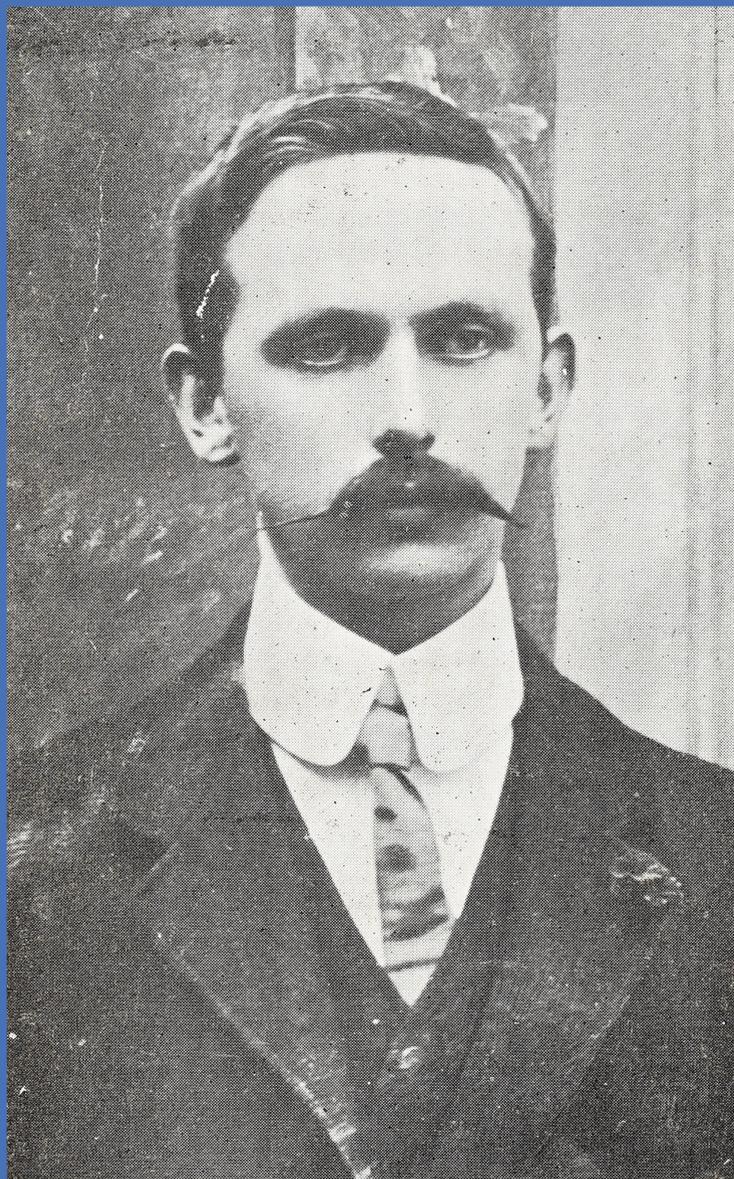


Éamonn Ceannt



Éamonn Ceannt -born Edward Thomas Kent- was born on 21st September 1881, in Ballymoe, County Galway, in the west of Ireland. Ceannt's father was Constable James Kent of the Royal Irish Constabulary and his mother was Joanne Galway. Éamonn was the second youngest of six children-William Leeman, John Patrick, Ellen, James Charles, Michael, Éamonn and the youngest, Richard. The family were very religious Catholics, and Éamonn remained a devout catholic all his life.

In 1881, James Kent was transferred to county Louth, on the east coast of Ireland. Initially, James was based in Drogheda, and then in Ardee, where Éamonn attended the De La Salle brother's primary school.

In 1892, after thirty years of service in the Royal Irish Constabulary, James Kent retired, and seeking to improve his children's education and future prospects, the family moved to Dublin.

The family first moved into 26 Bayview Avenue in Fairview, on the north side of the inner city- just a twenty-minute walk to the city's main street, Sackville Street (now O'Connell street). Éamonn, now at the age to begin his secondary level education, attended the Christian Brother's O'Connell school on North Richmond Street- Séan Heuston (Captain of the Mendicity Institute during the Easter Rising) and Con Colbert (based at Marrowbone Lane Distillery during the Easter Rising) also attended this school. Éamonn was an excellent pupil, and won a number of awards during his time in school.

In 1895, tragedy struck the Kent family, when Joanna, Éamonn's mother, died from blood clots in the leg. Éamonn was just thirteen years old at the time. In spite of this, Éamonn remained focused on his studies and in 1896 received yet another award (an exhibition-junior grade-worth £20).

Upon leaving school Éamonn tutored boys at Skerries academy, preparing them for university and civil service exams. In 1900, he became a clerk in the city treasurer and estates and finance office. Éamonn and his brother Michael both became members of the Dublin Municipal Officers

Association, set up for the 'purpose of recreation and mutual advancement of corporation employees'. He was later elected chairman of the association. Éamonn worked in the corporation for seventeen years, and according to his wife, Áine, he was only late once, when he set off on his bicycle, but a storm blew him off.

Though Éamonn Ceannt could not be faulted for his work in the corporation, he was not passionate about it- his passion lay in the Irish language and music, and found it through the Gaelic League (what is now Conradh Na Gaeilge). Though the league did not have a political bias, it attracted many Irish nationalists, with various viewpoints. Ceannt joined in 1899, and it was here that he met Patrick Pearse and Eoin MacNeill for the first time.

Ceannt had a love for Irish music, and played a number of instruments, though the Uilleann pipes were amongst his favourites. In 1900, Ceannt set up the Dublin Pipers Club with Edward Martyn, and became secretary of the club. He also printed and wrote for the club's journal, which was set up to promote the club. The first issue of An Píobaire was July 5th 1901. While on a trip to Rome in 1908, Ceannt performed the Uilleann pipes for Pope Pius X.

It was also through the Gaelic League that Ceannt met his wife, Frances Mary O'Brennan, who would change her name to Áine. Ceannt and Áine were married in 1905, and their only child, Rónán, was born a year later in 1906. Áine fully supported her husband's political activities. Indeed, after his execution in 1916 she herself became involved in Irish politics. She was the vice-president of Cumann Na mBan from 1917-1925, was an anti-treaty activist during the civil war and spent a year in Mountjoy prison during this time. She was also a founding member of the White Cross.

In 1907, Ceannt joined Sinn Féin, which opposed home rule and promoted the concept of national independence. Ceannt was eventually elected onto the national council of Sinn Féin. He was sworn into the Irish Republican Brotherhood by Seán Mac Diarmada in December 1912 and was elected to the provisional committee of the Irish Volunteers when it formed in November 1913. With the departure of the National Volunteers under John Redmond in 1914, Ceannt, Patrick Pearse and Joseph Mary Plunkett were elected to key positions within the Irish Volunteers. Ceannt also became commandant of the 4th Battalion of the Dublin Brigade in March 1915.

Ceannt was soon adopted into the Military Council of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, with many of their meetings taking place in his and Áine's house in Dolphin's barn. On Easter Monday of 1916, Ceannt led 120 men of the Irish Battalion of the Irish Volunteers into the South Dublin Union (SDU); they held part of the SDU until they surrendered on Sunday 30th April.

Ceannt was court-martialled and executed by firing squad at Kilmainham Gaol, on May 8th 1916, aged 35 years old.

In his final letter to Áine, dated to 2.30am, 8th May 1916, he writes:

"What can I say? I die a noble death, for Ireland's freedom. Men and women will vie with one another to shake your dear hand. Be proud of me as I am and ever was of you... ..You will be- you are, the wife of one of the leaders of the revolution"