

Irish Independent 

# 1916

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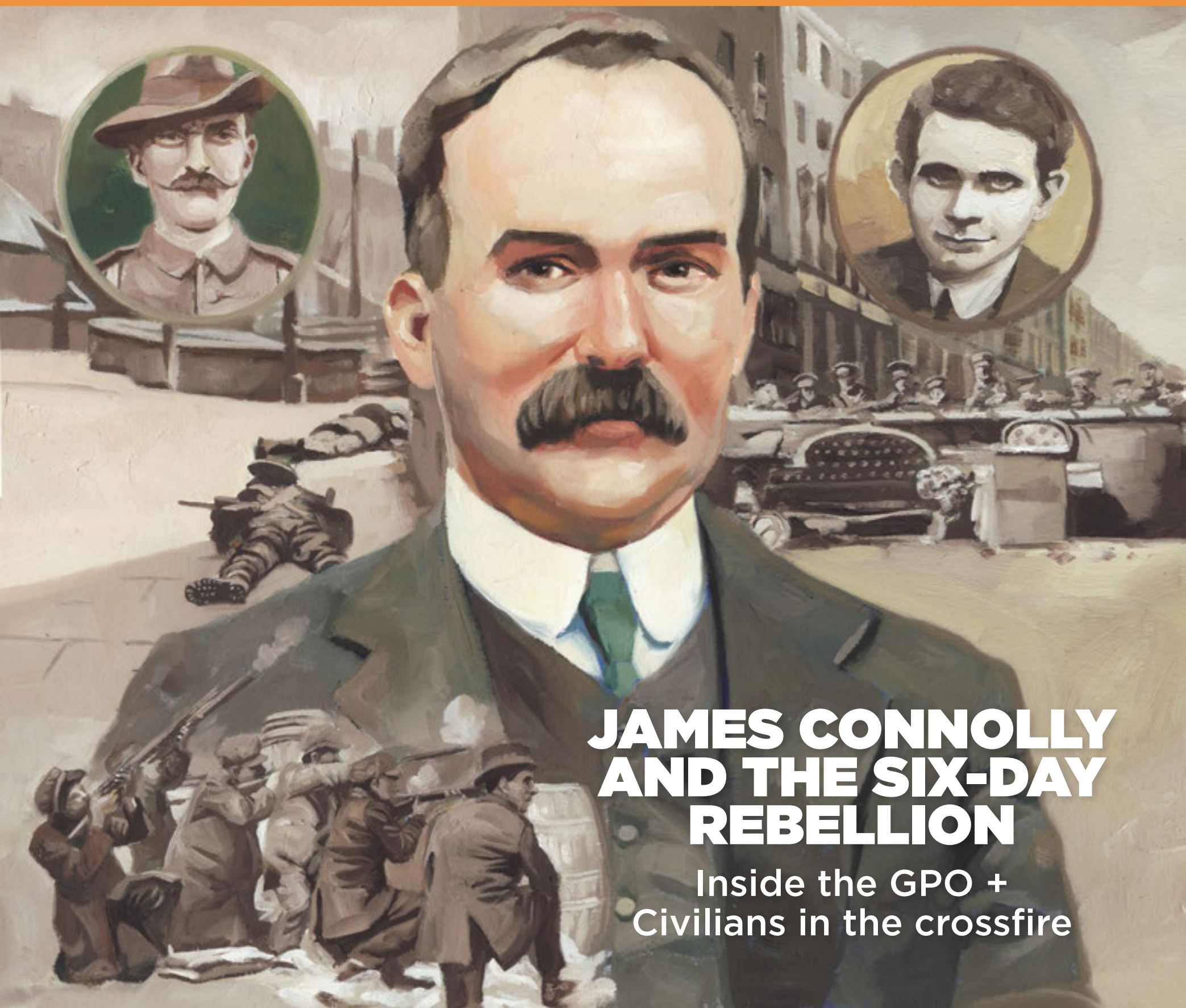
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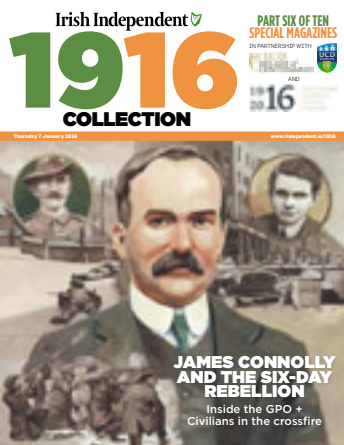
## **JAMES CONNOLLY AND THE SIX-DAY REBELLION**

Inside the GPO +  
Civilians in the crossfire



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Cover, by Jon Berkeley, shows James Connolly, Michael O'Rahilly and Con Colbert



Rising prices for rare 1916 relics

COLLECTING memorabilia of the Irish revolutionary movement has come into its own over the past 20 years and the centenary is likely to increase interest in artefacts and documents relating to 1916.

The ultimate collectible is the Proclamation. Only 500 were printed and fewer than 50 survived, half now in institutions such as the National Museum and the Dáil. In 2004, €400,000 was paid for one signed by the men who printed it. During the recession the price fell and recent examples have sold for €80,000 to €100,000, but on December 15 an example sold in London for £250,000 (€342,000).

In 1941, the 25th Anniversary was marked by the presentation of medals to those who served in 1916 and the War of Independence. 2,500 Rising medals were issued to veterans or families of those killed in action or who had died since. These now fetch €1,500 to €3,000. Medals to casualties can fetch up to €15,000, and the more famous the better — Tom Clarke's medal fetched €105,000 at auction.

Uniforms worn in the Rising are rare as most of those captured by the British were destroyed. An Irish Volunteer officer's uniform fetched €11,000 at auction in 2006.

1916 flags with a good provenance are

extremely rare. A tricolour with 'Sinn Féin' inscribed on it made €25,000 at Whyte's last year. Another larger flag captured by a Royal Dublin Fusilier in Sackville Street a few days after the surrender, and possibly flown over the GPO, was valued at €500,000 to €700,000 in 2009.

For those with a limited budget there are lesser-value authentic collectibles such as picture postcards issued in the days after the Rising which can be bought for as little as €10. The first edition of *The Irish Independent* issued after the Rising will cost up to €500.

Original unpublished photographs are of great interest to institutions such as the National Library as well as private collectors. There are still albums of photographs lying around in old houses that give a personal view of events. Whyte's sold an original tiny photograph of the surrender by Pearse, taken with a cheap Kodak by a bystander, for €1,800.

The greatest 1916 collectibles can be found in the National Museum, National Library and Kilmainham Gaol. The Glasnevin Cemetery Museum and The Little Museum of Dublin also have excellent collections and to get a rare glimpse of some fantastic private collections visit Dundalk Museum which has a superb loan exhibition.

Ian Whyte

FROM THE UCD ARCHIVES

Civil servant's diary recalls 1916 events in great detail

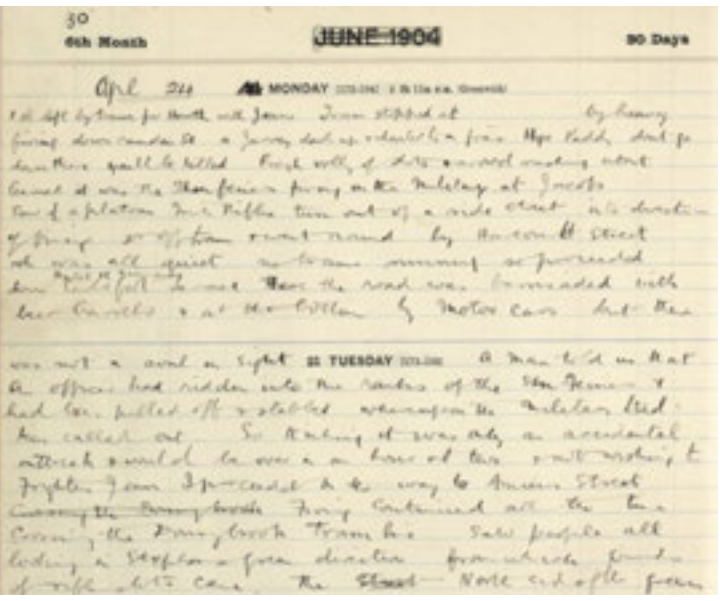
PERHAPS JR Clark made a New Year's resolution to keep a diary for 1904. A civil servant working with the Office of Public Works in Dublin, Clark wrote about some of the events of his life in a hard-backed Lett's 'Rough Diary and Almanac', which can be viewed in digital form in the UCD Archives.

As the months went by, however, his resolve may have waned as the entries became slim and sparse. But 12 years later he turned the diary into a notebook, and wrote about what he saw during the Rising, filling the pages from top to bottom with great detail:

"24 April [Easter Monday] — Fresh volley of shots and crowd rushing about, learned it was the Shinfeiners (sic) firing on the Military at Jacobs. Saw half a platoon Irish Rifles turn out of a side street into direction of firing. Got off tram and went around by Harcourt Street.

"It was all quiet no tram running so proceeded down Earlsfort Terrace. Here the road was barricaded with beer barrels and at the bottom by motor cars but there was not a soul in sight."

The diary in full can be viewed at: <http://digital.ucd.ie/view/ivrla:30531> **FC**



An extract from JR Clark's diary, which is held in the UCD archives

PAPER TALK

Killorglin tragedy had links to Casement

EASTER Monday was a bank holiday, and so the *Irish Independent* that went on sale that morning was thinner than usual at six pages. It sold for one halfpenny, and on the front page it proclaimed proudly: "Certified net sale now much more than twice the net sales of all the other Dublin morning newspapers added together".

