

<SLIDE 2>

For many Irish People, our knowledge of the 1916 Easter Rising is very poor. While there are many reasons for this, I think that now, at the time of the centenary, it's a great time to right that wrong.

Now, It is easier than ever to learn about the actual details of Easter Week – especially with the range of new, online, primary sources and the numerous books recently published.

For us, the relatives, it is even more rewarding to learn about the details. Many of us had multiple relatives who fought in 1916; many of us recognise other family names mentioned to us in past decades that ring a bell but we don't know why.

The Four Courts is one of the most misunderstood garrisons. It was the second largest and undoubtedly the garrison where most Volunteers were involved in most intense battles and skirmishes.

Today, I'm hoping to give you an overview of the fighting of 1916 Four Courts garrison.

<SLIDE 3 – Battalions and Garrisons>

Firstly, let's look at the organisation of forces for Easter Week. The Irish Volunteers were fairly well organised and structured as an Army, likewise for Fianna Éireann and Cumann na mBan.

The commander-in-chief of Irish Forces was Patrick Pearse. James Connolly was Commandant of the Dublin Brigade which comprised 5 Battalions of Irish Volunteers and one battalion of Irish Citizen Army.

However during Easter Week these structures were not intact. The countermanding order delayed the rising by a day and many Volunteers were not aware of the new orders.

The official Roll of Honour, which is not a full and complete list, has 14 garrisons, or areas of operation.

The Four Courts garrison was commanded by Edward Daly. While comprising mainly of Irish Volunteers of the 1st Battalion, it included many Volunteers from other Battalions.

The Four Courts force was supplemented by Fianna Éireann, Citizen Army, Hibernian Rifles and Cumman na mBan.

<SLIDE 4 – 1st Battalion>

The 1st Battalion is reported to have comprised 500 men before Easter Week, with 300 parading on a regular basis. Many of these men did not have weapons or uniforms.

The Four Courts Roll of Honour has approximately ~320 names, but as mentioned before, this does not just comprise 1st Battalion men.

The 1st Battalion had 6 companies:- “A,” “B,” “C,” “D,” “F,” “G”. “E” company was defunct. These Companies were of varying size nominally from under 50 to just over 100 men.

Two companies did not take part in fighting in the Four Courts area in 1916. “D” Company, under Seán Heuston took over the iconic Mendicity Institution on the south Quays. “B” Company, under Jimmy O’Sullivan went to Cabra Bridge but ultimately linked with the 5th Battalion in Ashbourne.

So, the four other companies, A, C, F, G were the nominal structures for the Four Courts Garrison. In your booklet you will see the Roll of Honour and the company that the volunteer was most associated with. This is indicative only as many men moved company during the week or were on separate detachments.

The leader of the 1st Battalion was Edward Daly.

Edward Daly was only 25 years old, he was the youngest commandant and became the youngest to be executed in the aftermath. All his life he wanted to be a soldier, so when the Irish Volunteers were established he joined and rapidly was promoted. He studied soldiering with great seriousness and became an accomplished tactician.

<SLIDE 5 – BIG MAP>

So what was the military objective? By looking at this map we can understand the general idea. The provisional government and military council was located in the GPO. Their objective was to hold out as long as possible. The original plans for getting thousands of German guns and a nationwide rising were dashed, so it was ultimately a defensive & holding military campaign.

The 1st Battalion was tasked with taking the area west of the GPO and north of the Liffey to prevent British Troops from moving towards the GPO. There were three barracks west of Dublin, Marlboro Barracks (now McKee), Royal Barracks (now Collins) and Richmond Barracks (no longer used). There were also two main train stations that could be used to bring British Troops from the country to Dublin. These were Kingsbridge (now Heuston Station) and Broadstone (now a Dublin Bus terminus).

He calculated that British Troops from the west would have to move East along the Quays, North King St or North Brunswick Street. To prevent this he planned to establish his defensive line north/south street from Church Street, up to Broadstone and Cabra.

The Monday morning was semi-chaotic because of the countermanding order. The order to muster at Columcille Hall, Blackhall Street was not widely circulated. James Connolly was at Liberty Hall organising various special units. Three of these are especially relevant to this story:-

- The Magazine Fort activity involving 30 Fianna and Volunteers;
- the Mendicity Institute force and the
- Cabra Bridge Force.

<SLIDE 7 – LOCAL MAP>

So, only between 80 and 200 men gathered at Blackhall Street and set off after 11am with the task of securing North West Dublin.

Daly marched down Blackhall Street, onto Smithfield, up Red Cow Lane and down North Brunswick Street. His original plan was to establish his HQ at the

North Dublin Union, a central position from Cabra to the Liffey. He sent “C” Company to take the Four Courts and Charles Bevan is the first to enter by way of Chancery Street.

It’s said that “No battle plan survives contact with the enemy.” However Daly had bigger problems with his plan, he had less than 50% of the number of men he had planned for, so things had to change.

