



7.0 The Main Sites of Activity During the Rising.

7.2 The General Post Office

The principal position to be occupied was the GPO on Sackville (O’Connell) Street, which was designated as the headquarters of the Provisional Government. Five members of the Provisional Government were located there: Pearse, Connolly, Clarke, MacDiarmada and Plunkett. The garrison amounted to possibly 350 men and women—Irish Volunteers, Cumann na mBan, Irish Citizen Army and Hibernian Rifles. Among those present in the GPO at some stage in the week were Harry Boland, Winifred Carney, Michael Collins, Rory Connolly (the fifteen-year-old son of James), Éamonn Duggan, Desmond FitzGerald, Louise Gavan Duffy, Julia Grenan, Seán Lemass, Diarmuid Lynch, Finnian Lynch, Seán McGrath, Nurse Elizabeth O’Farrell, Seán T. O’Kelly, Willie Pearse, James Ryan, Arthur Shields, Michael Staines, Oscar Traynor, Domhnall Ua Buachalla.

The understanding was that once the Proclamation had been read and the Irish Republic established, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army would merge as the army of the Irish Republic. As commandant general of the Dublin Brigade of the new army of the Irish Republic, James Connolly was in charge of the defense of the GPO and also directed operations throughout the city until communications were cut off later in the week.

The GPO garrison barricaded some of the neighbouring streets and also occupied a number of adjoining buildings, including some across the street. On Monday afternoon the garrison repulsed a cavalry attack by a troop

of Lancers which recklessly charged down Upper Sackville Street past Nelson's Pillar under fire from insurgents in the buildings on both sides of the street. With the breakdown of law and order, many of the shops and stores in Sackville Street and the adjoining streets were looted from Tuesday onwards.

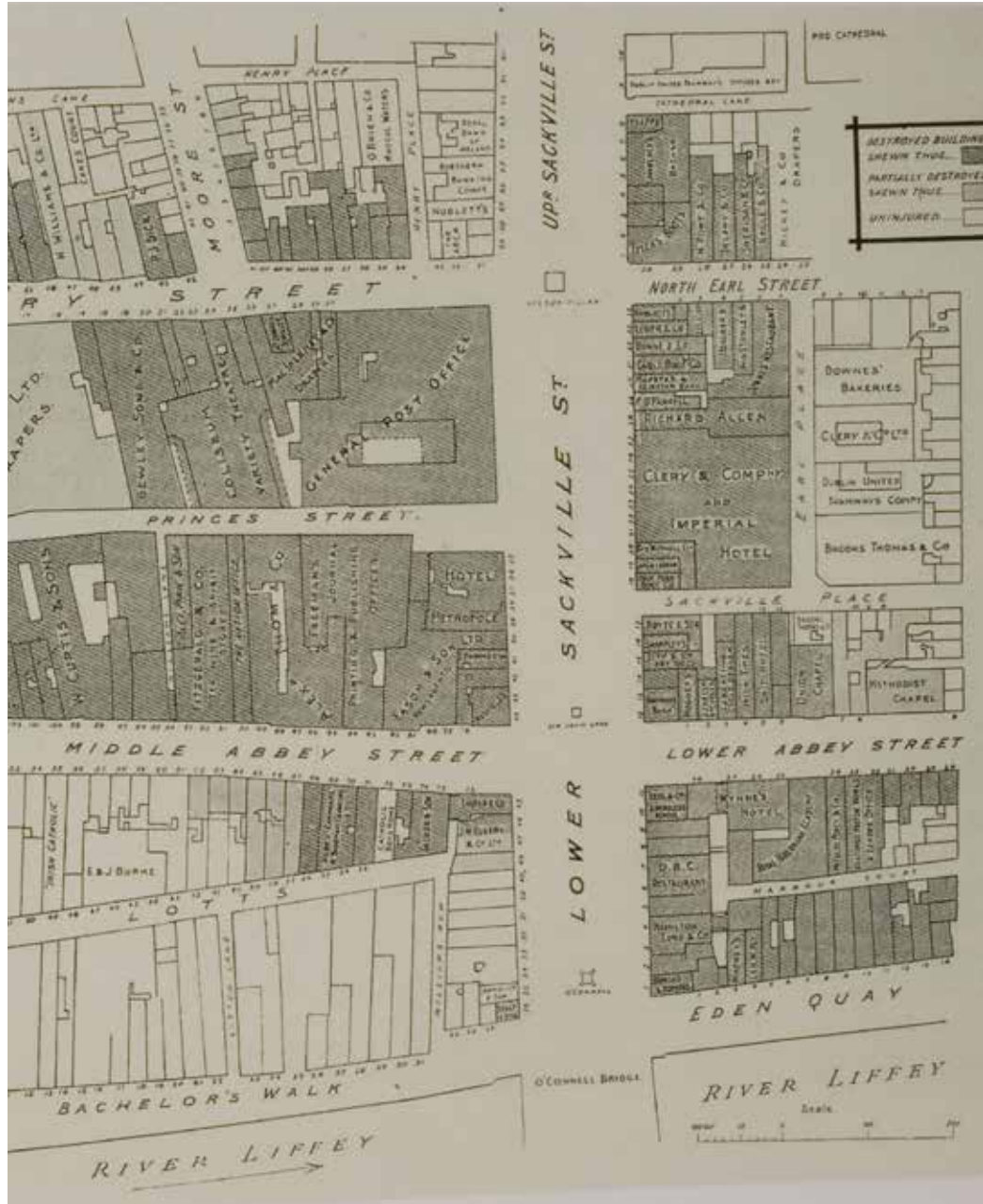
From Wednesday on, Liberty Hall, the GPO and other buildings in Sackville Street came under artillery and incendiary fire, mostly from the gunboat Helga at anchor in the Liffey. The Imperial Hotel located over Clery's department store, across the street from the GPO, was one of the first buildings to be set on fire; soon most buildings between that and the Liffey were in flames. Connolly had naively believed that the British would not use artillery in city areas because as capitalists they would be reluctant to destroy property.