The rest of the front page, as was the style at the time, was entirely covered in advertising, or family notices. Inside, readers could pick up news from the war, with a rather macabre football league-style table called the 'Roll of Honour' listing the dead,

wounded and missing of each of eight Irish regiments. That day the Royal Irish Rifles were "top", with seven dead and 17 wounded.

Reports were carried of fighting from places with names that are still remembered such as Verdun, Ypres and Thiepval.

Page 4 included a report of a tragedy in which three men had drowned after their car had plunged into the River Laune outside Killorglin. Their chauffeur had escaped and the report hinted that there was more to the story with the line "contradictory rumours are afloat as to the identity of the unfortunate

passengers, the chauffeur, it is alleged, disclaiming all knowledge of who they were."

It later emerged the group, from Dublin, were on their way to rendezvous with Roger Casement and the Aud. The three who died were Charlie Monaghan, Con Keating and Donal Sheehan.

There was less sport in wartime, but the pages contained race cards for Fairyhouse, where the Grand National was to be held, and Cork Park. There were also reports from a charity "old crocks" game at Lansdowne Road, while Blackrock beat St Finbarr's in the Cork club hurling championship. **LS**



The front page of the *Irish Independent* from Easter Monday, 1916





A selection of relics include a uniform from the era (opposite page); a Sinn Féin flag; a Proclamation original; and various medals



## Watch more online at [independent.ie/1916](http://independent.ie/1916)

AS part of the *Irish Independent's* unrivalled coverage of the centenary of the Easter Rising, a dedicated website is now online. The site uses words, pictures and video to enhance understanding of a defining moment in our nation's history.

Read excerpts from important books, watch Ryan Tubridy talk about his grandfather, and marvel at the stunning photos of Dublin in 1916. The site also carries all the articles in our ongoing series 'My 1916'.

The [independent.ie/1916](http://independent.ie/1916) site will continue to build into a brilliant resource for students in years to come.

## THE LOST CHILDREN

# Stray bullet killed two-year-old girl

CHRISTINA CAFFREY would have known little about the fight for Irish freedom when she died. She had been born on Christmas Eve 1913 to a family who rented a room in a tenement house in Church Street.

She arrived in this world in the middle of the Great Lockout, making it the bleakest Christmas the city had seen for a long time. She left it at another great Christian festival, Easter, just over two years later.

Her family lived in Corporation Buildings on Foley Street by then, near what is now Connolly Station. Her mother, Sarah, was standing at her doorway at No. 27B around 2pm on the day after the Rising broke out. She later described what happened, saying a stray bullet "struck me first, glided off my hand and entered my child's back".

Sarah carried Christina to the hospital at the North Dublin Union in Grangegorman, but she couldn't be saved. Christina Caffrey, aged 2 years 4 months, is buried in an unmarked grave in Glasnevin. **LS**

## IN MEMORIAM



Shane Cullen's sculpture is erected in O'Rahilly Parade

# O'Rahilly's dying words now etched in limestone

THE heroic death of Michael O'Rahilly, charging down Moore Street as he tried to cover the retreating rebels, is one of the most stirring stories of the Rising. As he lay dying in Sackville Lane, he wrote a last message to his wife Nannie on the back of a letter he had received from his son as he fought in the GPO.

The text has been etched in limestone by sculptor Shane Cullen and erected over where The O'Rahilly lay in what is now O'Rahilly Parade, a short laneway which connects Moore

Lane and Moore Street.

The message reads: "Written after I was shot. Darling Nancy I was shot leading a rush up Moore Street and took refuge in a doorway. While I was there I heard the men pointing out where I was and made a bolt for the laneway I am in now. I got more [than] one bullet I think. Tons and tons of love dearie to you and the boys and to Nell and Anna. It was a good fight anyhow. Please deliver this to Nannie O'Rahilly, 40 Herbert Park, Dublin. Goodbye Darling." **GS**

## THE UNTOLD STORIES

# Quilt to wrap up warm tales from 77 women interned at Richmond Barracks

A STITCH in time may save nine but a quilt hopes to preserve the stories of 77 women interned at Richmond Barracks in 1916.

The 77 Women Commemoration Quilt is being developed for a new exhibition centre at Inchicore, with Marja Almqvist, who runs The Yarn School at Goldenbridge, coordinating and designing the quilt. The Swedish-born artist came up with the idea, having become "fascinated by what motivated the women and what they inspired".

"I realised how few of them were actually remembered," she says.

Some 130 invites went out to women, many of whom are also activists, to get involved. However, when it came to an open day in September, a serendipitous 77 women showed up. They were then matched at random to the women of 1916. Following a lecture by historians Mary McAuliffe and Liz Gillis, each woman embarked on their own research.

Richmond Barracks project coordinator Éadaoin Ní Chléirigh was matched with Bridget Hegarty. "Within two phone calls, I discovered there were still some of her family around Rialto," she says. Within a day, Ms Ní Chléirigh discovered Bridget's



Some of the women who worked on the 77 Women Commemoration quilt

grandniece and a Communion photograph.

Ms Almqvist says that each quilt panel "reflects one woman, their contemporary woman and their reflection on the journey of women in Ireland in the past 100 years". She hopes the quilt will be something that people can "really explore", not least to unlock hidden meanings.

"A lot of the women were involved with delivering

messages so a lot of the panels have little secret messages," Ms Almqvist says. "For example, there were three sisters called Cooney so there is going to be a little shamrock in each of their three panels made by one of their relatives."

The Commemoration Quilt will be launched on March 8 at the Richmond Barracks Exhibition Centre. See [richmond Barracks.ie](http://richmond Barracks.ie). **AM**



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

**F**OR 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

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



*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*

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.

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 the soldiers were with the Sherwood Foresters and had just arrived in the city.

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6 >>>



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

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

>>> CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

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.

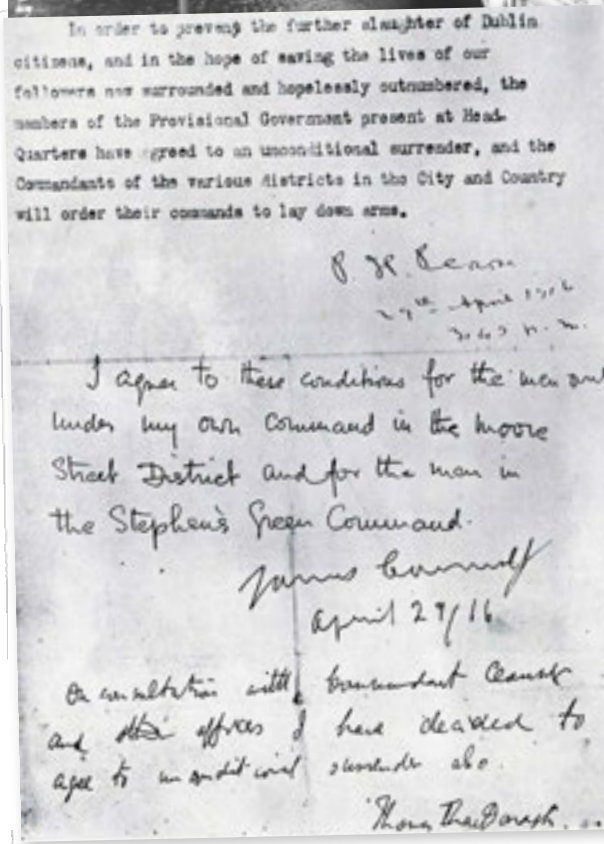
The realities of urban warfare meant that 184 civilians also died. Others died in the days and weeks after the Rising. Some were deliberately shot by soldiers on either side; others were simply caught in the cross-fire.

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



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.

