

Comóradh

ISSUE 1 SEPT 2012

A Newsletter for the Irish Abroad
in the Decade of Commemorations



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



“Over the coming years, this Government will be working at home and abroad to commemorate these events and to honour those who were part of them.”

Dear friend,

2012 is the first year in a decade of very important anniversaries. The years from 1912 – 1922 saw a series of momentous events in Ireland, and beyond, which changed the course of Irish history and led to the foundation of the state. Over the coming years, this Government will be working at home and abroad to commemorate these events and to honour those who were part of them.

1912 saw the introduction in Westminster of the Third Home Rule Bill, which set the stage for the conflict of the following years. It also saw the mass mobilisation against Home Rule in Ulster, led by Edward Carson, culminating in the signing of the Ulster Covenant. And, of course, it was also the year of the most famous maritime disaster in history, the sinking of the Titanic, built in the Belfast shipyards.

In marking these centenaries, I invited Northern Ireland First Minister Peter Robinson to Dublin earlier this year, where he delivered the Edward Carson Lecture, reflecting on the future direction of Irish Unionism. In September, my Department supported exhibitions in the Donegal, Cavan and Monaghan County Museums, looking at the backgrounds of those ordinary men and women from the border counties who signed the Covenant and associated Declaration. President Higgins attended a solemn service in Cobh, Co. Cork, in April, marking the final stop on the journey of the Titanic before it sank in the North Atlantic.

But these are not the only events remembered this year. In August,

Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Jimmy Deenihan launched a new permanent exhibition in the National Museum including a fully restored Asgard, the yacht piloted by Erskine Childers in the Howth gun-running of 1914.

There will be other anniversaries too. Next year, the 50th anniversary of the visit to Ireland by President John F. Kennedy will be an opportunity to celebrate more recent links between Ireland and America.

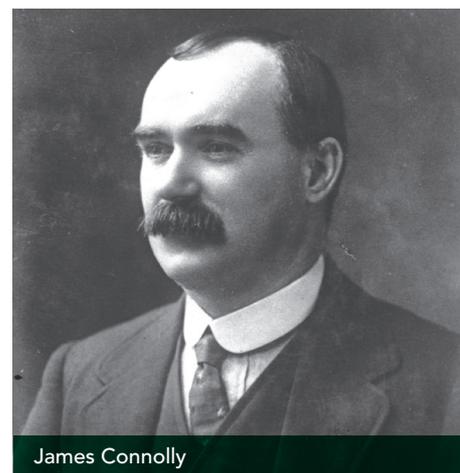
Over the coming decade, Irish people at home and abroad will remember our shared history. We will look back on the events which shaped us, from the 1913 Lockout to the First World War, and to the 1916 Rising and beyond. We will remember those times not just in exhibitions, books and lectures but also through art, music and storytelling.

It is important that commemoration of the past is something which engages the global Irish family, around the world. This is the first in a series of regular newsletters intended to highlight some of the events taking place in the course of the decade. Embassies and Consulates will also provide additional information on any local events.

I hope that you will be able to be part of this exciting journey over the coming years.

Eamon Gilmore T.D.
Tánaiste and Minister for
Foreign Affairs and Trade

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Tánaiste launches commemorative initiative for 2013 in New York

In September 2012, the Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore launched a new initiative in New York with the leaders of the labour movement to commemorate the close ties between the U.S. and Irish labour movements as we approach the centenary of formative events for both.

A series of special events in the US to be held in 2013 will be directed by the new Connolly Commemorations Committee, chaired by John Sweeney, former President of the AFL-CIO.

Minister Deenihan launches Bureau of Military History Website

In August, the Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht launched the Bureau of Military History website at Cathal Brugha Barracks in Dublin.

This project, which was undertaken by the Defence Forces Military Archives in collaboration with the National Archives (Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht), involves the digitisation of over 35,000 pages, 42 sets of photographs and 13 voice recordings from primary sources covering the revolutionary period in Ireland from 1913 to 1921. The Bureau collection is among the most important primary sources of information on the revolutionary period, and was made available to the public in 2003.

The new website allows users to search by name or other criteria against all witness statements and other items.

It also includes audio recordings of key figures from the period, including Maud Gonne McBride, labour leader William O'Brien and Áine Ceannt, widow of 1916 leader Eamon Ceannt.

Speaking at the launch, Minister Deenihan said: "Our Archives are essential in the preservation of primary sources for study by future generations. This launch is the culmination of years of work by the Military and National Archives. The records held within this collection cover almost the entire duration of the Decade of Commemorations, providing primary source material for the revolutionary period in Ireland from 1913 to 1921.

"The Bureau of Military History website will make a significant contribution to the goals of the Decade of Commemorations by encouraging scholarly and original research on the momentous events of this period in our history both nationally and internationally. In funding and developing this project, the State is paying tribute to the sacrifices of the past and celebrating the achievements of a revolutionary decade.