On Thursday, Connolly dispatched Lieutenant Seán McLoughlin with a party of thirty men to set up an outpost in the premises of the Irish Independent and the Nation on Middle Abbey Street. McLoughlin was a twenty-year-old member of Seán Heuston's company, who had taken part in the action in the Mendicity Institution, and had already favourably impressed both Pearse and Connolly. Afterwards Connolly was seriously wounded in the ankle outside the GPO; although confined to a stretcher he continued to direct operations.

By Friday evening the GPO was on fire, at which point it was decided to evacuate the garrison and move northwards by way of Moore Street, which was being raked by rifle and machine gun fire, to the Williams & Woods factory in Great Britain (Parnell) Street. The O'Rahilly led a charge by thirty Volunteers to clear the way. He was fatally wounded along with several of his men.

As Connolly was incapacitated, the direction of the evacuation was delegated to McLoughlin, the responsibility being confirmed by his promotion to commandant later that evening. The garrison then evacuated and took up new positions, mainly in houses along Moore Street. On Saturday morning McLoughlin proposed that the garrison fight its way via Henry Street and Capel Street to link up with Commandant Daly's 1st Battalion in the Four Courts area. As this course would entail considerable civilian casualties, it was decided at a meeting of the five members of the Provisional Government present that they would negotiate a surrender to prevent further loss of life.

7.2 The General Post Office



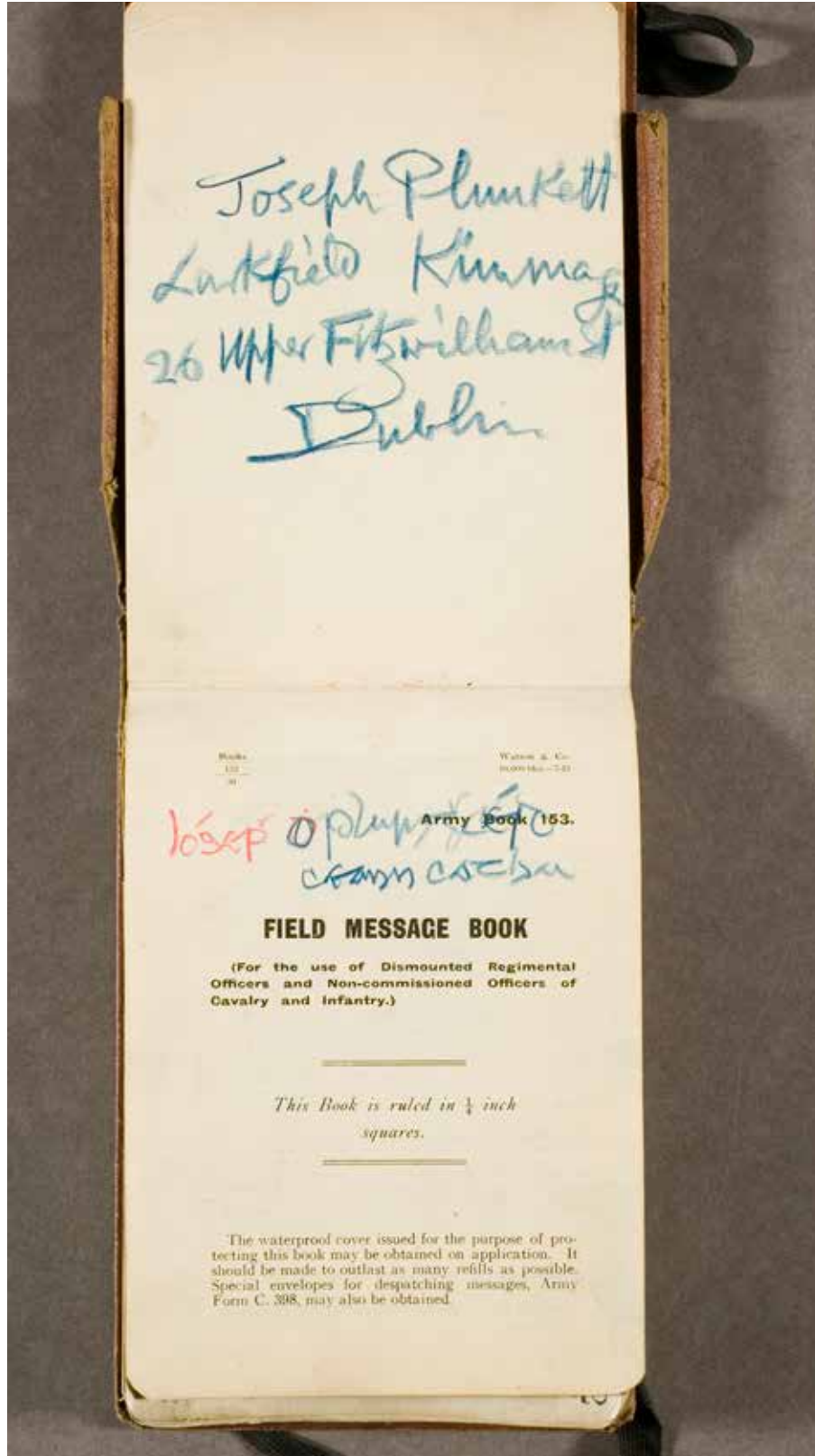
The General Post Office area as shown on a map issued by the Hibernian Fire and General Insurance Company shortly after the Rising. (O'Mahony Collection).