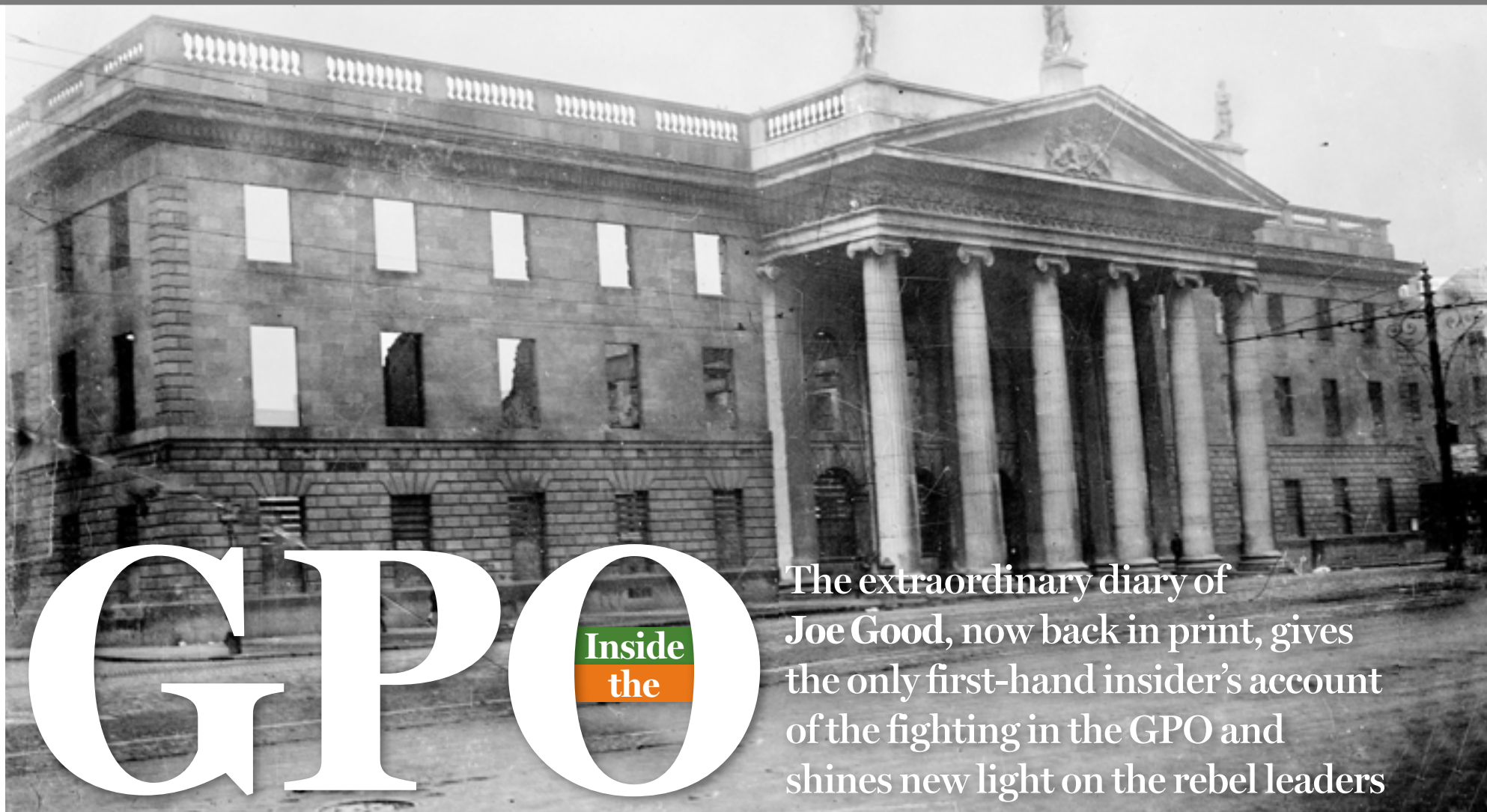
They were not to know it, but their rebellion did — in the years that followed — draw people from across Ireland to fight for a Republic.

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

Dr Paul Rouse is a lecturer in Irish History and Sports History at the School of History at University College Dublin (UCD)







# GPO

Inside  
the

The extraordinary diary of Joe Good, now back in print, gives the only first-hand insider's account of the fighting in the GPO and shines new light on the rebel leaders

**O**N Easter Monday morning the Kimmage garrison travelled into the city with D Company. We arrived at O'Connell Bridge, and marched down to Liberty

Hall, headquarters of the Irish Citizen Army. James Connolly looked very drab in his ill-fitting, bottle-green, thin serge uniform. He was rather pot-bellied, with bandy legs and a disorderly moustache.

Our whole party began the march to the GPO, Pearse, Connolly and Plunkett marching in front. We went via Abbey Street, as we attracted less attention by that back route.

There were only two or three of us in uniform, the rest in civilian clothes. On our arrival at the GPO, George Plunkett gave the order 'B and C Sections — Charge!' The word 'charge' was very quiet, as if he had lost the power to shout. B and C sections immediately swept into the entrance of the GPO.

## Good occupied an outpost but was later sent to the GPO...

The mood in the Post Office was jubilant, but the situation dangerously chaotic: guns were still going off in all directions by accident. There were some casualties already — mostly from broken or flying glass. Connolly was moving from window to window, urging the men to improve their loophole protection. Joe Plunkett, looking very pale and ill, was talking quietly to a much older, very frail man. Someone told me it was old Tom Clarke. They were both examining a sheaf of maps or dispatches — and were smiling a lot, with occasional laughter. I didn't see PH Pearse, but was told later that he had gone out into the street to read the Proclamation.

On leaving the Post Office, I encountered a number of Volunteers struggling to get into the building through crowds of onlookers. The crowds were anything but complimentary. Shouts of 'Shitehawks! Lousers! Bowsies!' accompanied me down the street.

## Tuesday

I'd found a fine sword at our outpost, and on my next journey to the GPO, gave it to Mick Collins. He looked hard at me, but accepted my peace offering; I had teased him at our camp at Larkfield.

I was struck by the large contingent of Cumann na mBan who had now joined us. They were all wonderfully cheerful-looking in their bright highly-coloured sashes, some with Red Cross aprons, others in full fighting kit, their belts stuffed with knives or pistols. Connolly passed by, uttering encouraging shouts, his voice gruff in spite of his smiling face.

## Thursday

It was the courage of Connolly, more than any other leader, which held the men together, though they all looked exhausted — tense from the long wait for the British infantry attack. A number of his Citizen Army members seemed to be detailed for special duties. They were all very good shots and efficient snipers. They were hard-bitten men: far better to have with you than against you, veterans of South Africa and economic wars. Unlike most of the rest of us, they were trained and prepared to kill.

Early in the day, every gun in the Post Office opened up when the British attempted to burst out from Upper Abbey Street, screened for a time by the smoke from the massive fires. The firing from our position by the Prince's Street corner was sustained, and there was the comfort of seeing some khaki forms in retreat.

\* \* \*

The first British shells struck and The Metropole Hotel was ablaze. Connolly led yet another sortie from the Post Office and was brought back with a shattered ankle. Our numbers were increasing, with the arrival of groups of Volunteers forced to retreat from burning buildings in O'Connell Street and other outposts.

The men assembled for an address



Joe Good with Mary Ellen Donovan on their wedding day

by Pearse. We were, he said, "making arrangements for the final defence of headquarters and are determined to hold it while our buildings last". He wanted to thank us for our gallantry, in case he might not be given an opportunity to do so later. The men were told that they deserved to win — that "win it they will although they may win it in death".

As time dragged on, our morale would have begun to weaken, I'm sure, if it hadn't been for Joe Plunkett. Pearse seemed to have shot his bolt; Connolly, gravely wounded. But Joe moved amongst us all the time, his eloquent, comforting words at odds with his bizarre, eccentric appearance, his dangling sabre and jewelled fingers. We all responded to his gentle urgings and praise. He was greatly loved.

## Friday

Connolly was sitting up on his bed, joking and laughing. He'd written a message for all of us. The O'Rahilly stood beside him to read it out. He did him proud.

That was the most amazing thing I witnessed that week. It was an extraordinary communiqué, welcoming us to the fifth day of the 'New Republic'. We were all reminded that for the "first time in 700 years" the flag of a free country floated above our heads. Connolly's words saluted our other active commandants: he spoke of de Valera and MacDonagh, Daly and Kent. The message finished with "Courage boys — we are winning!"

Shortly after that, between 20 and 30 young women were assembled before Pearse, who told them that the time had come when they must go. Some of the girls burst into tears, but the majority were very angry, and shouted back at him, refusing to leave... "No! — No! — We'll stay with the men!"... "You told us we were all equal!"... "What about women's rights?"

Pearse was very obviously shaken. Little Seán MacDermott limped over, and appeared to cancel Pearse's order. Pearse must have insisted on the departure of the women, for shortly afterwards, still protesting, they very reluctantly moved towards a door. A Red Cross flag was raised before them and they were ushered out into Henry Street.

The first incendiary shells were soon exploding on the roof. The enemy appeared to have closed in. There were bursts of machine-gun fire through the ground-floor windows. And their snipers found some more targets.

Someone burst into 'The Soldier's Song', and soon every voice, it seemed, was raised in chorus — 'So-oldiers are we ...' — among shards of falling, burning timbers. It was time — high time, I thought — for us to go.



*'Inside the GPO', by Joe Good, is published by O'Brien Press*



JAMES CONNOLLY

# The street fighter

Born and raised in Edinburgh, this leader of men was a critical figure in the GPO, writes **Darragh Gannon**

**A**DDRESSING his field court martial in Dublin Castle on 9 May 1916, James Connolly characterised the Easter rebellion as “a hurried uprising against long established authority”. Captured within this pithy assessment, it could be argued, was Connolly’s revolutionary self-epithet. For, despite commemorative expectations to the contrary, James Connolly’s place in the 1916 Rising was not predestined. Profiling Connolly’s ‘full life’, however, offers us an insight into the revolution against established authority which long occupied his mind and which, ultimately, hurried him into the General Post Office. Revolutionaries are not born, they are made.

Of James Connolly’s 47 years, 28 were spent outside Ireland. Born to Irish parents in Edinburgh, he was raised in the Scottish capital. In later life he would tour British cities recurrently and reside for lengthy periods in the United States. International socialism was the sustaining influence. Connolly found socialism during his poverty-stricken upbringing, identifying the grim realities of Edinburgh with the writings of left-wing commentators elsewhere in Europe. Despite leaving school at the age of 11, he taught himself enough French and German to read Marx and Engels.

His formative statement on socialist revolution, written from Dublin as leader of the Irish Socialist Republican Party (1896-1903), was to define his activism against ‘established authority’ in both Irish and international terms: “If you remove the English army tomorrow...unless

you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic... She would [still] rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers”.

Connolly was a relentless advocate of workers’ rights through political and industrial organisation. During his initial American tour on behalf of the Socialist Labour Party (1902-03) he addressed crowds in New York, Boston, Chicago, San Francisco and Los Angeles. Standing at a mere 5’4” and of short-sight and stocky build, Connolly did not have the towering

## ■ SNAPSHOT

### JAMES CONNOLLY

**Born:** 5 January 1868, Edinburgh, Scotland

**Educated:** Primary school, Edinburgh, left age 11

**Affiliation:** Irish Citizen Army/Labour Party

**Career:** Soldier, shoe-mender, trade unionist, activist

**Died:** 12 May 1916, Kilmainham Jail

stature of James Larkin. However, his speeches, delivered in an indomitable Scottish accent, were clear and resonant. One contemporary observed: “Larkin knew how to draw a crowd but Connolly knew how to hold one”.

