

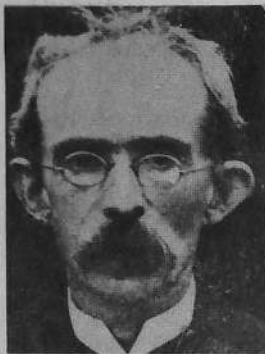
ÉIRE Ireland



IRIS na Roinne Gnóthaí
eachtracha

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Thomas J. Clarke

THE LEADERS OF THE 1916 RISING



Sean MacDiarmada



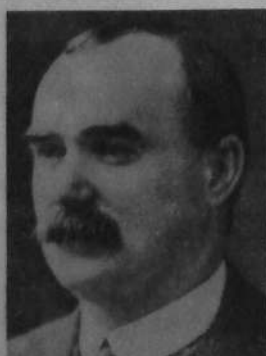
Thomas MacDonagh



Patrick H. Pearse



Eamonn Ceannt



James Connolly



Joseph Plunkett

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29th March, 1966.

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THE RISING OF 1916

Background to the Rising

The Rising of Easter Week, 1916, marks the end of one phase in Irish history and the beginning of another. Before the Rising it seemed that Ireland was destined to win, at most, only a limited measure of self-government under the British crown. The Rising, however, and the execution of its leaders led to the rapid spread of republican ideas and to the demand for a separate independent republican State.

The French Revolution, and to a lesser extent the American War of Independence which preceded it, had an important influence in the introduction of republican ideas into Irish politics in the latter half of the 18th century. Even though the insurrection of the United Irishmen in 1798 was unsuccessful, its influence on the course of subsequent Irish history was a decisive one. The gauntlet of nation-wide revolt, based on republican ideals, had been flung down in the face of British control. Although the immediate effect was to make that control an even tighter one - as a result of the Act of Union of 1800 - it served in the long term to cohere and clarify the forces and the aims of Irish nationalism. During the nineteenth and early twentieth century the Union remained the common enemy to be broken. Only as regards the means and extent of its disappearance, did differences of opinion exist between, on the one hand, the constitutionalists or "Home Rulers" and, on the other, the Republicans.

The ill-starred revolt of 1803, which cost Robert Emmet his life, was the first spark applied to the totally unacceptable situation created in Ireland by the Act of Union. Following his victory in 1829 on the Catholic Emancipation issue, Daniel O'Connell turned his efforts towards the political organisation of the Irish people and, in the 1840's, towards the Repeal of the Union. For a variety of reasons, some of them the result of O'Connell's own temperament and convictions, others the result of political forces to some extent outside his control, O'Connell's efforts were unsuccessful, insofar as the Repeal issue was concerned. He did, however, achieve important results in making the Irish people as a whole more aware of the political issues involved and in creating the machinery by which they could make their voice and their influence felt where it counted most.

O'Connell, in his moves towards Repeal, was, in a sense, out-flanked by the Young Irelanders. Here too the immediate outcome was unsuccessful and the Young Ireland movement was suppressed in 1848. But the influence of the movement lived on, and the idealistic and virile conception of Irish nationalism, expressed in the writings and speeches of its members, proved to be an important inspirational source for future nationalist leaders, and for the people as a whole in the years to come.

In the 1860's, the republican ideal was revived by the Fenian movement which organised an unsuccessful rising in 1867. The ideal was kept alive up to 1916 by a secret revolutionary society, the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

Ireland was strongly influenced by, and in turn itself influenced the growth of nationalism in Europe during the nineteenth century. National identity was increasingly seen, as elsewhere in Europe, as more than a constitutional or political status. The wholesale eviction of Irish tenant farmers, the writings of James Fintan Lalor and the powerful influence and authority of Parnell created the conditions which inspired Michael Davitt to found the Land League and gain victory for tenant rights after a prolonged and bitter Land War. Towards the end of the nineteenth century the foundation of the Gaelic Athletic Association in 1884 and of the Gaelic League in 1893 resulted in a revival of interest in the Irish language, literature, sports and culture generally which played an important part in the campaign for full national independence. In 1905 Arthur Griffith founded Sinn Féin (Ourselves - self reliance), advocating the withdrawal of Irish members from the

British Parliament and the establishment of a self-reliant Irish parliament to promote economic and cultural development.

