

# The GPO

The GPO on O'Connell Street is one of Dublin's most famous and historic landmarks. It is often considered the most important location of the 1916 Rising.

The building began construction in 1814 by architect Francis Johnston. At the time, Johnston was considered one of the best Irish architects. The building opened for business in January 1818. It cost £50,000 to build and was the centre of communications in Ireland.

The GPO is most famous for its role in the 1916 Rising. On April 24th, Easter Monday 1916, Padraig Pearse and James Connolly led a group of Irish rebels from Liberty Hall to the GPO, located on the then known as Sackville Street. They entered the building and ordered all those inside to leave. Some staff barricaded themselves in some upstairs offices. They left after shots began to be fired.

Later that day, Pearse made his way outside the building and read the Proclamation aloud. Other rebels made their way to the roof and removed the British flag. They raised the tricolour and the flag of the Irish Republic.

For the remainder of the week, the GPO would play a central role in the Rising. After much fighting, the building was on fire and parts had collapsed. After six days, Pearse and the other rebels surrendered.

Reconstruction began on the building following the fighting. It was decided that the building would also be extended. It reopened almost thirteen years after the Rising took place by WT Cosgrave.

After two centuries, the GPO still stands fully operational on Dublin's O'Connell Street, continuing to serve its initial purpose as the centre of communications and headquarters for the Irish Post Office (An Post), thriving in both business and national history.

## Questions

1. What does GPO stand for?
2. Who designed the GPO?
3. Explain, in one or two sentences, the role which the GPO took as part of the Easter Rising?
4. When Pearse and Connolly entered the GPO, why do you think they asked everyone to leave?
5. Why did rebels remove the British flag?
6. From reading the passage, what damage had been done to the building as a result of the Rising?
7. How many years did it take to reconstruct the GPO following the Rising?
8. What purpose does the GPO hold today?



# The GPO Answers

1. General Post Office
2. Francis Johnston
3. The Irish rebels occupied the GPO as their headquarters during the rebellion.
4. Because they wanted to use the building for themselves, as their headquarters. Also, they did not want innocent Irish lives to be lost in any fighting.
5. Because they were showing that they wanted an Irish Republic.
6. It was on fire and parts had collapsed.
7. 13
8. Irish Post Office Headquarters and centre of communications for An Post.