



The following is a slightly abridged newspaper report on the 1951 unveiling of a Dick McKee Memorial in Finglas by Éamon de Valera:

‘Memorial to Dick McKee Unveiled at Finglas. Great Soldier Honoured’

The people of his native Finglas, headed by their parish priest, [the] Very Rev. E. Farrell, P.P., joined with thousands from all parts of Dublin city and county yesterday to do honour to the memory of one of the greatest of the Republican leaders, when they gathered at the Triangle to see the unveiling by Mr. de Valera of a memorial cross to the memory of Brigadier Dick McKee, O.C., Dublin Brigade, I.R.A., who was killed by British forces in Dublin Castle while he was a prisoner there on November 21, 1920.

The memorial was erected by the Dick McKee Memorial Committee, which comprises former comrades-in-arms of the late brigadier and prominent public men of all shades of political opinion. Many organisations were represented in the huge parade to the site before the unveiling, but it was only natural that pride of place should have been given to the veterans who were under Brigadier McKee’s command in the Dublin Brigade in Easter Week and the years following his death.

The memorial, which takes the form of a Celtic Cross fifteen feet high in limestone on a granite base, was constructed by Messrs. Farrell and Son, Finglas Road, and bears the simple inscription in Irish and English: “To the glory of God and the honour of Ireland. In memory of Brigadier Richard McKee, Dublin Brigade, Irish Republican Army, killed in Dublin Castle by English Forces, Nov. 21, 1920. Rest in Peace.” ...

Mr. de Valera, who spoke in Irish and English, said that when it was proposed that he should come there to unveil the memorial, he thought it would be more fitting that Mr. Oscar Traynor, who was the close comrade of Dick McKee and his successor as brigadier, should perform the ceremony instead.

However, the [Dick McKee Memorial] committee urged that he should do it and Mr. Traynor was more insistent upon it than anyone else. He regretted to announce that Mr. Traynor was prevented through illness from being present.

Thanks were due to the committee for their idea of erecting the memorial on that site. It was fitting that there should be a memorial in Finglas to Dick McKee because it was there that his character was moulded and that he learned the things that made him the man and soldier he proved to be.

Dick McKee was under 21 years of age when the volunteers were founded and his love for Ireland and for freedom was such even then that he immediately joined the Volunteers and spent the years before 1916 in preparation and training which was common to the volunteers at that time.

Within two and a half years the Rising came and he was found in that Rising as Captain of F. Coy., 2nd Battalion. After the surrender he was arrested and interned and when released he was most active in re-organising the volunteers and getting them ready to carry on the work of the volunteers whose aim was the freedom of our country.

In that reorganisation he played a prominent part. He was against arrested and on his release he became Commander of E Company and later on of the Battalion itself, the 2nd Battalion.

In March, 1918, he was made Commander of the Dublin Brigade. That position brought him on to the H.Q. Staff and the experience he had gained in organising and training his Battalion was regarded as of such importance that he was then made Director of Training and also of Munitions on the H.Q. Staff.

Dick McKee's work as Commander of the Brigade was such that it required thought and very special soldierly abilities. There were no precedents that he could follow. The task and the problems that faced him were ones that had not been dealt with before. There were no books of reference to which he could turn. He had only to set for himself the problems and try to find the best solution.

He was in charge of the Volunteers later when the Republic was re-affirmed by Dáil Éireann. The Army of Occupation had their headquarters in Dublin. The arms which the Volunteers had were not sufficient to enable them to attack any of the major posts and the question was how the Volunteer army ... could be trained so as to make use of all available arms they could take possession of; how they were to be organised and what tactics were to be employed. That was the position which had to be worked out by Dick McKee ...

“We know from those who were close to him,” said Mr. de Valera, “how unassuming he was, how thorough he was, what soldierly bearing he had, and how magnificent he was in maintaining discipline in a Volunteer army. He had never lost sight of the fact that it was a Volunteer army. That was one of the glories of his success” ...

“When he was arrested and detained in Dublin Castle, although the time before his death was short, efforts were about to be made to secure his release, but unfortunately these efforts had not reached the point of success when he was foully done to death.”

“His death was typical of the man. Every evidence that there is shows that attempts were made by torture and sadistic methods to get him to reveal who his immediate associates were, and he and his Vice-Commandant, Peadar Clancy, and Volunteer Conor Clune were killed in Dublin Castle after each of the two others had also been subjected to the same methods. He died as he lived, loyal to his comrades and cause. His devotion sprang from the firmness of his conviction based on his consciousness of right. He was an example of devotion to us all. As long as Irish annals are read, as long as Irishmen exist, so long will the devotion of Dick McKee and his comrades be remembered, even when this Celtic Cross will have worn away and its solid granite foundation will have disappeared, his memory will still live and will be an inspiration to our people”

“There could be no higher wish for our country,” Mr. de Valera concluded, “than that it should continue to have men of the quality of Dick McKee who love their country and are willing to give devout service to it even unto death.”

Very Rev. E. Farrell, P.P., Finglas, said they were proud to welcome to their parish such a distinguished Irishman as Mr. de Valera ... God has blessed Ireland in a wonderful way with the leaders He had placed at the people’s head from the beginning of the new State.

It was a great pleasure to him to be there to officially welcome Mr. de Valera, who had proved himself such a worthy son of Ireland and a wonderful and brilliant son of [the] Holy Church.

Congratulating the chairman and members of the memorial committee on bringing so noble a work to fruition, Father Farrell said it was pleasing to note that the memorial took the form of a Celtic Cross, which was an inspiring symbol of the Faith for which so many of them had lived for and so many had died for in the past.

Mr. P. J. Burke, T.D., said that Dick McKee was a man who had given all he had that others might live in this country.

He hoped the new generation would try to live up to Brigadier McKee's spiritual ideal. They still had much to achieve in Ireland. The leader of the Irish people, Mr. de Valera, had gone a long way on the road and he would still lead the people onwards ...

Following the unveiling, Fr. Farrell, assisted by Rev. J. Furlong, C.C., blessed the memorial. The sounding of the Reveille followed, and the crowd answered a decade of the Rosary in Irish.

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