National Library of Ireland.

ON ARRIVING IN TRIESTE FROM AFRICA, MCBRIDE MADE HIS WAY TO PARIS WHERE HE MET MAUD GONNE.

She told John O’Leary that she thought that by marrying MacBride, who was a national hero, that she was marrying Ireland.

Many of the couple’s close friends had advised against the marriage, including WB Yeats. While the marriage was short-lived, the couple had a son Jean Seagan or Séan, born on the 28th January 1904 in Coleville.

On the 25th February 1905, Maud Gonne filed for separation in Paris on charges of drunkenness and immorality. MacBride denied the charges. After the separation MacBride was greatly pained by the fact that he couldn’t see his son and his reputation was damaged by the revelations and accusations of the case.



W. B. Yeats.
Image courtesy of the
National Library of Ireland.

Preparing for the Rising

THE EARLY YEARS OF THE NEW CENTURY WERE DIFFICULT FOR MACBRIDE, HE WAS UNABLE TO SECURE REGULAR EMPLOYMENT OR A PERMANENT ADDRESS.

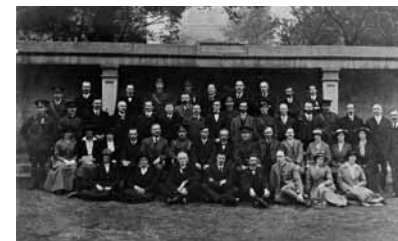
Details of his private life were being printed in the media and he was denied access to his son who was in France. However, he continued to be active with various Irish Nationalists in preparing for insurrection. Because he was so well

known to the British they thought it wise to keep him outside their secret military group planning the Rising.

On the 26th July 1915 O’Donovan Rossa died in Staten Island, New York. He was a legendary figure within the republican movement and his funeral was used as a spectacular propaganda pageant. A committee was formed to bring his body home and to co-ordinate the funeral. MacBride would serve on this along side all the future leaders of the Rising.



Standing at the grave side of O’Donovan Rossa at Glasnevin Cemetery (1915).
Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.



The O’Donovan Rossa Funeral Committee (1915).
Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.



Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street)
Dublin City Centre (Easter 1916).
Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.

Easter 1916

Monday 24th April (Easter Monday)

MacBride offered his services to Thomas MacDonagh and was appointed second-in-command of the 2nd Battalion.

The Jacob's Biscuit Factory was taken over by the rebels and staff were ordered to leave.

Tuesday 25th April

Martial law was declared in Dublin. British reinforcements arrived in Dublin from the Curragh.

Wednesday 26th April

British army snipers exchange fire with members of the Jacobs garrison.

Thursday 27th April

An anticipated overnight assault on the garrison did not materialise, snipers continued to exchange fire.

Friday 28th April

The GPO was abandoned as more British troops arrived.

Saturday 29th April

Five members of the Provisional Government met at No. 16 Moores Street and decided to surrender to prevent further loss of life.

Sunday 30th April

MacBride was influential in persuading members of the garrison in Jacob's that surrender was the best option. He assisted volunteers and members of Cumann na mBan to escape from the factory. MacBride was captured and taken to Richmond Barracks.

Monday 1st May

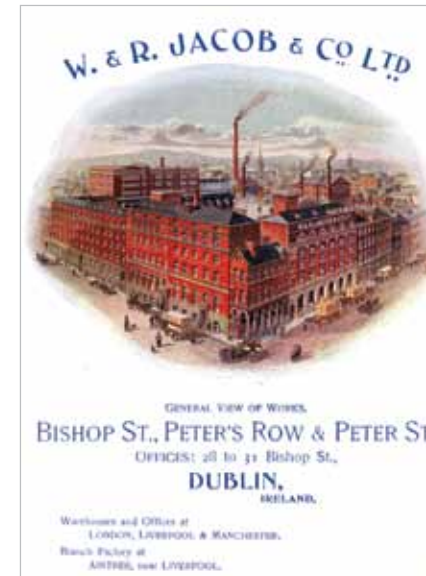
MacBride informed W.T. Cosgrave that his "life-long prayer had been answered. He has said three Hail Marys every day that he should not die until he has fought the British in Ireland."

Tuesday 3rd May

MacBride was court-martialed under the Defense of the Realm Act and transferred to the nearby Kilmainham Gaol.

