



THE SHELBOURNE
DUBLIN
A RENAISSANCE HOTEL

In 1904, George Olden became the new General Manager. Between 1906 and 1913, the hotel enjoyed great success. New additions included the telephone and a lift. Guests started arriving by car and tram. The summer of 1912 saw a great influx of visitors from USA, Japan and Australia.

In 1914 with the outbreak of war, several of the hotel's German staff were interned and The Shelbourne unofficially became the hub of military activity.

The Republican Rising of Easter 1916 was a seminal date in the Shelbourne's history. The hotel owners remained loyal to the Crown during the Easter Rebellion. However, some staff members did not. It emerged later that one hotel porter made regular forays up to the rooftop and signalled the movement of troops within the hotel to the rebel forces across the Green. Yet, despite all the disturbances, the hotel management and staff managed to carry on almost as normal.

On Easter Monday when fighting broke out on the Green, afternoon tea was transferred from the Drawing Room to the Writing and Reading Room at the rear of the hotel for safety (this room is now the Horseshoe Bar). On Tuesday afternoon, forty soldiers were sent to garrison the hotel, making it a legitimate target for the rebels across the Green. The Shelbourne came under regular fire for the remainder of the week. The windows were sandbagged and shuttered; the great entrance door was barricaded. A skeleton staff operated the hotel's services and titled guests acted as waiters. By Wednesday, the hotel opened its doors to receive the injured, irrespective of the side on which side they fought. The young rebels - who over the past days fired gunshots at the hotel - were now its guests, having their wounds treated by women whose very existence they threatened.

During the Civil War, The Shelbourne was home to the new army of Ireland. On January 24th 1922, the first meeting of the constitution committee was held in the hotel. Arthur Griffith and Michael Collins invited seven men to the meeting: Darrell Figgis, Hugh Kennedy, James Douglas, Clement J France, James McNeill, John O'Bryne and James Murnaghan. Alfred O'Rahilly and Kevin O'Shiel were later additions to the committee. Three civil servants were also appointed as secretaries: EM Stephens, RJP Mortished and PA O'Toole. In total there were five lawyers and four laypeople, including a writer, a businessman, a former British civil servant and a professor, on the committee which drafted the Irish Free State constitution laying the foundations for the structure of the modern Irish state.

Henceforth from February to May 1922, The Shelbourne played host to its most historic meeting – the drafting of the Irish Constitution. [Bunreacht na hÉireann](#) was drawn up in room 112, under the chairmanship of Michael Collins. This room is now The Constitution Room.

The war, as it affected The Shelbourne directly, lasted only a couple of weeks and, by August 1922, calm and customers returned again to The Shelbourne.

During the period 1919 – 1945, movement between the British mainland and Ireland was suspended. The Shelbourne patrons consisted mainly of the Diplomatic Corps and journalists and, from 1939, Ulster families seeking a brief respite from the blackouts and rationing brought about by the outbreak of World War II. Known as ‘the Emergency’, the war altered the cast at The Shelbourne and expanded it enormously. The year-end figures for visitors staying during the Emergency show an average annual increase of about 6,000 per year, starting at 19,333 in 1940 and rising to 61,496 in 1946. Arrivals into Dublin found a sharp contrast to the austerity that they had left behind, either in England or in the North. A few days at The Shelbourne offered a welcome respite from anxiety and isolation.