When, in 1912, Britain appeared likely to grant some form of Home Rule to Ireland, the Ulster unionists established the Ulster Volunteers to resist a separation from Britain by force if necessary. In April, 1914, they landed a large quantity of arms and ammunition which they had purchased in Germany. In 1913, with the backing of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, the Irish Volunteers were founded in Dublin to defend Irish rights, and Home Rulers and separatists alike joined. Arms were purchased on the Continent and landed at Howth, Co. Dublin, Bere Island, Co. Cork and Kilcoole, Co. Wicklow. The foundation by the labour leader, James Connolly, of the Irish Citizen Army, following on the bitter strike and lockout of 1913, added to the growing tensions.

The outbreak of the First World War in August, 1914, set the stage for the events that were to lead to the Rising of 1916.

The Rising

From 1914 on secret plans for a Rising began. The date finally fixed was for Easter Sunday, 23rd April, 1916. Three days before however, the Chief of Staff of the Volunteers, Dr. Eoin MacNeill, who until then was unaware of the plan for a Rising, learned of developments and promptly cancelled the orders for manoeuvres on Easter Sunday. Subsequently, on being informed of the Casement arms expedition, expected to arrive from Germany on the eve of the Rising (Bulletin No. 731 of 15th March, 1966) he changed his mind, taking the view that the die had been irrevocably cast. On Easter Saturday, MacNeill learned of the failure of the arms landing and of Casement's capture. The news seemed to him a disastrous blow to the prospects of the Rising and he at once reverted to his former position and issued counter-manding orders.

The majority of the leaders of the Volunteers, however, were determined that a rising must take place despite all difficulties and decided on the following day, Easter Monday. There was very little time to alert the country units. Less than a thousand men engaged at the beginning. In these circumstances, the Rising had little prospect of success in the strictly military sense. The object was, however, in the view of the leaders, to assert Ireland's claim to independence and to show that men were prepared to die for it.

Monday, 24th April

Easter Monday, 24th April, 1916, in Dublin was a bright sunny day. It was a national holiday and so little were the British concerned about a prospect of immediate revolution that a large number of officers and men had gone to celebrate the day at Fairyhouse race-course, twenty miles or so outside the city.

At mid-day, a party of Volunteers and Citizen Army men marched from the trade union headquarters at Liberty Hall and occupied the General Post Office in O'Connell Street. They were led by five of the men who signed the Proclamation of the Republic - Patrick Pearse, Tom Clarke, James Connolly, Seán MacDiarmada and Joseph Plunkett. (The remaining two signatories, Thomas MacDonagh and Eamonn Ceannt, commanded the Second and Fourth Battalions respectively.) At the G.P.O. the Proclamation of the Republic was read aloud by Patrick Pearse.

POBLACHT NA hEIREANN

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

OF THE

IRISH REPUBLIC

TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.....

The Easter Rising had begun.

Elsewhere in Dublin, the Volunteers, organised in four battalions, occupied a number of positions with the object of holding off British advances as long as possible and disrupting their lines of communication. The element of surprise was the Republicans' strongest weapon.

POBLACHT NA hEIREANN.
THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT
OF THE
IRISH REPUBLIC
TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN: In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us, summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and, supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength, she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland, and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty; six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to, and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens, and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government, hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God, Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed in Behalf of the Provisional Government,

THOMAS J. CLARKE,
SEAN Mac DIARMADA, THOMAS MacDONAGH,
P. H. PEARSE, EAMONN Ceannt,
JAMES CONNOLLY, JOSEPH PLUNKETT.

The First Battalion, under Commandant Edward Daly, took possession of the Four Courts on the north west bank of the Liffey, a position which dominated the approaches from the Curragh Camp in County Kildare, the location of the main concentration of British troops in Ireland.

Commandant Seán Heuston and some twenty-six men occupied the Mendicity Institute on the river's south bank and were soon in action, opening fire on and scattering a regiment of British soldiers which left the nearby Royal (now Collins) Barracks. The First Battalion also established outposts in Jameson's Distillery and at other points on the north west bank of the Liffey.

The Second Battalion, under Commandant Thomas MacDonagh occupied Jacobs biscuit factory in Bishop Street and established outposts in neighbouring houses.



