

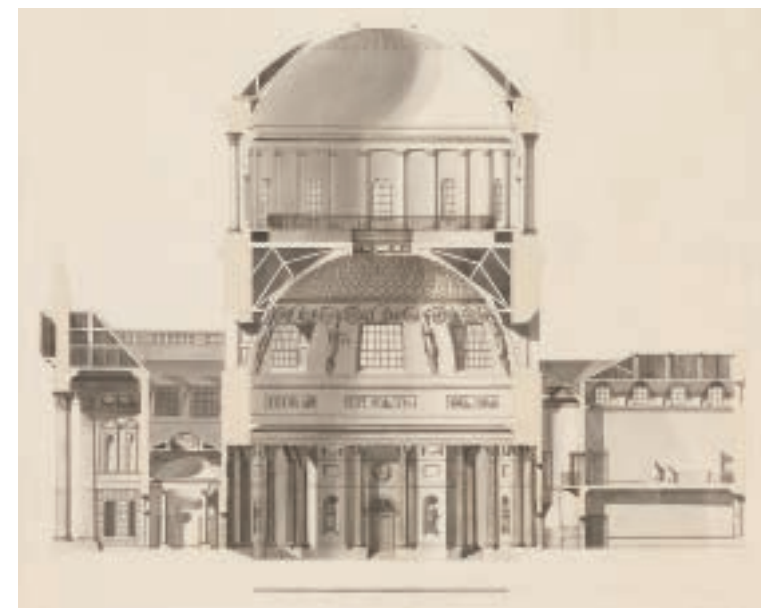
Four Courts, 1922

At the end of June 1922, the group of buildings known as the Four Courts, which has for some weeks – since 14th April 1922 – been occupied by Irregulars under Roderick O'Connor, was besieged and taken, and in the process was almost completely ruined (principally by explosions caused by the besieged forces).

OPW ANNUAL REPORT NO. 91, 1922-1923, P. 7



Four Courts, still smouldering ruins, July 1922
IAA T.J. Byrne Collection, 2012/51.2/25

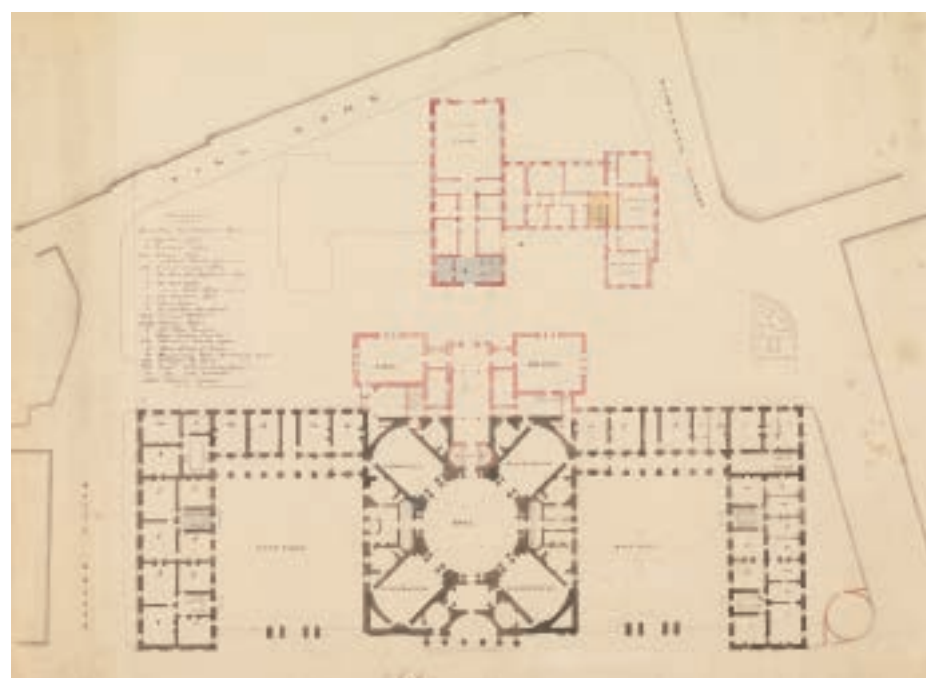


Four Courts, section of the central block, c.1800
IAA King's Inns Collection, 2007/10.2/10 A

This section of the Four Courts shows in particular Edward Smyth's original decorative scheme for the interior.



