

Comóradh

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A Newsletter for the Irish Abroad
in the Decade of Centenaries



An Roinn Gnóthaí Eachtracha
agus Trádála
Department of Foreign Affairs
and Trade



“Ireland will commemorate the centenary of the Easter Rising of 1916 – a seminal event in Ireland’s path to independence and the centrepiece of the Irish Decade of Centenaries.”

A Chara (Dear Friend),

The *Decade of Centenaries* marks the 100 year anniversaries of events that occurred between 1912 and 1922. It provides us with important opportunities to reflect on momentous historical events that significantly shaped Irish life then and since. Since my appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade in July 2014, I have been struck by how our past continues to inform our identities as individuals and communities on this island and as a diaspora abroad. While history can be a divisive subject, commemorations can present us with occasions to remember together and to encourage and value alternative and plural narratives.

In 2014, a range of commemorations took place to mark the centenary of the beginning of the First World War. In October, along with the Australian Ambassador to Ireland, Dr. Ruth Adler, I launched the Irish Anzacs Database in University College Dublin, which aims to identify all of the estimated 6,000 Irish-born enlistments in the Australian Imperial Force during the First World War. In November, I attended a Remembrance Sunday service at the Cenotaph in Belfast, where we remembered the thousands of men and women who travelled from all parts of the island of Ireland to take part in the war – in particular, the thousands who tragically did not return. The Taoiseach laid a wreath in Enniskillen while Ireland’s Ambassador in London, Dan Mulhall, laid a wreath at the official ceremony there (see page 3).

We are now in the fourth year of the Decade of Centenaries, and a number of events are planned for the coming months, including centenary commemorations to mark the beginning of the Gallipoli Campaign of the First World War in April; the sinking of the *Lusitania* in May; and Pádraig Pearse’s graveside oration at the funeral of Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa in August.

Next year, very significantly, Ireland will commemorate the centenary of the Easter Rising of 1916 – a seminal event in Ireland’s path to independence and the centrepiece of the Irish Decade of Centenaries. **Ireland 2016**, the Government’s national programme of commemorative events, will include a **Global and Diaspora Programme** to commemorate Easter 1916 and to present Ireland, and the last one hundred years of our history and culture, to the world. My Department through its network of Embassies and Consulates, is already engaged in planning events to that end with organisations, local communities and individuals around the globe. **Ireland 2016** will give people at home and abroad the opportunity to explore and reflect on our past, as well as to celebrate Ireland and our diaspora today.

I hope that all of you around the world will join with us in commemorating the significant events of 1916.

Beir bua agus beannacht (Best wishes)

Charles Flanagan TD
Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade

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From L-R: Minister Humphreys, the Tánaiste, Minister of State Aodhán Ó Riordáin TD and the Taoiseach.

Launch of Ireland 2016

On 31 March 2015, at the National Museum of Ireland in Collins Barracks in Dublin, the Government launched the **Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme** – a national initiative to mark the centenary of the Easter Rising of 1916. Ireland 2016 also features a **Global and Diaspora Programme**, which will be delivered through Ireland's extensive network of Embassies and Consulates. The Programme invites the global Irish family and friends of Ireland to participate in a range of commemorative and cultural events taking place around the world that will provide the opportunity to remember that pivotal period in our history; reflect on the past 100 years; and re-imagine our future.

A number of formal state events will be held over Easter weekend 2016, including a military ceremony in Dublin on Easter Sunday, 27 March. Other key events will include a special State Reception for relatives on 26 March, and a commemoration at Arbour Hill on Sunday 24 April to mark the date on which the Rising actually began.

Speaking at the launch, Taoiseach Enda Kenny, said:

There is no doubt that the narrative of 1916 is an intrinsic part of our DNA as a State. It is our inheritance. It is our story. And it is a story that deserves to be told unambiguously and with pride.

In her speech, Minister Humphreys made special reference to the diaspora. She said:

Ireland is not just an island of over 6 million people – it is a global tribe of 70 million people and, through Ireland 2016, we will connect with our global Irish family through our embassy network.

Information on the Government's **Ireland 2016 Centenary Programme**, including the Global and Diaspora Programme, can be found at www.ireland.ie, www.dfa.ie or your local Embassy / Consulate website.

Iveagh House Lecture: Christmas Truce of 1914

"At Christmas time on the Western Front just over a hundred years ago, soldiers from all sides put their fears and enmity to one side and held out the hand of friendship to each other. We today can draw hope and a valuable lesson from those events: we too must leave our trenches and have the courage to meet each other half-way. And we must be willing to keep doing it." — Professor Mary McAleese

The former President of Ireland, Professor Mary McAleese, addressed an audience in Iveagh House on the subject of the Christmas Truce of 1914. Professor McAleese was welcomed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Charles Flanagan TD. Guests included the British Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, the Rt Hon Philip Hammond MP, who was in Dublin on an official visit, and addressed guests.



From L-R: Rt Hon Philip Hammond, Minister Charles Flanagan TD; Prof Mary McAleese and her husband Dr Martin McAleese.