His later term in the United States (1903-10) included a period as organiser for the Industrial Workers of the World but he was only intermittently paid. Connolly’s dedication to the socialist movement frequently conflicted with his ability to hold down regular employment.

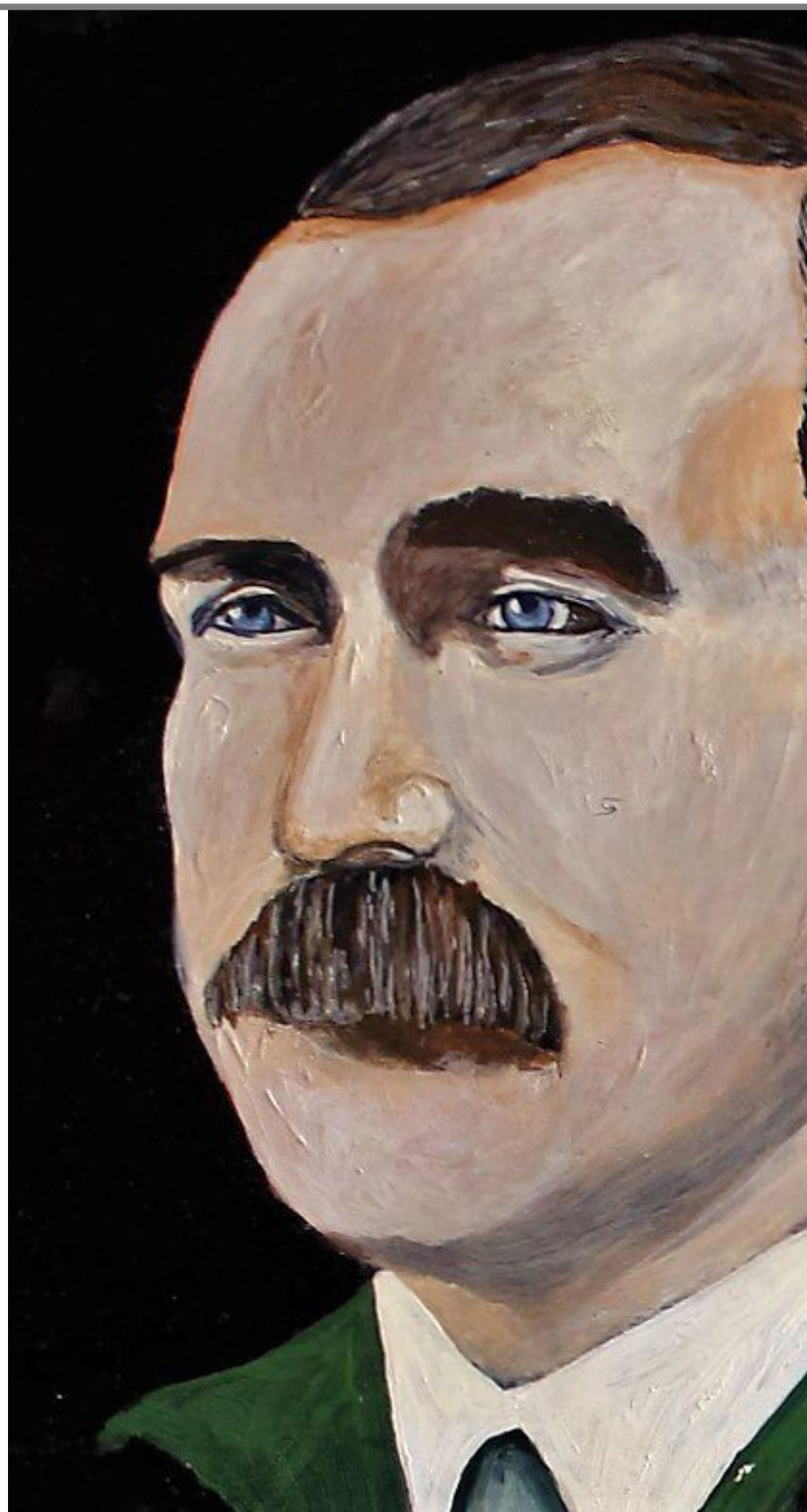
On at least one Christmas, the Connolly family went without dinner or gifts.

“*Connolly did not have the towering stature of James Larkin. However, his speeches, delivered in an indomitable Scottish accent, were clear and resonant. One contemporary observed: ‘Larkin knew how to draw a crowd but Connolly knew how to hold one’*”

“The history of all hitherto existing societies”, Marx and Engels had famously opened in *The Communist Manifesto*, “is the history of class struggles”. Connolly applied this thesis to Ireland in two seminal volumes, *Labour, Nationality and Religion* and *Labour in Irish History*, both published on his return to Ireland in 1910. In the *Irish Worker* he emphasised labour’s imminent ‘re-conquest’

of Ireland. Despite the suffering endured during the Lockout and the formation of an Irish Citizen Army, however, Connolly continued to write social revolution in terms of political mobilisation, not military insurrection.

On 28 July 1914, the First World War erupted. All changed, changed utterly. Across Europe millions of working class men, abandoned the Red Flag, and ‘rushed’ to their respective colours. In Ireland alone, 44,000 enlisted in the British Army in 1914. It is impossible to underestimate



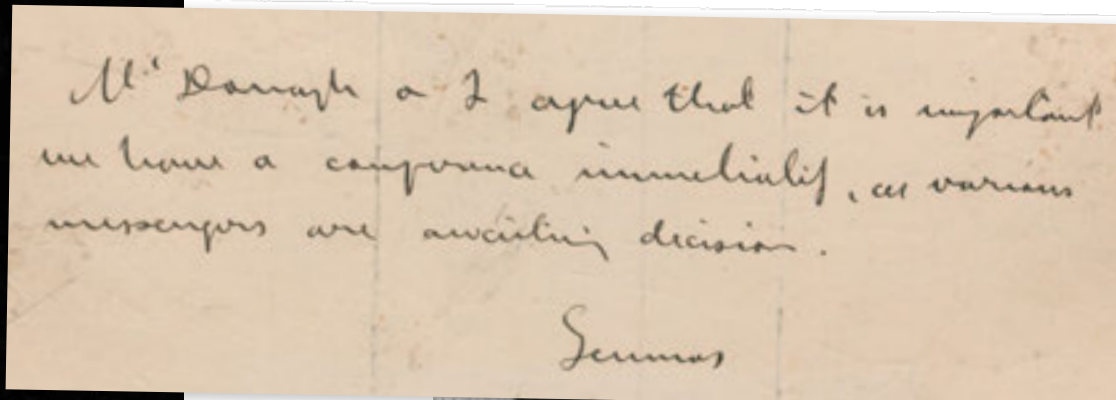
the psychological impact of these events on Connolly. Decades of exhaustive campaigning, speaking and writing on the socialist revolution had been shattered: “We are helpless!!! What then becomes of all our resolutions, all our protests of fraternisation... all our carefully-built machinery of internationalism, all our hopes for the future? Were they all as sound and fury, signifying nothing?” This was his Macbethian moment.

Connolly’s biographer, Ruth Dudley Edwards, has chaptered his final 20 months ‘desperation’. It is a laconic title. Throughout this period Connolly betrayed a restlessness with the world around him, a restlessness which hurried

him to violent insurrection. At a public meeting in September 1914 he declared: “Revolutions do not start with rifles; start first and get your rifles after. Make up your mind to strike before your opportunity goes.”

He made a similar call to rebellion at a meeting of separatists which included many subsequent military council members. One month later Connolly took on the role of Commandant of the Irish Citizens Army (ICA), leading recruitment; intensifying training and carrying out reconnaissance of capital buildings. By December 1915 the ICA, numbering just over 300, was primed for insurrection, independent of IRB initiative.





**James Connolly, by Dublin artist Brian O'Neill. Above: A letter sent by Connolly to Éamonn Ceannt on Easter Sunday morning, summoning him to a meeting at which it was decided to go ahead with the Rising the following day, despite Eoin MacNeill's countermanding order.**

MILITARY ARCHIVES/  
BUREAU OF MILITARY  
HISTORY

**Right: Dr Darragh Gannon, Curatorial Researcher to the National Museum of Ireland's Exhibition, 'Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising'.**

STEVE HUMPHREYS



burn out until the last throne and the last capitalist bone and debenture will be shrivelled on the funeral pyre of the last warlord". Europe's difficulty was Ireland's opportunity.

The military plans for the 1916 Rising have not survived. However, during 1915 James Connolly provided a tactical blueprint for what was attempted during Easter Week. In a series of articles, entitled 'Insurrection and Warfare', Connolly presented historical case studies on street fighting. Using the Belgian Revolution (1830), the June Days uprising in Paris (1848) and the Moscow Insurrection (1905), as examples, he emphasised the tactical superiority of defensive warfare if reinforced by cleverly positioned barricades, thereby exposing state forces to lateral lines of fire from 'civilian soldiers'. Subsequently 'kidnapped' by the military council on 19 January 1916, he remained locked in political and strategic discussion with Mac Diarmada, Pearse and Plunkett for three days, agreeing to join their Easter Rising. In Joseph Plunkett, who had predominantly mapped-out a Dublin-based Rising, Connolly had found a kindred spirit.

