

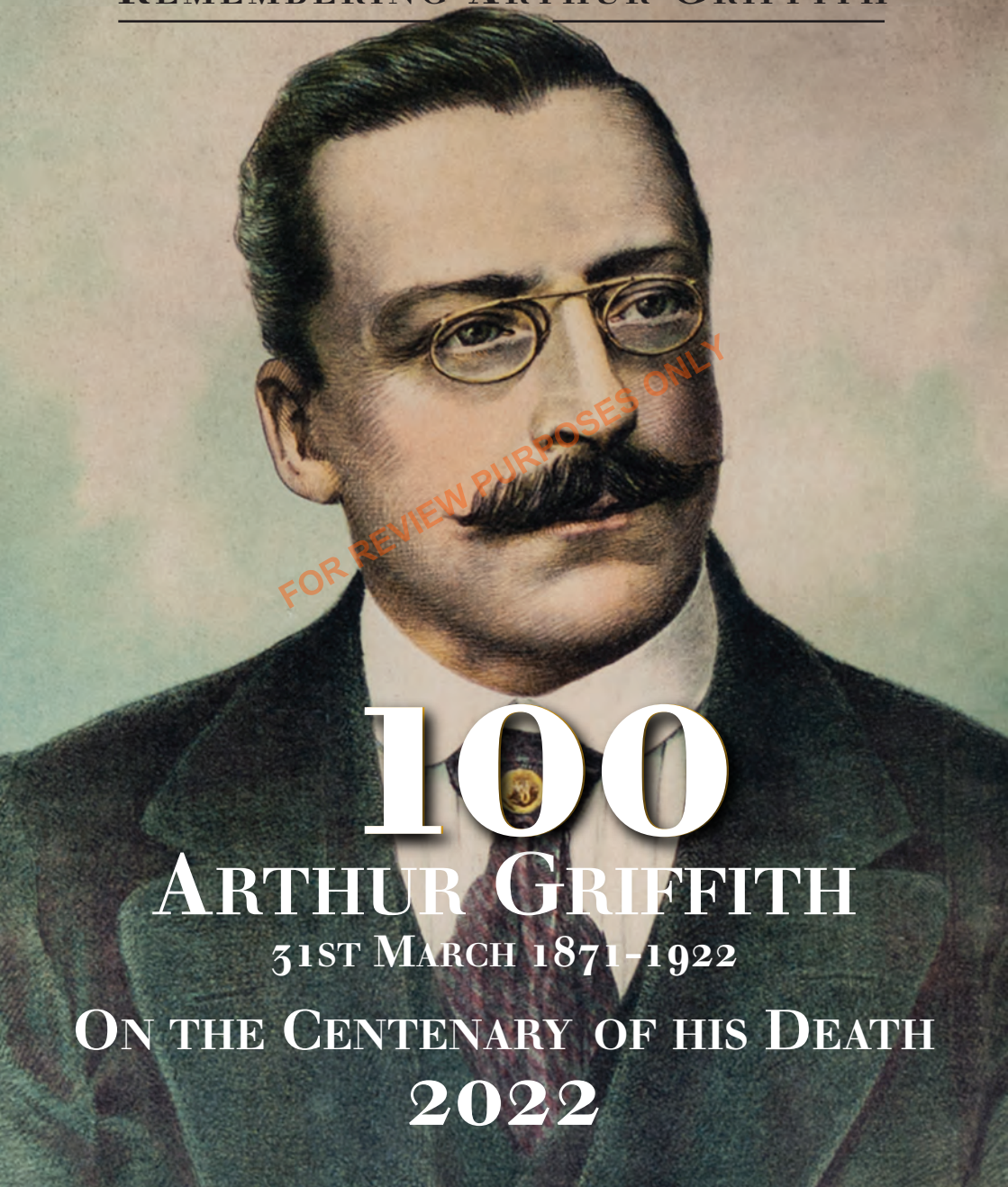
CUT & PASTE

March 31st

2022

Volume 5

REMEMBERING ARTHUR GRIFFITH



FOR REVIEW PURPOSES ONLY

100

ARTHUR GRIFFITH

31ST MARCH 1871-1922

ON THE CENTENARY OF HIS DEATH

2022

In fond Remembrance.



ARTHUR GRIFFITH,

DELIVERER of his COUNTRY,

TEACHER and STATESMAN.

Died 12th August, 1922.

—“Benmore”

*It is high treason for an Irishman to argue with the sword the right of his small nationality to equal political freedom with Belgium, or Serbia, or Hungary. It is destruction to the property of his printer now when he argues with the pen. Hence, while England is fighting the battle of Small Nationalities, **Ireland** is reduced to Scissors and Paste.*

—Arthur Griffith, Editorial, *Scissors and Paste*, Issue 1,

CUT & PASTE 2022

100TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION MARKING THE UNTIMELY DEATH OF ARTHUR GRIFFITH

FOR REVIEW PURPOSES ONLY

“He was gentle and simple and lovable. He was terrible, unpersuadable and right. And when one thinks of his gentleness and simplicity and of all he renounced, and when one remembers the long, solitary fight he made of it the heart almost breaks to think of the cruel suffering Fate imposed on this shy, modest, uncomplaining little man.”

— Oliver St John Gogarty,

quoted by JB Lyons *Oliver St John Gogarty, the man of many talents*, Blackwater, Dublin, p 124, *Free State*, 19 August 1922



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Airbrushing Arthur Griffith's Memory

Felix M Larkin

Arthur Griffith is an almost forgotten man, but he deserves to be remembered both for his journalism and for the part he played in the foundation of the modern Irish state. He was a brilliant polemicist, and his ideas shaped the final phase of Ireland's struggle for independence and the early politics of the new state.

He was born in Dublin in 1871, and trained as a printer. Active in advanced nationalist circles from an early age, he first came to prominence in opposing the Boer war; he had spent a brief period in the Transvaal in 1897–98. In 1899 he started the *United Irishman*, the first of a number of radical newspapers that he edited. It was replaced by a paper called *Sinn Féin* in 1906 and, after the latter's suppression in 1914, by *Scissors and Paste* and later by *Nationality*. He wrote most of the material for his papers himself, and he followed his own agenda in each of his papers. Indeed, he once turned down a job as a leader-writer on the *Freeman's Journal* so that, to quote one student of his journalism, "he could continue through his [own] newspapers to try to break up what he saw as Irish political apathy and torpor".¹

The most significant of Griffith's ideas was that Ireland's elected representatives should refuse to sit in the West-

minster parliament, but instead set up a rival assembly and administration at home. His model was the Hungarian nationalists who secured their own parliament in 1867 through a policy of abstention from the Imperial Diet in Vienna. Austria and Hungary had thus become separate political entities linked by the Emperor in a "dual monarchy", and Griffith concluded that a similar arrangement might satisfy both unionist and nationalist opinion in Ireland. He explored these themes in a series of articles in 1904, reprinted as *The Resurrection of Hungary: a parallel for Ireland*. He saw another model for "dual monarchy" in Grattan's parliament and the "constitution" of 1782.

In addition, influenced by the German economist Friedrich List, he advocated a system of protective tariffs to encourage native Irish industries; this remained a guiding principle of economic policy in independent Ireland from the 1930s until the 1960s. Likewise, he sought to foster a distinctive Irish culture; he published Yeats and other Irish authors in his newspapers, and supported the use of the Irish language. However, he was among those who condemned Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* for its unedifying portrayal of Irish rural life. Moreover, his writings—for example, on the

Dreyfus affair—reveal unfortunate racist, even anti-Semitic, tendencies.

Aiming to unite all strands of advanced Irish nationalism behind his policies, Griffith launched his “Sinn Féin” programme in November 1905. The Sinn Féin party was founded in 1907. It attracted some initial support, but in the years 1909–16 it was outflanked by a re-invigorated Irish Republican Brotherhood. Griffith, however, retained a high public profile through his prolific journalism – with the result that the name “Sinn Féin” was attached to almost all advanced nationalist activity, including the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin. Griffith took no part in the Rising, but was nevertheless arrested and interned afterwards. After his release in December 1916, the Sinn Féin party became the main focus of activity for those committed to furthering the aims of the Rising. In 1917 he stepped down as party leader in favour of Éamon de Valera, the senior surviving veteran of the Rising—an act of incredible political generosity, putting the interests of his party and of the country before his own self-interest. He recognised that he lacked the charisma necessary for the leadership of a popular movement; he was essentially a “backroom” man—a man of ideas, not of action.

While once more in jail, Griffith won the Cavan East by-election on an abstention platform in June 1918. Sinn Féin subsequently enjoyed an overwhelming victory in the 1918 General Election. The successful Sinn Féin candidates then met in Dublin in



National Archives website

A beautiful and expressive drawing by John Butler Yeats capturing John Millington Synge during rehearsals, 1907.

January 1919 and, styling their assembly Dáil Éireann, proclaimed themselves the parliament of the Irish Republic. The War of Independence that followed derived legitimacy from Sinn Féin’s electoral success, though Griffith himself had considered that violent methods could not succeed in winning Irish independence and had developed his abstention policy as an alternative to violence.