Professor McAleese's address, the fifth in a series of commemorative lectures at the headquarters of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, reflected on the centenary of the Christmas Truce, when troops along the Western Front – including soldiers from Ireland – laid down their arms in a temporary ceasefire.

In her address, Professor McAleese recalled the late Séamus Heaney's

poem 'In Memoriam Francis Ledwidge' – a tribute to the eponymous Irish nationalist and British soldier who perished in the trenches during the First World War. In the poem, Heaney explores Ledwidge's complex identity, and the competing experiences which shaped it, in an attempt to understand not just Ledwidge, but himself. Like Heaney, Ledwidge was a 'literary, sweet-talking, countrified' young man.

Heaney suggests that Ledwidge's loyalty to the Irish nation, notwithstanding what some might see as his contradictory decision to volunteer in the British Army, render him something of a 'dead enigma'. Heaney wrote:

*I think of you in your Tommy's uniform,
A haunted Catholic face, pallid and brave,
Ghosting the trenches with a bloom of hawthorn
Or silence cored from a Boyne passage-grave.*

The lecture was followed by a panel discussion, moderated by Dr John Bowman, with Professor John Horne of Trinity College Dublin and Mr Don Mullan, founder of the Christmas Truce and Flanders Peace Field Project.

Commemorating the funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa

June 2015 marks the centenary of the death of the prominent Fenian, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa. During the funeral, which took place on 1 August 1915 in Glasnevin Cemetery, Pádraig Pearse gave the funeral oration, which contained the famous lines:

The Fools, the Fools, the Fools! – they have left us our Fenian dead – And while Ireland holds these graves, Ireland unfree shall never be at peace.

Until October 2015, members of the public can see Pearse's oration at the grave of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa re-enacted daily by an actor dressed in full Irish Volunteer uniform.

As part of its Decade of Centenaries commemorations, Glasnevin Cemetery is putting together an exhibition dedicated to O'Donovan Rossa and the influence his funeral had on Ireland a year later in 1916. Glasnevin Cemetery has issued a call for help from the public to identify members of the funeral cortege present on the day of the funeral (seen in the photograph on next page). There has been an enormous response from the public to date but if you have any further information please contact the Glasnevin Trust or visit its website here: www.glasnevintrust.ie.



Can you identify any of the attendees photographed above at the funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa? Photo: Glasnevin Trust.

In New York, where O'Donovan Rossa lived for much of his life, a number of commemorative and community events will take place to mark the centenary of his death. These include a GAA tournament at Gaelic Park in the Bronx, a Catholic mass and other commemorative events hosted by the Cork Association in New York, and a wreath-laying ceremony at the O'Donovan Rossa memorial at St. Peter's Church in Staten Island. Glucksman Ireland House at New York University and the American Irish Historical Society will also collaborate on an exhibition and a lecture to coincide with the anniversary of the Pearse oration in August.

Free Website Resources – Trinity College Dublin History Course and Century Ireland

On 16 March 2015, Trinity College Dublin relaunched its highly successful 'massive open online course' (MOOC), 'Irish Lives in War and Revolution: Exploring Ireland's History 1912-1923'. This free programme is accessible across the world, and will enable participants to explore the lives of men, women and children who lived through war, revolution and the social changes that made modern Ireland. Active learning will be encouraged through videos, assignments and discussions. More information on this course, which is designed and moderated by Trinity historians, is available here: www.futurelearn.com/courses/irish-history.

Century Ireland is an online historical newspaper published on a fortnightly basis during the Irish Decade of Centenaries. News reporting on life in Ireland 100 years ago is supported by a wealth of visual, archival and contextual material to facilitate an understanding of the complexities of Irish life in the years between 1912 and 1923.

Century Ireland is produced by a team of researchers at Boston College Ireland and the project is funded by the Department of the Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht. It is hosted by RTÉ, Ireland's national television and radio broadcaster, and the site is complemented by RTÉ's broadcast schedule and material from its archives. Its website can be accessed here: www.rte.ie/centuryireland.

Further online information on the 1916 and centenary commemorations can be found on these websites: www.ireland.ie and www.decadeofcentenaries.com.

Remembrance Sunday 2014

Services marking Remembrance Sunday in 2014 held a special significance, as they marked the centenary of the beginning of the First World War. Minister Flanagan attended the Remembrance Sunday ceremony at the Cenotaph in Belfast on 9 November 2014, where he laid a laurel wreath. The Minister was joined by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Theresa Villiers MP, and the First Minister of Northern Ireland, Peter Robinson MLA, as well as Lord Mayor of Belfast, Nichola Mallon. Minister Flanagan reflected on the event:

I was pleased to accept the invitation to participate in [the] ceremony at the Belfast Cenotaph and to lay a wreath, on behalf of the Irish Government, to remember all those who died. I believe attendance at such commemorations shows respect for all traditions and helps further reconciliation on the island of Ireland and across these islands.

