

DOWNHILL HERALD

1916 Easter Rising: 100 Years Later

Liam Leary

4 September 2019

On the busy main thoroughfare of O'Connell Street in Dublin, Ireland stands the historic General Post Office, the site of the 1916 Easter Rising. At the General Post Office there is a plaque written first in Irish, and then in English, that describes Patrick Pearse's public oration of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic that declared independence from Britain. This Proclamation accompanied an uprising on April 24th throughout Dublin by Irish revolutionaries, which began by capturing the General Post Office, but was eventually crushed by British troops just six days later.

Now, more than a century later, the plaque at the General Post Office is just one of many ways that the Irish have decided to commemorate the Easter Rising. The commemorations of this event have been particularly emphasized in the past decade, as the uprising had its 100th anniversary in 2016.



Plaque located on the General Post Office in Dublin, commemorating the Easter Rising

One of these commemorations that was created as part of the 100th anniversary was hosted by the Kilmainham Gaol in Dublin, the jail in which the leaders of the 1916 Easter Rising were held and eventually executed.

Kilmainham began the commemoration on May 3rd, the date that the first three leaders were killed one hundred years earlier.

Commemorations continued throughout the next two weeks to honor the rest of the executed leaders on their respective anniversaries of death.

The jail, despite being considered a “dark tourism” location, or a place that is visited for its bloodshed and tragedy, drew a significant crowd for the centenary events.



A cross marking the location of an execution at Kilmainham Gaol

Another commemoration that was established is an exhibit at the National Museum of Ireland entitled “Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising”. The [exhibit](#) contains hundreds of artifacts concerning the Rising and its surrounding events, making it one of the largest collections from this time period.

The exhibit was opened by Ireland's Taoiseach, Edna Kenny, on March 2nd, 2016, and became open to the public the next day. It was well received by the public for the first few months, even causing the [National Museum](#) to warn that visitors may be asked to wait before entering the exhibit because of crowding.

DOWNHILL HERALD



Taoiseach Edna Kenny observing artifacts at the new Easter Rising exhibit

However, as years went by the excitement of the anniversary faded away, public desire to view and experience these commemorations has declined as well. [Irish Times](#) reports that the General Post Office, the “flagship” of the 1916 centenary commemorations, has fallen from 160,000 visitors in 2016 to just over half of that figure in 2018.

In order to combat the decreasing interest, An Post, who runs the General Post Office exhibit, requested Dublin City Council to allow them to hang large signage on the building in order to become more visible and marketable.

“Without heavy expenditure on marketing, the decline in visitor numbers would likely have been greater”, An Post stated. The organization says that they might not be able to cover operating costs if the number of visitors continues to decline. The commemoration cost 10 million euros to open.

The expensive exhibit, which was funded by the government, calls into question whether those funds could have been better used. For example, there is a significant homeless population in Ireland, with over 4,500 individuals in need of emergency accommodations as of November 2018 in Dublin alone, according to the [Dublin Region Homeless Executive](#).

The money spent on the exhibit could have helped support the city’s impoverished

population and combatted homelessness, if used by the government for this cause. However, in 2016, €96,254,326 was already being spent on providing services and accommodations for the homeless in Dublin. This shows that while homelessness is a problem in the city, there is still a significant amount of capital used by the government to battle the issue.

In addition, it is important for citizens to learn about their country’s past, especially the historic impact of the 1916 Easter Rising, which propelled Ireland toward becoming an independent republic. The [General Post Office](#) exhibit offers education programs for students, and provides accessible accommodations for those with language barriers or disabilities. Every year, tens of thousands of people take advantage of the exhibit, as well as the Kilmainham Gaol and Proclaiming a Republic exhibit, where they have an experiential learning about Irish history.

Also, these commemoration exhibits help bring in tourists, which in turn can assist in boosting the local economy in Dublin. The money spent on creating the General Post Office exhibit has definitely had a positive impact, and as An Post hopes, will be able to serve an even greater number of individuals as a result of their increased marketing efforts.

This mock newspaper article was written by a student on the Fall 2019 Syracuse Abroad Signature Seminar on “Borders in Flux: Identities and Conflict in Ireland” as part of the three-credit course’s assessment. For more information, see suabroad.syr.edu/destinations/london-england/field-trips-and-signature-seminars/borders-in-flux-identities-and-conflict-in-ireland/