"Bill, we are going out to be slaughtered." These were the words uttered by Connolly to William O'Brien on Easter Monday morning. Connolly's performance that week as Commandant-General Dublin Brigade belied such fatalism. On leading a combined Irish Volunteer and Irish Citizen Army force into the GPO, Connolly ordered the men to smash the windows and barricade them, in keeping with street fighting exercise.

He later stood beside Pearse as the latter read the Proclamation, to which

Connolly had almost certainly contributed several articles. Most rebels' recollection of Connolly is of an authoritative military leader despatching orders. One such order saw the raising of the Starry Plough flag over William Martin Murphy's Imperial Hotel.

Connolly was a highly visible presence on Sackville Street preparing and repairing barricades, in keeping with anticipations of a British infantry attack. Instead, from Wednesday, artillery shells from Trinity College rained down on the rebel positions. Connolly was militarily unprepared for this tactical upturn. Sniper fire increasingly raked the streets surrounding the GPO. On one Thursday sortie into Prince's Street, Connolly took a stray bullet to the arm. He quietly had his wound dressed in the GPO before returning to Middle Abbey Street. Within minutes, however, he was injured again, this time seriously, a bullet having shattered his left ankle. Incapacitated and in acute pain, Connolly survived his final days in the GPO on a makeshift mattress, dictating orders. In one latter moment of light relief he was to remark of his unfavourable circumstance: "A morning in bed, a good book to read, and an insurrection, all at the same time. It's revolution de luxe."

James Connolly was executed on 12 May 1916. His had been a hurried uprising against long-established authority.

*Dr Darragh Gannon, UCD, is currently Curatorial Researcher to the National Museum of Ireland's 'Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising' exhibition*



## 'Connolly'

By Liam MacGabhann

*The man was all shot through that came today  
Into the barrack square;  
A soldier I — I am not proud to say  
We killed him there;  
They brought him from the prison hospital;  
To see him in that chair  
I thought his smile would far more quickly call  
A man to prayer.*

*Maybe we cannot understand this thing  
That makes these rebels die;  
And yet all things love freedom — and the Spring  
Clear in the sky;  
I think I would not do this deed again  
For all that I hold by;  
Gaze down my rifle at his breast — but then  
A soldier I.*

*They say that he was kindly — different too,  
Apart from all the rest;  
A lover of the poor; and all shot through,  
His wounds ill drest,  
He came before us, faced us like a man,  
He knew a deeper pain  
Than blows or bullets — ere the world began;  
Died he in vain?*

*Ready — present; And he just smiling — God!  
I felt my rifle shake  
His wounds were opened out and round that chair  
Was one red lake;  
I swear his lips said 'Fire!' when all was still  
Before my rifle spat  
That cursed lead — and I was picked to kill  
A man like that!*

### AN ASSESSMENT DR LUCY COLLINS



The idealism of James Connolly's life, and the stark facts of his death, are the twin concerns of this poem. It offers a striking perspective on the subject; its speaker is a British soldier who remembers his role in Connolly's execution at Kilmainham Gaol.

The stumbling rhythm expresses the soldier's regret and uncertainty — 'Maybe we cannot understand this thing / That makes these rebels die'. His thoughts are disjointed but he recognises the human need that shaped the rebellion, the universal desire for freedom and justice. Connolly's capacity to inspire loyalty among his followers is given an almost religious significance here, and its powerful effect is clearly felt by the speaker himself.

Yet though he reflects on the moral force of the rebels' actions, he registers his own responsibility as a soldier too. The poem meditates on the obligation of the individual to the group. Connolly is set apart from the rest of the rebels in his commitment to improving the lives of the poor, and his suffering expresses the collective distress of all marginalised people.

*Dr Lucy Collins is a lecturer in English at University College Dublin (UCD). She is the curator of 'Reading 1916', a forthcoming exhibition at UCD Special Collections*







Left: British soldiers force entry to a rebel building during The Easter Rising. Right: Wynn's Hotel on Dublin's Abbey Street. Below: Francis Sheehy Skeffington, who was shot by a British officer, with his wife Hannah.



# The accidental front-liners



As the Rising erupted, Dublin descended into a surreal, chaotic and ultimately deadly place for ordinary civilians, writes **Richard McElligott**



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**T**HE Rising was an undemocratic act. The rebels represented the political margins of Irish life in 1916 — an unlikely cohort of Sinn Féin advocates, Fenians and socialists. As the Irish MP John Dillon mused, this was the first insurrection in Irish history in which the British Government had the majority on its side.

However, it was the ordinary people who would suffer most as the battle between the forces of the self-proclaimed Irish Republic and the British Army pounded central Dublin. The civilian experience of Easter week has often been overshadowed in accounts of the rebellion. Yet their fate during these six days illustrates the merciless nature of modern urban warfare.

Dublin basked in glorious sunshine on Easter Monday. Indeed frustrated at the lack of action the previous day, many of the Volunteers had decided to absent themselves from their units and follow the throngs making for the highly popular annual race day at Fairyhouse. The city centre itself was relatively quiet as bank holiday crowds clambered onto trams and trains seeking to make the most of the fine weather.

Little heed was paid to the band of armed and uniformed Volunteers, making the short march from Liberty Hall towards the GPO shortly before noon. After all, due to the Great War, men in uniforms had become ubiquitous on Dublin's streets. Marches by the Irish Volunteers had also become a common occurrence. It was only when the force wheeled right and charged into the GPO and physically evicted the bewildered customers and staff inside that passers-by began to suspect that something serious was unfolding.

As the rebels began taking over buildings and commandeering vehicles to construct barricades, clashes with

civilians became inevitable. In St Stephen's Green, one old man, who repeatedly tried to remove his lorry from a barricade near the Shelbourne Hotel, became an early fatality when he was shot dead by an exasperated Volunteer.

Among the race day patrons crammed into the hotel bar, the atmosphere of light hearted bemusement gave way to the screams of onlooking women. Violent encounters with civilians were a regular occurrence during the first hours of the Rising and naturally had an unsettling impact on the rebels themselves.

When Volunteers occupied Roe's Distillery near Kilmainham, they ran into an angry mob of locals who came out to oppose their occupation and barricading of the streets. Many were 'separation-women', the wives or widows of enlisted Irishmen serving in the British Army. In order to disperse them, the Volunteers beat them back with the butts of their rifles.

The Rising's outbreak created a surreal atmosphere in Dublin. At first there were wild rumours that this was some sort of German invasion. Traffic into the city centre swiftly ceased while tramways ground to a halt. The postal service was completely disrupted and soon even the street lighting was cut off. The authorities quickly declared Martial Law across the city and cinemas, restaurants and public houses were forced to shut their doors. Shops and business closed and soon wages dried up. Banks ceased trading and even the well-off found it hard to buy essentials like bread and milk. Dublin finally experienced something of the war conditions suffered by Parisians of the era.

Shortly after the capture of the GPO, three members of the Dublin Metropolitan Police were killed. Immediately the decision was made to take the unarmed force off the streets. This vacuum in law and order was quickly exploited. Looting



## CORNELIUS 'CON' COLBERT

# From a boy scout to rebel leader with a cause

Limerick native wept openly when told he had to surrender, writes **Leanne Blaney**



became a defining feature of the first days of the rebellion. Hordes of opportunistic individuals, mainly from the poverty-stricken inner city tenements, converged around Sackville Street to ransack shops and premises. Owners that got in the way were mercilessly beaten. Ernie O'Malley, who happened to be on Sackville Street, recalled looters selling "diamond rings and pocketsful of gold watches... for sixpence and a shilling". The situation became even more dangerous when they began to start fires to cover their actions.

For those who resided in Dublin's southern suburbs, the fighting and the fires attracted crowds of sightseers anxious to catch a glimpse of some action. Yet for those forced to live in the squalor of Dublin's inner city, the close quarter fighting proved deadly. It is estimated that around 256 civilians, 38 of whom were children, were killed over the course of the rebellion. Most were simply caught in the crossfire.

On Thursday 28 April, ferocious house-to-house fighting enveloped the area around North King Street as British troops advanced on rebel positions near the Four Courts. The British were forced to bore through walls from one house to the next, in the process several civilians sheltering in cellars were buried alive. Many more died from fires or stray bullets. Enraged by the heavy casualties they were sustaining, soldiers of the South Staffordshire regiment broke into the homes of locals on the Friday evening and shot or bayoneted 15 civilian men whom they accused of being rebels. A token military inquiry into the incident later concluded that the

deaths could not be blamed on any specific individual.

Perhaps the most famous civilian death of the rebellion was Francis Sheehy-Skeffington. A well-known radical pacifist, he had been trying to organise a small crowd into an anti-looting patrol

when he was arrested by a suspicious Army lieutenant on the Tuesday evening. Skeffington was taken to Portobello Barracks where, the next morning, Captain JC Bowen Colthurst of the Royal Irish Regiment executed him and two other innocent men he suspected of being involved in the rebellion.

The evening before, Colthurst had also casually shot dead a boy passing outside. Colthurst was declared insane during his subsequent court-martial but it is an indication of the frenzied atmosphere ordinary

Dubliners endured that even after the killings, none of his superiors felt the need to detain him. He remained at large for some time.

In the fallout from the Rising, the attempts by the British Army to cover up the circumstances of Sheehy-Skeffington's death would become a long running and, arguably, fatal public relations disaster for the British administration in Ireland.

