

Elizabeth O'Farrell

Nurse and Revolutionary

Elizabeth O'Farrell was born in Dublin in 1884.

- She was a member of Inghinidhe na hÉireann and along with her lifelong friend Julia Grenan, she joined Cumann na mBan, the women's branch of the Irish Volunteers.
- As plans were put in place for the 1916 Easter Rising, Elizabeth and Julia were sent around the country as messengers delivering important information.
- When the rebellion began on Easter Monday, (24 April 1916) Julia and Elizabeth were stationed in the GPO. As casualties mounted, they tended to the wounded and dispatched messages.
- On Saturday, 29 April, the decision was made by Patrick Pearse to surrender. Elizabeth was chosen to deliver the surrender to the commander of the British troops, General Lowe. Then she crossed the city delivering surrender orders to outposts.
- When the Rising was over, Elizabeth spent a short time in prison. She later trained to be a midwife and remained committed to the idea of independence for Ireland for the rest of her life.
- Elizabeth died in 1957 and is buried alongside Julia Grenan.



JC LINKS

2.4 examine the rise and impact of nationalism and unionism in Ireland, including key events between 1911 and 1923.

1.5 investigate the job of the historian, including how s/he finds and uses evidence to form historical judgements which may be revised and reinterpreted in the light of new evidence.

LC LINKS

Modern Ireland Topic 3: The pursuit of sovereignty and the impact of partition, 1912-1949.

Did You Know?

On Easter Monday 1916, Elizabeth travelled to Galway with a message to say that the Rising was going ahead and would begin in Dublin that day!



Working as an Historian

Primary Source Evidence

Look up the record for Elizabeth O'Farrell's family on the 1911 Census.

<http://www.census.nationalarchives.ie/reels/nai000118945/>

What facts can you identify about Elizabeth from this record?

How is her surname recorded in the census? What does this tell you about the research challenges faced by historians?

Do you recognise any of the other people recorded in this record?

This well-known photograph shows Patrick Pearse during the surrender to General Lowe on 29th April 1916. Can you spot a pair of feet and a skirt beside Pearse? They belong to Elizabeth!

Image (left) courtesy of the NLI