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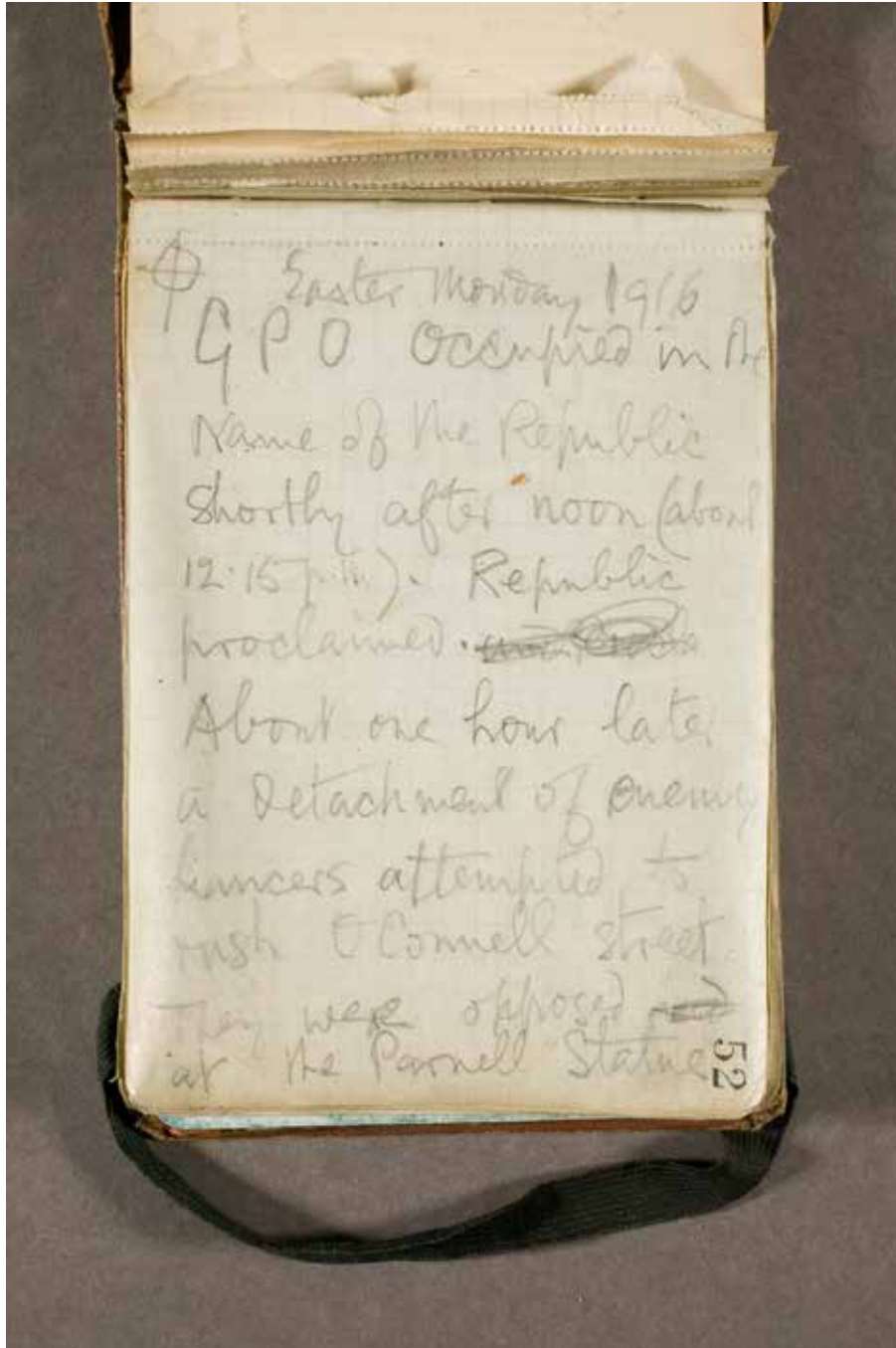


The GPO and Nelson's Pillar as they appeared about a decade before the Rising.
(Lawrence CAB1).