*Dr Richard McElligott lectures in Modern Irish History in UCD. He teaches the Uncovering 1916 and the Irish War of Independence courses which are being hosted by the National Library of Ireland from January 2016*



## SNAPSHOT

### CON COLBERT

**Born:** 19 October 1888, Castlemahon, Co Limerick

**Educated:** Athea NS, North Richmond St CBS, Dublin

**Affiliation:** IRB/Irish Volunteers

**Career:** Clerk, drill instructor

**Died:** 8 May 1916, Kilmainham Jail

Dublin Brigade, he was responsible for the selection and training of those who would serve as Volunteer officers during the Rising.

Ironically, given that Colbert was a dedicated pioneer, during Easter Week he was responsible for commanding the garrison at Watkin's brewery on Ardee Street and later successfully defending the Jameson distillery on Marrowbone Lane. Blindsided by the order for general surrender issued by Patrick Pearse, Colbert allegedly wept openly when it was passed to him from Thomas MacDonagh.

In Kilmainham, while awaiting execution, he refused visitors for fear it would prove upsetting, with the exception of asking to meet the wife of one of his captains, Séamus Ó Murchadha, who was also a prisoner in the gaol.

"I asked why he did not call for his sister Lila. He said he did not like to cause her trouble." Instead he spent the time writing letters to his family, as well as to "the nicest girl in Dublin" Lucy Smyth, a member of Cumann na mBan who had spent Easter Week as a volunteer in the GPO.

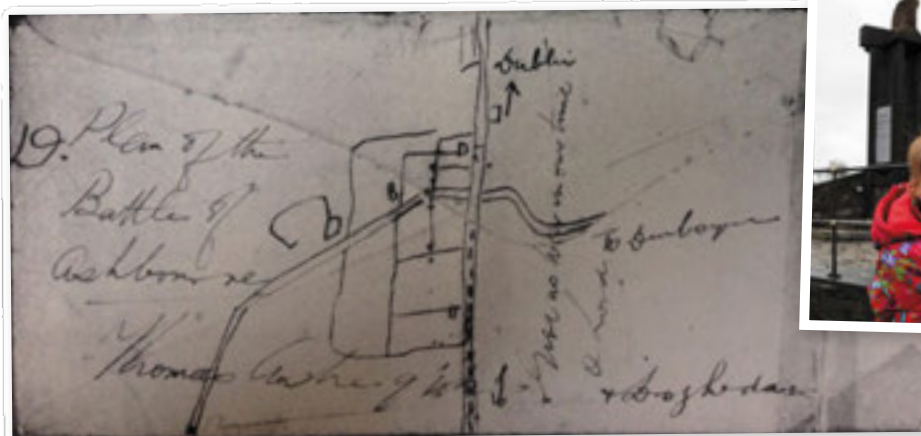
*Leanne Blaney is a social and transport historian who recently completed her PhD in the School of History (UCD)*



Copies of three of the letters Con Colbert (right) wrote to his siblings on the eve of his execution in Kilmainham. BUREAU OF MILITARY HISTORY







From far left: a hand-written plan for the Battle of Ashbourne; Pat English with his granddaughter Robyn who is wearing her great-grandfather's medals outside the 1916 Ashbourne monument; and Thomas Ashe, who, with Richard Mulcahy, led 40 men during the battle.

# Ashbourne lit the blue touchpaper for future battles

**Graham Clifford** on a battle where Thomas Ashe's outnumbered men conquered the odds

**S**O frequently described as a military defeat but a symbolic victory, the overall analysis of the 1916 Rising often overlooks one key battle — in which the outnumbered rebels claimed a remarkable victory.

On April 28, 1916 a group of Fingal Volunteers, estimated to number 45 men, under the command of Thomas Ashe, a national school teacher in Lusk who was originally from West Kerry, and second in command Richard Mulcahy, attacked the Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) barracks at Ashbourne, County Meath.

While other skirmishes took place on Easter Week 1916 outside of Dublin, in Galway, Cork, Wexford, Louth and Tipperary, the rebellion at Ashbourne was arguably the most significant — in that the reasons for and methodology of its success paved the way for future military activities in the War of Independence.

Using guerrilla tactics, close quarter combat, the element of surprise and by breaking his men down into small groups, Thomas

Ashe fooled the RIC into thinking that more rebels were involved in the attack on Ashbourne than actually participated.

On April 24, Easter Monday morning, Ashe received orders from James Connolly to send 40 of his Battalion to the GPO to help with efforts there. Ashe, with his force of about 60 men, decided to send 20.

That week Ashe and his battalion raided RIC barracks in Swords and Donabate and seized ammunition. Their tails were up. On Friday Ashe decided to split his unit into four sections which acted like flying columns, highly mobile and carrying that element of surprise. Each section consisted of only a dozen men who mostly travelled on bicycle.

They planned to destroy the railway line which went through Batterstown so as to sabotage the flow of British reinforcements travelling from Athlone to Dublin to help quell the Rising there.

But as three of the sections detoured to Ashbourne they spotted an RIC sergeant and Constable hastily barricading their barracks. Rebel look-out scouts approached on their bicycles and managed to disarm

the two men who were taken prisoner.

Ashe shouted to the police inside the barracks, demanding they, "surrender in the name of the Irish Republic". But the RIC men replied with rifle fire in his direction. Ashe dived for cover as the section returned heavy fire on the windows — the Battle of Ashbourne had begun.

The fighting intensified as RIC reinforcements arrived from Navan, Dunboyne and Slane but still the rebels held the upper hand taking up different locations around the barracks and confusing the enemy.

Indeed a convoy of police arriving from Slane, in as many as 24 cars, believed they had driven into an ambush after just two volunteers fired shots in their direction. They dived from their vehicles into nearby ditches. It's estimated that between 60 and 70 police arrived in this convoy and although they didn't know it, they almost doubled Ashe's force.

The next day, newspaper articles mistakenly estimated Ashe's troops numbered as many as 200.

Two Volunteers, John

Crennigan and Thomas Rafferty, were fatally wounded. When the RIC's District Inspector Alexander Gray was killed, the constables surrendered and were taken prisoner.

The Volunteers gathered their arms and ammunition while Ashe warned the constables that they would be shot if they took arms against the Irish people again.

Their victory was short lived however, as at 2pm the next day, Ashe received word of the surrender in Dublin and sent his men home.

Many of those involved in the Ashbourne battle were arrested within days and interned in Wakefield in England and Frongoch in North Wales.

Thomas Ashe was sentenced to death but this was commuted to penal servitude for life and he was imprisoned in Lewes Prison in England.

Fourteen people were killed in the battle, two Volunteers, eight RIC members, two civilians driving RIC cars, and another two civilians who were passing through the area.

Many more were injured. One witness said afterwards: "The

road that evening was a terrible sight with blood and bandages strewn across it."

In all, the battle at Ashbourne lasted for five-and-a-half hours but the success and tactical formation of Ashe's rebels acted as a blueprint for rebellion attacks in years to come.

In total, the Fingal Volunteers captured four RIC police barracks and almost 90 prisoners.

Some 43 years after the local rising, a monument was unveiled by President Seán T O'Kelly on April 26, 1959 at the Rath Cross in memory of John Crennigan and Thomas Rafferty, the volunteers who lost their lives.

The monument displays the name of Thomas Ashe's poem, 'Let Me Carry Your Cross For Ireland, Lord' and the names of both men who died there are displayed on the memorial in Irish.

It's unlikely that Ashe and his men would have held out too long if further reinforcements had flooded the County Meath town — but there's no doubt that Ashe's tactical nous helped deliver the rebels their most glorious military victory against all odds.

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## IRELAND IN 1916

# Education changed utterly

Turn of century ushered in six new third-level institutions, writes **Fergus Cassidy**

**T**HE structure of the education system in 1916 reflects huge changes experienced in the previous 100 years, but also continuities which ripple to the present. Between 1831 and 1908, education gradually formed into a shape which is familiar today — national schools, intermediate (secondary), and third level.

One of the changes which had a huge impact on education was the establishment of a national school system under a National Board of Education in 1831. The intention was to offer multi-denominational primary schooling for boys and girls. Twenty years on, 4,547 schools were open, with 511,239 pupils. By 1862, however, only 53pc of the schools were multi-denominational, falling to 35pc by 1900.

Compulsory attendance for all children aged 6-14 was implemented in 1892 and the numbers at school grew dramatically. In 1900 there were 8,684 schools, and 745,861 pupils. Illiteracy rates for those aged five and over, fell from 53pc in 1841 to 14pc in 1901, largely credited to the work of the national schools. A revised programme was introduced which saw the adoption of a wider curriculum, including drawing, singing, elementary science, and physical education. The purpose was also to make learning more relevant to daily life. Arithmetic, for example, was taught based on everyday experience.

Pupils from around age 4 or 5, up to 14 attended classes between 9.30pm and 4pm, though many commentators wanted this changed to 2.30, believing the school day was too long for younger children. Patrick Hegarty, Crossmolina, Co Mayo, remembered those times: “My schooldays were much the same as all others. We much preferred to kick a sock filled with hay than to settle down to the detestable job of ‘book learning’”.

Many children also left school before their 14th birthday, such as Thomas Ryan, from Cahir, Co Tipperary: “I began my education as an infant in the local national schools, but my schooling finished there at the age of 12... my father’s death bringing about a domestic financial crisis which demanded my constant labour on the farm”. This situation is reflected in a 1911 report on the national schools, where the average attendance was 73pc but dropped to 2.4pc for those aged 14. The figures for 1914 show that 80pc of pupils aged 12 had left. In that year there were 9,000 schools with one million pupils.