He established his HQ in St John’s Convent on North Brunswick Street (now Carmichael House). <SLIDE BRUNSWICK STREET>

He set about securing the area along the length of Church Street especially at the junctions of North Brunswick Street, North King Street and Mary Lane as well as the Four Courts and the Liffey bridges.

The tactics employed by Daly were modern, sophisticated and effective. He ordered his troops to build multiple substantial barricades across key roads and junctions. He ordered his troops to take the tall buildings and structures in the area. He ordered the loophole-ing of the buildings to allow movement along streets. Crucially, he did not man the barricades, but instead commanded the houses overlooking them. These tactics proved to be very effective and deadly.

<SLIDE – Barricades, Guns, Grenades, Snipers>

The men were equipped with rifles, Howth Mausers and Lee Enfields. They also had home-made grenades. Many of the men were expert shots, having trained for many years – so they were used as snipers.

So that’s the scene. Clear objective. Reduced Forces. Initial areas secured. So what happened? Let’s take it through the week:-

<SLIDE LOCAL MAP>

On **Monday**:

The first contact was with British Lancers who were proceeding down the Quays. Peadar Clancy's section fires on them and they seek shelter in the Medical Mission opposite Four Courts.

<SLIDE – MEDICAL MISSION> They remained there for most of the week and you can still see the bullet holes.

A lance is used to raise the tricolour in the middle of a N King Street & Church Street. This tricolour remains in place until Saturday.

<SLIDE – LOCAL MAP>

Late on Monday, Daly's forces increased in number as more men and women reported for duty.

Tuesday:

<SLIDE – FR MATTHEW HALL & BROADSTONE>

On Tuesday, Daly moves his HQ to Fr Matthew Hall....closer to the centre of operations in his new limited area.

Daly orders a group under Dinny O'Callaghan to take the Broadstone station. In this group is Peadar Breslin 2nd in command and also involved is Sean Moore, Eamon Martin, Garry Holahan & Paddy Holahan and George Butler. In the operation Eamon Martin is wounded and the attempt is abandoned because of British fire from the station.

<SLIDE – CLARKES DAIRY SEEN FROM NORTH>

During the rest of the week Rebels try to prevent British troops from attacking from the North. The British use the Broadstone throughout the week to exchange fire with Irish Forces in in the high building of Clarke's Dairy.

Wednesday:

Daly orders the Linenhall Barracks to be taken. Men from "G" company are involved.

<SLIDE – LINENHALL BARRACKS>

A number of unarmed men are taken prisoner and the barracks is set on fire to prevent it being used by British Forces. This barracks burns for days, and the acrid smoke and heat was intense throughout the week

<SLIDE – LOCAL MAP>

On Wednesday, the Mendicity Insitute is taken by British Forces after an unbelievably heroic defence by Sean Heuston.

At the south end of Daly's command, Peadar Clancy and Tom Smart run across the Liffey Bridge with fuel cans to set fire to houses on southside of Liffey to prevent the British establishing a base.

Thursday:

<SLIDE CHURCH STREET>

On Thursday, Volunteers at the Church Street Bridge barricade prevent British Forces moving along the quays, killing many of them.

British Forces are now organising themselves with their massive reinforcements and, significantly, the use of Armoured Cars begins.

<SLIDE LOCAL MAP>

The British plan is to encircle the Four Courts Irish Forces. They take Capel street to the East, Queen Street to the West, the Liffey to the South and plan on taking North King Street to the North.

British snipers have taken key positions around Dublin and fire on Volunteer troops in Four Courts area.

Friday

On Friday British Forces from Capel Street establish their base at Bolton Street College and start to move west along North King Street.

Three main Volunteer forces inflict massive casualties on the British as they advance

On North King Street: Thomas Sheerin, William Murphy, John Williamson and John Dwan occupy Langans.

Sniping from Frank Shouldice in the Malt Tower on Beresford Street was particularly lethal.

<SLIDE – REILLYS FORT>

In Reilly's, Jack Shouldice & Maurice Collins command a small unit that included Edward Delamare, Patrick & Michael O'Flanagan

Reilly's Fort is now the Tap pub.

The British realise they need to change tactics and attempt to move down rooftops of N King Street to attack Irish Forces. That doesn't work as they suffer more losses.

<SLIDE ARMoured CAR>

They now use Armoured Cars to continually ferry 10-15 troops each time to houses on North King Street in an attempt to get to Church Street.

Infuriated with the losses they had suffered, on late Friday evening and early Saturday morning, the British troops broke into the homes of the locals and shot or bayoneted 15 civilian men whom they accused of being rebels. This is what's known as the North King Street Massacre. This event, and the sham of the subsequent enquiry, was significant in terms of support for the Easter Rising in the following weeks.

<SLIDE LOCAL MAP>

British Forces also move from the West into Smithfield in an attempt to reach Church Street.

Daly decides to move his HQ from Fr Matthew Hall to the Four Courts building itself on Friday.