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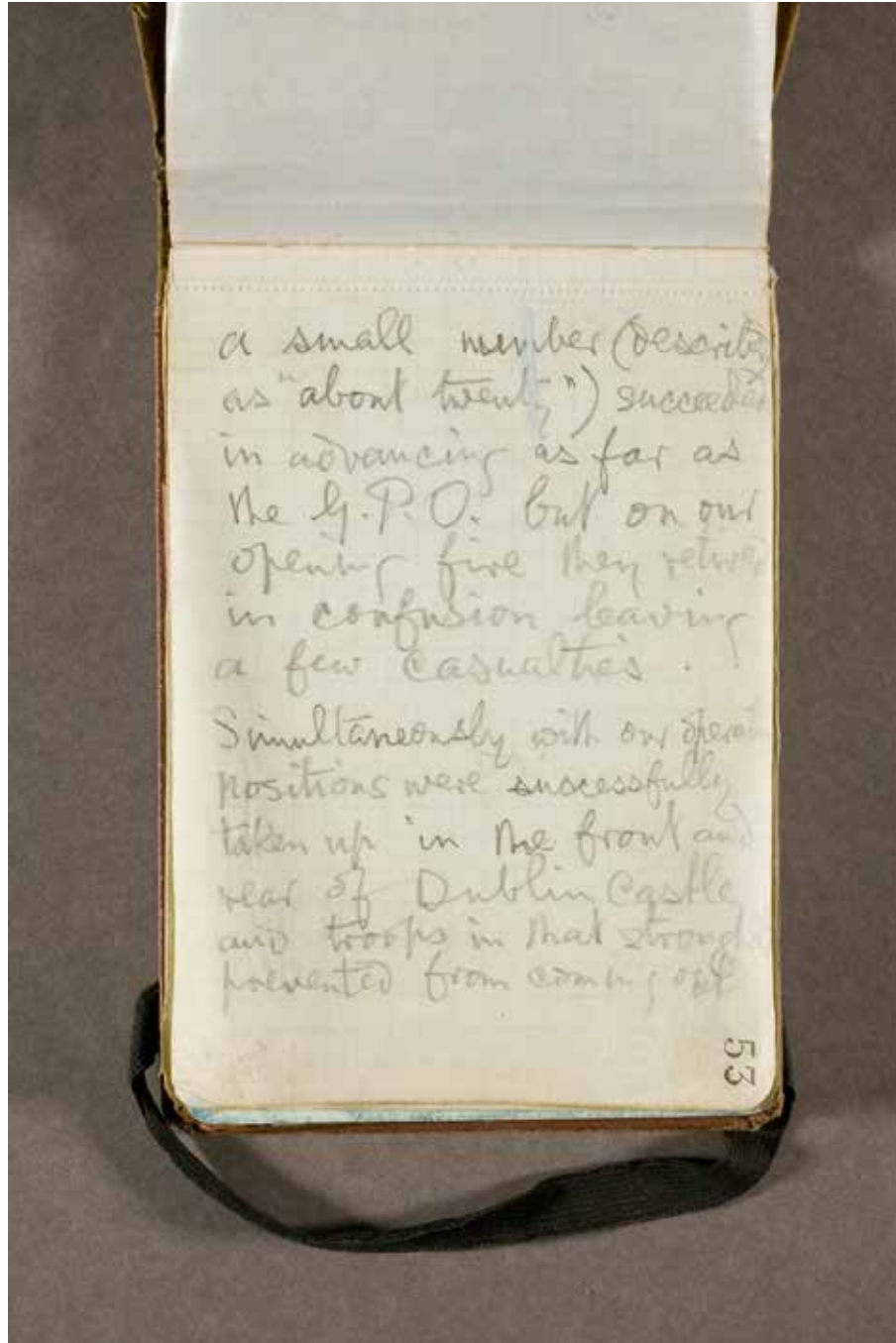


