

Republican SINN FÉIN Poblachtach

Theobald Wolfe Tone Commemoration
Bodenstown, County Kildare



2014

Speaking at the annual Republican Sinn Féin commemoration at the grave of the father of Irish Republicanism, Theobald Wolfe Tone, in Bodenstown, Co Kildare on Sunday, June 22, Ard Chomhairle member Peig King (Dublin and Tyrone) said:

“It is an honour to be here today at the grave of Theobald Wolfe Tone, the Father of Irish Republicanism. He and his fellow United Irishmen began the long struggle for a free Irish Republic and so June will always find Republicans gathering together at Bodenstown to honour him. It is also a time to ask ourselves are we doing enough to remove the English presence from our shores.

“This year is the centenary of Cumann na mBan and it is fitting that we remember the part that Irish women played since the 1790s in the fight for Irish freedom and also for equality.

“During the 1798 Rebellion many women throughout Ireland played a prominent role in the United Irishmen. Among them were Anne Forde, of Garrysackle, Co Wexford; Peg Kavanagh was one of many women who conveyed dispatches to Michael O’Dwyer and Joseph Hall in their hiding place in the Wicklow mountains. Also Susan O’Toole, of Annamore and Mary Doyle of New Ross.

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“Equally brave were Betsy Gray of Granshaw, Co Down, who on June 13 followed her brother George and Willie Boal to the fatal field of Ballinahinch, where she fought bravely at their side during the entire conflict and died with them in the battle.

“The indomitable Mary Anne McCracken, sister of Henry Joy also she took part in the 1798 Rising. After the Rising in Antrim Henry Joy was arrested and Mary Anne was present at his trial and later at the scaffold in Rosemary Street, Belfast when he was executed. She also watched Thomas Russell, “the man from God knows where” pay the supreme sacrifice at Downpatrick. Other heroines of 1798 include Teresa Malone of Carlow, Mary Loftus and her daughter Brigid of Wicklow, Mrs Oliver Bond, Mrs Henry Sheares and Lady Pamela Fitzgerald.

“The 1803 Rising saw the involvement of Anne Devlin with Robert Emmet in planning the Rising and after it failed she carried messages between his hideout in the Dublin mountains and his associates in Dublin. She herself was later arrested and tortured and despite attempts at bribery and torture she refused to give any information regarding Emmet or any others who might have participated in the Rising.

“The main involvement of women in the Young Ireland Movement was through its official paper The Nation. Many women wrote their contributions to The Nation under a pseudonym – Speranza, Mary, Eva, Thomasine and Finola wrote verse and prose that inspired nationally-minded people during the terrible period of the Great Hunger between 1845–1855.

“Following the unsuccessful Fenian Rising of 1867 women worked actively to relieve the sufferings of the Fenian prisoners in English jails and for a general amnesty for all political prisoners.

“The Ladies Land League was formed on January 31, 1881 and a remarkable group of women emerged as its leaders: Anna and Fanny Parnell, Clare Stritch, Hannah Lynch and Harriet Byrne, Mrs Moloney, Miss O’Leary, sister of the Fenian John O’Leary, Jenny Wyse Power and the writer Katherine Tynan, to name but a few.

“Women were again very much to the fore in the Amnesty Association which was revived in the early 1890s in order to campaign for the release of the prisoners serving long sentences in English jails following the Fenian Dynamite Campaign of the 1880s. Among the Association’s most active members were Maud Gonne, Eithne Carbery and Alice Milligan and their continued their work until 1898 when the last of the Fenians, Tom Clarke, was released after serving fifteen-and-a-half years in jail.

“In October 1900 following a very successful event held in opposition to the visit of the English Queen Victoria the inaugural meeting of Inghínidhe na hÉireann took place. Maud Gonne was elected President. Inghínidhe’s main objective was the re-

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establishment of the complete independence of Ireland. In 1908 Helena Moloney launched the journal of Inghínidhe – Bean na hÉireann.

“The Irish Women's Franchise League was formed in 1901 and women like Hannah Sheehy Skeffington were very active in the campaign for votes for women. The Suffrage Movement was in full swing in England and women were being imprisoned as they held public meetings, protest marches, including one which led to windows being broken in Dublin Castle. Over 1,000 women were imprisoned in England and in Ireland at one stage, under grim conditions. In England women were forcibly fed but were not daunted and continued their protests on their release.

“The Proclamation of 1916 guaranteed universal suffrage in a New Ireland.

“In 1914 Cumann na mBan was founded under their own leadership, Constitution and Rules. They were from the beginning a military organisation, taking part in all aspects of the struggle, during the 1916 Rising, the War of Independence and were the first Republican organisation to reject the Treaty of Surrender with a large majority in 1922. For the past 100 years Cumann na mBan has continued to take a full part in the struggle to end the British presence in Ireland and many members have made the supreme sacrifice and are on the Cumann na mBan Roll of Honour.

“The organisation designed and produced the Easter Lily in 1926 and members made them by hand for many years while at the same time carrying out their Republican duties like attending parades, protests, taking part in colour parties, guards of honour and many other activities that were asked of them and which cannot be mentioned here today! This they did while running a home and working for a living. They also set up and trained Cumann na gCailíní in marching, history, culture, language and discipline.

