

# The Dublin Bread Company Restaurant

*I saw the fire gradually work... down to the D.B.C. Restaurant. That being a very high building I knew that it would stop the fire for a time... It made a brave stand for hours. Then I noticed an ominous light in the upper lantern windows. It was at once an indication that the place was doomed.*

CAPTAIN THOMAS P. PURCELL, DUBLIN FIRE BRIGADE, 1916

The exuberant pagoda of the Dublin Bread Company (DBC) Restaurant dominated the eastern side of O'Connell Street, Lower, from 1900. Popular as a meeting place with a wide cross section of Dublin society, including many 'advanced republicans', the building was one of the earliest works of architect George Francis Beckett and was built by his family's construction company, James Beckett Ltd.

Beckett said that the front elevation had taken the form of 'two distinct houses' in order to preserve the lines of separate plots. 'It was also a motive in the design' he noted, 'that it should be in character with its purpose, and this principle dictated the emphasising of the first, or luncheon-room, floor as the principal one by the carrying out of large bow windows, over which a larger balcony has been provided, accessible from the smoking room.' Rising above the edifice, a glazed lantern provided panoramic views of the city rivalling those from the nearby Nelson's Pillar.

Architecturally, the DBC was not universally admired. Indeed, it was primarily with the DBC in mind that the *Irish Builder* hoped that in reconstructing O'Connell Street after 1916 every effort would be made to avoid 'the ugly and distressing spectacle of lofty and massive edifices of brick and stone carried apparently on flimsy sub-structures of glass'.

In the aftermath of the Rising photographs show the gutted DBC looming alone over the eastern end of the street. Within weeks, the remains had been taken down. A replacement – a building to be the 'architectural rallying point' of this end of the street – was designed by Millar & Symes in 1917 but never constructed. Instead, the DBC was replaced by the classical stone façade of the Grand Central Cinema (later converted to a bank).



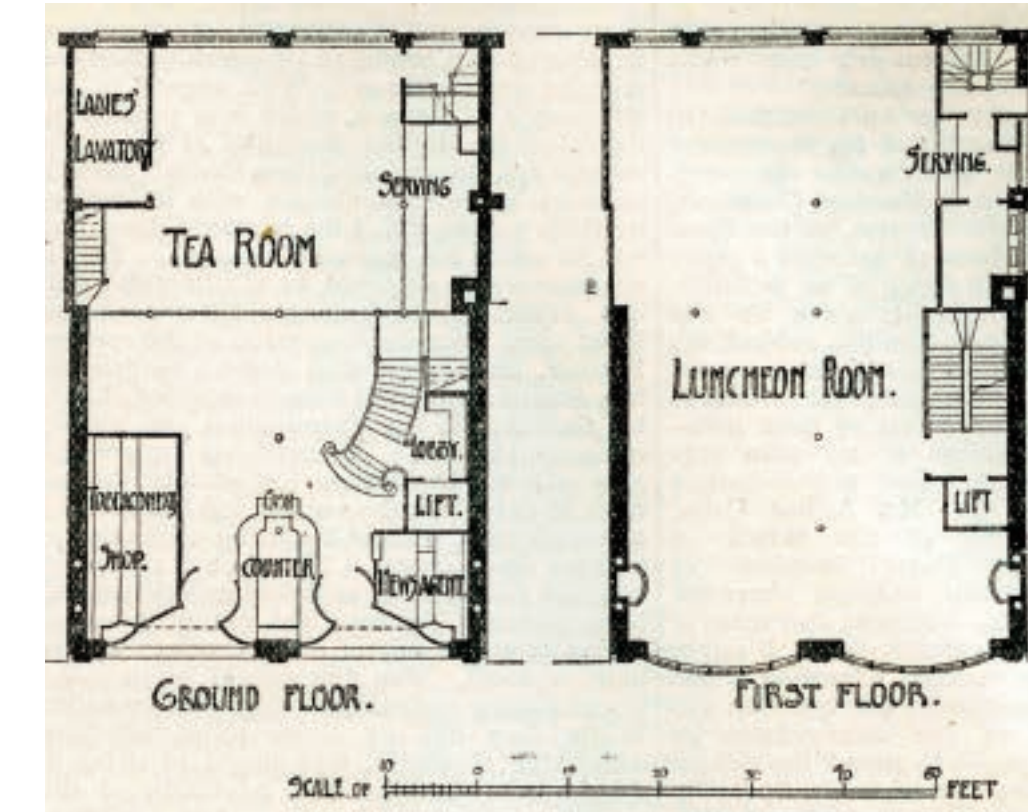
O'Connell Street, Lower, general view c.1905  
IAA Photographic Collections, 12/29V39



'Loyal Volunteer on duty at General Post Office',  
identified in the *Irish Builder* as architect  
George F. Beckett  
T. W. Murphy, Dublin after the Six Days Insurrection,  
1916, p. 25



DBC advertisement  
Visitor's Guide to Dublin and Neighbourhood giving a  
complete Dictionary of Dublin, 1907



DBC Restaurant, O'Connell Street, Lower, ground and first floor plans  
The Builder, 19 January 1901, p. 64



DBC Restaurant, O'Connell Street, Lower,  
engraved view  
The Builder, 19 January 1901, p. 66



DBC in ruins, May 1916  
IAA Westropp Collection, 96/57 Vol. 10 p. 54 1



DBC ruins under demolition, July 1916  
IAA Westropp Collection, 96/57 Vol. 10 p. 53 1