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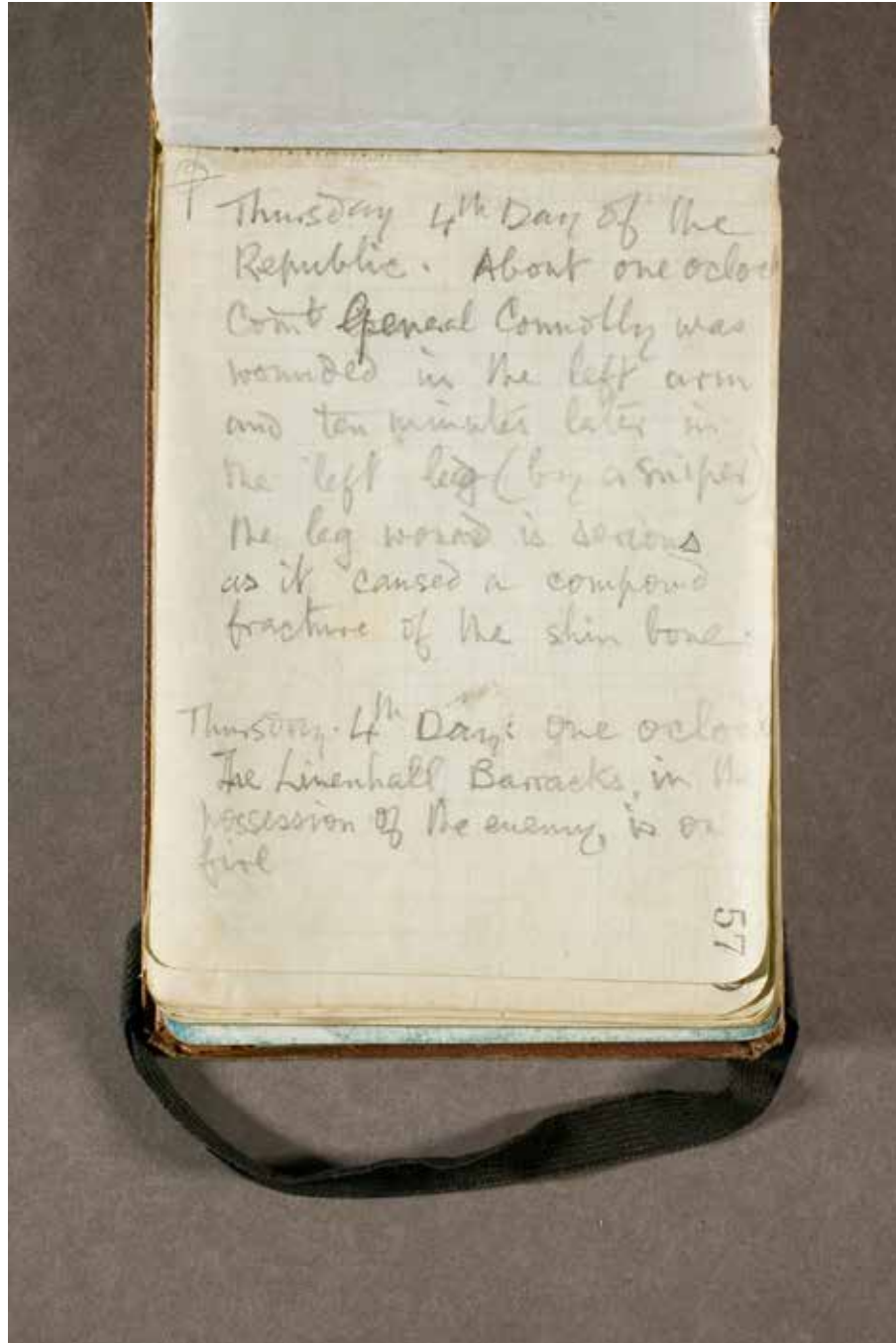
Pages from Joseph Plunkett's field notebook for the week of the Rising. (Ms. 4,700).

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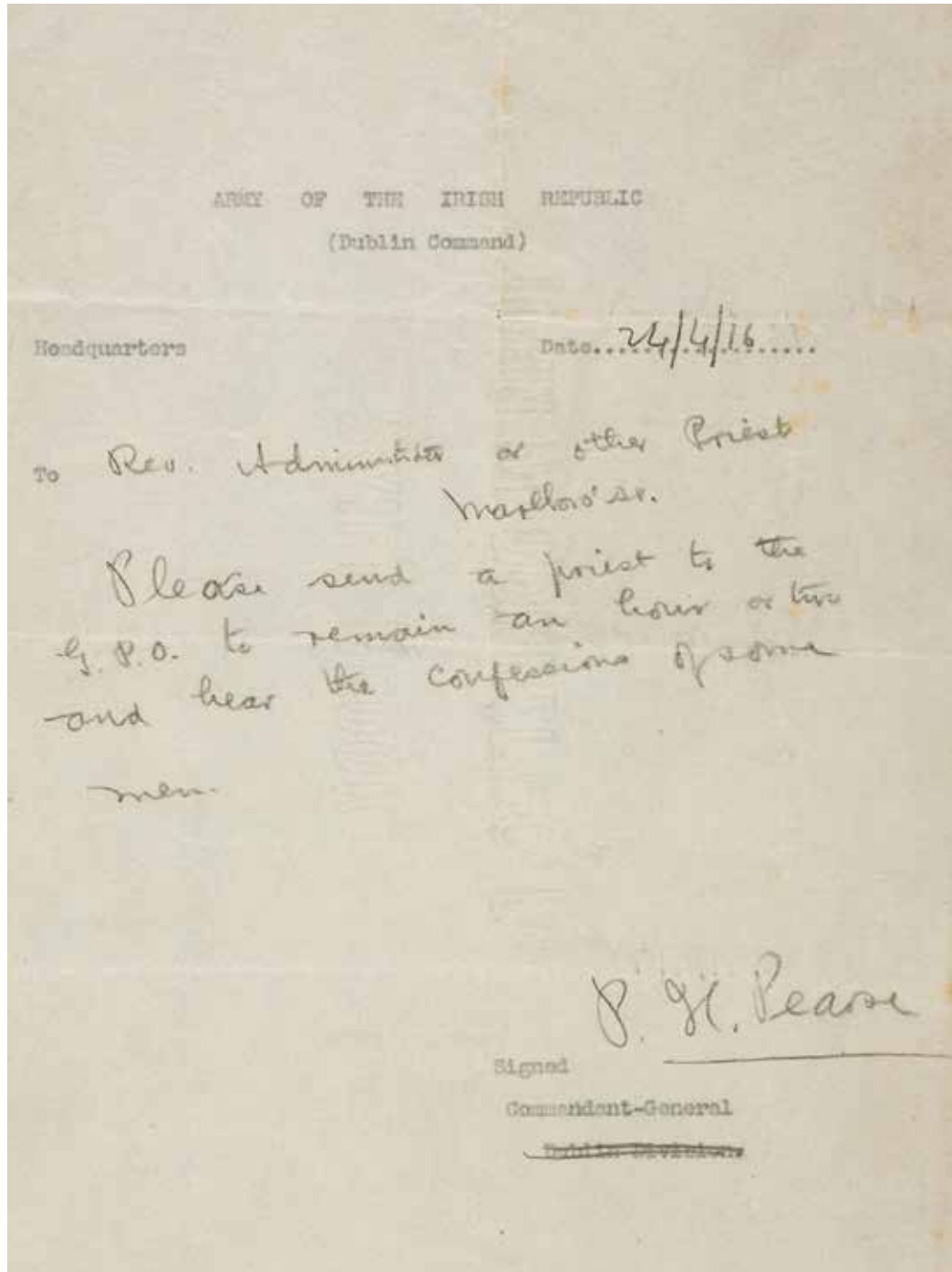
A photograph taken in the GPO during the Rising. Formerly in the custody of a member of the garrison who emigrated to the United States, it was provided for use in the film *An Tine Bheo* (The living flame) directed by Louis Marcus and produced by Gael Linn for the fiftieth anniversary in 1966. From left: Des O'Reilly, T. Nolan, P. Byrne, Jack Doyle, Tom McGrath, Hugh Thornton, P. Twamley, Murphy (?). All are Irish Volunteers except Nolan and Twamley who have been identified as ICA. (PC06 Lot 6).