Griffith held the posts of minister for home affairs and minister for foreign affairs successively in the Dáil Éireann governments of 1919–22, was acting president of Dáil Éireann—i.e. head of the government—when de Valera was in the United States from mid-1919 to

end-1920, and in January 1922 succeeded de Valera as president after the Dáil approved the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921. He had led the Irish delegation that negotiated the Treaty, and was the first of the Irish delegates to agree to sign it. The Treaty gave Ireland a measure of independence broadly comparable with the “dual monarchy” concept, and this may account for the force and passion with which Griffith defended it against its critics. The intemperance of his statements contributed to the polarisation of opinion on the Treaty which ultimately resulted in the civil war. With Ireland in the throes of civil war, Griffith died suddenly on 12 August 1922.²

He now occupies, in Anne Dolan’s words, a “marginal place in popular Irish memory”.³ A nation’s choice of whom to remember—and how to remember them—is, of course, profoundly significant. As President John F. Kennedy told his audience at Amherst College on 26 October 1963, just a month before his assassination,

“a nation reveals itself not only by the men it produces but also by the men it honours, the men it remembers”.

It seems, therefore, appropriate to ask why the Irish nation in its one hundred years of independence has largely forgotten—in fact, has airbrushed him out of history—the intellectual architect of that independence, Arthur Griffith.

Was it because we rejected his intemperance—his belligerence and personal abuse—in defending the Treaty against its critics and wished to finesse the

divisions in Irish public life that he had thus exacerbated? It is undeniable that he was relentlessly and viciously polemical both in his journalism and in his political activities. He was unable to credit any opponent with good faith.

Alternatively, does it simply reflect a reluctance to rejoice in a compromise solution—an outcome to the struggle for Irish independence that fell short of what was considered ideal, even by those who accepted it? If the latter, then the contrast between our continuing commitment to the settlement represented by the Good Friday agreement on Northern Ireland in 1998 and the virtual airbrushing of Griffith out of Irish history is an indicator of remarkable growth in the political maturity of the Irish nation in the past one hundred years. We have learned the art of political compromise, and we are the better for that.

Endnotes:

¹ V.E. Gandon, *Arthur Griffith and the advanced nationalist press: Ireland, 1900–1922* (New York, 1985), p. 49.

² For this outline of Griffith’s life, I have relied on Michael Laffan’s entry on Griffith in J. McGuire and J. Quinn (eds), *The Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009), and on the following studies: S. Ó Lúing, ‘Arthur Griffith and *Sinn Féin*’ in F.X. Martin (ed.), *Leaders and men of the Easter Rising: Dublin 1916* (London, 1967); R. Davis, *Arthur Griffith and non-violent Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1974); C. Younger, *Arthur Griffith* (Dublin, 1981); and B. Maye, *Arthur Griffith* (Dublin, 1997).

³ A. Dolan, *Commemorating the Irish Civil War: history and memory, 1923–2000* (Cambridge, 2003) p. 113.

The Legacy of Arthur Griffith

Brian Maye

Arthur Griffith died suddenly 100 years ago on 12th August. He was the man who founded Sinn Féin and led the Dáil delegation to London that signed the Anglo-Irish Treaty, the founding document of Irish independence. He contributed much to bringing about that independence but it would be probably true to say that in the Ireland of today he is largely forgotten. It was not always thus.

A small Dublin weekly paper called the *Spark*, edited by John Doyle under the pen-name Edward Dalton, conducted a poll in February 1915 based on the question: "Who is the Irish nationalist whom Dublin wishes most to honour?" Griffith was the first choice, followed by Eoin MacNeill and Alderman Tom Kelly, a longtime Sinn Féin representative on Dublin Corporation.

Dalton wrote: "The name Arthur Griffith has been chosen by a majority of readers of the *Spark*... What Ireland owes to Griffith, to his patriotism, to his self-sacrifice and to his ability and earnestness will one day be told. The man's modesty prevents it being known to his contemporaries."

Michael Collins, W. T. Cosgrave, Richard Mulcahy and Desmond FitzGerald are among the leaders on the pro-Treaty side who recorded their debt to Griffith's teachings. Their testaments should not surprise us. But what about the leading



The *Spark*, of 7th March 1915 revealing the poll result of the "Man for Dublin" as Arthur Griffith. The prize, a silver cross.

anti-Treatyites who were equally strong in recording their debt to his influence?

"He was the greatest intellectual force stimulating the national revival," wrote Erskine Childers, a particularly gracious tribute given that Griffith, in an uncharacteristic outburst during a Dáil debate, referred to Childers as a "damned Englishman". Harry Boland declared to Dr Patrick McCartan: "Damn it, Paddy, hasn't Griffith made us all!"

Seán T. O'Kelly wrote that "Griffith's political philosophy, so eloquently taught, and his long years of toil and sacrifice, brought the present generation of Irishmen from their knees to their feet and rekindled in their hearts the almost extinct flame of liberty."

The centenary of Griffith's birth was 1971 and it is revealing to contrast that year with the hundredth anniversary of the birth of Michael Collins (1990) from the point of view of commemorative events. Collins's centenary was marked by the publication of a major new biography, by television and radio programmes and newspaper articles, and by a wreath-laying ceremony at his birthplace, a function at which every shade of political opinion in the State was represented.

Compare this to the muted manner in which Griffith was remembered nearly 20 years before. A campaign was undertaken by a few private citizens to have a commemorative postage stamp struck in his honour, but Taoiseach Jack Lynch dismissed the idea in the Dáil with the comment that Griffith was "a Civil War figure". A thought-provoking piece in the periodical *Studies* by Griffith's first biographer, Seán Ó Lúing, and a few newspaper items were all that recalled him in 1971.

So why has he been forgotten and why should he be remembered? The extract from the *Spark* quoted above referred to his modesty. He never sought positions of leadership. Although he founded Sinn Féin in 1905, he became its leader six years later only when he could not find anyone else to take the role, and in 1917 he willingly stepped down in favour of Eamon de Valera in order to prevent a split in the movement. De Valera overshadows him in Irish history because he had longevity on his side and dominated Irish political life for so many of the 100 years that the country has been independent.



Griffith was that non-glamorous person, the writer, intellectual and philosopher, the one who worked quietly on policies in the background while others claimed the limelight. Collins overshadows him because of his role as orchestrator in the War of Independence and all the tales of derring-do, close escapes and heroism, and the brilliant counter-intelligence campaign he ran which turned the tables on the British. Collins also has the romance associated with dying in action and dying young—the lamented "lost leader" who might have achieved so much had he lived.

It is not easy to do justice, in an article of this length, to the extent of Griffith's contribution to the Irish independence movement from around 1900 to 1922. But there are three facets of that contribution to which particular attention should be drawn.

Firstly, what mattered most to Griffith was not political independence but economic independence, because he saw the former as useless without the latter.

As a result, he devoted much of his writing as a journalist, editor and pamphleteer to making the case for Ireland's economic self-sufficiency, which is summed up in the name of the movement with which his name will always be associated: Sinn Féin (Ourselves).

The economic philosophy he preached may be summed up as "economic nationalism", of which protectionism was the core. It is one of the ironies of Irish history that it was not his lineal political successors in Cumann na nGaedheal in the 1920s but his anti-Treaty opponents in Fianna Fáil from the 1930s onwards that put his economic ideas into practice. And it is important to realise that the economic policies pursued by successive Irish governments from 1932 up to the 1960s were based on ideas that Griffith had put forward in the early decades of the 20th century.

Secondly, whatever about his attitude to or actions during the 1916 Rising, it was absolutely vital that the programme he had evolved in the previous 20 years was there in the aftermath of the rising. That programme provided the blueprint and framework on which future progress could be built after 1916.

Terence de Vere White expressed this interaction between Griffith's programme and the sacrifice of the men of 1916 well: "Pearse and his comrades... provided by their sacrifice whatever mystical and romantic inspiration was lacking in Griffith's work" but "he had created the political philosophy and hammered out the framework" on which their dream could be realised.

Thirdly, and perhaps most enduringly in terms of his contribution, Dáil Éireann was primarily one of Griffith's long-advocated theories put into practice. From the beginning of the 20th century, he had called on the Home Rule MPs to abstain from going to Westminster (because that, to him, was to recognise the legitimacy of the British conquest) and to set up their own parliament in Dublin. Griffith had always argued that the way to achieve independence was to establish a rival administration at home which would win the confidence of the Irish people.

That is exactly what the victorious Sinn Féin candidates in the general election at the end of 1918 did and on 21st January 1919, Dáil Éireann met for the first time. For Griffith, who had been elected to the Dáil but who was in jail in Gloucester at the time, the meeting of that assembly in the Mansion House in Dublin was a dream come true.

To Arthur Griffith, the establishment of a separate parliament in Ireland was part of the process of winning independence by peaceful means. He was thus one of the earliest advocates of the theory of non-cooperation or passive resistance, and its greatest 20th-century exponent, Mahatma Gandhi, recorded his debt to the founder of Sinn Féin in his campaign to free India from British rule.

When Griffith collapsed and died, probably from a heart attack, on 12 August 1922, it is said that the only money found in his pockets was one penny. But he left behind a legacy of selfless dedication to his country that deserves to be remembered.

