

# **HIBERNIAN RIFLES**

Submitted with the permission of [aoh\\_board\\_of\\_erin@lineone.net](mailto:aoh_board_of_erin@lineone.net)

Easter is a very poignant time for the nationalist community.  
Taken from the book *Éirí Amach na Cásca. The Easter Rising 1916.*

Although not mentioned in the Proclamation of the Republic, the Hibernian Rifles were among the units which fought in Dublin in Easter Week 1916 and are listed as such by Padraig Pearse in a bulletin issued by him in Irish War News.

The Hibernian Rifles were the Military Arm of the A.O.H. ( Irish - American Alliance ) who had broken away from the A.O.H. (Board of Erin ) about 1907. As the name indicates, most of their success was in the USA where the movement was under the influence of Clan-na-Gael, and it is quite clear that their attitude was far removed from that of the A.O.H. (BOE).

This was made clear by the Commandant of the Rifles, J. Scollan, in a lecture on 'Treason in Ireland', given to the Michael Dwyer Sinn Féin Cumann on December 16th 1914, in which he said: "Many more of us through God's grace shall live to see the Union Jack of England down in the dust and our own immortal green interwoven with the yellow and white of the Irish Republic waving proudly and victoriously over the land."

During the 1913 strike and lockout a special levy was placed on the members in Ireland and a fund opened in the USA for the relief of those affected by the strike and it is quite clear that the Hibernian Rifles were on friendly terms with the Irish Citizens Army when founded. In fact they lost some members to the new body, advertised regularly in the Irish Worker to the effect that they were willing to co-operate with the other national groups, and obtained some of their rifles from James Connolly - others being bought from British soldiers.

The I.R.B. does not seem to have trusted them completely to judge from a barbed comment by 'Sarsfield' (P.S. O'Hegarty) in Irish Freedom, March 1914, and though the Irish Volunteers refused them affiliation as a unit - as they did the Irish Citizens Army also - friendly co-operation became possible, mainly, it would appear, through Thomas McDonagh. Through him, perhaps, they participated as a body at the O'Donovan Rossa funeral and later in allowing their headquarters at 28 North Frederick Street, to be used as an overnight stop for many of the Volunteers returning from England late in 1915 and early the next year.

In 1915 they also launched a weekly paper The Hibernian to add to the mosquito press, as the Redmondites scornfully called the nationalist papers, and in it was serialized 'Ireland's Roll of Honor' - a list of those killed or wounded at Harrel's 'Battle of Clontarf' and Bachelor's Walk, imprisoned, deported or served with exclusion orders under the Defense of the Realm Act.

It was one of the most aggressive pieces of journalism of the period and one that deserves more attention than it has received.

Coming up to the rising, their co-operation with the Volunteers increased, but no definite date for the insurrection was given them by the revolutionary leaders.

On Easter Sunday, 1916, they paraded as usual at their headquarters. Startled by McNeill's countermanding order in the Sunday Independent that day, the commandant, realizing that something serious was afoot, ordered them to parade the next day.

The fight having started on Monday, the men were given the choice of participating and about 20 - 30 went to the G.P.O. at midnight. On Tuesday some of them with some of the men from Maynooth were sent to the Exchange Hotel in Parliament Street where in a brisk exchange they lost one man, fatally wounded, before retiring to the G.P.O. where most of them remained for the rest of the week.

If small in number the Hibernian Rifles should not be forgotten in any celebration of the Rising that was not of their planning, but in which they willingly joined when once it had begun.

Taken from the book *Éirí Amach na Cásca. The Easter Rising 1916*