O'Connell Street and the G. P. O. before the Rising

The Third Battalion, under Commandant Eamon de Valera occupied Boland's flour mills and the railway line from Westland Row to Lansdowne Road. They established outposts at Mount Street Bridge, Northumberland Road, Lansdowne Road, South Lotts Road, and Grand Canal Street. These were all important positions, being on the line of march of the British reinforcements arriving from England at Dún Laoire.

The Fourth Battalion, under Commandant Eamonn Ceannt, occupied the South Dublin Union and established outposts in the area.



The G. P. O. after the Rising

The Citizen Army, commanded by Michael Mallin and Countess Markievicz occupied St. Stephen's Green with outposts close by. A smaller group, under Seán Connolly, marched on Dublin Castle but withdrew, in the belief that it was heavily guarded, and occupied the City Hall and the Evening Mail offices.

Fianna Eireann

A number of senior boys from Fianna Eireann, the Republic youth movement, accompanied by some Volunteers, raided the British ammunition store at the Magazine Fort in the Phoenix Park, overcame sentries and set fuses alight. Afterwards they joined the Volunteers in the Four Courts.

A troop of British lancers, sent to reconnoitre the G.P.O., suffered a number of casualties. Late in the afternoon British attacks on many outposts were repulsed. There was bitter fighting at the South Dublin Union. Irish Forces attacked Beggar's Bush Barracks. An attempt to capture the telephone exchange at Crown Alley failed and the British authorities were able to call up reinforcements from the Curragh, Belfast, Athlone, and Templemore, Co. Tipperary. More volunteers joined the Rising as they realised that the countermanding order of the previous day was no longer effective.

Cumann na mBan, the women's Republican movement, provided provisions and medical equipment at the Irish garrisons.

Tuesday, 25th April

G.P.O. A bulletin was issued from the G.P.O., and from a radio transmitter which had been established in the Hibernian Bank, O'Connell Street, announcing the Proclamation of the Republic and naming its signatories as members of the Provisional Government.

St. Stephen's Green

The British occupied the Shelbourne Hotel and after some sharp exchanges the Irish withdrew into the College of Surgeons.

Evening Mail Offices

The British captured the Evening Mail offices, an important success, which enabled them to string a cordon from Kingsbridge to Trinity College, cutting off the Irish forces in the south city from the G.P.O. headquarters. British reinforcements were coming into the Kingsbridge area from the west and south of the country. The small garrison in the Mendicity Institute, however, succeeded in holding off a wave of British attacks and inflicted heavy losses.

South Dublin Union

There was fierce hand-to-hand fighting in this area. The Irish in nearby outposts were outnumbered and were forced back into the Union step by step.

North City

British reinforcements from the North forced the Volunteers to abandon outposts in the northern suburbs of Fairview and Ballybough and retreat to O'Connell Street.

Wednesday, 26th April

A small Irish force successfully kept at bay large British reinforcements which had landed at Dún Laoire and were now moving towards the centre of Dublin. Seven men held Clanwilliam House, Mount Street Bridge, for nine hours. Some 234 of the advancing troops were killed or wounded before the house was bombed and set on fire, and abandoned by the four surviving Volunteers.

Commandant Heuton surrendered at the Mendicity Institute when his lines of communication with the Four Courts had been cut and more than half his men were without ammunition.

The Irish forces still held the centre of the city. A British gun-boat 'Helga' began shelling Liberty Hall from the River Liffey.

Activity outside Dublin

The orders and counter-orders which preceded the Rising caused even greater confusion outside Dublin than they did in the city itself and this, combined with the inadequacy of means of communication with the Dublin headquarters, frustrated the plan for a general insurrection. Nevertheless, the Volunteers were active at several points throughout the country.

Enniscorthy (Co. Wexford) was seized by a contingent commanded by Robert Brennan and held for several days before the surrender on 1st May; several police barracks were captured in County Galway, where Liam Mellows was in command; volunteers mobilised at Dundalk, County Louth and marched towards Dublin; in north County Dublin, the Fifth battalion, under Thomas Ashe, controlled the district and carried out a successful attack on British forces at Ashbourne, Co. Meath.

In order to prevent the further slaughter of Dublin citizens, and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered, the members of the Provisional Government present at Headquarters have agreed to an unconditional surrender, and the Commandants of the various districts in the City and Country will order their commands to lay down arms.

Thursday, 27th April

A number of Irish positions in O'Connell Street were abandoned following a British artillery attack in which many buildings were set on fire.

The British forced an entry into the South Dublin Union but retreated to Mount Brown after fierce hand-to-hand fighting.