The rocky road to the amalgamation of the Sinn Féin movement, 1907

Marnie Hay

Breaking up is hard to do, but mergers are not easy either. That was certainly the case when three separate advanced nationalist organisations promoting the Sinn Féin (ourselves) message of Irish political and economic self-reliance—Cumann na nGaedheal, the National Council and the Dungannon Clubs—amalgamated in 1907. Although the ultimate goal of the Sinn Féin movement was the dissolution of the 1801 union between Great Britain and Ireland, members of the movement disagreed about the form a post-union Ireland would take: dual monarchy or republic. Tensions also existed between the centre and periphery of the movement embodied in its two leading propagandists: Arthur Griffith in Dublin and Bulmer Hobson in Belfast.

Arthur Griffith (1871-1922) was the main instigator of the Sinn Féin movement. Its policies were generally based on his 1904 pamphlet *The Resurrection of Hungary: a parallel for Ireland*, which was inspired by Hungary's dual monarchy settlement with Austria in 1867. Griffith first cited this example in a speech at the 1902 convention of Cumann na nGaedheal, which was founded in 1900 as an umbrella organisation for literary, athletic and political groups advocating the de-anglicisation of Ireland. Hoping to reconcile Ulster Protestants, Griffith advocated a dual monarchy under the



Photo courtesy of the collection of R. B. and C. Mitchell.

As Deputy Director of Stamping in the Office of the Revenue Commissioners from 1924 until his retirement in 1948, Bulmer Hobson later served the Irish state of which Arthur Griffith was a founding father.

British crown in which Ireland was an equal partner with Great Britain. To achieve political equality with Britain, Griffith endorsed a policy of passive resistance that was later implemented when Sinn Féin MPs elected in December 1918 abstained from taking their seats in the British parliament and instead established Dáil Éireann in January 1919.

Meanwhile Bulmer Hobson (1883-1969), a quirky Belfast Quaker,¹ was

developing a similar two-pronged approach to defeating British rule based on his reading of James Fintan Lalor. The first prong was a policy of passive resistance while the second was the employment of tactics later labelled guerrilla warfare. Hobson described Griffith's Hungarian policy as 'Lalor's policy of 1847 come home with a foreign dress and with a foreign prestige',² and asserted that 'the Sinn Féin idea took shape at nearly the same time in Dublin and Belfast'.³ Although Hobson acknowledged that Griffith's newspaper the *United Irishman* 'was read by all the younger Nationalists and profoundly affected them',⁴ he was reluctant to concede that Griffith was one of his own influences. Instead he saw himself as Griffith's equal rather than his disciple, a viewpoint that helped to fuel their rivalry.

In March 1905 Hobson and Denis McCullough established a new organisation, the Dungannon Clubs, 'which would do some serious national work and which [they] could control in Belfast'.⁵ This new nationalist organisation reflected their frustration with the drunken conduct of some fellow Belfast Cumann na nGaedheal members and their disillusionment with the National Council. Founded in 1903, the National Council was conceived as a vehicle to organise opposition to King Edward VII's forthcoming visit to Ireland, but continued as an association dedicated to promoting nationalist representation on elected bodies.⁶ Hobson and McCullough were disappointed by 'the Dublin people who could think of nothing except winning a few seats in the Dublin

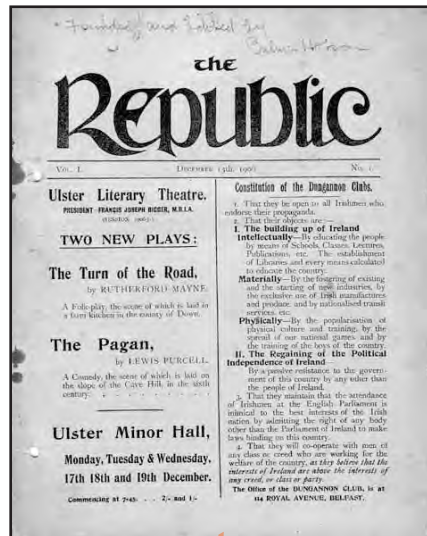


Photo: Whyte's Auctioneers, Dublin

Bulmer Hobson's signed copy of Volume 1 Issue 1 of "The Republic", 13 December 1906.

Corporation'.⁷ Thus the Dungannon Clubs had the dual purpose of promoting the Sinn Féin policy, particularly in Ulster, and driving the Dublin crowd back onto the advanced nationalist track. The clubs became a recruiting ground for the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), a secret society advocating the establishment of an Irish republic through the use of physical force if necessary.

The Dungannon Clubs' name was designed to attract Protestant as well as Catholic members. It recalled the Volunteer convention held in Dungannon in February 1782, which led to the final, successful thrust toward Irish legislative independence. The Volunteers were a part-time military force that had been raised in 1778-9 to protect Ireland at a time when the regular army had diminished in size due to the demands of the American War of Independence.

They eventually took on a wider political role providing extra-parliamentary support for policies and goals, such as free trade and legislative independence, promoted by the 'Patriot' interest within the Protestant-dominated Irish parliament.⁸ Hobson and his colleagues hoped to see Ulster return to the spirit of the non-sectarian United Irishmen, whose initial advocacy of parliamentary reform later shifted to republicanism in the 1790s.

At their inaugural meeting on 8 March 1905, the Dungannon Clubs showed the influence of Griffith in outlining their goals as the restoration of the Irish constitution of 1782, the conservation of the Irish language and traditions, and the encouragement of Irish industries.⁹ By the time the organisation issued its constitution and manifesto in late August 1905, the restoration of the 1782 constitution had been dropped in favour of 'regaining... the Political Independence of Ireland', while its other stated objective was now to build up Ireland intellectually, materially and physically.¹⁰

When the Dungannon Clubs launched their short-lived weekly paper *The Republic* in December 1906, it proclaimed:

We stand for an Irish republic, because we can see that no compromise with England, no repeal of the Union, no concession of Home Rule or devolution will satisfy the national aspirations of the Irish people nor allow the unrestricted mental, moral, and material development of our country. National independence is our right; we ask no more; and

we accept no less.¹¹

Despite such lofty words, club member Patrick McCartan reported, 'Outside the IRB there were few Republicans & Griffith knew it & so did we. We were mere propagandists & we realised it.'¹²

Hobson's growing reputation as a persuasive public speaker led to an invitation to undertake a speaking tour to introduce the Sinn Féin message to the United States in February and March of 1907. En route to Cork to catch a steamship to America, Hobson stopped in Dublin where he visited Griffith, whose 'coldness and hostility' came as a surprise. Later discovering that Griffith had written to Clan na Gael leader John Devoy to suggest that he himself should undertake an American speaking tour, Hobson regretted 'inadvertently' queering the pitch for the more senior man.¹³

On the same day that Hobson set sail, Griffith voiced his disapproval on the front page of his newspaper *Sinn Féin*: 'The executive wishes it to be clearly understood that [Hobson's visit to the United States] is not authorised by the National Council, nor undertaken on its behalf.'¹⁴ His words imply that the National Council held a monopoly on the Sinn Féin 'brand', despite the fact that the Dungannon Clubs and Cumann na nGaedheal were engaged in propagating the Sinn Féin message and would soon merge forces as the Sinn Féin League.

A central issue that emerged during Hobson's tour was the refusal of Irish-American nationalists to provide financial aid to the Sinn Féin movement unless its component organisations merged. The existence of three different

organisations advocating a Sinn Féin policy, two different leaders, and two different visions of what Ireland should strive to achieve proved problematic. Advanced nationalists in London and the United States urged their colleagues in Ireland to strive for unity of purpose and a rationalisation of resources.¹⁵

Hobson and McCullough had already tried to bring about an amalgamation. In October 1906 they proposed that a meeting should be held to discuss a possible merger with Cumann na nGaedheal and the National Council. They were open to amalgamation because Cumann na nGaedheal were expected to support their policy regarding full independence, which would strengthen both the Dungannon Clubs and the imminent launch of *The Republic*. They were less certain of the reaction of the National Council.¹⁶

The first meeting to discuss a possible amalgamation was held in Dundalk on 21 October 1906. At this meeting the representatives of the Dungannon Clubs put forward the suggestion that in case of amalgamation the constitution should read: 'That our object is to secure the independence of Ireland believing that the people of Ireland are a free people and that no law made without their authority or consent is or ever can be binding on their conscience.'¹⁷ After some discussion, it was agreed 'that the new amalgamation should include men who believe in the Constitution of [17]82 as a final settlement and men who believe in separation and that the demand should be *independence*'. Cumann na nGaedheal were expected to accept this, as was the majority of the

National Council's executive.¹⁸ An alternative suggestion was also put forward that 'a council consisting of an equal number of representatives from each executive should be formed to work out the Sinn Féin policy and agree on a common line of action'.¹⁹ In the end the National Council rejected the proposed amalgamation, so Hobson and McCullough decided to push for 'unity of action with the Cumann na nGaedheal people in Dublin'.²⁰

Hobson promised Irish-American nationalists to do his best to bring about a merger upon his return to Ireland. As a result, the executives of the Dungannon Clubs and Cumann na nGaedheal, both of which were controlled by IRB men, held a meeting in Dundalk in early April 1907 at which they decided to amalgamate immediately, calling the newly merged organisation the Sinn Féin League.²¹ Its main objective was 'the regaining of the sovereign independence of Ireland'. Although this wording implied a rejection of the 1782 settlement of legislative independence, it did not assert overt republicanism. At a second meeting on 21 April, P.T. Daly was elected president, with McCullough and Sean McGarry as joint secretaries. Richard Davis has suggested that Hobson's demotion to a position as a mere member of the executive committee may have been designed to appease Griffith in hopes of coming to a future settlement.²²

Griffith and the National Council, however, remained aloof. Ironically, the term 'Sinn Féin' has been associated with Griffith even though he did not belong to the first body bearing that name, which was in fact an organisation

that he resented. As Michael Laffan points out:

Almost a year earlier Griffith had appropriated the term 'Sinn Féin' by using it as the title for his own newspaper, and a feeling of affronted proprietorship may have been part of the reason for his hostility towards the new party. He virtually ignored it in the columns of *Sinn Féin*.²³

The isolation of Griffith and the National Council proved short-lived.