The continuing growth in the numbers



Schoolchildren in Connemara around the start of the 20th century. Compulsory attendance was introduced in 1892. GETTY IMAGES

of children attending national schools wasn’t paralleled by a secondary system. Introduced in 1878, the Intermediate Education Act established a standard leaving examination for boys and girls, who could sit various subjects, but had to include two of these: Latin, Greek, English, mathematics and modern languages. Marks were prioritised — Latin, Greek,

English and maths were worth 1,200 marks, while German, French and Celtic [Irish] carried 600 marks.

Numbers attending were very low with 38,000 students in 1901 and only 8,000 sat the final exam. In 1904 only 264 intermediate schools existed. 1914 saw the introduction of the Intermediate Education (Ireland) Act which sought to

raise the status of the schools and their teachers.

Such small numbers graduating from second level education feeds into the third-level sector, consisting largely of small colleges, technical institutes and universities. In 1908, for example, there were 1,000 students enrolled in universities. From having just one university, Trinity College Dublin, at the start of the 19th century, the turn of the 20th ushered in six. The 1908 Universities Act dissolved the Royal University of Ireland, founded in 1879, and established Queen’s University Belfast and the National University of Ireland, which consisted of University College Dublin, University College Galway and University College Cork. Maynooth affiliated in 1910. Fearing for its independence, TCD stayed outside the federation.

A third level, technical education system was set up in 1900 under the auspices of the Department of Agriculture and Technical Instruction. The department sought to address the development of agriculture through higher education, the training of agricultural instructors, and the science of food production. National school teachers were also trained in rural science and domestic economy. The remit was expanded, and by 1914 there were courses in Dublin in mathematics, physics, chemistry, building trades and printing trades.

## SUMMER OF 1916

Exams for secondary school students, ages 12 to 16, took place between June and August. The marking system was divided into higher and lower percentages, depending on the degree of difficulty, as seen in the following examples in English, Irish and History:

### JUNIOR GRADE

**English Paper:** Composition (40pc) and Literature (30pc).

**History Honours Paper:** General History of Ireland and Great Britain and of Europe in relation to them, 1485 to 1603 (90pc).

**Irish Paper Pass:** Short sentences, colloquial phrases, and a passage for translation from English to Irish (35pc); O’Sharkey ‘Cú na gCleas’ pp 9-53 (25pc), and Questions in Irish to be answered in Irish (20pc).

### MIDDLE GRADE

**English Paper:** Composition (40pc), Literature — Shakespeare’s ‘Julius Caesar’, Homer’s Iliad and Life of Goldsmith (30pc).

**History Honours paper:** General history of Europe, with special reference to Ireland, Great Britain, and France 1603 to 1748 (90pc).

**Irish Pass Paper:** Colloquial phrases and a passage of English for translation into Irish (40pc), Sheehan Cnuasacht Trágha and O’Leary An Cleasaidhe (25pc).

### SENIOR GRADE

**History Honours Paper:** General History of Europe and other Continents in so far as they come into direct contact with Europe 1748-1832 (90pc).

**Irish Pass Paper:** Flannery Laoi Oisín ar Thír na n-Og, Breathnach Seilg i measg na n-Alp, Sgriobhinní pp 1-31 (30pc), Free composition in Irish (20pc).

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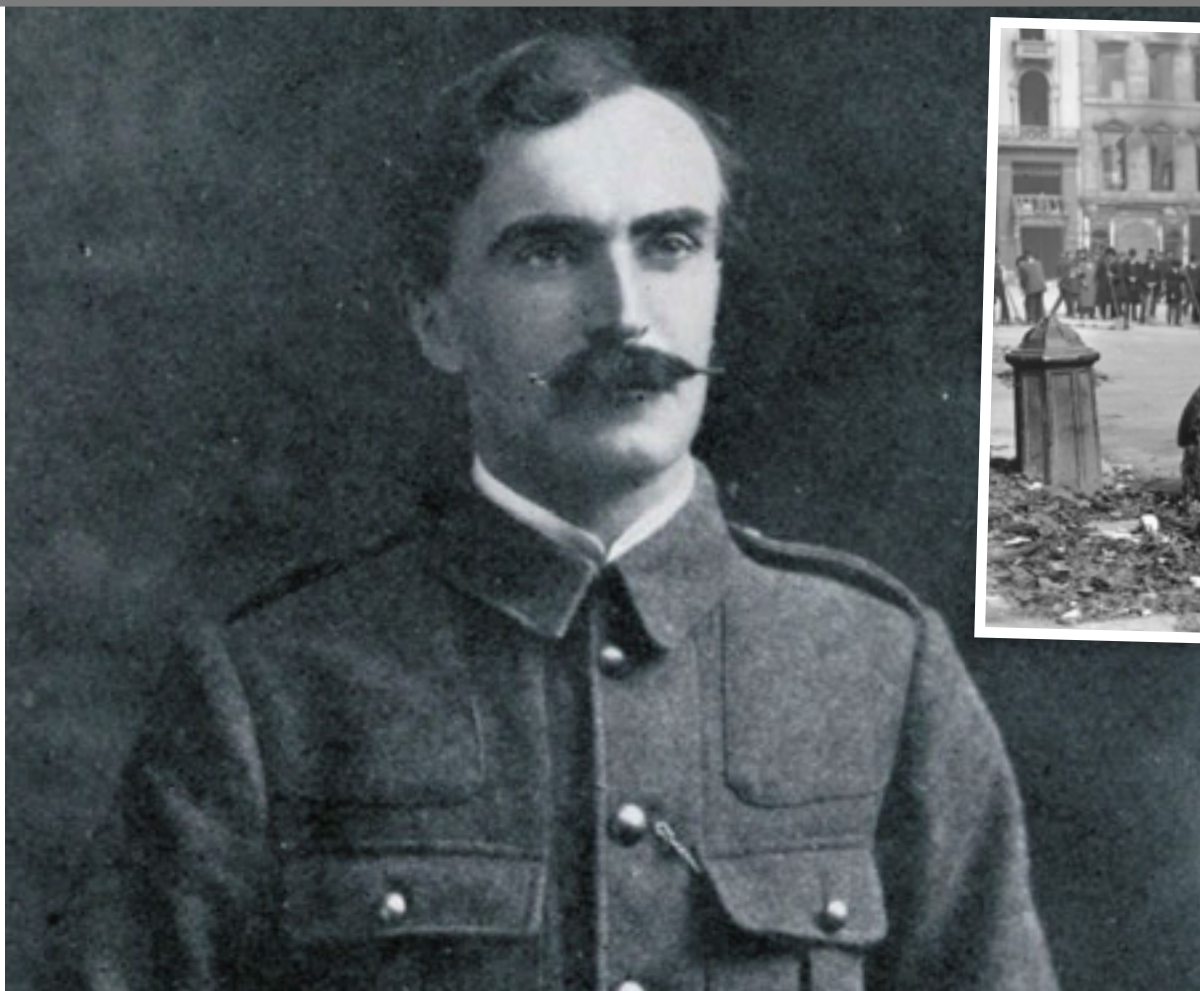
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The O'Rahilly (left) and his burnt-out De Dion Bouton in the aftermath of the Rising. Right: Leanne Blaney



# THE O'RAHILLY A true driving force

Leanne Blaney on the wealthy Kerryman who 'wound the clock' on the Rising and heard it strike

**W**RITING to his teenage son in 1893, Richard Rahilly, a prosperous Kerry businessman urged him to remember that 'it is only those who do, and are determined to do, all they can, in whatever position in life they are placed, that will succeed in that position or rise out of the bulk'. Few could have imagined how those words would resonate with the actions of his son Michael Joseph during Easter week 1916.

As the third child and only son born to Richard and his wife Ellen (née Mangan), Michael had enjoyed a privileged childhood and education. After completing his studies at Clongowes Wood, he enrolled to study medicine at UCD in 1894. However a bout of tuberculosis and the sudden death of his father in 1896 meant that he abandoned his studies and returned home to Ballylongford, to take over running the family business.

Enraptured by a young Irish-American heiress named Nancy Brown, whom he had first met during the summer of 1893, Michael, a keen writer, would maintain regular correspondence with her until news arrived in 1898 that she was engaged to be married. Determined to prevent the nuptials, Michael sold the family business and travelled to America, where he presented Nancy with a £100 diamond ring and convinced her to marry him. The union was a happy one, albeit marred by the death of their eldest child, Robert, aged 3.

A financial settlement provided the family with an enviable yearly income of £450, enabling him to live like a 'licensed loafer'. He and Nancy, along with their remaining children, travelled extensively, before settling in Ballsbridge in 1909. Having lived in Philadelphia for five years, where motor transport was plentiful, Michael was eager to purchase a new car on his return to Ireland. By 1910 he had persuaded his sister Anna Humphries and her family to jointly purchase a green four-seater De Dion Bouton motorcar. Though initially a rather poor driver, who infamously crashed into the Chapelizod gate in Phoenix Park, over the next six years both Michael and the car would contribute greatly to the cause by transporting various nationalists (as well as smuggled arms and ammunition), throughout Ireland.

Michael's interest in nationalism had been sparked as a child thanks to a love of Irish and local history. In adulthood, his nationalist beliefs gained momentum. By 1904 he was regularly contributing articles to Arthur Griffith's nationalist

newspaper, *United Irishman*. While abroad, he retained his interest in nationalism and often saved clippings from the Philadelphia press describing developments within Irish nationalist circles, such as the foundation of Arthur Griffith's political party, Sinn Féin, in 1905. Unsurprisingly, when he returned to Ireland, Michael quickly became an active member, subscribing £100 and working as a journalist for its short-lived daily newspaper, *Sinn Féin*. In October 1910, having joined the party executive, he orchestrated opposition campaigns ahead of the 1911 royal visit by when 'The O'Rahilly' (as he was now styled) was arguably Ireland's most famous Sinn Féin activist, second only to Griffith.

