



## History

1916 Rising

## **Main events in Dublin during the 1916 rising, and why was Ireland, in Yates's phrase "changed utterly" as a result?**

The first uprising since 1789, the Easter rising of 1916, was fought by members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood and Irish Citizens Army in protest of British rule in Ireland. It was originally planned as a larger attack but due to the loss of the munition shipment from Germany procured by Sir Roger Casement only about 1,250 men took part in the Rising. It began on April the 24th 1916 and ended on April the 29th 1916, lasting only five days. But what were the key events of the 1916 Rising, and how was Ireland changed as a result?

The first key event in the Easter Rising occurred when Patrick (Pádrig) Pearse stood outside the entrance of the General Post Office and read aloud the Proclamation of the Irish Republic. On Easter Sunday 300 men captured and occupied the General Post Office, led by Patrick Pearse and James Connolly. Once the building was under their control a green flag bearing the words 'Irish Republic' and the tricolour was raised. At 12:00 o'clock in Dublin (12:15 GMT) Patrick Pearse, the President of the Provisional Government, read aloud in Irish the Proclamation of the Irish Republic indicating the Rising had officially begun. It was used to announce the separation of Ireland from the United Kingdom, the reason why it was such an important event.

A short time after the GPO was captured a small group of Irish citizens Army soldiers attacked Dublin Castle, the centre of British administration and Ireland, under the command of captain Seán Connolly. At the time the castle was largely in the hands of civil servants and around 25 soldiers. The 10th battalion of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers from the Royal Barracks on the 3<sup>rd</sup> battalion of the Royal Irish Regiment from Portobello barracks moved to Dublin castle as quickly as possible and Seán Connolly was forced to retreat to the nearby City Hall. The reason this is such an important event is because it was the first response of the British authorities to deal with the Rising.

On Tuesday, the Mendicity Institution, which had been taken the previous day by Seán Houston and members of the Irish Volunteers was recaptured by the British. The building had been chosen by the Irish Volunteers because of its location on the Liffey quays. It was arguably the most strategic building in Dublin at the time and by capturing it, Houston and his volunteers would be able to ambush British soldiers who might be mobilised from the Royal Barracks on the other side of the river, like those who marched on Dublin Castle repelling Seán Connolly and his soldiers. The recapturing of this building was extremely important to the British eventually ending the Rising because they could now cross the river without needing to worry about being ambushed.

On early Wednesday morning British reinforcements arrived at Dún Laoghaire and were warmly applauded while marching through the suburbs by the upper-class crowds still enjoying the spring show at the Royal Dublin Society. However, when

they reached Northumberland Road they came under attack by a group of Irish Volunteers. This group was only 13 men strong, and their commander Michael Malone held off the British soldiers for two days of continuous fighting. Although it would have been far easier to cross the canal at Baggot Street, General Lowe, the commander of the British reinforcements ordered the Mount Street Bridge be taken "at all costs". As a result of this the British suffered heavy losses with 214 men and 4 officers killed, (2/3 of the total British losses during the rising), before finally taking the bridge on Thursday after killing only 4 of the volunteers while the rest escaped. The event shows just how dedicated the Irish Volunteers worked their cause but also how far the British were willing to go to end the Rising no matter how many lives it costs them.

Given that the majority of British military installations in Dublin were located in the western part of the city, the Irish Volunteer seized the South Dublin Union which allowed them to impair the movement of British troops from the Richmond Barracks and the Royal Hospital in Kilmainham. However, after 5 days of intense fighting it was recaptured by the British after the 4th Battalion of the Dublin Volunteers under Éamonn Ceannt, who had manned the complex, surrendered on Sunday the 30th. This event again shows the determination of the Irish Volunteers. It is also extremely important because if the men had not held on to the complex for so long the Rising probably would have ended a day or two earlier.

On Friday, British general Sir John Maxwell arrived in Dublin to put a swift end to the Rising, on Friday evening, with the GPO inflames the Irish rebels began evacuating and Pearse, knowing there was no escape, wrote a brief note of surrender for General Maxwell. This message was delivered to general though by the nurse Elizabeth O'Farrell, a member of Cumman na mBan and active nurse. She was one of over 70 women who took part in the uprising as nurses, messengers, cooks, and secretaries. Although the Rising didn't officially end until Sunday the surrender of the GPO (the Irish rebel's headquarters) marked the defeat of the Irish forces as the last few rebel held buildings would not last long.

Although the Rising did fail in the end it would be nonsensical to say that Ireland, in Yates's words, wasn't "changed utterly" as a result. Shortly after the Rising, between the 3<sup>rd</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> of May 1916 all the leaders of the Rising were executed after the order was given by General Lowe. This included Patrick Pearse, Éamonn Ceannt, Seán Heuston and Roger Casement. Within days, the news of the executions shifted the public's attitude towards the Rebellion. The leaders and men who died fighting in the Rebellion were later used as martyrs by the Irish people, and much as Pearse believed, the sacrifices won huge support from the public to the nationalist cause. The Rising led many people to hate the British government even more and would no longer be satisfied with just having Home Rule. It was a catalyst that led to the Irish War of Independence and the creation of the Irish Free State later known as the Irish Republic when independence was gained in 1949.