| **Title** | The crustiest and most personally unbiddable of instruments: Éamonn Ceannt and the pipes |
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ÉAMONN CÉANN'T is perhaps one of the least well-known leaders of the 1916 Rising. Described variously as a reserved, quiet, somewhat taciturn and private figure, he has been easily eclipsed by the better-known personalities amongst the other signatories. In fact an Irish Times article published on the fiftieth anniversary of the Rising, summarises this position stating that there are only three things for which Ceannt is... of the Proclamation, Commandant of the South Dublin Union during the Rising and that he played the pipes for the Pope.

Edward Thomas Kent was born in the police barracks in Ballymoe, Co. Galway in 1881, where his father James Kent, originally from Ballyporeen, Co. Tipperary was an officer of the Royal Engineers. He went on to study Classics at Trinity College, Dublin, where he met his future wife Constance. Together, they... the Gaelic League which he joined in 1901 and later with his young family.

The Kent family eventually settled in Dublin on his father's retirement in 1892, and Éamonn attended the Christian Brothers O'Connell School on North Richmond Street. His... Ceannt's name, appear in his school diary in 1897, which may well be the first translation of the surname Kent to Ceannt.

Inspired by mounting hostility to the Boer War and by the centenary of the 1798 Rebellion, Ceannt engages with a growing ideological sense of resistance to cultural imperialism. During the Boer War, he asks his sister to make a Boer flag, which he hangs outside their house (this, despite the fact that his... well-educated, intelligent, high achieving young man. Work options for a young working class Catholic are few. Joining the police is one answer to the question of how... the doors. This was the start of a long and difficult journey...
An Claidheamh Soluis

16    NLI, MS 13,069/4/5.   17

26 September, 2015, an article by Denise McNamara outlining the 1916
Memories of the Dead

5    Daly, Martin (1916)

14While

15

10In fact the winner of the piping

9In fact the winner of the piping

7Ceannt applied

6Volunteer Harry

4It is also around this time, in

3My thanks to Gerard Manning for providing a copy of a letter from Éamonn Ceannt to Nally’s widow (dated 15 October, 1911)

2021

9 August, 1913.

rail and car fare fee for one session tenable at any Irish training college and £1 towards expenses or a gold medal’ .

29 July, 1911.

An Claidheamh Soluis

16    NLI, MS 13,069/4/5.

18 August 1906, no first or second prize was awarded. The third prize consisted of a ‘third class

1900, that Ceannt and Nally amongst others, set up the Dublin Pipers’ Club (DPC). Clear precedents in a revival-ist

1902 he is adjudicating the piping competition at the Oireachtas, and is frequently listed as an adjudicator in subsequent

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Rome to partake in the competition along with a contingent from the Dublin Corporation sanctioned with imparting a message of congratulations to the Pope on behalf of the people of Ireland. Indeed two pipers travel to Rome, Pádraig Breathnach, father of Breandán Breathnach accompanies Ceannt.

During the visit, the Irish pilgrims obtain an audience with the Pope. Seán T. Ó Ceallaigh makes an address to the Pope in Irish, while Ceannt and the rest of the pilgrims line the periphery of the Vatican’s main hall. The Pope listens intently, and on departure he awards Ceannt a gold medal of appreciation. "The Pope of course got a full blast of the war pipes. He was a little bit pained by it, but very charmed all the same." Later that evening the Evening Telegram states that "the notes of the pipes, echoing and re-echoing through the halls of the Vatican buildings could be heard distinctly over the whole stadium."

It reports that the Pope stops and questions Ceannt about the pipes. Even Il Giornale d'Italia tells its readers that the Pope "prays for the realisation of the aspiration of the Irish people and wishes to see "the beautiful Isle of the sea" resounding with the notes of the strange instrument that has been such an attraction away under the walls of the Eternal City."

Following 1908 and in the years preceding 1916, the war pipes and war pipe bands take on an increasing political and social significance, quite literally, mobilising national identity. Such bands become integral to the 'national' movement playing at political gatherings such as the Manchester Martyrs anniversary procession to Glasnevin in November 1913 and the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa (1915). By 1916 the best known bands are the United Irish Pipe Band, founded by Thomas Ashe and the St Lawrence O'Toole Pipe Band is established with Tom Clarke as its president.

For Ceannt, both the war and uilleann pipes were instruments on which the ideological movement of cultural nationalism, that had crystallised in organisations such as the Irish Volunteers, fought for independence was played. As he said himself: 'Táceol thar phíobaireacht ann, ach níl aon cheol chomhtháin, chun Gaeil Éireann a ghríosú'.