Wednesday 3rd May

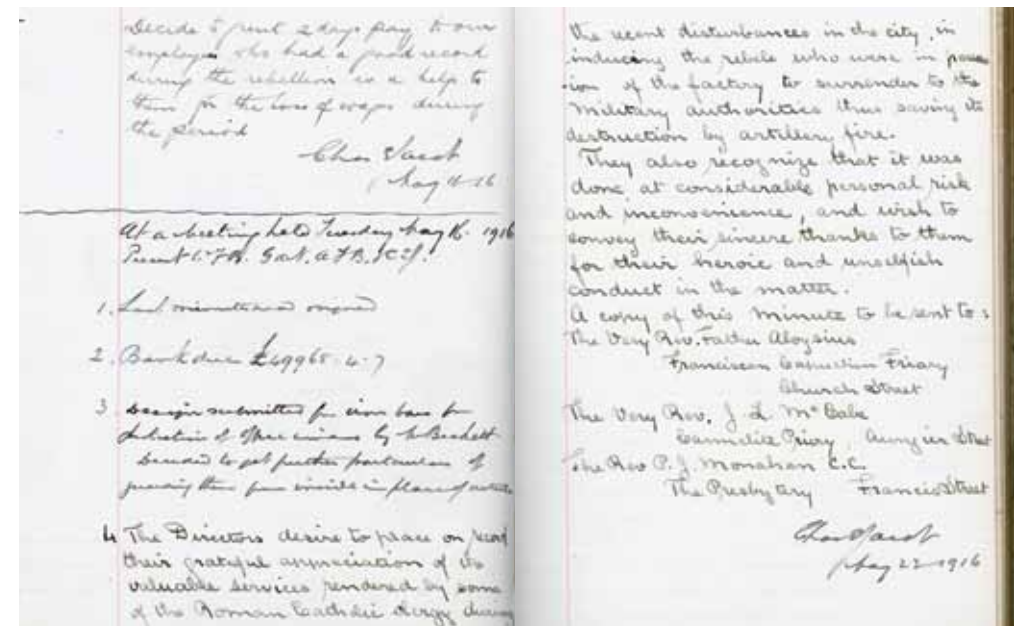
Major John MacBride was executed by firing squad at 3.47am.



Advertisement for Jacob's (c.1910).
Image courtesy of Dublin City Library, Jacob's Archive.



The Irish War News (April 25th 1916).
Image courtesy of Hugh Trayner.



W. & R. Jacob & Co. Ltd Management Book (1916).
Image courtesy of Dublin City Library, Jacob's Archive.



Court-Martial & Execution

WHEN JOHN MACBRIDE WAS SEARCHED AFTER THE SURRENDER, A SINGLE SHEET OF PAPER WAS TO PROVE ULTIMATELY DAMNING. TYPED ON THE BACK OF A JACOBS'S FACTORY LETTERHEAD AND SIGNED BY THOMAS MACDONAGH, IT PROCLAIMED MACBRIDE APPOINTED TO THE RANK OF COMMANDANT.

His charge sheet read:

“Did an act, to wit, did take part in an armed rebellion and in waging of war against His Majesty the King, such act being of such a nature as to be calculated to be prejudicial to the Defense of the Realm and being done with the intention and for the purpose of assisting the enemy.”

MacBride was to be executed by firing squad the next day.

“I have looked down the muzzles of too many guns in the South African war to fear death and now please carry out your sentence.”



Major MacBride being marched off under arrest. Image courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.



Major John MacBrides Cell, Kilmainham Gaol. Images courtesy of Hugh Trayer.



Death Certificate of MacBride (May 5th 1916). Image courtesy of the National Museum.

Legacy

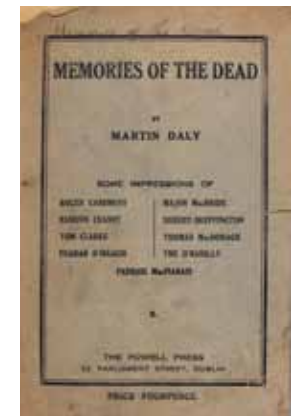
JOHN MACBRIDE UNDERWENT TWO TRANSFORMATIONS DURING HIS SHORT LIFE OF 48 YEARS.

The first saw an ordinary middle class shop worker with links to the Irish Republican Brotherhood transformed into a folk hero of the Transvaal. The second saw a middle-ranking corporation employee transformed into a national hero, following the Easter Rising of 1916.

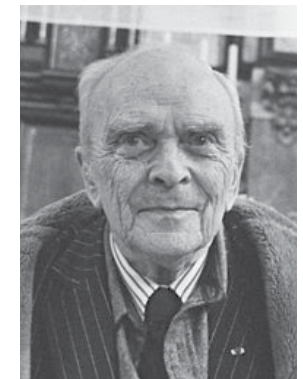
The execution of John MacBride was to have a lasting impact, particularly on his family. His former wife began to use the name Maud Gonne MacBride.

John MacBride's actions also had a profound effect on the future of his son Seán. He joined the IRA and was involved in the War of Independence. During the Civil War, he was on the anti-treaty side. Seán was imprisoned by the government of the Irish Free State and later founded Clann na Poblachta and became Minister for External Affairs in the coalition government of 1948-1951. He retired from politics and was a founder member of Amnesty International in 1961.

He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1974.



Memories of the Dead. Image courtesy of the Jackie Clarke Collection.



Seán MacBride (26.1.1904 - 15.1.1988)