Four Courts, shell damage to front of central block, July 1922
IAA T.J. Byrne Collection, 2012/51.2/350



Four Courts, plan of the ground floor, 1832
IAA King's Inns Collection, 2007/10.5/5

Shown in black on this plan is the ground floor of Gandon's original Four Courts building. In red are additions and alterations proposed to be carried out from 1832 onwards by Jacob Owen.



Inns Quay, looking west past Four Courts, July 1922
IAA T.J. Byrne Collection, 2012/51.2/29



Four Courts, view of scaffold in main hall, 1926
IAA T.J. Byrne Collection, 2012/51.2/46



Four Courts, evaluating the remains, July 1922
IAA T.J. Byrne Collection, 2012/51.2/30

The shock generated by the loss of the Custom House was compounded just thirteen months later by the destruction of the Four Courts, an event which the Irish Builder ranked 'among the worst outrages in the history of architecture'.

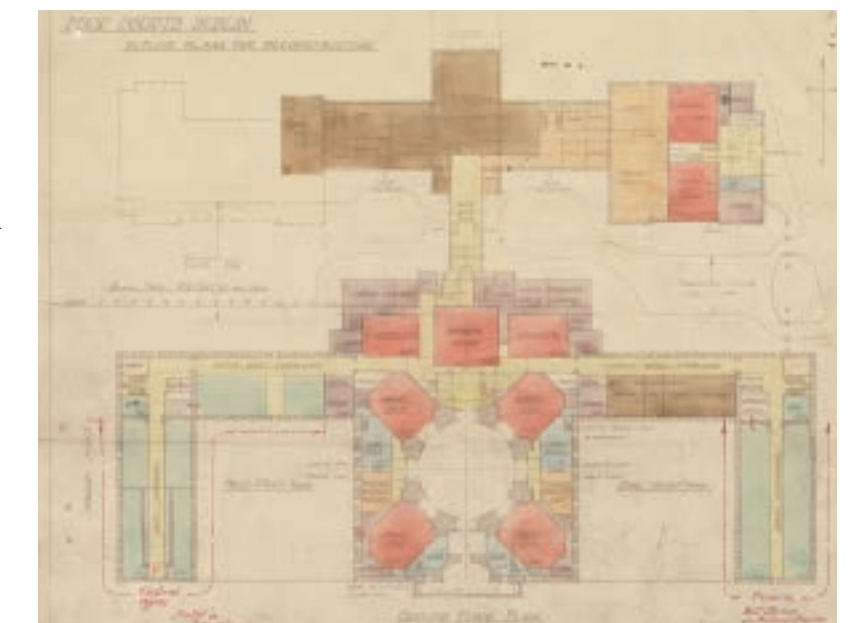
Shelling began at 4 am on Wednesday 28 June 1922. Fighting continued until the afternoon of Friday 29 June. Despite the OPW Report's assertion that the loss of the building complex was due to explosions caused by the anti-Treaty forces, the precise cause of the final calamitous mine explosion which destroyed the Treasury of the Public Records Offices adjacent to the Four Courts remains a matter of contention.

The business of the courts was relocated briefly to the King's Inns in Henrietta Street and then more permanently to the State Apartments in Dublin Castle, but by March 1923 the

OPW was 'carrying out works of repair whose purpose is to restore the outer shell of the central part of the building, viz., the portico, the central hall, and the drum and roof over it, to something like their original appearance'. By 1926, the OPW could report that:

...it was settled that the Four Courts building would be reconstructed for the use of the Supreme Court and High Court, and the general lines of a plan of reconstruction were approved. The plan adheres as closely as possible to the central conception of Gandon's original design, viz., the four courts grouped round a circular central hall, which is surmounted by a dome, but adds a Supreme Court in an axial position and two other courts... [Other accommodation] will be greatly improved in spaciousness and simplicity of arrangement, as compared with those of the old Four Courts building, by the adoption of modern methods, particularly steel frame construction inside the blocks. The floors will be concrete, which will make the building more resistant to fire.

As with the GPO and the Custom House, the Four Courts were rebuilt under the direction of OPW Chief Architect, T.J. Byrne.



Four Courts, reconstruction plans, OPW, 3 October 1925
IAA King's Inns Collection, 2007/10.5/2/1



Four Courts, steel support for new concrete dome, 1928
IAA T.J. Byrne Collection, 2012/51.2/53