

Elm Park And Irish Independence

Tom Ennis (1892 – 1945) Independence Hero and Golf Captain Elm Park

TOM ENNIS WAS BORN 12 APRIL 1892 in Enfield, Co. Meath. The family moved to Dublin in 1898 and Tom attended St Laurence O’Toole NS in Seville Place. Afterwards worked as a labourer for the Port and Docks Board. He was very interested in Gaelic games, was a member of St Laurence O’Toole GAA Club and a successful footballer and hurler.



- Tom Ennis with O'Tooles GAA club, winners of Dublin Junior Football League 1913-14. Tom is seated fourth from left.
- Joined E Company, 2nd Battalion, Dublin Brigade of the Irish Volunteers in November 1913. Promoted to rank of sergeant, he fought with the GPO garrison during the 1916 Rising, was imprisoned and, on release, helped reorganise his old Irish Volunteer company.

The burning of Custom House, 25 May 1921, was the largest-scale engagement undertaken by the Irish side during the War of Independence and Tom was in charge of organising it. Logistically it was a huge operation involving 120 men. Somehow, the authorities were alerted that the building was under attack and in the ensuing gun battle, many were killed and wounded. Tom, badly wounded, was lucky to escape.

Tom took part in many of the major military operations in Dublin during the War of Independence, including “Bloody Sunday”, when he and others assassinated British Lieutenants Ames and Bennett at 38 Upper Mount Street. That afternoon, he attended the football match at Croke Park during which Black and Tans and Auxiliaries shot dead 14 people.

Personal loyalty to Tom was the reason so many of the battalion of which he was O/C went pro-Treaty. When the National Army was formed, he was put in command of the 2nd Eastern Division and played a leading role in the Civil War, signing the order to vacate the Four Courts; leading a daring attack by sea, with Emmet Dalton and Liam Tobin, that captured Cork city, and many other actions, while all the while ensuring prisoners under his control were not mistreated.



- Tom Ennis with WT Cosgrave
- Generals Dalton and Ennis conferring on board the SS Arvonla



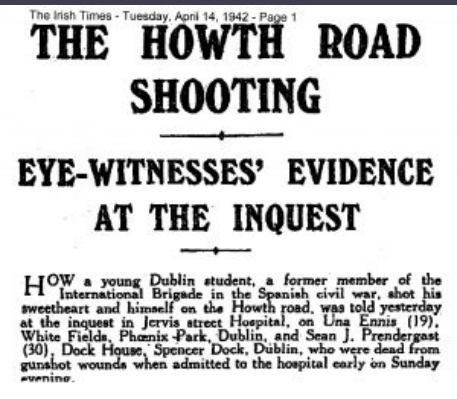
- Tom with Dublin team before match that afternoon



Tom left the army in 1924, became Chief Ranger in the Phoenix Park and lived in Whitefields residence there [1]. He and his wife Kathleen [2] had five children and they spent their summer holidays in their caravan in various places in Ireland. [3]



Tom joined Elm Park in July 1926, was a committee member five times during the 1930s and was captain 1940 and 1941. The club was revived and extended from 1937 onwards, especially growing from nine to 18 holes, and a number of sources give much of the credit for this to Tom Ennis. Shown here Tom directing so-called “Chain Gang” filling in a deep hollow before fifth-hole green [4]: Official opening of Nutley House [5]: Tom on Elm Park tractor [6]



Tragedy struck the Ennis family in 1942 when their 19-year-old daughter Una as shot dead on the Howth Road by her boyfriend who then took his own life.

- Newspaper headline on tragic death of Tom's and Kathleen's daughter



Tom died on 10 March 1945 at the young age of 52. He was buried with full military honours and all shades of political opinion were represented at his massive funeral. Elm Park was represented by F Shorthall, B Hayden, S Kavanagh, W Kelly, H Farrelly and M Campbell.

- Newspaper report on his death



Later in March 1945, the Elm Park committee decided that the Tom Ennis Memorial Cup would be played for by men's golf members to perpetuate his memory.

