



09.0 The Executed

09.8 Thomas Kent

Thomas Kent (1865-1916) was born in Bawnard House, Castlelyons, near Fermoy, Co. Cork. He was one of the seven sons and two daughters of David Kent, who farmed 200 acres, and his wife Mary Rice. He was educated at the local national school, probably until about the age of fourteen or fifteen as was normal in rural areas at the time. He spent five years in Boston, where he worked with a publishing and church-furnishing company and participated in Irish cultural activities, many of which were run by the Gaelic League.

When he returned home c.1889 he became involved in the Plan of Campaign, a movement for land reform organised by members of the Irish Parliamentary Party, particularly T.C. Harrington and William O'Brien. As a result of his involvement, he served two months hard labour in Cork Jail, having been convicted for conspiracy to evade the payment of rents. His brother William had a previous conviction and served six months. Thomas's health was impaired by the experience and with the ending of the Parnell era in 1891 he ceased to participate in political activity, devoting his free time instead to the Gaelic league and traditional music and dance.

In 1914 the Kent brothers organised a branch of the Irish Volunteers at Castlelyons which was said to be the first teetotal branch in the country. Thomas was dedicated to the Volunteers, sometimes travelling long distances to special events; for instance, he was present at Patrick Pearse's

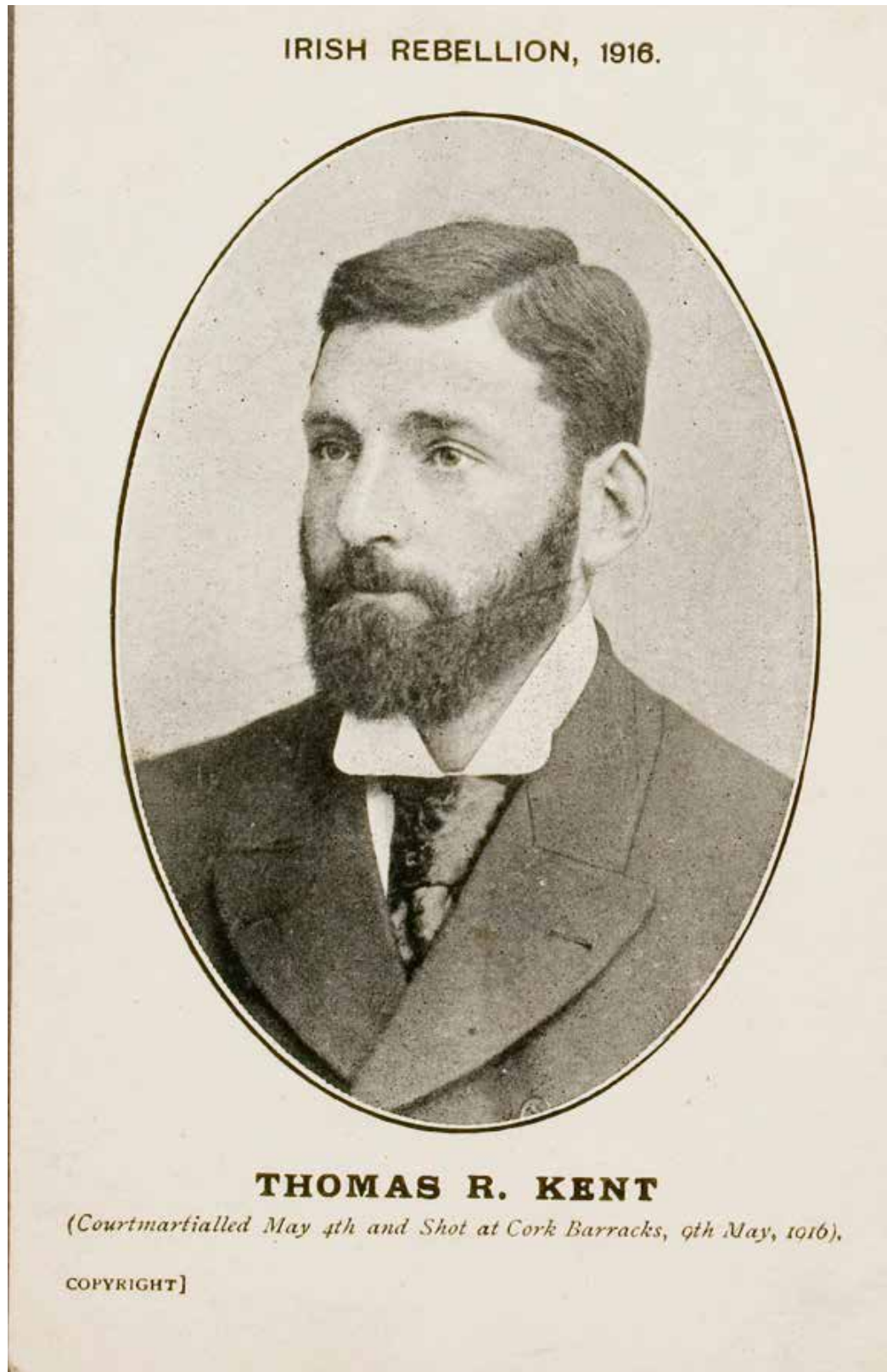
celebrated oration at the funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa in Dublin in August 1915. The Kents had long been under the suspicion of the Royal Irish Constabulary who raided their house for arms early in 1916. As a result, Thomas served two months in Cork Jail for possession.

When the Kents heard of the Rising they remained away from home hoping for mobilisation orders, but returned when it was over, on the night of 1 May. The RIC were then rounding up members of the Irish Volunteers and surrounded the house next morning. There are various accounts of what happened next; in any event a gun battle took place, in the course of which Head Constable W.C. Rowe was shot dead. Thomas and William Kent were arrested; David was wounded; and Richard was mortally wounded trying to escape.

Thomas and William Kent were tried by courts-martial at Cork Detention Barracks. William was acquitted, but Thomas was sentenced to death. David was tried when he had recovered from his wounds; he was sentenced to death but the sentence was commuted to five years penal servitude. Thomas Kent was executed in Cork on 9 May 1916. He was unmarried.

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Newspaper report on the arrest of Thomas Kent. (Daily Mail, 3 May 1916).

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Richard Kent (1875-1916), brother of Thomas Kent, was mortally wounded while attempting to escape following his arrest and died the next day. (Keogh 49).