“I myself have been a member for more years than I care to remember and I would like to mention here two great Republican women from whom I got my training: Síle Humphreys and Aoife Taffe. Also a comrade I have always highly respected was Margaret (Maggie) Doyle, later to be Maggie Langsdorf.

“When the Six Counties erupted in 1969 and the nationalist people were attacked Cumann na mBan was to the fore again along with the Irish Republican Army in firstly the defence of the Occupied Six Counties and then in taking the war to the British. The long struggle which ensued saw murder, internment, torture and hunger strikes and Cumann na mBan continued in its work in all things pertaining to the fight for freedom.

“Cumann na mBan is still an active organisation and rightly takes it's place in the Republican Movement.

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“The 1920s saw the fake Border put around our six north-eastern counties when the British passed a law partitioning our country and brought the King of England to Belfast to open the Six-County partitionist assembly. The Black-and-Tans murdered many Irishmen and women, including three brave Roscommon men, Michael Carty, Loughlinn, Captain John Vaughan, Clonsuck and Lieut Ned Shannon, Loughlinn. Following the Treaty of Surrender Republicans were attacked in the Four Courts by the Free State, backed by the English and bombarded with British guns.

“In the 1930s the IRA was banned by de Valera's Free State government who are still claiming to be Republicans. They passed the Offences against the State Act which saw many good men in jail because of love of their country. In 1947 Frank Driver gave hope when he made it known to the world here at this grave in Bodenstown that the Irish Republican Movement was indeed intact and would continue to function until Ireland is free from foreign interference.

“The Republican Movement is still here today and remember: it is in the hands of everyone who believes him/herself to be Irish. We are the people who will keep the spirit alive and eventually unite our country. We must never forget the words delivered by Frank Driver in 1947 “until Ireland is free from foreign interference”. Let this be our cry.

“I ask you to disregard the snide remarks from those who claim they can solve Ireland's problems by administering British rule in Ireland. Hundreds of years have taught us it is not the way forward. We must teach the younger people the history of Ireland when under foreign law, help them to understand that a nation without freedom, justice, language, culture and equality is a nation which will disappear from the maps. I ask you, is that the nation that as Irish people we wish to pass onto future generations, where they will grow up without nationality, culture, freedom of speech, living in no-man's land? Let us remember our patriot dead who died for love of their country and the future generations. They had ideals and their ideals are our ideals. Let us ensure those ideals are passed on to future generations.

“Irishmen and Irishwomen of all ages must work together and demand our rights as a free nation. Follow the ideals of all the thousands down the years who fought and died for a free country and never let ourselves be subservient to any foreign power. Let us study our history, look at our Republican calendar all down the years of imprisonment, torture and death of brave Irishmen and women and our youth. Ask yourself why. It is because they believed in the freedom of their country and ours but also because they would not kneel down and say “yes sir”. The foreign invader England, having lost their subjugated colonies, hope to hold on to Ireland. Yes, I say, Ireland, because Ireland, North and South, is still bending the knee.

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“Irishmen and women, wake up now before you are buried alive within the English law and more recently the laws of the EU. The only question this country is asking the EU is “how high shall we jump?” Let us tell the EU, England and others, we are our own nation and no one is going to own us and tell us what we can or cannot do.

“No one should be afraid or ashamed to come out and speak their mind or join in and support necessary protests. Once again I urge everyone to wake up and join the Republican Movement, the one and only true organisation willing to gain Ireland’s freedom. Become the citizen who is willing to stand up and fight for what is rightfully yours. The Republican Movement has the belief and experience to guide you in the path to freedom with justice. The fight has begun but must be finished.

“Men and women of all ages, I call on you to join Republican Sinn Féin now. Your country needs you to finish what our brave men and women have fought and died for. Don’t forsake them. You have the choice to select the branch most suitable to your abilities. Cumann na mBan, Cumann na gCailíní, Na Fianna Éireann, writing to POWs, collecting for CABHAIR etc so they can assist the families of the prisoners; many opportunities to further the cause. We have come this far, are we going to sit back now and ignore the sacrifices of our patriot dead for the future generations. Or are we going to continue the campaign our Republican comrades fought and died for?

“Let us all say together: Forward March to freedom, when all citizens will be greeted as equals. I say to every true Irishman and woman: stand up and be counted now. Do not waste time on those who have gone their separate ways because of jealousy, fright, ignorance or whatever reason. We have no time to waste. Let us join hands and march to freedom. I say to those who may have got tired, just step back, give what support you can, but a true Irish person will not stoop to maligning those who are carrying on the fight. That is a coward’s way out.

“Let us leave here today resolved and determined to finish the fight for freedom. Let us have less talk and more action. Believe in yourself and each other. The work is there to be finished and each one of us has a duty to help leave our country – Ireland – with justice and freedom for our children, their children and their children’s children. Never mind what any other organisation or political party is doing. Let US all march to freedom. We can do it if we have faith in ourselves and faith in our ever-supporting friends at home and abroad.