

Gearóid Ó Súilleabháin

Our interest in Gearóid Ó Súilleabháin began when we discovered he was born in Coolnagurrane Skibbereen, our town land. He was actually born next door to one of us. At first it didn't really mean anything to us but as we learnt more about his life and achievements we began to feel it was a great honour. We would imagine that Coolnagurrane has changed an awful lot since Gearóid's time - the road would have been a boreen more suited to horse and carts than cars. There was a big wood on the boreen which was cut down in the 1950s by Fullers Sawmills, Skibbereen. As his home in Coolnagurrane was raided many times by the police, you would wonder did he use the wood to hide in. One of our neighbours remembers when he was young helping his father to clear the rubble of the house and the rubble was used as part of the foundation of the house that our neighbours built on Gearóid's site. He also remembers finding relics amongst the ruins, sadly these must have been destroyed as they didn't realise the importance of them. Over the years the site has passed from O'Sullivan's to Clerks to another O'Sullivan family to Hourihans and finally to its current owners Mc Carthys.

We spoke with Gearóid's nephew Mr Diarmuid Mc Sweeney from Baltimore. He told us about what he remembers about his uncle. He began to tell us that like us, he didn't know he was that famous until the one hundred year commemorations of the 1916 Rising. From what he remembers his mother telling him, "The Troubles", as they were called, were not really talked about but at the same time everyone was affected by them. From a young age Gearóid was interested in an independent Ireland and went on to fight for that cause.

When he was young, he went to the secondary school at the time in Skibbereen called Duggans. Before the Rising he was a teacher in Cork city, Dublin and the Wicklow area. He had a double wedding with Michael Collins, his cousin. Gearoid had three daughters. In the Rising, he fought in the GPO with some of his brothers. Gearoid raised the tricolour over the GPO at Michael Collins's request. Diarmuid remembered his mother going to Gearoid's funeral in Dublin. At that time it took almost a day to get to Dublin so he didn't go to the funeral but remembered seeing pictures of it. Diarmuid explained to us that he hardly knew his uncle and that he was just like any "old man" - but an uncle to him. He only met Gearoid about six or seven times as Gearoid lived in Dublin and Diarmuid lived in Baltimore. Diarmuid never remembers seeing him in uniform as the 1916 rising was over before Diarmuid was born. Diarmuid's mother didn't really talk to him about the troubles. What Diarmuid knows about Gearoid is what he was told and what he read. He didn't see any medals from Gearoid as they went directly to his immediate family.

Mary Whalley and Saoirse Lucey
St. Joseph's N.S



Us and Diarmuid Mc Sweeney in his house on 2nd February 2017.

1916



1966

IÚBAILE ÓRDA EIRÍ AMAĈ NA CÁΣZA.

**TÓZAĎ AN LEAC SO MAR ĆUIMNE AR
GEARÓID Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN
A KUZAD I DPARÓISTE AN SCIODAIRÍN
D'ÁRDUIZ ŪRAC NA SAOIRSE ÓS CIONN OIFIZ A' POIST
LUAN CÁΣZA, 1916,
AZUS A ĆROID ZO CRĎDA SAN EIRÍ AMAĈ.**

**ERECTED IN PROUD MEMORY OF
GEARÓID Ó SÚILLEABHÁIN
BORN IN THE PARISH OF SKIBBEREEN
HOISTED THE NATIONAL FLAG OVER THE G.P. O
EASTER MONDAY, 1916.**

SOLAS NA ŪFLAITĆEAS DÁ ANAM.

NOILLAIZ 1966.

D. MURĎU DEANNTRAÍ

Plaque dedicated to Gearóid Ó Súilleabháin
at the Town Hall in Skibbereen.



This is a picture of the house that is built where Gearóid lived. (Coolragumane, just outside Skibbereen.)