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Two Volunteers in the GPO during the Rising. From the same source as the previous item. (PC06 Lot 6).

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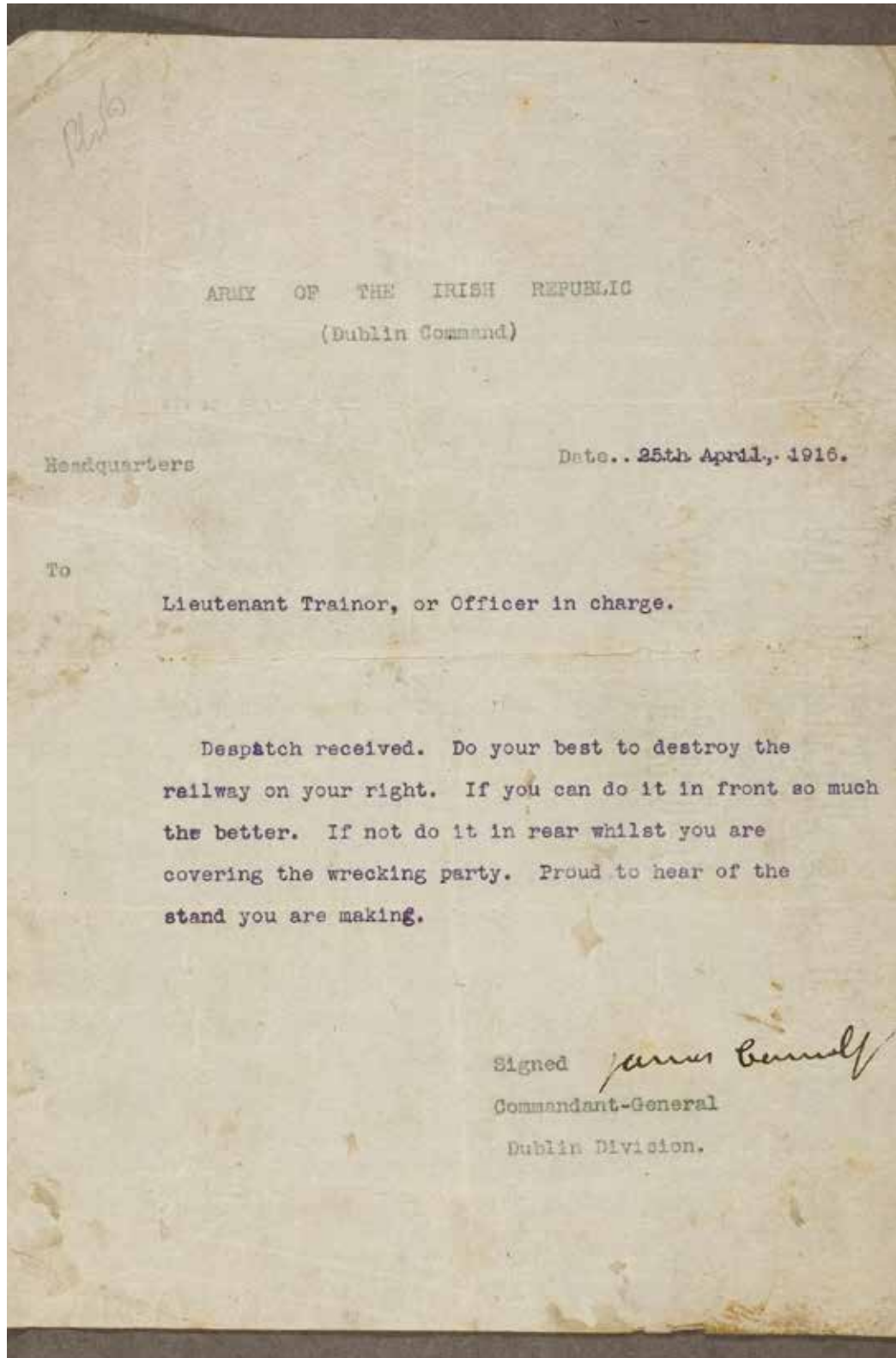
Request by Pease to the administrator at the Roman Catholic church in Marlborough Street for a priest to hear the confessions of members of the garrison; the request was made on Monday afternoon or evening sometime after the occupation of the GPO. (Ms. 15,002, de CourcyWheeler Papers).

