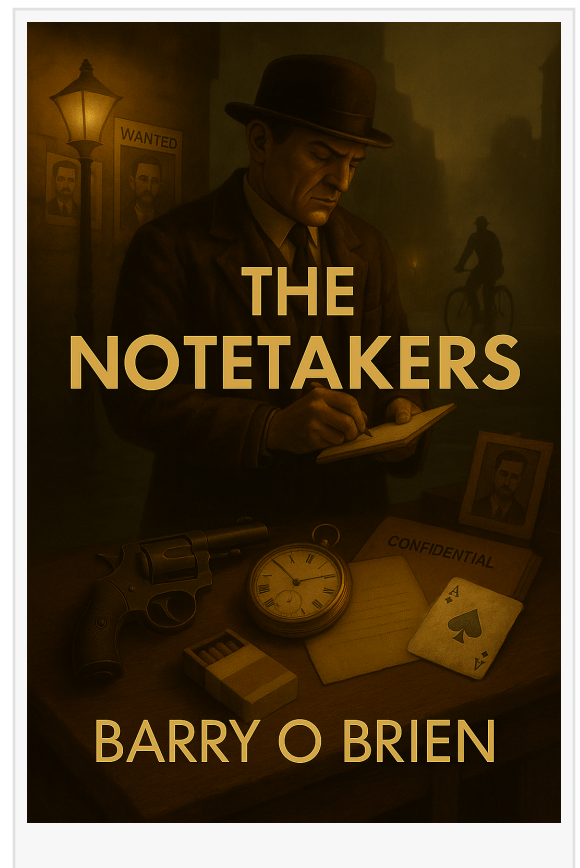


Upcoming Historical Novel 'The Notetakers' to Reveal Dublin Castle's Hidden World Before the 1916 Rising

LONDON, UK, UNITED KINGDOM, November 18, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Former Assistant Commissioner of An Garda Síochána and independent historian Barry O'Brien will soon release his debut historical novel, *The Notetakers*, a detailed exploration of intelligence, secrecy, and divided loyalties within Dublin Castle during the tense months leading to the 1916 Easter Rising.

Set in early-twentieth-century Dublin, *The Notetakers* follows Detective Inspector Daniel Barton of the Dublin Metropolitan Police's G Division as he navigates the moral and political uncertainties of a city on the brink of rebellion. The narrative immerses readers in the atmosphere of Edwardian-era Ireland, a society marked by class division, social unrest, and competing visions of loyalty to the Crown and to the emerging idea of Irish nationhood. Through Barton's experiences, the novel reconstructs the world of surveillance, coded messages, and quiet betrayals that unfolded behind the fortified walls of Dublin Castle.



While fictional, the book draws heavily on documented historical realities. Dublin Castle functioned as the administrative and intelligence centre of British rule in Ireland. Its G Division kept meticulous records on political activists, trade-union organisers, and cultural revivalists. Within this context, O'Brien's portrayal of Barton's work reflects the daily operations of officers who balanced duty with doubt, men often caught between enforcing the law and questioning its moral basis. The story places the reader inside this complex environment, showing how intelligence gathering and human relationships intersected during one of Ireland's most volatile periods.

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O'Brien's forthcoming novel examines the ethical dilemmas faced by those who served in

institutions of authority at a time when Ireland itself was undergoing transformation. By depicting a protagonist who must reconcile personal integrity with institutional obligation, *The Notetakers* extends beyond historical reconstruction to consider universal questions of conscience. The work highlights the cost of loyalty, the fragility of trust, and the ambiguity of heroism issues as resonant today as they were in 1916.

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Drawing upon over forty years of service in Irish policing and a lifelong interest in Irish history, O'Brien brings a rare authenticity to his fictional world. His understanding of investigative process, organisational hierarchy, and the pressures of public service allows him to depict law-enforcement life with precision. Yet the author's focus is less on procedure than on humanity, the private thoughts of people working in institutions that shaped Irish society for centuries.

In speaking about the forthcoming publication, O'Brien explained that *The Notetakers* was motivated by "a desire to explore how ordinary individuals respond when history places them in extraordinary circumstances. Many of those who worked within Dublin Castle were neither villains nor heroes but people caught between two conflicting visions of duty."

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The months preceding the Easter Rising were marked by heightened surveillance, secret communications, and a growing sense of inevitability. The Irish Republican Brotherhood and the Volunteers prepared for insurrection while ordinary citizens tried to survive economic hardship and wartime restrictions. Within this pressure, Dublin Castle became both a symbol of authority and a crucible of fear. O'Brien's novel revisits this moment with attention to everyday detail: the rhythm of the streets, the architecture of the Castle, and the uneasy coexistence of coloniser and colonised.

By reconstructing Dublin through the eyes of both its officials and its rebels, *The Notetakers* contributes to a broader understanding of how history is experienced at ground level. The book's measured narrative aligns with the current interest among historians and readers in reassessing the events of the early twentieth century, not simply as nationalist myth but as lived reality for thousands of people.

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Although set more than a century ago, the questions raised by *The Notetakers* about integrity, surveillance, and moral responsibility remain strikingly contemporary. In an age still negotiating the balance between security and freedom, O'Brien's portrayal of divided loyalties within the machinery of governance offers quiet parallels without imposing modern judgment. The novel approaches history as inquiry rather than nostalgia, encouraging reflection on how societies remember their conflicts and the people who served on every side of them.

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The Notetakers will be published in both print and digital formats in November 2025 through major Irish and international book outlets. Details regarding the official launch, media availability, and public discussions on the historical context will be announced in the coming months. The release represents a convergence of O'Brien's dual passions: the disciplined world of law enforcement and the interpretive craft of historical storytelling.

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Barry O'Brien served for more than forty years in the Irish Police, An Garda Síochána, culminating in his appointment as Assistant Commissioner with responsibility for the Northwestern Region. After retiring in 2022, he founded an independent tour-guiding enterprise that provides visitors with historical and cultural insights into Dublin's layered past. His professional background, combined with his enduring fascination with Ireland's complex history, inspired his debut novel, *The Notetakers*. O'Brien lives on Dublin's Northside with his wife and two of their three adult children.

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