



The three funerals of Frank Stagg

The first burial of Frank Stagg, was managed by the State, and was contrary to the wishes of the deceased

(image: rebelbreeze.com)

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The three funerals of FRANK STAGG

Frank Stagg was born in Hollymount, Co. Mayo on the 4th October 1941. He was an Irish militant and republican activist. He was a member of the Irish Republican Army and a hunger striker who died in 1976.



Frank Stagg (image:rebelbreeze.com)

He was the 7th child in a family of 13. His father and uncle both fought in the Irish War of Independence. After finishing school he worked for a while as an assistant gamekeeper with his uncle, before emigrating to England to find work. In London he worked as a bus conductor before becoming a bus driver. While in England he met and married a native Mayo woman, Bridie Armstrong from Carnacon in 1970. In 1972 he joined Luton Cumann of Sinn Fein and soon became a volunteer in the Provisional Irish Army.

In April 1973 Stagg and seven others were arrested for planning bomb attacks in Coventry. He and the others were tried at Birmingham Crown Court. The jury found three of the seven not guilty. Stagg was given a ten year sentence. He was initially sent to a top security prison on the Isle of Wight. In March 1974, having been moved to Parkhurst Prison, he and fellow Mayo man Michael Gaughan joined a hunger strike begun by sisters Marion and Dolours Price and Hugh Feeney and Gerry Kelly. It resulted in the death of Michael Gaughan.

The others were granted repatriation to Ireland but Stagg was transferred to Long Lartin Prison in Worcestershire where he spent a lot of his time in solitary confinement for refusing to do prison work.



Image: goldenlangan.com

He, along with his wife and sisters, were subjected to humiliating body searches. In protest he began another hunger strike and after 34 days the governor agreed to stop the strip searches. For the rest of his stay in Long Lartin he was bed-ridden due to a kidney problem. In 1975 he was transferred to Wakefield Prison where again he spent a lot of time in solitary confinement for again refusing to do prison work.

On December 14th 1975 he embarked on another hunger strike along with other republican prisoners after being refused repatriation to Ireland during the IRA\British truce. His demands were;

- An end to solitary confinement
- No prison work
- Repatriation to prison in Ireland

All his demands were refused and on the 12th February 1976 after 62 days on hunger strike he died. Frank Stagg's burial caused considerable controversy in Ireland. He wished to be buried alongside Michael Gaughan in Ballina. However, as his family and supporters waited at Dublin Airport the Irish Government had his plane diverted to Shannon Airport and from there a helicopter flew his remains to Hollymount before being buried in Leigue Cemetery, Ballina.

He was buried not in the Republican plot beside Michael Gaughan but in a plot dug by Gardaí. This burial was attended by thousands of supporters.

1,600 members of the Defence Forces plus An Garda Síochána were deployed to keep order. Despite all of this, the Provisional IRA fired volleys of shots over his coffin.

At a later date a requiem Mass was held in Mayo for Stagg by Republicans. Joe Cahill, the Chief of Staff of the IRA vowed that Stagg would be buried in accordance with his wishes.

On hearing this it was decided to cover his grave in concrete and have it guarded around the clock for six months.

However, the grave beside Stagg was purchased by his brother George and late one November night a group of republicans dug down and then sideways and recovered the coffin of Frank Stagg.

He was then reburied in the Republican plot beside his friend Michael Gaughan - as was his wish. This is sometimes referred to as the third and final funeral of Frank Stagg. It is also noted that he is commemorated on three headstones in the same graveyard!

Source:
wikipedia.ie
[Leigue cemetery page](#)

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 now open at the North Mayo Heritage Centre every
 Thur, Fri, Sat, Sun, Mon
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