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Michael Collins (1890-1922) was born at Woodfield, Clonakilty, Co. Cork. He went to London at the age of sixteen as a clerk in the Post Office. In the Rising he was aide-de-camp to Joseph Plunkett. His experience of the Rising taught him that it was unwise to take on the British army from static positions: he later planned and directed the guerilla warfare that was to prove so successful in the War of Independence (1918-21). (Keogh 16).

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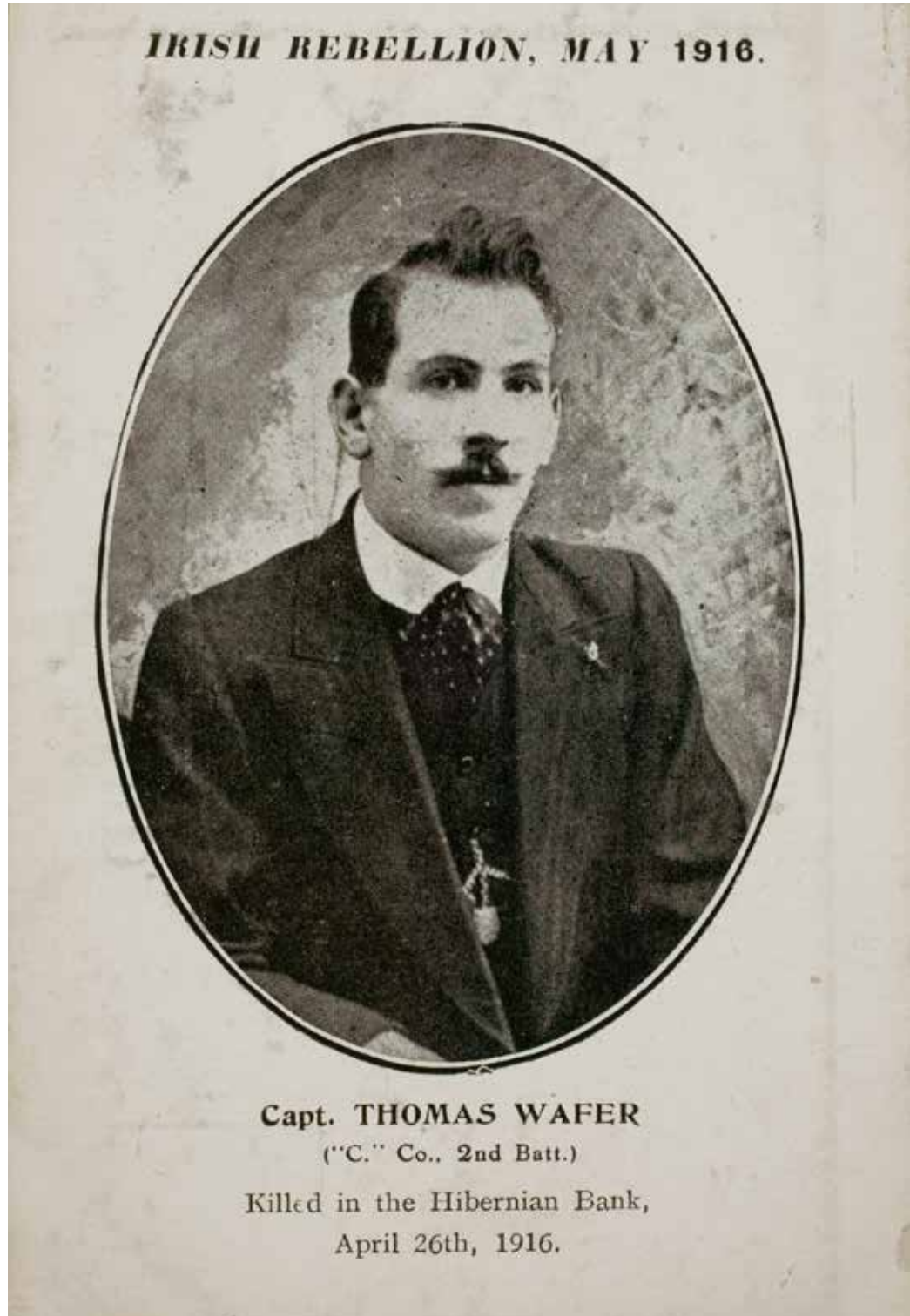
Order by Connolly to destroy the railway line, probably to the north of Amiens Street station, Tuesday 25 April 1916. (Ms. 15,002 (2), de Courcy-Wheeler Papers).