"The Military Bureau's official brief was 'to assemble and co-ordinate material to form the basis for the compilation of the history of the movement for Independence from the formation of the Irish Volunteers on 25th November 1913, to the 11th July 1921'. Anyone who sees these collections online will have to agree that they accomplished this goal with distinction".

The archive is available at www.bureauofmilitaryhistory.ie.

Minister of State McGinley opens exhibition on the Ulster Covenant in Donegal

On 15 September, Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Dinny McGinley T.D. opened an exhibition on the signatories of the Ulster Covenant in Donegal, at the Donegal County Museum in Letterkenny.

The exhibition is part of a wider initiative in Donegal, Cavan, and Monaghan to commemorate the centenary of the Ulster Covenant, which was signed on 28th September 1912. Public lectures and exhibitions have been organised in all three counties, to explore the history and legacy of the 35,000 people in those counties who signed the Ulster Covenant – 17,000 in Donegal alone.

Support provided for the exhibition by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade's Reconciliation Fund forms part of the Government's commemorative programme for 2012.

Speaking before the event, Minister McGinley said:

"The events of the decade 1912 – 1922 changed the course of history in Ireland. The signing of the Ulster Covenant 100 years ago was a defining moment in that period and its consequences have impacted on every person on this island in the decades that followed. It is important that we remember the ordinary men and women in every corner of Ulster who signed the Covenant in their hundreds of thousands, to better understand their hopes and aspirations for the society in which they lived. It is only right that we reflect on its causes and legacy.

The Reconciliation Fund is supporting commemorative activities and also wider community initiatives to ensure that voices from the past are heard, but also to contribute to increased understanding of how to move forward together in a spirit of mutual respect and understanding."



Deputy Chief of Staff Major General Ralph James, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Jimmy Deenihan TD, Ms. Catriona Crowe, National Archives and Cmdt Padraic Kennedy with "Slabh na mBan, the recently restored armoured car associated with Michael Collins and the Beál na mBláth

Asgard exhibition launched in National Museum

On 8 August, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Jimmy Deenihan launched a new permanent exhibition at the National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks entitled "Asgard: The 1914 Howth Gun Running Vessel Conserved".

The yacht Asgard, an iconic item of Irish heritage and history, was formerly owned by the Irish nationalist and writer Erskine Childers and his wife Molly. Asgard was built in 1905 by one of Norway's most famous boat designers to the specifications of the newly married couple.

Asgard's most famous voyage in 1914 was part of a gun-running expedition. Childers, his wife and a small crew made the channel crossing into Howth harbour just north of Dublin, laden with a hold full of rifles from Germany to arm the Irish Volunteers. This gun-running expedition had been undertaken in response to the arming of the Ulster Volunteers by the Larne gun-running in April of that year.

The exhibition is the culmination of a five year project of restoration and conservation carried out by a small team of dedicated shipwrights at a studio in the Museum.

Commenting at the launch, Minister Deenihan said:

"Asgard links us directly to the tumultuous times, a hundred years ago, when the futures of Ireland, the United Kingdom and Europe were about to change.



Launch of the Asgard exhibition, National Museum of Ireland, Collins Barracks

The launch of this exhibition presents an opportunity to reflect on the complexities of the time and to remember Erskine Childers in the range of identities and roles - as a writer and sailor, as a soldier of the Empire who became an Irish Nationalist, and as a Republican that could not be reconciled to the outcome of the struggle, even as a member of the Treaty delegation.

"I hope that through scholarship and research in the coming years we will enhance our knowledge of the revolutionary age. I would like to acknowledge all that has been done to prepare this special exhibition and to thank all those involved. I will encourage everyone to come to see Asgard and the associated exhibition that tells her story and acknowledges the achievement of Erskine and Molly Childers and the other crew members of May, 1914."

Northern Ireland First Minister Peter Robinson delivers The Edward Carson Lecture in Dublin

On 29 March, Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore welcomed Northern Ireland First Minister Peter Robinson to Dublin to deliver The Edward Carson Lecture, subtitled 'Reflections on Irish Unionism'. The lecture was the first in a series of events supported by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade to mark the centenary of the Home Rule Crisis in 1912.

The lecture took place in the ballroom of Iveagh House, headquarters of the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. Iveagh House is located just a few hundred feet from the birthplace of Unionist leader, Edward Carson, on 4 Harcourt Street.

It was delivered to an invited audience of writers and academics, and prominent political figures including Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness, Northern Ireland Executive Ministers Carál Ní Chuillín and Arlene Foster, Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, Alan Shatter, Secretary of State Owen Paterson, SDLP leader Alasdair McDonnell and Sinn Féin leader Gerry Adams.



Tánaiste Eamon Gilmore TD, First Minister Peter Robinson MLA and Deputy First Minister Martin McGuinness at Iveagh House in advance of the Edward Carson Lecture

The lecture was preceded by a panel discussion on the legacy of Edward Carson, between Professor Michael Laffan (University College Dublin) and Professor Paul Bew (Queen's University Belfast) moderated by Dr. John Bowman.