The conversion of Irish Parliamentary Party MP Charles J. Dolan to Griffith's political views in June 1907 strengthened Griffith's hand. This allowed him to dictate favourable terms when the National Council finally amalgamated with the Sinn Féin League at the end of August 1907.²⁴ This merger helped to bring unity to Dolan's re-election campaign in North Leitrim on a Sinn Féin platform, though he was ultimately defeated in the February 1908 by-election by the Irish Parliamentary Party candidate, F. E. Meehan, 1,157 votes to 3,103.²⁵

The decision to amalgamate the Sinn Féin League and the National Council was finally made after a two-hour discussion at the third annual congress of the National Council in Dublin at the end of August 1907. The newly amalgamated body initially retained the National Council's name. Hobson was elected as a non-resident member of its executive.²⁶ His move to Dublin six months later enabled him to participate more fully on the executive of the National Council, which was known as Sinn Féin from September 1908 onwards.

At the annual congresses in 1908 and 1909 Griffith and Hobson were elected co-vice-presidents of the organisation. In the election for the latter year, Hobson received only twenty-nine votes to Griffith's fifty,²⁷ demonstrating the latter's dominance.

Hobson left Sinn Féin in late 1910 due to frustrations similar to those that had sparked the formation of the Dungannon Clubs. He recalled night after night of attending Sinn Féin committee meetings where some attendees appeared more interested in winning seats in Dublin Corporation than in organising the movement around the country. The seeming futility of endless meetings and his continuing inability to work with Griffith resulted in Hobson's departure.²⁸

Views differ regarding the root of the rivalry between Hobson and Griffith and its effect on the Sinn Féin movement. McCullough and Constance Markievicz saw the rivalry as more personal than political. According to McCullough,

Hobson was a very headstrong and somewhat egotistical person, and being much younger than Griffith, the latter naturally resented Hobson's endeavouring to force his or our opinions on Griffith and his friends. This naturally created a certain amount of friction between two strong personalities, but I must say that I never knew it to interfere with either of them, in any action that would be for the good or forwarding of the movement.²⁹

In contrast, Markievicz believed that the rivalry between Hobson and Griffith detracted from the efficacy of the movement, reporting that 'the two men

became more and more bitterly opposed, and more concerned in blocking each other's schemes than in getting work done for Ireland'.³⁰ Laffan has argued that the manoeuvrings of Hobson and Griffith 'took place on a modest, insignificant scale, and most Irish nationalists remained unaware of these sectarian squabbles between rival leaders who had few followers'.³¹

Differing views of what form a post-union Ireland should take, tensions between centre and periphery, and the rivalry between Griffith and Hobson were among the challenges faced in bringing about the 1907 amalgamation of the Sinn Féin movement. The merger was a landmark in the history of a movement that finally gained mass support in the aftermath of the 1916 Easter Rising and contributed to the dissolution of the union between Great Britain and 26 counties of Ireland.

Dr Marnie Hay

lectures in History at Dublin City University.

Endnotes:

- ¹ See Marnie Hay, *Bulmer Hobson and the nationalist movement in twentieth-century Ireland* (Manchester, 2009).
- ² Bulmer Hobson, *Ireland yesterday and tomorrow* (Tralee, 1968), p. 19.
- ³ *Ibid.*, p. 42.
- ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 4.
- ⁵ McCullough, statement, 1957 (University College Dublin Archives [UCDA], McCullough Papers, P120/29).
- ⁶ Richard Davis, *Arthur Griffith and non-violent Sinn Féin* (Dublin, 1974), pp 19-20.
- ⁷ Bulmer Hobson to Martin McCullough, 25 Nov. 1962 (UCDA, McCullough Papers, P120/24/19).

⁸ 'Volunteers' in S.J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford companion to Irish history* (Oxford, 1999), p. 581.

⁹ Dungannon Club minute book, 1905 (National Library of Ireland [NLI], Hobson Papers, MS 12,175); Davis, *Sinn Féin*, p. 26.

¹⁰ 'Constitution of the Dungannon Club', quoted in Hobson, *Ireland*, pp 23-4.

¹¹ *Republic*, 13 Dec. 1906, p. 4.

¹² Patrick McCartan, witness statement (Bureau of Military History [BMH], WS 99).

¹³ Hobson, *Ireland*, p. 10.

¹⁴ 'Irish Ireland – the National Council – the Resident Executive', *Sinn Féin*, 2 Feb. 1907, p. 1.

¹⁵ Davis, *Sinn Féin*, p. 28.

¹⁶ Patrick McCartan to Joseph McGarrity, 2 Oct. 1906 (NLI, McGarrity Papers, MS 17,617/1); Minutes of Sinn Féin amalgamation meeting, 21 Oct. 1906 (NLI, MS 8,198).

¹⁷ Minutes of Sinn Féin amalgamation meeting.

¹⁸ McCartan to McGarrity, 23 Oct. 1906 (NLI, McGarrity Papers, MS 17,617/1).

¹⁹ Minutes of Sinn Féin amalgamation meeting.

²⁰ Denis McCullough to Richard P. Davis, 14 Oct. 1957 (UCDA, McCullough Papers, P120/23/12).

²¹ 'Sinn Féin League', *Republic*, 11 Apr. 1907, p. 1.

²² *Peasant*, 13 Apr. 1907, 27 Apr. 1907; Davis, *Sinn Féin*, p. 33.

²³ Michael Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland: the Sinn Féin party, 1916-1913* (Cambridge, 1999), pp 25-6.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Ciarán Ó Duibhir, *Sinn Féin: the first election, 1908* (Manorhamilton, 1993), p. 82.

²⁶ 'The National Council – the third annual congress', *Peasant*, 7 Sept. 1907, p. 5.

²⁷ Davis, *Sinn Féin*, p. 174.

²⁸ Hobson, *Ireland*, p. 12.

²⁹ McCullough, witness statement (BMH, WS 111).

³⁰ Countess Markievicz, 'Memories', *Éire*, 18 Aug. 1923, p. 6.

³¹ Laffan, *The resurrection of Ireland*, p. 24.

Capturing Arthur Griffith on Camera

Colum Kenny



Photo: National Library of Ireland (NLI)

A number of little-known photographs of Arthur Griffith deserve closer attention. One shows him drilling with the rifle that he got on the day of the Howth gun running, reflecting the fact that while he had a distaste for violence he was prepared to sanction force on occasions when he thought it was justified and necessary. Three others show him in 1921 in Dáil Éireann, of which he had been its acting-president for longer than de Valera had been its president. The last photo below shows Griffith's lighter side.

1 GRIFFITH'S RIFLE

Griffith has not been identified on the caption accompanying this photo in the National Library (National Library of Ireland MS 13,174/7/1). But he is clearly identifiable in the extract reproduced here. Padraic Colum was also present on that day when guns were landed at Howth for the Irish Volunteers (26 July 1914). He may be the young man immediately on Griffith's right (photo left), as that person resembles three photos of Colum as a young man in the Constantine Curran collection in UCD Archives which can be viewed free

online. For more on Griffith's attitude to force or violence see Colum Kenny, 'Arthur Griffith's Rifle', *The Irish Sword: The Journal of the Military History Society of Ireland*, 32 (no. 130, Winter 2020): 360–76. That article includes (pp. 373–6) the text of a special report that Griffith wrote which was published in William Bulfin's *The Southern Cross* paper in Buenos Aires on 28 Aug. 1914, headed 'Bringing in the guns'.

2 GRIFFITH IN THE DÁIL, 1921

Three glass negatives in the National Library of Ireland allow us remarkable glimpses of Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins and Éamon de Valera beside each other in August–September 1921 (in Dublin's Mansion House at one of the first meetings of the 2nd Dáil). It was just weeks after the truce in the War of Independence was agreed. Known as its 'president', De Valera was the Dáil's prime minister (but while he was in the USA from June 1919 until late 1920 Griffith had been appointed acting president in his place). In autumn 1921 Griffith was minister for foreign affairs and Collins minister for finance. Griffith and Collins were two of the five plenipotentiaries selected by the Dáil in September 1921 to go to London to negotiate an Anglo-Irish treaty, with Griffith as their chairman.

At first glance the photographs by Keogh Brothers (NLI Ke 219–21) show us simply a broad sweep of the Round Room in Dublin's Mansion House,

where Dáil Éireann was then sitting. However, the quality of the glass negatives (each 25–30 cm) is so good that it is possible to zoom in on details while maintaining clarity. Thus, the images are much superior at every technical level to some photographs of the Dáil in session when viewed in newspapers (e.g. *Irish Times*, 17 Aug. 1921; *Freeman's Journal* and *Irish Independent*, 27 Aug. 1921).

