

Elizabeth O'Farrell

Evacuation of GPO

On Friday, the 28th of April 1916, in the evening, the General Post Office, which was the building for the provisional government, was in flames. Together with hundreds of people who made up the Republican garrison, we left the post office by the side entrance leading to Henry Street and made our way to Moore Lane as constant sniper shots were being fired. We rushed to Moore Lane, where a barricade had been erected, and we saw the burning building and heard the bullets of machine guns and sporadically even the sound of hand grenades. As I passed the barricade, I tripped and fell behind. Immediately a man came to my rescue and brought me back to house No. 12. When I reached the parlour of the house, I found James Connolly lying on a stretcher, one of the members of the Provisional Government. There were seventeen wounded that day and I spent the night taking care of them, as I was a nurse by profession.

Patrick Pearse

The republican forces had evacuated the burning General Post Office. On that day we left in three sections, I was the last to leave the building to make sure no one was left behind. When we reached Moore Street we entered No. 10, Cogans Grocery shop, and began tunnelling from one house to another in order to remain unnoticed and increase the chance of escaping the area. Ultimately, we ended up in house No. 16, Plunketts, a poultry shop.

The surrender

In that small house, we discussed what we could do. There was this one moment when I saw through a shattered window three men carrying white flags being shot down. That was when I decided that we must surrender. Connolly agreed that risking further lives cannot be tolerated. I still remember how 58-year-old Fenian Tom Clarke, openly wept at our final decision.

Elizabeth O'Farrell

On Saturday, I got the orders to convey the message to the British forces. Around 12pm I left the house and waved the small white flag to the military. I gave General Lowe my message on behalf of Commandant Pearse. At first many of them believed I was a spy. At around 2pm I went to No. 16 Moore Street and brought back the message the condition of surrender.

Patrick Pearse

I saw our entrusted nurse Elizabeth O'Farrell was back. She passed through the doorway of No. 16, bravely walking down the street. General Lowe demanded that within half an hour she must return with myself, and the only term was an unconditional surrender. At around 3pm I marched down towards the barricade in my heavy military overcoat and Boer shaped hat. I handed the sword to General Lowe,

and Elizabeth O'Farrell was by my side. On the footpath outside of Byrne's shop, an old wooden bench was brought out. I stopped and signed the document of surrender.

Elizabeth O'Farrell

Without speaking, Pearse grasped my hand tightly. I agreed to deliver the message to Dublin outposts. It was finally over. I saw Pearse was taken away in a motorcar by General Lowe. That was the last time I saw him.