Elsewhere for the third year, the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD, participated in a Remembrance Sunday ceremony in Enniskillen, the scene of a devastating IRA bombing of 1987. The Tánaiste, Joan Burton TD, attended the Remembrance Sunday service in St Patrick's Cathedral, Dublin. Ireland's Ambassador in London, Dan Mulhall, laid a wreath at the official ceremony there. This was the first time that Ireland was represented at the London ceremony since 1946.

President Higgins attends ceremonies marking the beginning of the First World War in Belgium

On 4 August President Higgins attended the official ceremony held in Liège, Belgium, to mark the beginning of the First World War. Liège was the first city to be attacked by German forces in August 1914. Over seventy countries were invited to attend, sixteen of which were represented by Heads of State. The President and his wife Sabina were welcomed by the King and Queen of Belgium, before participating in a commemorative ceremony at the Monument Interalliés at Cointe.

Later that evening the President and Mrs Higgins joined dignitaries from Canada, Belgium and Germany at a commemorative service hosted by the United Kingdom at St. Symphorien Military Cemetery in Mons. Lieutenant Maurice Dease from Co. Westmeath, who was the first person to be posthumously awarded the Victoria Cross during the First World War, is among the many Irish buried in St Symphorien.

Irish Anzacs Database

Last October, Minister for Foreign Affairs and Trade Charles Flanagan TD, together with the Australian Ambassador to Ireland Dr. Ruth Adler, launched the Irish Anzacs Database in University College Dublin (UCD).

The Irish Anzacs Project aims to identify all of the estimated 6,000 Irish-born enlistments in the Australian Imperial Force during the First World War and to compile an open-access database containing information on each of them. The launch was then followed by a day-long symposium on 'Australia and Ireland in the First World War'.

Speaking before the launch, Minister Flanagan remarked that:

this pioneering work... is a true tribute to the Irish Anzacs and a gift to researchers, family members of Anzac participants, and all us who possess an abiding interest in our history... This year is the centenary of the outbreak of the First World War, which claimed more Irish lives than any other conflict. Irish and Australians stood shoulder to shoulder in Gallipoli and at the Somme, and I am delighted that today we continue to work together in more peaceful times.

The Irish Anzacs Database will be officially launched in Australia at the 14th Australasian Congress on Genealogy and Heraldry in Canberra on 28 March 2015, ahead of the centenary commemorations of the Gallipoli Campaign, in which many Irish-born Anzacs perished.

The Irish Anzacs Project is a research undertaking of the Global Irish Studies Centre at University of New South Wales (UNSW), made possible by a grant from the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Emigrant Support Programme. Further information on the project is available here: <https://hal.arts.unsw.edu.au/about-us/community-engagement/irish-studies/irish-anzacs-database/>



Minister Flanagan and Minister Deenihan at the launch of Ireland's Diaspora Policy

Launch of Ireland's Diaspora Policy

Global Irish, Ireland's Diaspora Policy was launched on 3 March 2015 by the Taoiseach, Enda Kenny TD together with the Tánaiste Joan Burton TD, Minister Flanagan, and the Minister for Diaspora Affairs, Jimmy Deenihan TD. This important policy document recognises that Ireland has a unique and important relationship with its diaspora. It defines the Government's role to both drive and foster diaspora engagement in a way that:

- » **Supports** those who have left Ireland and need or want support;
- » **Connects** in an inclusive way with those, of all ages, around the world who are Irish, of Irish descent or have a tangible connection to Ireland, and wish to maintain a connection with Ireland and with each other;
- » **Facilitates** a wide range of activity at local, national and international level designed to build on and develop two-way diaspora engagement;
- » **Recognises** the wide variety of people who make up our diaspora and the important ongoing contribution that they have made, both individually and collectively, in shaping our development and our identity;
- » **Evolves** to meet changing needs in changing times.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Deenihan observed:

Any history of the Irish people is only half told without mentioning the waves of emigrants who left our shores over many generations. I hope that this Policy reminds our emigrants abroad of the importance the Irish Government attaches to ensuring that the connections that tie them to Ireland are nurtured, strengthened and intensified.

A fourth Global Irish Economic Forum will be held in Dublin in November 2015. New initiatives contained in the policy include a Global Irish Civic Forum which will meet in June 2015, a Global Irish Media Fund to encourage and support media coverage of the diaspora and emigration experiences, and an alumni challenge fund to provide seed-funding to new collaborative initiatives by Irish institutions to target their Irish and non-Irish graduates working internationally.

Minister Deenihan will establish an interdepartmental committee to oversee the implementation of the policy. They will produce a progress report in two years.

Further information is available on www.dfa.ie/global-irish and by following @globalirish on Twitter.

Updates on forthcoming commemorative initiatives will be posted on the website of your local Embassy or Consulate, and on the website of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade.

Useful links:

Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade: www.dfa.ie

Official Website for Ireland 2016: www.ireland.ie/

Decade of Centenaries: www.decadeofcentenaries.com

Century Ireland: www.rte.ie/centuryireland/