In his introductory remarks, the Tánaiste noted the potential held in commemorations for building a future society, stating:

"I invited Peter to speak in the conviction that this decade of commemorations is as much about looking forward as about looking back.

Like the decade we are remembering, this decade is an opportunity to re imagine the Ireland that we want to leave to our children and grandchildren. How will they remember us when anniversaries are recalled?"

The First Minister, in his address, reflected on the apparent paradoxes in the figure of Carson who, he said, "would not be what in today's terms could be considered a stereotypical unionist. Though he became the leader of Ulster Unionism his origins are, of course, in Dublin. He defined himself as a "liberal" unionist. He had a thick Dublin brogue. He had leading nationalists among his close friends. Though leading the cause of Ulster he was proud to call himself Irish". >>

(Edward Carson lecture contd.)

In concluding, the First Minister argued that figure of Edward Carson could be adopted as a model for unionism in the future.

“Edward Carson may now be consigned to the pages of history, but he still speaks to us today. If this generation of unionists is listening then let us work to broaden support for his vision for Northern Ireland’s future.

That vision of unionism, threatening to no one, open to all, living peacefully and in co-operation with our neighbours, will truly honour the bravery, the ideals, the sacrifice, the memory and the legacy of those who were counted when the challenge came all those years ago.”

Note from Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan T.D.



With the centenary in April 2012 of the introduction of the Third Home Rule Bill to parliament at Westminster, we have now embarked upon a decade of anniversaries relating to the most turbulent, tumultuous, and formative era of our modern history – the decade from 1912 to 1922.

Recognising the significance of this Decade of Centenary anniversaries, the Government decided that a special commemorations programme would be appropriate. I am very pleased to have been assigned the responsibility, on behalf of the Government, for the development of the comprehensive and inclusive programme to be brought forward in the coming years.

In the coming years we will follow the timeline of history to explore our journey from the Home Rule campaign, through the Dublin Lockouts, the First World War and the Easter Rising, and on to the years of seismic change that followed the war.

Commemorating these events will also give us the opportunity to reflect on the development of the organised labour

movement in Ireland and the campaigns for a more fair and equal society.

The growth in national consciousness which occurred from 1912 and the moves towards autonomy will be examined through both the political events of the period and the development of our artistic, cultural and sporting traditions. The first phase of our commemorative programme will culminate in 2016 with the proclamation of the Irish Republic.

These anniversaries provide a remarkable opportunity for us all, at home and abroad, to acknowledge the achievements of a heroic generation. In this process, we will have the opportunity to examine historical records and deepen our understanding of this time of change and challenge. Our commemorative programme will contribute towards a deeper appreciation of the aims and aspirations of all traditions.

I have been greatly impressed by the goodwill and commitment of all towards the respectful and inclusive commemoration of a shared heritage. Opening the narrative of those times, I acknowledged the achievement of John Redmond and the Irish parliamentary Party with Memorial lectures in Waterford and subsequently a major exhibition of contemporary portraits in Dublin City Gallery the Hugh Lane, a travelling library exhibit shown at several venues and a series of talks and lectures on the Home Rule debate. For all these events and the others described in this newsletter, we have been working in close partnership in Britain and Ireland at Government level and with diverse institutions and community groups.

I hope that the commemorations brought forward by Government will be complemented by the initiatives of local authorities, universities, cultural institutions, ex service organisations, history and community groups, and the national cultural and sporting organisations. I hope that everyone will participate in this commemorative programme and explore a remarkable decade that shaped our modern society.

Through this newsletter, I extend an invitation to all to contact me with their views, advice and suggestions for the development of the programme.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jimmy Deenihan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jimmy Deenihan T.D.
Minister for Arts, Heritage
and the Gaeltacht
Chairman of the All-Party Working Group
on Commemorations

Easter Rising Commemorations in Dublin

A ceremony to mark the 96th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising took place outside the GPO, O’Connell Street, Dublin, on Easter Sunday, 8 April 2012.

The event, led by President Michael D. Higgins, was attended by approximately 3,000 people, including relatives of the 1916 leaders, the Taoiseach Enda Kenny, Minister for Justice and Defence, Alan Shatter, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Jimmy Deenihan, Ministers of State Joe Costello and Paul Kehoe and Lord Mayor of Dublin Andrew Montague.

Members of the Defence Forces, including the Air Corps and Naval Service participated in the ceremony, where the 1916 Proclamation was read aloud by Captain Shane Keogh. The President then laid a wreath to commemorate those who died during the Rising. This was followed by a fly-past by Air Corps aircraft.

Earlier that morning, Minister Deenihan laid wreaths in Glasnevin Cemetery at the graves of Edward Hollywood, a member of the delegation which brought the first Tricolour from France to Ireland in 1843, and Peadar Kearney, who wrote the words of the National Anthem Amhrán na bhFiann.

Updates on forthcoming commemorative initiatives and future issues of this newsletter 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

Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht
www.ahg.gov.ie

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