By zooming in on these images (which one can do online at home via catalogue.nli.ie) we see that Cabinet members were provided with armchairs and settees or couches. De Valera (photo large image spread over page) is in an armchair, while to his right Griffith and Collins are on a settee.

Chairing the session is Ceann Comhairle (Speaker) Eoin MacNeill TD. One might zoom in and put names on many other deputies and members of the public in the photographs, thus enhancing the value of these negatives as an archival source.

In the spread on pages 18–19 (Ke 219) we can see de Valera reading a newspaper or document, while Griffith, Collins and the Ceann Comhairle watch an unidentified deputy address the Dáil [standing on the extreme right]. In the close-up on page 20 (Ke 220) de Valera is also reading, while Griffith watches Michael Collins standing and addressing the Dáil. In the second close-up on page 21 (Ke 221) Griffith appears to glance at Michael Collins who is leaning forward. De Valera makes notes on a page.







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UCD Archives

3 GRIFFITH SMILING ON A ROOF, 1922

Walter Leonard Cole was a fruit importer and a close friend of Arthur Griffith, who frequently visited Cole's house at 3 Mountjoy Square, Dublin. In this photo, believed to have been taken early in 1922 (UCD Archive, Cole Papers P134/36–9), a smiling Griffith has climbed onto the roof with the bearded Cole, from where they can look across towards Dublin Bay. With them are Tom Casserly (ex R.I.C., later a Garda superintendent) and either Breege Swanzy (whom Casserly was to marry on 18 April 1923) or her sister Christina (whom Cole had taken in with her three children after her husband, the actor Seán Connolly, died in the 1916 Rising). For another photo of Griffith on that roof (with both Breege and

Christina), and a recent painting based on it by Cole's grand-daughter Sarah Walker see *Sarah Walker, Walter Leonard Cole: 3 Mountjoy Square* (catalogue to accompany an exhibition of multiple paintings of the house and its inhabitants based largely on old photographs, Oliver Sears Gallery, Oct.–Nov. 2021). One of those paintings is of a simple bedroom in the house known to the family as 'Arthur's room', where Griffith sometimes spent a night to avoid arrest. See too Niall MacMonagle, "What lies beneath: Arthur Griffith's bird's eye view of history", *Sunday Independent*, People & Culture section, 17 Oct. 2021.

Dr Colum Kenny

is professor emeritus of Dublin City University and author of: *The Enigma of Arthur Griffith: "Father of us All"* (Dublin: Merrion Press, 2020).



Memorialising Arthur Griffith from the Cenotaph 1923 to a New Maquette 2022

Cormac O’Hanrahan/Des Gunning

A large crowd gathered to commemorate, on their anniversaries, the lives of Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins at Leinster House on the 13th August 1923 for the unveiling of a cenotaph by President Cosgrave in memory of the Free State’s founding figures both of whose lives were tragically cut short and had died in the same month.

Even at this early stage the cenotaph courted controversy when Arthur Griffith’s wife, Maud, declined to attend stating that the new State should mark her husband’s achievement and work for an independent Ireland solely, without linking it to others, namely, Michael Collins for whom she had little respect. However Maud did allow her children to attend and so acknowledge the State’s and the people’s profound respect for

their father.

The cenotaph was hastily erected in order to mark the anniversary of the deaths of Griffith and Collins in August 1923. It was made of wood, covered with metal lathing and cement.¹

In 1950 the cenotaph was replaced by the present classical obelisk topped with a bronze guilt flame. The obelisk bares the inscription “An Claidheamh Soluis (“The Sword of Light”) possibly to acknowledge Patrick Pearse who was editor of the Gaelic language newspaper of the same name.

Although railed off from public view, plaques on the cenotaph commemorate Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins and

¹ See Deaglán de Bréadún: <https://www.dublininquirer.com/2020/08/26/at-leinster-house-a-historically-significant-monument-lies-overlooked>

Kevin O'Higgins, assassinated on 10th July 1927. The addition of Kevin O'Higgins' name was a provocative act at the time and this act has now come back to question the very existence of the cenotaph at worst, or at least, question its appropriateness.

Commemorating Arthur Griffith's Centenary 1922-2022

The cenotaph has become the topic of debate recently as Dr Maurice Manning, the chair of the Government's advisory group on commemorations, has argued that it should commemorate *all* the victims of the Civil War and not just those on the Pro-Treaty side.

Meanwhile it has been brought to our attention that the Petitions Committee has been approached with a submission for a statue in memory of Arthur Griffith to be erected in Dublin. The submission argues that at the very least a postage stamp should be produced. However, it could be noted that An Post has managed to seriously devalue the honour and status of appearing on a postage stamp by some of its recent issues.

Marking the centenary year of Griffith's death and the centenary year of the State he helped establish (now the Republic of Ireland), the Dublin-based Joyceborough project (estd. 2012) has worked with renowned sculptor John Coll to produce a maquette for a Griffith memorial bronze.

John Coll's sculptures of Patrick Kavanaugh, Brendan Behan and Luke Kelly already adorn the city and it is hoped that his treatment of Griffith will be added to that collection.



Maquette for an Arthur Griffith Centenary Memorial Bronze by John Coll.

The finished piece is intended to be some five metres in height. A limited edition of the maquette (pictured, with figure added to the foreground for scale purposes) is available, as of the date of this publication. Contact John Coll, Sculptor for details.

The maquette will be unveiled at the annual launch of "Cut&Paste" 2022 on 31st March at DALC, 3 Mountjoy Sq., 7.30pm.

“Unionists embrace Irish national self determination—with essential unity”

Des Gunning

The Anglo Irish Peace Conference (‘The Treaty negotiations’) in London were suspended for the duration of the annual Conservative and Unionist Party Conference event, which took place in Liverpool in November. The gathering was dominated by one issue: whether the party, which was itself a coalition and then part of a coalition led by the Liberal, David Lloyd George, would accept the principle Arthur Griffith had been advocating since the 1890s, namely legislative self determination for Ireland.

Two weeks before the conference, on October 31st, a motion had been introduced in the House of Commons censuring the government for participating in the peace conference at all. That motion was defeated but members of the government had reason to be concerned that the ‘die-hards’ behind that motion would take their case to the party rank-and-file at the convention in Liverpool, using the party conference as an opportunity to remind those involved in the negotiations that the constitutional position of the Conservative and Unionist party would be a key determinant in any settlement.

Three members of the Treaty negotiating team attended the party conference: Winston Churchill, Colonial Secretary; Austin Chamberlain, who had been

Conservative party leader since March 1921 and Frederick Erwin Smith who in 1919 had been raised to the peerage as First Earl of Birkenhead and who, as Lord Chancellor, was Speaker of the House of Lords and ‘keeper of the royal conscience’. Smith’s father had been mayor of Birkenhead, just across the Mersey from Liverpool and he had practiced law in the city. In 1906 he’d been elected a Conservative and Unionist MP for the City’s Walton division.

The conference would see a ‘face off’ between diehards on the status of Northern Ireland, led by former party leader Andrew Bonar Law and those of more moderate views, represented by Chamberlain who had succeeded as party leader earlier in the year.

The outcome of the conference was crucial for the Government and for the success of the peace conference. In order to secure a favourable vote from the convention, Lloyd George considered it necessary to be able to show some sign of progress in the negotiations. The alternative was that the government would fall and the peace conference be abandoned.

Lloyd George wanted Griffith’s acceptance of a boundary commission in the event that Ulster, which had had its own parliament since June, could not be cajoled into entering the Irish Parlia-



Liverpool Daily Post and Mercury: "The Slaughter Corps"

ment—but might govern on a Home Rule basis with Dail Éireann having an over-arching role. The Commission would be the instrument that would ensure 'essential unity'.

Griffith agreed with Lloyd George's stratagem for getting the principle of Irish national self-determination past the party conference. Lloyd George's secretary Tom Jones prepared a document in which that agreement, verbally made, was reduced to writing. Griffith reportedly initialled the document and gave the verbal and written assurance on his authority as leader of the plenipotentiary delegation, acting under the authority of Dail Éireann.

Griffith's motivation appears to have been to help the UK government win what was in effect a vote of confidence in Liverpool. But Lloyd George subsequently deployed Griffith's assurance as a pledge not to break off the negotiations on the issue of Ulster. Furthermore,

Lloyd George felt that Griffith's acceptance of the boundary commission released him (Lloyd George) from an earlier pledge to the Irish that he would resign as Prime Minister if he could not secure Ulster's participation in an Irish parliament. There was an unambiguous air of duplicity about this part of proceedings, but who is worthy of being Prime Minister who is incapable of statagising to maintain their occupation of that office?

On November 15th, Birkenhead told his mentor Archibald Salvidge 'the king of Liverpool', [pictured above] that he had come to believe that a genuine settlement could be reached and that the Irish delegates, especially Griffith and Collins, could be trusted to honor their pledges.

Birkenhead anticipated that Ulster would be offered "Home Rule within Home Rule" but would not be coerced into accepting it; he told Salvidge that, in

his opinion, it was to Ulster's advantage to accept because the 1920 Government of Ireland Act had made the conventional Unionist arguments obsolete: that the only difference between Ulster's position under the 1920 Act and the new agreement was that overall supervision would be passed from London to Dublin, with British guarantees that Ulster Protestants would not face discrimination. Finally, he considered that the only alternative to a settlement was a resumption of war, with Ireland continuing to occupy a corrosive position in the politics of the United Kingdom.