The Four Courts were shelled and the British, occupying the Bolton Street Technical Schools, attacked the Irish posts in the North King Street area.

Positions at Westland Row and Boland's mills were attacked by the British, while, in turn, Irish forces from Jacobs factory launched attacks at various points.

B. H. Beane

*27th April 1916
3.45 p.m.*

I agree to these conditions for the men only under my own Command in the Moore Street District and for the men in the Stephen's Green Command.

*James Connolly
April 27/16*

On consultation with Commandant Ceannt and other officers I have decided to agree to an unconditional surrender also

Thomas MacDonagh

Surrender Orders

Friday, 28th April

Pearse issued a manifesto in which he re-affirmed the resolution of his forces to hold the G.P.O. and praised the gallantry of all the Irish soldiers. "I desire now", he said, "lest I may not have an opportunity later, to pay homage to the gallantry of the soldiers of Irish Freedom who have during the past four days been writing with fire and steel the most glorious chapter in the later history of Ireland. Justice can never be done to their heroism, to their discipline, to their gay and unconquerable spirit in the midst of peril and death". He mentioned, by name, the wounded James Connolly, officer in command of the Dublin Division, "the guiding brain of our resistance". The manifesto ended - "If we accomplish no more than we have accomplished, I am satisfied. I am satisfied that we have saved Ireland's honour."



Patrick Pearse Surrenders

For my part, as to anything I have done in this, I am not afraid to face either the judgment of God, or the judgment of posterity".

The British shelled the G.P.O. and wounded and prisoners, with members of Cumann na mBan, were evacuated to Middle Abbey Street. By nightfall the entire G.P.O. was in flames and the garrison withdrew to nearby Moore Street. British soldiers attacked Irish positions in North King Street.

Saturday, 29th April

A dawn bayonet-attack by the British in the Church Street - North King Street sector was repulsed and arms captured. Irish forces in the Boland's Mills - Westland Row area were attacked at many points, and fighting continued in other parts of the city during the day.

Surrender

The Provisional Government held council in a house in Moore Street (No. 16) and decided that, since a military victory was now out of the question, to avoid further heavy casualties they should try to negotiate surrender terms. An unconditional surrender was demanded. Pearse met Brigadier-General Lowe in Parnell Street and wrote the surrender in the following terms:-

"In order to prevent further slaughter of Dublin citizens, and in the hope of saving the lives of our followers now surrounded and hopelessly outnumbered the members of the Provisional Government present at Headquarters have agreed to an unconditional surrender, and the Commandants of the various districts in the City and Country will order their commands to lay down arms".

Though the surrender order marked the end of the Rising, leaders of other battalions continued fighting until they had confirmed that it was authentic.

Large-scale arrests were made throughout the country. Within four days the executions of the leaders and the deportation of thousands of others to England had begun.

Executions and Imprisonment

It is not possible to give a precise figure of the number who took part in the Easter Week Rising. The insurgents, however, men, women and boys numbered probably about 1500. Fourteen of the leaders, including the seven members of the Provisional Government, were court-martialled and executed by shooting. When one includes the executions of Roger Casement and Thomas Kent, the total of those involved in the Rising, who suffered the death penalty, is 16.

There were 160 courts martial and 122 sentenced. 97 death sentences were commuted to penal servitude for various terms, from three years to life. In addition to those sentenced under court martial, several thousand men and women were deported to various British prisons and internment camps. Those sentenced to penal servitude were released under a general amnesty in the summer of 1917.