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Winifred Carney; a member of Cumann na mBan and the ICA, she was James Connolly's secretary.

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A commemorative postcard for Capt. Thomas J. Wafer, from Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford who commanded the Hibernian Bank outpost diagonally across the street from the GPO at the corner of Lower Abbey Street. He controlled the approach from Amiens Street station. Aged twenty-six, he was shot dead on Wednesday 26 April. (Album 113).

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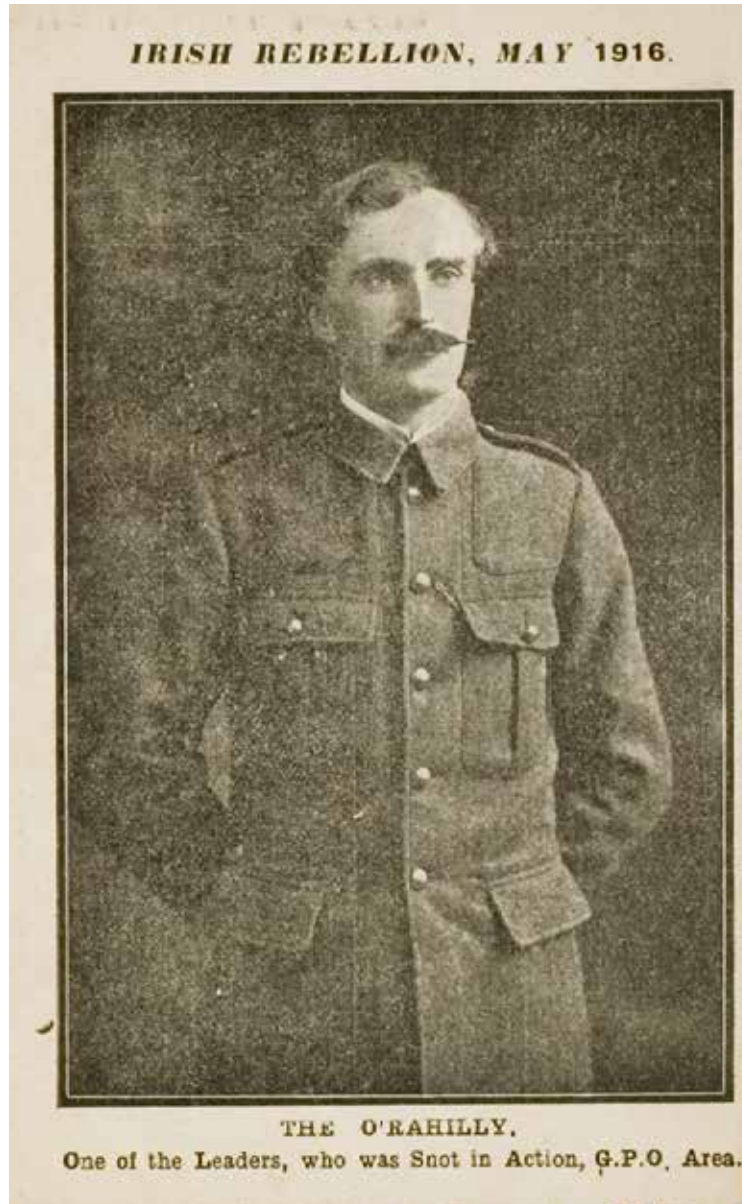
Commandant Seán McLoughlin (1895-1916) was a son of Patrick McLoughlin, an ITGWU activist. Socialist and radical in outlook, he was a member of the Gaelic League, Fianna Éireann, the IRB and the Irish Volunteers. As a commandant, his life was at risk following the surrender, but the authorities overlooked his rank probably because a British captain had removed his tabs. (Camillian Post, Spring 1948).

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An artist's impression of the scene in the GPO shortly before the evacuation. (A print by T. Kiersey of the painting by W. Paget in the National Museum of Ireland; P&D HP (1916) 2/A).

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A commemorative postcard for O'Rahilly who was shot leading a charge in Moore Street. Born in Ballylongford, Co. Kerry, Michael Joseph O'Rahilly (1875-1916) was prominent in Sinn Féin and was treasurer of the Irish Volunteers. He supported MacNeill's countermand, but joined the garrison in the GPO, supposedly saying 'I helped to wind up the clock, so I might as well hear it strike'. (O'Mahony Album).

7.2 The General Post Office



The GPO viewed from the top of Nelson's Pillar at the end of the Rising. (Manchester Guardian History of the War, 16 Aug. 1916).