By the end of the Liverpool Convention, legislative self-determination for Ireland, however circumscribed in initial practice, had been established as a policy objective of the Conservative and Unionist Party. This was a truly remarkable development and an extraordinary vindication of Arthur Griffith's advocacy of that policy over decades.

John D. Fair has written that the Anglo Irish Treaty marked the end of a great British constitutional struggle, even as it prompted a proclamationist insurgency and civil war in Ireland—albeit not on the issue of partition. The response to the Treaty at the Conservative Conference in November 1921 identified the settlement as an expression of the new Conservative policy. Self-determination for Ireland, along the lines advocated by Arthur Griffith since the 1890s and with a mechanism to avoid



Photo: Creative Commons

Frederick Edwin Smith, 1st Earl of Birkenhead, 1872-1930, British Conservative politician noted for his staunch opposition to Irish nationalism. A great friend of Winston Churchill. He died at 58 from pneumonia caused by cirrhosis of the liver. (Source: Wikipedia)

partition, had been introduced with, in government, the Conservatives, the party long most vehemently opposed to that outcome.

Arthur Griffith had come a long way since the day in late September 1891 when he'd stepped out from the crowd at Broadstone terminus, Dublin, to shake the hand of the visibly ailing Charles Stewart Parnell and to thank him for all he'd done for Ireland. Griffith proved himself to be a worthy successor.

Endnote: When F. E. Smith / Lord Birkenhead died in September 1930, the *Times* of London declared that "the Irish Settlement was largely due to his patience and reason. He frequently made further negotiations possible when it seemed that a deadlock could not be avoided."

Reference: *The Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921: Unionist Aspects of the Peace*, John D. Fair, *Journal of British Studies*, Vol. 12, No. 1 (Nov., 1972), pp. 132-149

Arthur Griffith and Maud Sheehan: a love of home and a love of country

Brian Maye

Arthur Griffith first met Maud Sheehan when she and her sister Annie, who were both musicians, performed at a Celtic Literary Society music-evening. Because he lived on the same side of the city, he escorted them home. He got on better with Maud, then only 15. The Sheehans lived in a large house in Belvedere Place. They were well off and in the big front rooms of their house they gave musical afternoons. In the newspaper office where he worked, Griffith was on duty all night on Wednesdays and Thursdays. After finishing, rather than going home to bed, he used to call and take the sisters for a morning walk in the Phoenix Park, getting them home in time for eight o'clock Mass which they attended before going to school.

There is little surviving evidence of their relationship; it is known that Maud destroyed much of it. One of Griffith's few extant letters is addressed to her and is from an early stage in the association:

Jan. 18th, '94

Dear Miss Sheehan,

"The Lily of Killarney" is announced for Saturday night. Do you remember your promise? If you are not better engaged for that evening, I would be delighted to meet you at, say, a quarter past seven o'clock at the corner of Winetavern St and Merchant's Quay.

Sincerely yours,

Arthur Griffith

"The shyness that was so noticeable in Arthur Griffith is in this note," Padraic Colum remarked.

He described her as follows in a poem he wrote as a young man:

*Her laugh is music sweet and low,
Her heart is gentleness enshrined,
Her soul is fairer than the snow,
And purity dwells in her mind.
Sweetest of maidens, truest, best,
So fair, so pure, so far above me,
Would with your head upon my breast,
I once could hear you say you loved me.*

They got engaged in 1904 but because of his meagre earnings (he was also supporting his mother), he was not in a position to marry until 1910 when he was 39 and she 36. A group of people got together to buy them a house, at 122 St Lawrence Road, Clontarf, and it was there that they lived for the 12 short years of their marriage. They had two children: a son, Nevin (Naomhan in Irish), born in 1911, and a daughter, Ita, born two years later. They got married on 24 November. On that date in 1916, he wrote the following letter to his wife from Reading Gaol:

Dearest,

My love to you on the anniversary. We will spend it happily hereafter. Tell Nevin

and Ita to kiss you for me. Did the children like the picture I sent? It was done by Milroy, a fellow-prisoner here, for them. We are all well. I hope Clontarf storms are past and you are having a calm time again... Love to yourself and the children...

He spent half of the last six years of his life in prison, and he was so preoccupied while free that his wife and young children saw very little of him. For the three months before his arrest in November 1920, he did not sleep at home; his house was raided several times a week and on one occasion his young son was roughly treated.

He was particularly fearful of the effect the violence would have on the children. "That the two children ... never really knew their father was, naturally, a source of great regret to Mrs Griffith, and, indeed, a loss to the children themselves," observed Colum, who knew the Griffiths well, and who has left the following vignette of their family life:

Ita, then a little girl, remembers a man who used to come into the house and, standing before her, his hands behind his back, would ask her which hand she would take. She might expect to get a "lucky bag" — little packages of sweets with a small toy — in one. But the lucky bag was always in the other hand and this vexed the little girl.

His pet-name for his wife was Mollie. Just after he arrived in London as leader of the Dáil delegation, he sent her the following undated letter (probably 10 October 1921):

*Dear Mollie,
My address is 22 Hans Place SW. The weather here is insufferably warm.*

Yesterday we motored to Reading, where I had the first view of the town that I lived in for so many months.

I was at Mass at Brompton Oratory. Today we are hard at work and tomorrow we meet the other side.

I enclose some cards for Ita and Naomhan.

*Love,
Arthur*

Kathleen Napoli McKenna, who was Griffith's secretary, recalled a lunch she had during the Treaty negotiations with him and Fr Augustine OFM Cap, who had been her "childhood spiritual counsellor". They talked about Griffith's imprisonment after the Easter Rising and particularly about the night before his probable execution. "If the worst happens," he had said to Fr Augustine, "go to Maud and tell her I died thinking of her". McKenna described Griffith as in a happy mood that day because Maud was coming to join him in London for a day or two. Despite the stress of the negotiations, he did not forget their 11th wedding anniversary. "Dear Mollie, I'm sending a little token to you of the day 11 years ago." The token was a telegram they had received on their wedding day wishing them well.

While he was in London for the negotiations that led to the Treaty, Maud sent him touching notes about family matters. "First thing I noticed in London was his hair turning white," she wrote a few days after arriving there near the end of the talks. "I feel so worried," she added.

In a statement she gave to the Bureau of Military History many years later, she

said that he *"never talked to me about politics as I did not want to, having been brought up in a family in which my father was an ardent Parnellite and my mother a follower of William O'Brien, with consequent frequent disputes in political matters"*. As Colum Kenny remarks, her statement to the Bureau *"is disappointingly short, especially in respect to personal details"* but it contains a section which might explain why so little personal evidence of their relationship survives:

We had a lot of political publications but burnt them and all papers that might incriminate anybody from time to time for fear of raids. I never took part in any public functions or meetings, except once in Coote-hill in the 1918 election where I went to stop some people talking. Once when Mrs Sheehy-Skeffington wrote an article in "The Irish World" saying that my husband always kept me at home and gave me a bad time, for the only time in my life I wanted to write an answer to it, but he said it was better not as that would only give her statement more publicity, which was probably what she wanted.

Four months after her husband's death, in the course of a letter to a friend, Mrs Griffith remarked: *"The children now are company and too young to realise the Daddy's loss. He was cheated of their company and all that meant home."* Following his death, as Colum Kenny has written, *"his devastated and loving widow Mollie described him as having been 'a fool giving his all, others having the benefit'"*.

We saw how she expressed worry about Arthur when she saw how his hair was turning white at the negotiations in London. The following poignant and

moving reminiscence that she has left shows that she had good reason for being worried:

Every day for four months I had to see him going out, and he was calm near death as in life. Poor boy; he was tormented and tortured to the grave by men who in the old days used to call themselves his friends, and I'm happy for him that he has escaped them all. His poor exhausted face will haunt me as long as I live. We have had so little happiness, the two of us...

It is understandable that she should have felt bitter about his premature death and the consequent loss to his family. Part of that bitterness was obviously directed towards the anti-Treaty side but she proved reluctant to assist some of those who wished to write about her husband. Chrissie Doyle, who was her friend, told Griffith's first biographer Seán Ó Lúing that Maud was *"very nice but sometimes queer"*, and another interviewee said *"she is like that (indicating the table)"* and could be *"very difficult"* to approach. Griffith's most recent biographer, Colum Kenny, speculates:

"She appeared to feel that her husband was a sacrifice on the altar of Ireland and feared that people might come to think of him not as she believed and knew him to be."

Maud Griffith lived most of her life after her husband's death in Eaton Square in Terenure. She died in January 1963 at the age of 87.

Witness Statement of Maud Griffith

Maud Griffith

Maud Griffith (1874-1963), née Sheehan, was in her 75th year when she submitted her witness statement to the Bureau of Military History. Her testimony is dated the 3rd of March 1949 and recorded as number 205 of 1,773. It was thus amongst the earliest accepted. The Bureau collected the statements in the decade 1947-1957. Maud signed her name and date in a bold strong hand. Her address is given as 36 Eaton Square, Terenure.