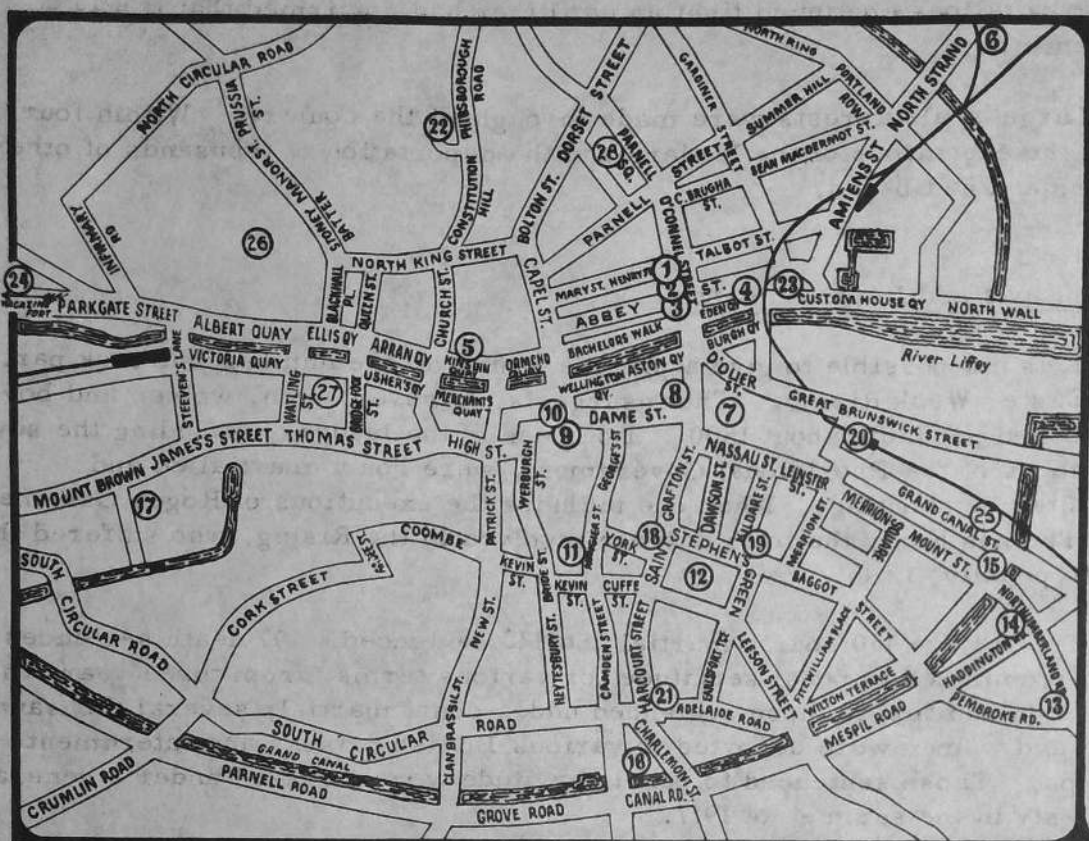
Aftermath

In the words of the late Desmond Ryan, whose book 'The Rising' is among the most complete and authoritative records of the events of Easter Week, the Rising of 1916 provides "one of the most arresting and indubitable examples in all history of the triumph of failure". Shocked by its aftermath of execution, deportations and imprisonment, public opinion in the following months turned increasingly towards support of Sinn Féin. In the General Election of December, 1918, the Sinn Féin candidates swept the country, and, when the First Dáil (Irish Parliament) met in Dublin on 21st January, 1919, and established a National Government, the Proclamation of the Republic was formally re-affirmed.

Immediately after the Rising, the writer James Stephens set down his impressions of the events of that fateful Week. He had not been personally involved in those events, and they took him completely by surprise as they did the majority of Dubliners. Yet, even in the days of shock and confusion which immediately followed Easter Week, he sensed the results which might follow:

"It may not be worthy of mention", he wrote, "but the truth is, that Ireland is not cowed. She is excited a little. She is gay a little. She was not with the revolution, but in a few months she will be, and her heart which was withering will be warmed by the knowledge that men have thought her worth dying for. She will prepare to make herself worthy of devotion, and that devotion will never fail her."

Map showing some places in Dublin associated with the 1916 Rising



- | | |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|
| 1. General Post Office | 15. Clanwilliam House |
| 2. Hotel Metropole | 16. Portobello Bridge |
| 3. Kelly's Gun Store | 17. South Dublin Union |
| 4. Liberty Hall | 18. College of Surgeons |
| 5. Four Courts | 19. Shelbourne Hotel |
| 6. Fairview | 20. Westland Row Station |
| 7. Trinity College | 21. Harcourt Street Station |
| 8. Bank of Ireland | 22. Broadstone Station |
| 9. Dublin Castle | 23. Custom House |
| 10. City Hall | 24. Phoenix Park Magazine Fort |
| 11. Jacob's Factory | 25. Boland's Mills |
| 12. St. Stephen's Green | 26. Arbour Hill |
| 13. Northumberland Rd. | 27. Mendicity Institute |
| 14. Northumberland Rd. | 28. Garden of Remembrance |