

# ON THE BRINK

## The Politics of Conflict 1914-1916 Project

PRO / ANTI HOME RULE

EASTER RISING & BATTLE OF THE SOMME

COMMEMORATION

### ROGER CASEMENT

Roger Casement was born in Dublin to a Protestant family in 1864. By the time he was 13, both his parents had died and John Casement, his uncle, who lived in Magherintemple, Ballycastle, became his legal guardian. During his time at Ballymena Diocesan School (now Ballymena Academy), he stayed with his great uncle Francis Casement and with his relatives, the Youngs of Galgorm Castle. Throughout his life, he retained strong links with these areas.

In his 20s, Casement worked in Africa, initially for the International Association, which was controlled by King Leopold II of Belgium, and later helping British consul appointments in Mozambique, Angola, the Congo and Brazil. In 1904, he came to national and international prominence by producing a hard-hitting report exposing atrocities in the Belgian Congo. He also investigated alleged colonial abuses in South America. In 1911 he was granted a knighthood for his humanitarian work in both areas.

When at home, Casement was heavily involved in Irish cultural activities, including the 1904 Glens Feis and the Gaelic League. In 1913, he resigned from the British Foreign Office to focus on Irish politics. In November 1913, he helped Eoin MacNeill to found the Irish Volunteers and travelled to the United States to raise funds to arm them. In July 1914, he ran guns into Howth. On the outbreak of war, he identified a new political ally in Germany, and travelled there Germany via Norway to commence negotiations on support for an Irish insurrection. He also tried, with little success, to recruit captured Irish soldiers to an 'Irish Brigade' to fight in the planned insurrection at home.

Eventually Casement secured a German consignment of arms, which was shipped to Ireland on board the 'Aud'. He travelled with two others on a submarine and landed on Banna Strand, in Kerry, on 21st April 1916. Plans to use these arms in the Easter Rising were ruined when the Royal Navy intervened. The 'Aud' was sunk and Casement was captured. Casement was tried for treason in London, convicted and stripped of his knighthood.

Casement was executed on 3rd August 1916 was buried in an unmarked grave in Pentonville Prison, rather than at his beloved Murlough Bay as he had hoped. Casement's death was quickly integrated into public memory of the Easter Rising and he is remembered by Irish nationalists as one of the 16 Irish martyrs who died for Irish freedom.

On the anniversary of his death, the McCarry family hold an annual memorial service at the place in Murlough Bay where Casement wished to be buried. In 1929, the family erected a stone cross in memory of Patrick McCarry and three close friends, one of whom was Roger Casement.

In August 1953, at an official ceremony at Murlough Bay, Taoiseach Éamon de Valera called for a return of Casement's remains and chose a site for internment. In 1965, on the condition that it was never exhumed again, his body was repatriated to Ireland and buried at Glasnevin Cemetery, Dublin.