Due to the scarcity of historical material on Arthur Griffith's life (for which Maud must take some responsibility) her testimony is an important document. It reads as follows:

“I have no papers, notes or diaries belonging to my husband and he never talked to me about politics as I did not want to, having been brought up in a family in which my father was an ardent Parnellite and my mother a follower of William O'Brien, with consequent frequent disputes on political matters. We had a lot of political publications but I burnt them and all papers that might incriminate anybody from time to time for fear of raids. I never took part in any public functions or meetings, except once in Cootehill in the 1918 election where I went to stop people talking. Once when Mrs. Sheehy-



Skeffington wrote an article in the *Irish World* saying that my husband always kept me at home and gave me a bad time, for the only time in my life I wanted to write an answer to it, but he said it was better not as that would only give her statement more publicity which was probably what she wanted.

He did not take any part in the Rising as he was against all that and Sean McDermott had promised him that a Rising would never be started without his—Arthur's—knowledge. My sister was staying with us at the time and I was to accompany her to Queenstown on Easter Monday and see her off to

America, but my husband advised me not to go as he was afraid there might be trouble. However, on Easter Saturday or Sunday O'Leary Curtis came and told Arthur there was now no danger of disturbance. I heard the priest as Mass on Sunday saying that the manoeuvres were cancelled, so I decided to travel with my sister, leaving my husband with the children. I later learned from him that on the Monday he took the children to go to some relatives and got only to the end of the road as he was informed of the fighting. He then went home and asked a neighbour to take the children so that he might go to see what was happening. The neighbour refused, thinking thereby to keep him at home and out of danger. On the Wednesday, however, he went out and made his way by a circuitous route to Eoin MacNeill's house at Rathfarnham. Some time after that he was arrested.

I had a very trying time in Cork. I had very little money with me as I had never intended to stay even a night. I came to the station every day in the hopes that a train might run. I went to the HQ of the Volunteers where I saw Terence McSwiney and Tom McCurtain. The former was in a terrible state of anxiety as he did not know what to do, having got conflicting instructions from Dublin. Eventually, on Saturday morning there were two trains and I got the second one which, however, only brought me to Lucan.

My husband did not leave Dublin at any time before the Rising to take a message to the country.

Arthur was born in Dublin where his

grandfather had come to from Redhills in Cavan, having been thrown out by his Presbyterian family because he had become a Catholic. While my husband was in jail his granduncle—a very old man—asked me to come with the children to stay with him in Cavan, but we did not go.

Before Sean McDermott was executed he sent a message to Arthur by someone who was in the prison, asking him to forgive him for not having kept his promise to inform him about the Rising, but he and others thought it would be better not, so that Arthur might live on afterwards to keep the National Movement alive.

My husband was a member of the IRB and of the Volunteers and had been present at the Howth gun-running with his Unit. I was present at the foundation meeting of Sinn Féin in 1905¹. I do not remember who was present."

Signed: *Maud G. Griffith*
Date: *3 March 1949*
BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY 1913-21
BURO STAIRÉ M'LEATA 1913-21
NO. W.S. 205

¹ Strangely, or perhaps for his own reasons, Arthur Griffith did not include Maud in the list of attendees as published in the *United Irishman* 9/12/1905. See *Cut&Paste* 2021, p22. At least nine of the 99 named are women but Maud is not amongst them.

MAUD GRIFFITH²

Wife of Arthur Griffith. Died at her home, 36 Eaton Square, Terenure. She was an 87-year-old widow of independent means. Cause of death was pneumonia with atrial fibrillation. The informant was Margaret Dobson.

Birth: At 4 Cook Street, Dublin. Daughter of Peter Sheehan, a dealer in rags, and Mary Pardue.

Marriage: 24th November 1910 at St. John the Baptist Church, Clontarf.

Arthur Griffith, a journalist, of 83 Summerhill, Dublin, son of Arthur Griffith, printer, married Mary Sheehan, of 4 Vernon Parade, Clontarf, daughter of Peter Sheehan, merchant. The marriage was performed by the bride's brother Fr. Leo Sheehan, O.F.M. The witnesses were James Connolly and Anne Cecilia Sheehan.

The Funeral of Maud Griffith January 24th 1963

It is of interest that President de Valera could, or would not, attend in person but sent his A.D.C. Could it have been because Maud was to be buried in the same plot as her husband, in Glasnevin?

It was this same plot that she had fought hard to pressure the Free State to pay for. According to the *Frontier Sentinel* of 16 Jan. 1926, Maud had let it be known that Arthur had expressed to her the wish that his grave should be made of Irish granite and Wicklow limestone. See p34.

² <https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/214838948/mary-teresa-griffith>

The funeral of Mrs Mary T. Griffith, 36 Eaton Square, Terenure, widow of Arthur Griffith, first President of the Executive Council of the Irish Free State, took place to Glasnevin Cemetery yesterday, following Requiem Mass in St. Joseph's Church, Terenure, celebrated by Rev. W. Warner, C.C. Other clergy present included Very Rev. D. F. Cregan, C.M., Principal, St. Patrick's Training College; Very Rev. T. O'Flynn, C.M., president, St. Paul's College, Raheny; Very Rev. Celsus O'Briain, O.F.M., Provincial; and Very Rev. M. Walsh, C.M., president, Castleknock College. Chief mourners: Mr Nevin Griffith (son); Mrs Ita Gray (daughter); Lt. Shane Gray and Miss Nora Gray (grandchildren). The President, Mr. de Valera, was represented by his A.D.C., Col. Sean Brennan, and the Taoiseach, Mr Lemass, by his A.D.C., Comdt. J. O'Brien. The attendance included the Tanaiste, Mr MacEntee; Mr J. M. Dillon, T.D., Leader of the Opposition; Mr J. J. O'Keefe, T.D., Lord Mayor of Dublin; Mr J. A. Costello, S.C, T.D.; Gen. Sean MacEoin, T.D., and Mrs MacEoin; Mr T. F. O'Higgins, S.C., T.D.; Mr M. J. O'Higgins, T.D.; Mrs M. J. O'Higgins, T.D.; Mr R. Ryan, T.D.; Mr L. Cosgrave, S.C, T.D., and Mrs Cosgrave; Senator M. Hayes; Senator P. J. Lindsay, S.C; Senator C. B. McDonald. Mr W.T. Cosgrave, Gen. K. Mulcahy and Mrs Mulcahy, Mr Ernest Blythe, the Attorney-General, Mr A. O'Keefe; the Master of the High Court and Mrs O'Leary; Mr D. O'Donovan, Chief State Solicitor, and Mrs O'Donovan; Col. E. Droy, Maj.-Gen. R. J. Callanan and Mrs Callanan; Dr Sean Lavan. Commissioner K. O'Sheil, S.C; Mr and Mrs Niall Montgomery, Lt.-Col.W. O'Kelly, Col. P. F. Dineen, Col. and Mrs E. A. Morkan, Mr R. O Brolchain, Lt. Col P. Collins, Mr S. McCann, chairman, Dublin Co. Council; Mr and Mrs W. B. Fawsitt, Dr J. J. Loftus (Dublin-Brigade, Old I.R.A.), Mr Desmond Fitzgerald Mr J. J. MacWeeney, T.C.; Mr T. Doyle, S.C, and Mrs Doyle; Dr A. P. O'Kelly, Mr K. Fawsitt, Mr Denis McCullough, Mr R. O'Hanrahan. Judge D. Fawsitt was represented by his son, Mr B. J Fawsitt.



The grave of Arthur Griffith and his wife Maud in Glasnevin. Perhaps one of the most simple and tasteful in its understated dignity in the cemetery. The column and border are made from Irish granite with the base being Wicklow limestone.

Arthur Griffith's association with two freemen of Dublin City

John Curtis

Although not without minor flaws the most thorough research to date on Arthur Griffith's ancestry is Pilip Uas Ó Mórdha's 'The Griffiths of Laurelhill, County Monaghan and Associated Families' (1993).¹ Ó Mórdha's main aim was to uncover the identity of Arthur Griffith's paternal grandfather but in that regard his investigation ended inconclusively.² Of interest here is that along the way he noted that Ó Lúing (1953)³ said that Arthur Griffith claimed descent from a freeman of Dublin City. As Padraic

Colum (1959) put it, "Arthur Griffith claimed that one of his forefathers was a Freeman of Dublin—that is, he belonged to the eighteenth century merchant class."⁴ The following, which relies heavily on Ó Mórdha, examines the veracity or otherwise of Griffith's reported claim.

Mainly based on records of land transactions, Ó Mórdha's research traced the Griffith family back to Arthur Griffith's great-great-great grandfather John Griffith who leased land around Cornapaste and Fastry in 1708. John had two

sons, Thomas who married Esther Ward in 1720, and John who married Elizabeth Walsh in 1733. Thomas settled in Fastry while John settled in Cornapaste and according to Ó Mórdha, “This marked the beginning of the two branches of the Griffith family of Cornapaste and Fastry.”

Thomas was Arthur Griffith’s great-great grandfather but it is from his brother’s line that a familial link with a freeman of Dublin can be found. One of John’s sons, James (c.1740-1798) married Elizabeth Welsh around 1762. Apparently James and Elizabeth had only one son, Richard.⁵ In March 1791, Richard married “the agreeable Miss Winter, of Aungier Street, with a fortune of £7000.”⁶

According to Ó Mórdha:

The Griffiths were also related to the Winter family of Dublin. Arthur Winter married Dorcas Few in 1761. He was a surgeon in Fleet Street, Dublin, and she was a niece of Alderman John Few, merchant, Usher’s Quay. Their daughter Elizabeth married Richard Griffith in April 1791. Perhaps it was this association of the Griffiths with Alderman Few which prompted Arthur Griffith to say that one of his ancestors was a freeman of Dublin.

