

Duggan, Éamonn John (Edmund) by Pauric J. Dempsey

Duggan, Éamonn John (Edmund) (1874/9–1936), solicitor and politician, was born Edmund John Duggan in Longwood, Co. Meath. Educated locally, he began his working life as a law clerk, though after study he was admitted as a solicitor in Hilary term 1914 and built up a large practice at 66 Dame St., Dublin.

On the foundation of the Irish Volunteers (1914) he enlisted as a private in A Company of the 1st Dublin Battalion, and in time rose to the position of adjutant officer. During the 1916 rising he was attached to the staff of Commdt Edward Daly (qv) at the North Dublin Union and later at the Father Mathew Hall. Court-martialled and sentenced to three years' penal servitude on 2 May 1916, he was released in June 1917 after serving nearly fourteen months in Portland, Lewes, and Maidstone jails. Through some oversight, Duggan had not been struck off the roll of solicitors and hence was able to recommence his law practice.

In September 1917 he acted as solicitor to the next of kin at the inquest on Thomas Ashe (qv), during which he instructed T. M. Healy (qv). A senior member of the IRB, Duggan became the IRA's director of intelligence (May 1918–November 1920). In December 1918 he was elected Sinn Féin MP for Meath South (1918–22), and at the first meeting of the dáil on 21 January 1919 he read the declaration of independence in English. On 21 November 1920 he was rearrested and imprisoned in Mountjoy jail with Arthur Griffith (qv). While imprisoned, the two men met the British civil servant Alfred Cope (qv), and began the process that would eventually lead to the truce and treaty.

Duggan was later moved to Brixton jail to enable him to instruct T. M. Healy in an appeal case before the house of lords. While at Brixton, as an MP Duggan occasionally dined at the house of commons, and Healy used these opportunities to encourage peace talks. In a profile in *The Times* of the delegates to the treaty talks, the piece on Duggan noted that had he refused to return to Brixton prison after dining at the house of commons, a curious question of parliamentary privilege might have arisen.

Duggan was released on 30 June 1921 and, with Robert Barton (qv), made the final arrangements for the truce. Appointed chief Irish liaison officer, he accompanied Éamon de Valera (qv) to London, where they met with Lloyd George in July. Later Duggan was appointed as one of the members of the treaty delegation. Within the delegation his role largely involved liaison with the various British officials, particularly Cope and Tom Jones. As the treaty delegation split, Duggan invariably supported the line taken by Michael Collins (qv) and Arthur Griffith. At the close of negotiations it was his emotional appeal to Robert Barton that persuaded the latter to sign the treaty.

Duggan defended the treaty in the dáil, stating that if freedom were not achieved under these terms, it would be the fault of the Irish people, not the treaty. On 9 January 1922 he accompanied Michael Collins and Kevin O'Higgins (qv) to the handover of Dublin castle, and in March 1922 he and Griffith met Sir James Craig (qv), prime minister of Northern Ireland, to negotiate the reorganisation of the police in Belfast, unemployment relief for catholics, and the cessation of IRA activity in Northern Ireland. Elected TD for Louth–Meath (1921–3) and for Meath (1923–33), Duggan was minister for home affairs (January–September 1922); he has been seen as the 'weakest link' in the provisional government (Brady, 39–40). He later served as minister without portfolio (September 1922–March 1923), and as parliamentary secretary to the executive council (1924–6), to the minister for finance (1926–7), and to the president of the executive council and to the minister for defence (1927–32). In government his role was again that of liaison, for which he commanded a salary of £1,200 a year.

In March 1923, urged on by Hugh Kennedy (qv), he raised the issue of divorce legislation with W. T. Cosgrave (qv), who in turn told him to consult with Archbishop Edward Byrne (qv). On 14 March 1925 Cosgrave sent Duggan to Armagh to secure the support of the catholic bishops for the anti-partition candidates in the NI general election (3 April 1925). He crossed the border again in April 1926 to sit in the strangers' gallery at Stormont and meet Craig, with whom he purportedly discussed Free State budgetary matters. In 1933 he did not seek re-election to the dáil, but served as a senator (1933–6). He was the last citizen of the Free State to take the oath as a member of the oireachtas (1933), and he was also the first chairman of Dún Laoghaire borough council. On 17 May 1933 he successfully sued Allied Newspapers in London concerning an article in the *Sunday Times* of 20 March 1932, in which Duggan was said to oppose the oath of allegiance and support the withholding of land annuities, when the opposite was in fact the case. His health broke down in 1935 and, never fully recovering, he collapsed and died 6 June 1936 while addressing a municipal election meeting at Dún Laoghaire town hall. He left an estate valued at £35.

He married Miss E. Kavanagh; they had one son. The family lived at 26 Upper St Bridget's Road, Drumcondra, Dublin; 46 Palmerston Road, Dublin; and 1 Ardenza Terrace, Monkstown, Co. Dublin.

Times, 7 Dec. 1921 (photo), 18 May 1933, 8 June 1936; Piaras Béaslaí, *Michael Collins and the making of modern Ireland* (1926); Frank Pakenham, *Peace by ordeal* (1935); *Ir. Times*, 8 June 1936; Margery Forrester, *Michael Collins: the lost leader* (1971); Conor Brady, *Guardians of the peace* (1974); Leon Ó Broin, *No man's man* (1982); Ronan Fanning, *Independent Ireland* (1983); Oliver Coogan, *Politics and war in Meath 1913–23* (1983); Clare O'Halloran, *Partition and the limits of Irish nationalism* (1987); Michael Hopkinson, *Green against green* (1988); Dennis Kennedy, *The widening gulf* (1988); Brendan Sexton, *Ireland and the crown 1922–36* (1989); Frank Callanan, *T. M. Healy* (1996); Liam McNiffe, *A history of the Garda Síochána* (1997); Brian Maye, *Arthur Griffith* (1997); Boylan (1998 ed.).

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