Saturday:

On Friday night and Saturday morning, The fighting along North King Street is relentless with very close fighting across and down the street. The Irish forces decide to abandon Langan's Pub & barricade before daylight.

British Forces start mouse-holing houses on N King Street to advance toward Reilly's fort. They break cover to advance on the open street and early on Saturday morning 9 British Soldiers are killed in a single charge.

At 9am, Reilly's is abandoned and Volunteers move south in a daring move. A small group of British Soldiers occupy Reilly's but are immediately fired upon by Volunteers north and south of them on Church Street.

<SLIDE - CLARKS LOOKING SOUTH>

A group of Volunteers numbering 50-70 are now cut-off North of Reilly's fort and North King Street. They occupy Moore's Coach Factory, Clarke's Dairy and other buildings 50 yards from Reilly's. They plan a counter-assault to take back Reilly's. The fighting becomes even more intense. You can see from the photo how close the forces were to each other.

The men include Mick O'Neill, Liam O'Gorman, Sean O'Brien, Denis Neary, Sean Geraghty, Sean Duffy, Sean Forde, Paddy Holahan, Garry Holahan, Peadar Breslin, Larry Lawlor, Frank Lawlor, Eugene Hammill

However, at 6pm on Saturday Nurse O'Farrell & Fr Columbus delivered Pearse's surrender order to Edward Daly at the Four Courts. Daly and his men could have held out in the Four Courts for much longer, but Daly, being the military man, accepted his orders. They surrendered their weapons and marched as an army of probably less than 200 to the Rotunda.

The Volunteers, cut off north of Reilly's Fort, did not know of the surrender. They were preparing to launch a counter attack on the British when they were approached by Father Albert. The rebel force, now commanded by Paddy Holahan because Nicholas Laffan was injured, did not want to surrender and fully expected to fight to the last man. They wanted to see a written order from Pearse. A ceasefire, unique in Easter Week, was agreed that would last from 7:30pm Saturday until 10am Sunday to allow a surrender note from Pearse to be obtained. The note arrived and the cut-off group of 50-70 men surrendered and marched out.

<SLIDE SURRENDER NOTE>

The surrender note is handwritten and dated 30th and must have been written by Pearse in the early hours of Sunday morning.

It should be mentioned that a number of Rebels managed to slip away without being arrested, some attending Sunday Mass on Church Street and mingling with the congregations

THUS ENDED THE FIGHTING AT THE FOUR COURTS GARRISON

The nature of the fighting

The nature of the fighting by the Irish Forces in the Four Courts area was for want of a better word “professional.” They moved civilians out of their houses (against their will) to other locations. They set up field hospitals and took prisoners. They treated their prisoners well and in many cases released them on their word. Commandant Daly arranged for Monks Bakery to remain open throughout the week to distribute bread to the locals.

They also, on many occasions, established short cease fires to allow the British to take in their wounded.

Not that we need endorsement from the British, but I think this excerpt is worth reading:-

<SLIDE HOW THE IRISH FOUGHT>

HOW THE IRISH FOUGHT.

Captain R. K. Bereton, J.P., Ladywell, Athlone, who was captured by the Republican Army and held with ten other English prisoners from Monday evening to Saturday evening, said on May 14th, 1916:—

“ What impressed me most was the international tone adopted by the Sinn Fein officers. They were not out for massacre, for burning or for loot. They were out for war, observing all the rules of civilised warfare and fighting clean. So far as I saw they fought like gentlemen. They had possession of the restaurant in the (Four) Courts, stocked with spirits and champagne and other wines, yet there were no signs of drinking. I was informed that they were all total abstainers. They treated their prisoners with the utmost courtesy and consideration, in fact they proved by their conduct that they were men of education incapable of acts of brutality.”

In the Four Courts garrison, there were many casualties:-

Many civilians were killed, not just in the North King Street Massacre. Many British forces were killed or injured.

<SLIDE IRISH FORCES DEATHS>

And 10 Volunteers and Fianna were killed.

Thomas Allen

Edward Costello

John Cromien

John Dwan

Patrick Farrell

Sean Howard

Sean Hurley

Peter Manning

Patrick O'Flanagan

Philip Walsh

Commandant Edward Daly was executed on the 4th May.

<SLIDE LOGO>

Many of the Four Courts garrison and the 1st Battalion were sentenced to death or long prison terms, but ultimately ended up in Frongoch. They returned to a heroes welcome and subsequently fought in the War of Independence.

So, as we, the relatives, go through this week we can think of those brave men who set on this day to fight. As we rise each morning and go to bed each night this week we should think of what these men and women went through. Danger, fear, lack of sleep, hunger but ultimately bravery and belief in the future generations of free Irish men and women.

As I said at the start, this story is different for us.

For many of the relatives here today it was their loving parents who fought 100 years ago, not abstract names and faded photographs.

As Úna said, it's now up to us and the younger generations who did not meet these people to remember them and commemorate their actions which allowed us to be the "generation of freedom."

Thank you.