

TIMELINE OF EVENTS DURING THE SIX-DAY REBELLION...

Monday 24 April, 1916

Approximately 1,250 members of the Irish Volunteers, the Irish Citizen Army and Cumann na mBan mobilise throughout the city. Key buildings are seized throughout Dublin, including the Four Courts (pictured), Boland's Mill and the Mendicity Institution. Patrick Pearse reads the Proclamation of the Republic outside the GPO, which acts as the rebels' headquarters.



Tuesday 25 April

Martial law is declared as British military forces take up positions throughout the city, including City Hall and the Shelbourne Hotel. At St Stephen's Green, the Irish Citizen Army comes under heavy attack, while skirmishes continue at other positions, including the South Dublin Union. Shops on Sackville Street are looted and burned.



Members of the Irish Citizen Army outside Liberty Hall shortly before the Easter uprising. Opposite page: the same building in the aftermath of the insurrection. GETTY IMAGES, IRISH INDEPENDENT/NPA ARCHIVE

BEFORE



SIX DAYS AT



Paul Rouse tells the story of the week that changed the course of Irish history

FOR six days, Dublin filled with the sound and fury of war. There were marching boots on the streets, artillery fire and gunshot, the screams of the injured and dying. Heroic deed mixed with cruel violence.

The collision of dreams with reality left city streets in rubble — and ultimately opened a fissure that shattered part of the greatest empire in history.

At 11am on Easter Monday less than 1,300 members of the Irish Volunteers, the

Irish Citizen Army and Cumann na mBan mobilised and moved to occupy buildings around Dublin city centre.

The rebels seized the Four Courts, St Stephen's Green, the Jacob's Factory, Boland's Mills, the Jameson Distillery Building, and the South Dublin Union (the site of the current St James' Hospital).

They made their headquarters at the General Post Office (GPO) on Sackville Street (now O'Connell Street) and flew flags of revolution from its roof.

One man who was in the GPO — Michael Cremen — later recalled: "I saw Connolly

and Pearse together in the street just as the tricolour was being hoisted on the GPO. As Connolly shook hands with Pearse, I heard him say: "Thank God, Pearse, we have lived to see this day."

By the time Patrick Pearse walked out in front of the GPO at 12.45pm and read aloud the Proclamation which declared the establishment of an Irish Republic, Dublin had been seized by war.

The rebels sent men to attack Dublin Castle — the centre of British rule in Ireland. The Castle — unbeknown to the assailants — was poorly defended, but the rebels withdrew quickly and settled instead for claiming City Hall.

Outside of Dublin, rebels gathered in Galway and Cork and Tyrone, but dispersed after only limited engagement and were not a factor.

Wednesday 26 April

Fighting intensifies as British forces bring in heavy artillery. Liberty Hall, thought to be a rebel stronghold, is shelled by the battleship *Helga*. Volunteers attack Linen Hall barracks in the north of the city, while British soldiers marching from Kingstown [Dun Laoghaire] come under attack from Éamon De Valera's (right) garrison at Boland's Mill.

**Thursday 27 April**

Heavy shelling on Sackville Street, causing fires and destruction. The South Dublin Union comes under attack from the Sherwood Foresters. Artillery is deployed in Sackville Street, while sniping occurs throughout the city. At the GPO, James Connolly is wounded in the arm and the leg. Fires and looting become more widespread.

**AFTER**

EASTER, 1916

Later, another group of rebels mobilised in the Co Wexford town of Enniscorthy. They occupied the town, set up a headquarters and paraded undisturbed in uniform, but there was no fighting.

Only in Ashbourne, Co Meath was there a significant military engagement, when rebels seized an RIC barracks; policemen and rebels were killed in the fighting that ensued, but this was in truth just a sideshow to the real drama.

This rebellion was, in essence, a Dublin uprising. Its success, or otherwise, depended on events in the city.

It had been planned for almost a year by a small cohort of men who were members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood.

Determined to strike while the Great War remained the overwhelming focus of British attention — and a savage drain on

its resources — a Military Council moved to overthrow British rule in Ireland.

Driving the enterprise were Tom Clarke and Seán Mac Diarmada. They were later joined by others, including the Dublin schoolteacher and Irish language activist Patrick Pearse and James Connolly, the socialist leader of the Irish Citizen Army.

Their plan was to use arms imported from Germany to rise in rebellion at Easter, 1916.

The manpower for this rebellion was to come from Connolly's Irish Citizen Army and from the wider Irish Volunteer movement, then under

the leadership of Eoin MacNeill.

The arms shipment was thwarted on the eve of the Rising, however, and dissent and confusion among those in the leadership of the Irish Volunteers ensured that the



The heaviest day of casualties suffered by both sides came on the Wednesday. The Battle of Mount Street Bridge saw 30 British soldiers die, many of whom had just arrived in the city

eventual number who took to the streets was much fewer than the rebel leaders had envisaged.

Any notion that — inspired by what was taking place — the people of the city and country would join in support of the rebels was quickly dispelled.

The rebellion was met with astonishment, disdain and even disgust. With less than expected numbers of

volunteers on Easter Monday, the rebels were unable to seize control of Dublin's railway stations and ports.