His involvement with the Gaelic League, initiated due to his passion for the language, was solidified when he was elected to its executive committee in 1912. O'Rahilly relished devising schemes aimed at raising the Gaelic League's profile amongst the wider Irish public. As Patrick Maume noted in his *Dictionary of Irish Biography* entry on O'Rahilly, this included organising the translation of Dublin street names into Irish and campaigns to coerce the post office to accept post addressed in Irish. Utilising his flair for journalism as well as his address book, O'Rahilly revamped the Gaelic League's official paper *An Claidreamh Soluis* in 1913 and began publishing regular contributions from Eoin MacNeill and Patrick Pearse.

Convinced that Britain would not relinquish control of Ireland until

compelled to do so by physical force, O'Rahilly encouraged and supported the formation of the Irish Volunteers in November 1913. As its treasurer, O'Rahilly played a key role in recruiting men and gathering arms for the militia. Owing to his personal opposition to secret societies, O'Rahilly never belonged to the Irish Republican Brotherhood and was ignorant of the planned uprising until Good Friday.

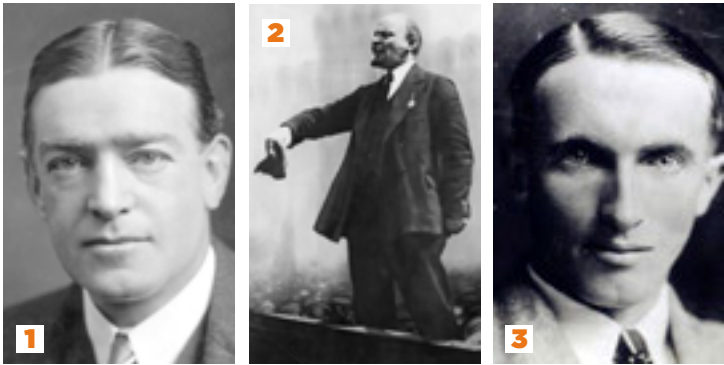
Keen to avoid bloodshed, O'Rahilly took orders from MacNeill to deliver his countermand to Irish Volunteer factions preparing for the Rising in Cork, Kerry, Limerick and Tipperary on the Saturday night. Due to illness, O'Rahilly chose to travel by taxi rather than in his own car. When he returned to Dublin on the Sunday and learned that the Rising was now due to begin on Easter Monday, O'Rahilly chose to participate declaring, "Well I've helped to wind up the clock — I might as well hear it strike!"

Having fought in the GPO, O'Rahilly was fatally shot by a British machine gun on Thursday 27 April when leading a charge against a military barricade on Moore Street. Retreating to a doorway on Moore Lane, he scribbled one final letter to his wife, pronouncing the Rising 'a good fight', before dying of dehydration and blood loss on Friday 28 April.

Leanne Blaney is a social and transport historian who recently completed her PhD in the School of History (UCD)







# NINE LIVES

Grainne Coyne on the explorers, leaders and high flyers of the era

**1** BORN in 1874 in Kildare, **Ernest Shackleton** was raised in London, where he joined the merchant navy at 16. He joined an Antarctic expedition with Robert Falcon Scott in 1901 but left early due to bad health. In 1907 he came within 97 miles of the South Pole and was knighted upon his return. He set off on a Trans-Antarctic Expedition but disaster struck when his ship the *Endurance* was crushed by ice. In 1921 he began a bid to circumnavigate the Antarctic, but suffered a heart attack on board and died the following year.

**2** Born Vladimir Ilyich Ulyanov in 1870 in Russia, he adopted the name of **Lenin** in 1901. He had been exiled to Siberia for Marxist activities in 1897. After the Revolution of February 1917, Lenin returned and denounced the new Provisional Government, leading to the October Revolution and a three-year civil war. He narrowly escaped assassination in 1918 and had to deal with a widespread peasant uprising in 1921. As premier of the Soviet Union, Lenin introduced the New

Economic Policy, which allowed workers to sell their grain on the open market. After a series of strokes, he died in 1924.

**3** Born in 1896 on the Aran Islands, **Liam O'Flaherty** was considered one of the great novelists of the Irish literary renaissance. After early flirtations with the priesthood and police he signed up to fight in the First World War. He moved to England for a time but on his return completed his most famous books including *Thy Neighbour's Wife* (1923), *The Black Soul* (1924) and *The Informer* (1925). In his later years he wrote the novel *Insurrection* (1950) which dealt with the 1916 Rising. O'Flaherty died in Dublin in 1984.

**4** Born in 1881 in St Petersburg, Russia, **Anna Pavlova** showed a passion for ballet from a young age. At 10 she entered the Imperial Ballet School and made her company debut in 1899. Her breakthrough performance was in *The Dying Swan* in 1905, which soon became her signature role. By 1906 she



had already successfully danced the difficult part of Giselle and promoted to prima ballerina. In 1907 Pavlova took her first tour abroad and two years later joined the Ballet Russe, and later toured the UK and US. She died in 1931 after contracting pneumonia.

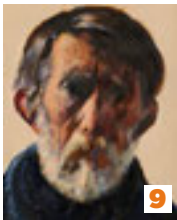
**5** Born in Dublin in 1884, **Ernest Kavanagh** was a political cartoonist who began in 1912 at the *Irish Worker*. His most famous drawings were of the 1913 Lockout, William Martin Murphy and the Dublin Metropolitan Police. While under James Connolly's editorship he also cartooned John Redmond's policy of recruiting Irishmen to fight for Britain in the First World War. He also drew pro-women's suffrage cartoons for *The Irish Citizen*, and contributed to *Fianna* and *Irish Freedom*. Kavanagh, a civilian casualty, was shot dead on the steps of Liberty Hall during the Easter Rising.

**6** Born in Dublin in 1841, **William Walsh** studied at the Catholic University (now UCD)

and Maynooth, where he later became President of the college. He was ordained in 1866 and on the death of Cardinal McCabe, was appointed the Archbishop of Dublin in 1885 and oversaw the building of numerous churches. He showed support for Home Rule and the Plan of Campaign. He later became disenchanted with the Irish Parliamentary Party and signalled an allegiance to Sinn Féin. He died in 1921.

**7** Born in 1878 in Kent, **Lilian Bland** was one of the first female journalists and aviators. Inspired by the pioneering cross-Channel flight of Louis Blériot in 1909, began to construct her own biplane glider made from bamboo, ash and elm. 'Mayfly' was the first of its kind constructed in Ireland and in 1910 at Carnmoney Hill it briefly became airborne. She fitted an engine and flew Mayfly for more than a quarter of a mile and at an altitude of about 30 feet. She took up motoring and became Ford's Belfast agent. Bland retired to Cornwall and died in 1971.

**8** **Frank Browning** was a



notable civilian casualty of the Rising. Born in 1868, he had been one of Ireland's leading cricketers from his days in Trinity and played for Ireland from 1888 to 1909, winning 39 caps. A member of Wanderers, he was president of the Irish Rugby Football Union at the outbreak of the First World War and set up a 'Pals' regiment which drilled in Lansdowne Road. He was on manoeuvres with an unarmed Home Guard unit when the Rising began and was shot dead by snipers as they marched back into Dublin along Northumberland Road.

**9** Born in Limerick in 1889, **Seán Keating** moved to Dublin in 1911 to study at the Metropolitan School of Art under William Orpen. Nationalism became a driving force in his work and 'An Allegory' depicted the difficult birth of the new state. Keating was elected a full member of the RHA in 1923 and commissioned by the ESB to portray the development of the first hydroelectric projects in 1926. He was president of the National College of Art and the RHA. His last exhibition was a series of six portraits for the Golden Jubilee of the Rising. He died in 1977.

## LEARN MORE

### READ...

- \* *James Connolly*, by Lorcan Collins (16 Lives Series, O'Brien Press, 2012)
- \* *Connolly: A Full Life* by Donal Nevin (Gill+Macmillan, 2005)
- \* *Inside the GPO* by Joe Good (O'Brien Press, 2015)
- \* *Con Colbert*, by John O'Callaghan (16 Lives Series, O'Brien Press, 2015)
- \* *Winding the Clock — O'Rahilly and the 1916 Rising* (Lilliput Press, 1991)

\* *Field of Fire: The Battle of Ashbourne* by Paul O'Brien (New Island, 2012)

### LISTEN TO...

- \* Eyewitness to the Rising [rte.ie/radio1/doconone/2014/0418/647643-documentary-easter-1916-easter-rising-eyewitness-1960/](http://rte.ie/radio1/doconone/2014/0418/647643-documentary-easter-1916-easter-rising-eyewitness-1960/)

### DOWNLOAD...

- \* The 1916 Necrology 485: Glasnevin Trust PDF gives full list of those who died in the Rising. [goo.gl/ANcVAH](http://goo.gl/ANcVAH)



### WATCH...

- \* 'Ireland's Greatest' series in which Joe Duffy champions James Connolly, [rte.ie/tv/irelandsgreatest/jamesconnolly.html](http://rte.ie/tv/irelandsgreatest/jamesconnolly.html)

### VISIT...

- \* The Irish Labour History Society, whose museum is situated in the old Beggars Bush barracks (*pictured*), <http://www.irishlabourhistorysociety.com/>



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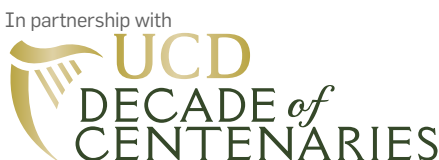
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