- Tom Ennis Memorial Trophy
- Tom Ennis's grave, St Fintan's Cemetery, Sutton, Co. Dublin



“As modest as he was brave ... the most unassuming man I have ever met”

DAVID NELLIGAN

“A winning sportsman and fighting general; a man of action, not stopped by severe wounds or fears for his family safety; a most popular Free State officer, yet a good soldier in IRA eyes; a man with morals in dirty wars, sparing Civil War foes”

DES WHITE



Elm Park And Irish Independence

Anna O’Rahilly (1873–1958) Independence Heroine and Golf Captain Elm Park

Anna O’Rahilly

was born into a nationalist family in Ballylongford Co. Kerry where her father had a grocery business and was a nationalist public representative. She was educated at the local National School, then with the Ursulines in Waterford and at Mount Anville in Dublin. Her sister Nell, was a leader in Cumann na mBan and Áine was present in fact at the foundation of that organisation in Wynn’s Hotel in April 1914. When her brother changed his name from Rahilly to O’Rahilly, she followed suit and also adopted the Irish version of her first name.

In 1896 she moved with her mother to Co. Clare where they were joined by her sister Nell with her husband and children in 1902. The girls’ mother died in 1903 as did Nell’s husband and in 1909 Áine moved with Nell and her children to Dublin where they lived in Northumberland Road. Both Áine and Nell became active revolutionaries in the 1916 - 23 period, as did Nell’s daughter Sighle Humphreys. Sighle also served in Cumann na mBan and, like Áine, was imprisoned a number of times during the revolutionary period.



Image of Sighle Humphreys in Cumann na mBán uniform, courtesy of humphrystree.com

Revolutionary activities - adventures with guns

In Áine’s submission to the Bureau of Military History, she relates how she helped her brother Michael (The O’Rahilly) with the purchase and distribution of arms. In one incident he brought her to Howth where, he told her, guns were to be landed. The yacht was already in the bay and the Volunteers were there to help with the unloading. Her brother’s car was filled with ammunition, so that Áine had to return to Dublin by bus!

The guns were stored in The O’Rahilly’s house in Herbert Park and in his sisters’ house in Northumberland Road. The houses were raided frequently by the British forces so there was a major problem in moving the guns without attracting attention to them. The solution arrived at was to form an ‘orchestra’ among their friends and helpers. Various political friends came to the houses bringing their musical instrument cases into which they fitted the revolvers and brought them safely to be rehoused.



Áine O’Rahilly



Early twentieth century Howth



Image of O’Rahilly House. O’Rahilly and Humphreys images courtesy of Mark Humphrys at humphrystree.com

The Battle of Mount Street Bridge

Áine and her family had a good view of this battle from their house (*Bureau of Military History*). On Wednesday 26th April 1916, The Sherwood Foresters (a division of the British Army) landed at Kingstown (Dun Laoghaire) and marched towards the city centre. They were ambushed by a group of rebels firing from 25, Northumberland Road, the Schoolhouse and Clanwilliam House. There were 234 British Army casualties and fewer than 20 rebel casualties.



Action during The Civil War 1922-23

The O’Rahilly family took the Republican side during the Civil War. The house they had moved to in 1920 on Ailesbury Road contained a ‘safe room’ and in 1922, Ernie O’Malley was hiding there when the house was raided by Free State forces. Aine was accidentally shot in the face and she was badly injured. When she had recovered she was sent to prison and was held there until the end of the Civil War. She was sent to the North Dublin Union where she went on hunger strike with her niece Sighle in October and November 1923 and they were both released in November 1923.



Áine O’Rahilly’s debenture pledge

Silver trophies won by Áine O’Rahilly and her niece Sighle Humphreys

Support for the cause

Áine was arrested and detained in 1916 following the death of her brother. She appealed for money on behalf of Republican prisoners’ dependants (*see letter in National Library of Ireland*) and sat on the Committee of the Dependants’ Fund. She provided the first money to be handled on behalf of Dáil Éireann from her own resources - a loan of £2,000. She worked with other family members on the campaign of Desmond FitzGerald in the 1918 General Election and paid his deposit.



Success on the golf course... ‘and that includes Miss O’Rahilly’

Áine was always a keen sportswoman, playing golf, tennis and hunting. She was Lady Golf Captain in Elm Park in 1929 and her name can be seen on the Lady Captains’ Board in the Clubhouse today. She was an avid golfer and she won a silver trophy, as did her niece Sighle while they were members of Elm Park. They both made a sizeable contribution to the Debentures in 1934 (£50 each = €4,100 each approx. in today’s money)

Áine played golf every day in hail, rain or snow and her grand-niece tells the story of how, one time, when there was heavy snow, notices were erected to say that the Golf Course was closed. Some wag wrote on the notice “AND THAT INCLUDES MISS O’RAHILLY” !