Arthur Winter did indeed marry Dorcas in 1761 but it was in March rather than April⁷ and Dorcas’s maiden name was not Few but Tew. Also, she was not Alderman John Tew’s niece but his sister. The siblings’ father was Alderman David Tew who became a freeman of Dublin City by service in 1714⁸ and was Lord Mayor of the city in 1743-44. His son John (c.1722-1771) followed in his

father’s footsteps and became a freeman by birth in 1743⁹ and was Lord Mayor of the city in 1759-60. When Dorcas’s daughter Elizabeth / Eliza (the agreeable Miss Winter) married Richard Griffith, she created an association between her two freemen relatives and the Griffiths.

While Arthur Griffith could claim an association with two historical freemen of Dublin City, he did not share a genetic line with those freemen.

Endnotes:

¹ Ó Mórdha, Pílip Uas, (1993) ‘The Griffiths of Laurehill, County Monaghan and Associated Families’ *Clogher Record*, Vol. 14, No. 3.

² Later research by this writer discovered documentary evidence that robustly indicates that Griffith’s paternal grandfather was Arthur Achmuty Griffith (c.1787-1847), a Dublin and Longford based solicitor. A Protestant by religion, he was born in Cavan and possessed land there.

³ Ó Lúing, Séan, (1953) *Art O Gríofa*, Dublin.

⁴ Colum, Padraic, (1959) *Arthur Griffith*, Dublin, Browne and Nolan

⁵ In later life Richard was better known as Richard Griffith, Esq. of Laurel Hill, Co. Cavan. He was an Officer in the Ballyhaise Yeomen and took part in the suppression of the 1798 Rebellion.

⁶ *Finn’s Leinster Journal*, Saturday, March 26, 1791.

⁷ Ó Mórdha’s source for April 1791 was Index to marriages, 1771-1812, in *Walker’s Hibernian Magazine*, p. 190. That magazine was published monthly and marriage notices referred to the previous month. The Griffith-Winter marriage was mentioned in the April 1791 issue of the magazine.

⁸ Probably because his name is misspelt in the records, David Tew is not usually noted as a freeman.

⁹ [https://databases.dublincity.ie/freemen/vi
ewdoc.php?freemenid=21639](https://databases.dublincity.ie/freemen/viewdoc.php?freemenid=21639)

Playing Arthur Griffith

Karen Ardiff



Karen Ardiff as Arthur Griffith in Fishamble's *The Treaty* by Colin Murphy. Photo by Leo Byrne.

When my agent first told me that Conall Morrison had asked me to play Arthur Griffith my first feeling was fear. We had a conversation about it and I asked him how it might play out so that the reviews didn't start with the phrase 'why oh why oh why...'. And he more or less said that he didn't know but why not?

An honest and far-seeing reply.

I had a hard think about it and then thought that if actors of my age couldn't take the plunge what hope would younger actors have? It helped immeasurably that Jane Brennan was playing Dev, Ali White, Birkenhead, Camille Lucy Ross, Churchill and Caitríona Ní Murchú, Craig. So I was in good company.

Before we started rehearsals, I visited Collin's barracks and as I opened a door I found myself looking at Arthur's death mask. He seemed so small and so vulnerable and I was shaken by the privilege of speaking his words. I never forgot that human vulnerability and I thought in the rehearsal process often about it as I spoke his strong, wise and considered words.

Later in the process, my husband, Michael Glenn, was cast as Arthur in ANU's production of the treaty debates, leading John Cronin (Brugha in our production, Dev in theirs) to christen our home 'Griffith Barracks'.

So it began.

Colin Murphy, the writer, gave me a

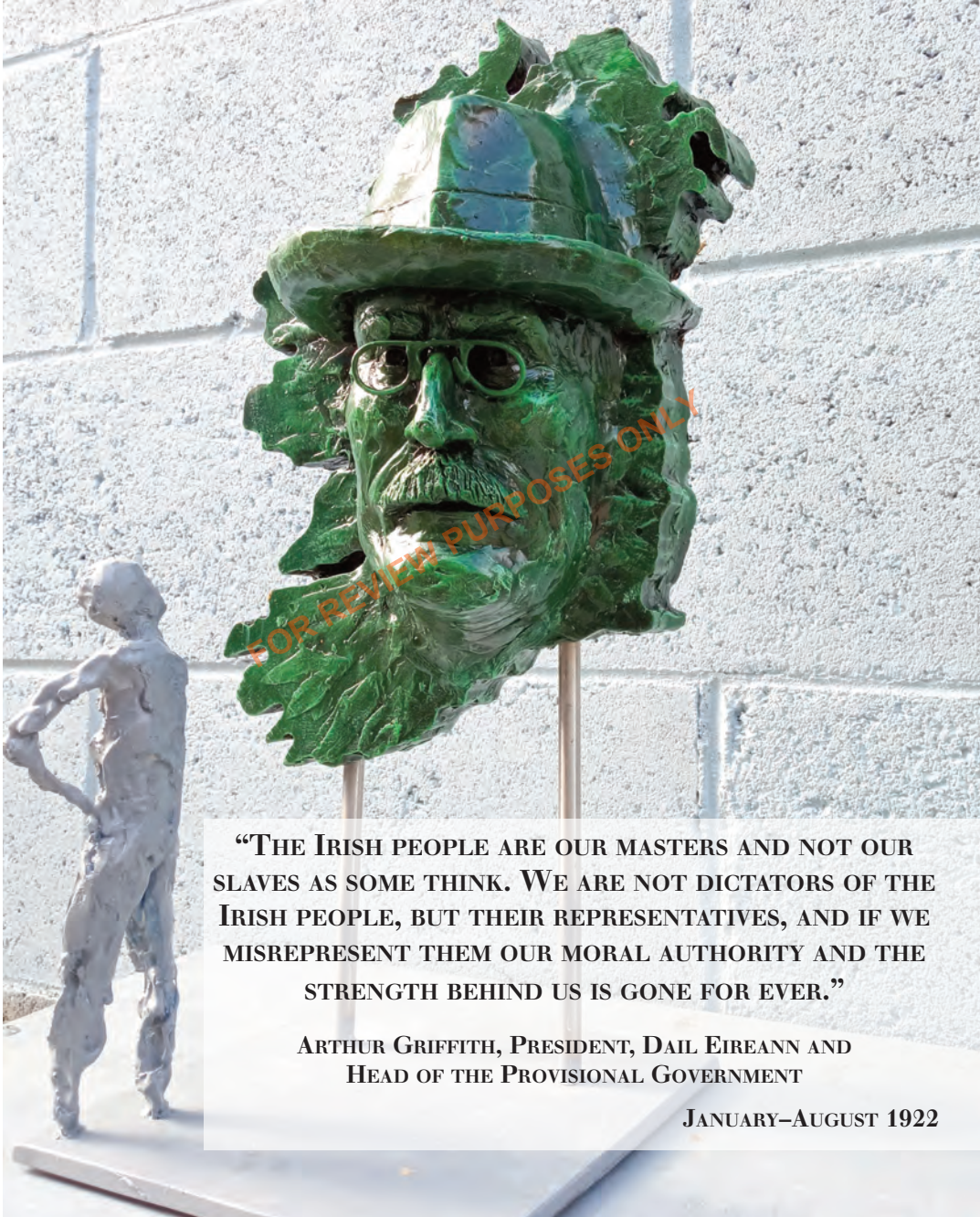
copy of Colum Kenny's wonderful book *The Enigma of Arthur Griffith* and I, we, were smitten.

My grandfather fought and was twice incarcerated on the anti-treaty side. But, in the way of these things, I had little real understanding of why. My grandparents on my father's side had been immersed in the upending sequence of first WWI, Rising, Civil War, WWII, but I had no understanding, beyond fragments of stories, of their lived experience.

So I went to the script. The words I would be uttering as Arthur. I suppose I was preoccupied, initially with how my words or physique would land as Arthur. I soon shed these concerns as I reckoned I was Arthur now, for the duration of the production, and I consumed the scant moving pictures of him.

It was difficult to separate the man from the too fast film. His walk was too jaunty. I lamented that his voice was never captured to my knowledge. I read accounts of Collins' mystique but could not separate that from my own impression (as a woman, I suppose) that Arthur was a handsome man. As I read on, I came to understand him as a curious, voracious, stable and humble person.

MAQUETTE OF PROPOSED SCULPTURE OF ARTHUR GRIFFITH



“THE IRISH PEOPLE ARE OUR MASTERS AND NOT OUR SLAVES AS SOME THINK. WE ARE NOT DICTATORS OF THE IRISH PEOPLE, BUT THEIR REPRESENTATIVES, AND IF WE MISREPRESENT THEM OUR MORAL AUTHORITY AND THE STRENGTH BEHIND US IS GONE FOR EVER.”

**ARTHUR GRIFFITH, PRESIDENT, DAIL EIREANN AND
HEAD OF THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT**

JANUARY–AUGUST 1922



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