In this respect, the capacity of the British army to flood the city with men was undiminished.

Martial law was declared with civil power handed over to Brigadier-General William Lowe, and British army reinforcements poured in, the rebels were increasingly outnumbered.

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One of the Irish Volunteers, Thomas Walsh, said: "I fired again and again until

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KEYNOTE

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Friday 28 April

General Sir John Maxwell arrives in Dublin to take control of the British military. Shelling intensifies and the GPO, now severely damaged by flames, is evacuated by the rebels, who establish a new headquarters in Moore Street. Michael (The) O’Rahilly, a prominent nationalist and volunteer, is killed during the evacuation (re-enactment pictured).



Saturday 29 April

Shortly after noon, Pearse and the other leaders in Moore Street decide to surrender. After meeting with General William Lowe, Patrick Pearse (right) is taken to the British Army headquarters where he signs an unconditional surrender. The garrison at the Four Courts, led by Ned Daly, also surrenders. The prisoners are taken to the Green outside the Rotunda Hospital, where they are held until the next morning. The events of the week and its aftermath cost 485 lives, including 254 civilians.



SIX DAYS AT EASTER, 1916

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the rifle heated so much it was impossible to hold it.”

That day also saw the rebels lose 13 men.

Wednesday brought a further dramatic sight as a British gunboat sailed up the River Liffey and into the city centre.

Guns on the Helga destroyed Liberty Hall — empty of people, but symbolic for its association with the Irish Citizen Army and James Connolly — before it moved to pound buildings on Sackville Street.

One volunteer recalled that the heavy gun on the Helga made her “frightened and heartsick”. Oscar Traynor recalled what happened next in the GPO: “The shells started late on Wednesday. They were shrapnel shells, and the amazing thing was that instead of bullets coming it was molten lead, actually molten, which streamed about on the ground when it fell.”

All around Sackville Street and around North King Street there was heavy fighting on Wednesday and Thursday.

Nicholas Laffan at the Church Street outpost, near the Four Courts, remembered: “The British military kept up a constant attack on our position from an armoured car in which they rushed up reinforcements, keeping our barricades at Red Cow Lane and Church Street continuously under fire. Our men were beginning to feel the effects of the week’s strain.”

By Friday the scars of war were readily apparent across the city.

The barricades of cars and furniture and much else that the rebels had erected lay smouldering and useless.

Dead horses, also, lay in the street, their flesh rotting.

The numbers of dead continued to rise. In six days, the most recent research suggests, the British army lost 107 soldiers, the police lost 13 and 58 rebels died.

The realities of urban warfare meant that 184 civilians also died. Others died in the days and weeks after the Rising. Some were deliberately shot by soldiers on either side; others were simply caught in the cross-fire.

Across the city, rebels clung to their positions. At the Jacob’s Biscuit factory, John MacDonagh said: “We could see, towards the end of the week, the glare in the sky from the fires which were raging in O’Connell Street. This heartened us, for it showed the magnitude of the Rising, which we knew would change the whole position of Ireland.”

On Friday evening, the ferocity of the onslaught from British forces, forced the rebels to tunnel out of the GPO whose roof had collapsed as fire spread through the building.

A new headquarters was set up in a house at number 16 Moore Street. It was a temporary reprieve.

Frank Burke recalled the scene: “We were completely surrounded. The military were entrenched behind a high barricade at the end of Moore Street. We could see from our windows dead bodies of civilians lying out on the path opposite. I took



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 County will order their commands to lay down arms.

P. H. Pearse
29th April 1916
2.45 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 29/16

On consultation with Commandant Connolly and other officers I have decided to agree to unconditional surrender also.
Thomas MacDonagh

Sackville Street (now O’Connell Street, above) and the former Coliseum Theatre (right) in Dublin following the 1916 insurrection. IRISH INDEPENDENT/NPA ARCHIVE

Left, the surrender letter signed by Patrick Pearse calling a halt to the fighting. UCD ARCHIVES



particular notice of one poor man lying with a white flag grasped in his hand, lying dead on the doorstep of his house. He had evidently been shot while evacuating his home for a safer place.”

On Saturday, understanding that the rebellion was doomed, Patrick Pearse, surrendered unconditionally to Brigadier-General William Lowe. The document of surrender read: “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 County will order their commands to lay down arms.”

Word of the surrender was brought to the sites of rebellion around Dublin and to Enniscorthy. Pearse’s surrender order was carried by Elizabeth O’Farrell to rebel positions around Dublin.

The reaction was a certain disbelief. What need had they of surrender when they were undefeated?

The rebellion ended, however, with the Republic proclaimed aloud by Patrick Pearse apparently destroyed.

In the hours and days after the Rising ended, more than 3,500 men and women were arrested.

Fourteen of the rebels of the Rising were executed in the yard in Kilmainham

Gaol. Thomas Kent was executed in Cork and Roger Casement was hanged three months later at Pentonville Prison in north London. The insurrectionists had been condemned by courts martial and put before firing squads.

They were not to know it, but their rebellion did — in the years that followed — draw people from across Ireland to fight for a Republic.

The whole position of Ireland had, indeed, been changed.

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