



Wynn's Hotel Dublin

IN THE HEART OF DUBLIN FOR OVER 150 YEARS



History

Wynn's Hotel has been in existence in one form or another since 1845 and has witnessed many of the events which have shaped the history of Dublin City. The plaque, which may be seen in the main lounge of the hotel, commemorates an event which had a decisive effect on the history of Ireland in this century - the decision to establish Oglaiġ na hEireann - the Irish Volunteers'.



In January 1913, the British House of Lords had rejected a Bill which proposed Home Rule for Ireland. Nevertheless, it seemed that the agitation for Home Rule which had begun forty years earlier must soon bear fruit. Those in the North who were bitterly opposed to any weakening of the 'Union of Great Britain and Ireland' had established an armed force - 'The Ulster Volunteers', and were threatening rebellion if an all-Ireland Government were set up in Dublin. Nationalists began to realize the need for action to defend their rights.

A newspaper commentary on the political situation in Ireland by Professor Eoin Mac Neill of University College Dublin, himself an Ulsterman, was rejected by many as a call to arms. The suggestion that Mac Neill should take the lead in the establishment of an Irish Volunteer force is said to have been made by a Belfast Quaker, Bulmer Hobson. Hobson, a political journalist working in Dublin, was the local head of the Irish Republican Brotherhood - a secret organisation which aimed at the establishment of an Irish Republic. The O'Rahilly, a man of independent means, who was very active in the Gaelic League, after discussions with Mac Neill and Hobson, invited a small group to meet in Wynn's Hotel on 11th of November 1913. At the meeting, under Mac Neill's chairmanship, it was decided to establish an Irish Volunteer force. Of the small group who attended, four died as a result of 1916 - Pearse, Ceannt, Mac Diarmada and The O'Rahilly. Though he did not become a member of the Provisional Committee in 1913, Sir Roger Casement was one of those who inspired Eoin Mac Neill at this time. Within a few hours of the holding of the meeting in Wynn's, detectives from Dublin Castle called on the manager of the hotel to warn him not to allow further meetings of this kind on the premises. This warning seems to have been ignored. A provisional committee representative of all degrees of nationalist opinion was established immediately. The committee met in Wynn's Hotel on a number of occasions to plan the public inauguration of the 'Irish Volunteers', whose aim it would be "to secure and maintain the rights and liberties of all the people of Ireland." On the 25th of November, 1913, Ireland's modern army was established by acclamation at a huge public meeting in the Rotunda Rink which stood in the grounds now occupied by The Garden of Remembrance, Parnell Square.



General Background

Wynn's Hotel owes its origin and name to a Ms. Phoebe Wynn who opened a commercial boarding house at No. 33 Lower Abbey Street in 1845. For this enterprise she chose a house which previously had been the Church of Ireland rectory of the Parish of St. Thomas. It adjoined The Royal Hibernian Academy and was a mere stones throw from. Dublin's main thoroughfare then Sackville Street. Nothing else is known of Phoebe Wynn except her ownership of the establishment lasted only seven years. But the business she had located so well prospered and grew under successive owners who enlarged the premises as the opportunity arose.

Before the end of the century Wynn's Hotel already occupied numbers 35, 36, 37, 38, and 39 Lower Abbey Street and had become one of Dublin's most popular hotels. Although Ms. Wynn's association with the business was of short duration, her name lived on through several changes of ownership. Despite the fact that for nearly twenty years (1878 -1897) the hotel was officially known as Telford's, the old name persisted and in 1897, when the hotel was acquired by its present owner, it became Wynn's once more. Phoebe Wynn herself long since been forgotten, but her name had gained a permanent place for itself in Lower Abbey Street.

Situated in the heart of Dublin close to many centres of social, political and business life, Wynn's Hotel, soon became a favourite venue for formal and informal gatherings. While the meeting of the 11th November 1913, had more far-reaching effects than any other meeting ever held there, the public rooms of the hotel provided hospitality for many other political meetings during the latter half of the nineteenth century and the early years of the twentieth century. It was at Wynn's too that 'Cumann na mBan', was founded to give the volunteers support of a body of courageous and determined women. Wynn's had always a link with the artistic life of Dublin through its proximity to the Royal Hibernian Academy. When the Abbey Theatre was opened nearby, the public rooms of the hotel became a favourite rendezvous for playwrights, actors, and theatre-goers. During the 1916 Rising, Wynn's together with The Royal Hibernian Academy and the neighbouring buildings in Sackville Street was destroyed by fire. A member of the staff who was in the hotel at the time recalled in later years that a barricade erected by the Volunteers in front of Wynn's had been set on fire by incendiary bullets. The fire spread from the barricade to the timber facings of the hotel. When danger threatened, the guests and staff found refuge in Clarence Hotel. They had succeeded in getting there by Butt Bridge and the South Quays under the protection of an improvised white flag. In 1926 when the hotel was re-built, the old tradition of hospitality and service which had been characteristic of Wynn's in the past was re-created in a new setting worthy of Dublin's capital and of a new Ireland.

A full history of the Irish Volunteers will be found in "The Irish Volunteers 1913 -1915" edited by F.x. Martin o.S.A. and published by Duffy & Co. Wynn's Hotel, Lower Abbey Street, Dublin 1