Archives & Records Association Ireland

Newsletter Spring 2018

A Word from the Chair

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Dear Member,

Welcome to the Spring 2018 newsletter.

Firstly, thank you to all the members who attended (and help organise!) this years "Explore Your Archives" campaign which was launched on the 16th of November 2017 in Iveagh House by broadcaster and author John Bowman. The campaign received lots of national media coverage and was covered on the RTE Radio 1 'History Show' with the whole episode devoted to archives. You can listen back here. A special thank you to our Outreach Officer, Felix Meehan, who coordinated this years campaign.

We have three upcoming training events in both Belfast and Dublin. The first entitled, 'Understanding Risk Registers and their Value for Internal Advocacy' will take place on the 13th of March 2018 in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) in Belfast.

The second event entitled "Digitising and Reimagining Your Film and Sound Archives" will take place on Tuesday the 20th of March at PRONI in Belfast. This training event is being organised by the ARA Film, Sound and Photography Section (FSPS)

Finally we will run a training event entitled "Excel for Archivists" with Gillian Sheldrick, to be held at the Catherine McAuley Centre on 23 Herbert Street (off Baggot Street) in Dublin on Tuesday 27th March 2018 from 2pm.

This event will be followed by the Ireland region AGM at 5pm. There are five officerships up for election, namely:

- Chairperson
- Hon. Treasurer
- Campaigns Officer
- Training Officer (NB this is a joint role)
- Recording Secretary

I would encourage all members to consider running and advise you to talk to the relevant outgoing committee member if you would like to know more.

Lastly, I would like to express my thanks to all the committee members I have worked with over the last six years for their work, dedication and support.

Kind regards,

Ross Higgins,

Chair, ARA, I

ARA Archive Volunteering Award for 2018

Do you want peer recognition for excellence? Do you need evidence to show your effective engagement with volunteers? If so, why not nominate your archive service for the ARA Archive Volunteering Award?

Winners will have a national platform to celebrate their volunteers' contribution to the service and gain publicity for their archive's role in supporting individuals and community through volunteering programmes.

2017 Award Winner was **'Speak Out London, Diversity City'**, a community led LGBTQ+ Oral History project based at London Metropolitan Archives (LMA) which has established a permanent community sourced LGBTQ Oral History and memorabilia archive that can be accessed by the public via a website as well as via the LMA onsite facilities.

The judging panel called it exceptional in empowering partnership with the LGBTQ+ community, resulting in benefits for volunteers, staff skills and collections at LMA, and reaching a wide audience though an onsite exhibition and with a demonstrable sense of community recognition and value for participants

The Archives and Records Association seeks to celebrate the role of volunteers in supporting archive services, and to collect good practice case studies to inform the wider sector. This award is a key strand of the work of ARA's Volunteering in Archives, Action Plan, bringing to life the recommendations the ARA report *Managing Volunteering in Archives*. The award is also supported by The National Archives, the Welsh Government's Museums Archives and Libraries Division, and the Scottish Council on Archives.

This award is open to archives across the United Kingdom and Ireland. Awards will be publicised widely throughout and beyond the sector.

We welcome nominations for the award. A short nomination form is available from the ARA website

http://www.archives.org.uk/careers/volunteering/volunteering-awards.html

and organisations may nominate projects, or ongoing volunteer programmes, that ran during 2017/2018.

Nominations will be assessed against three key outcomes:

A) Impact on volunteers

B) Impact on service

C) Wider impact

Completed nomination forms need to be returned to volunteeringaward@archives.org.uk by the end of National Volunteers Week – **9 June 2018**

If you have any queries about the award please contact Sally Bevan, Volunteering Awards Administrator, (020 7332 3820) or via volunteeringaward@archives.org.uk

Sally Bevan,
Volunteering Awards Administrator

War, needlework & flowers: Letters to Granny during World War One

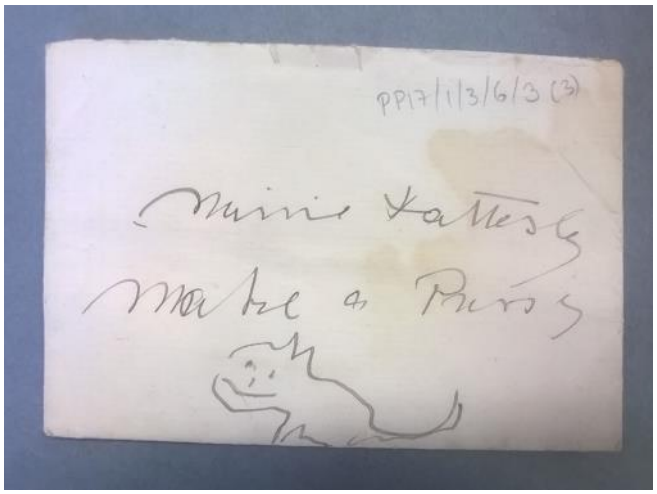


Image 1: Envelope accompanying letter by Honor Edmonds, c. 1918, '[?Minnie Attesly] make a Pussy' (PP17/1/3/6/3)

Five sisters, Jens, Mildred, Molly, Harriett and Honor Edmonds wrote letters to their grandmother, Harriett Perry, during World War One. They were in Bedford, England, while their grandmother lived in King's County [Offaly]. It is lovely to have an insight into the children's daily lives and to see certain things mentioned in one child's letter correlating with its mention in another child's letter. Christmas and birthdays and the presents they received are important events and three of the girls also mention the visit of a German and other war-related things. Needlework is also something mentioned more than once. What follows is a short journey through the letters covering these topics.

Birthdays and Christmas

Jens Edmonds thanks her grandmother on 9 June 1914 for her birthday present which was a watch chain. She also lists the other presents she got, such as a watch and five shillings from 'Aunt Flowers', as well as 'the dearest little brooch' from Aunt Flowers's mother Mrs Duncan. Aunt Mildred gave her 'such a nice hymn book' and a racket, Mildred gave her a pin cushion and Dickie gave her a little box.

She also says she got 'heaps of letters' and Debora came over to play games.

Another undated letter around Christmas in an unspecified year has a sketch of a watch Jens bought partly from her grandmother's monetary gift [Image 2]. In another letter Jens is conspiratorial, asking her grandmother not to tell anybody of her plan to give her father a Christmas present of an India rubber which she will make into a big parcel so as to pretend she is giving him a large present.

On 28 December 1915 Mildred writes she got a prayer book and a book called Little King Richard from her granny's Christmas money. She has a little sketch of a plant in the corner [Image 3]. An undated letter from Honor thanks her granny for the money and she says what presents she got from other people, such as an album from her father, a rubber and a pen from Mildred and a 'lovely icing cake from Jens'. This letter is accompanied by an envelope with the drawing of a cat and a caption in another person's handwriting [Image 1].

On 5 October 1914 Molly writes what everybody gave her for her birthday. Aunt Flo gave her a birthday cake, Mother gave her a teddy and Dad[d]y gave her a trowel and a fork, Mildred gave her a knife and Jens a pram. The following year, on 18 June 1915, Molly says she got money from her granny Harriett, from Aunt Mildred and from Uncle Ernest which makes her fell rich as it totals a pound. She also got two books, a purse, a pencil, a big piece of rubber, a bead loom and a 'box of chocklets'.

On 28 December 1915, Molly says she got 'such a lot of present[s]' at Christmas. Jens gave her a 'dear little handkerchief' which she made herself and Mildred gave her a pen. She also says that Jens takes Mildred, Molly and Honor out for a long walk every day.

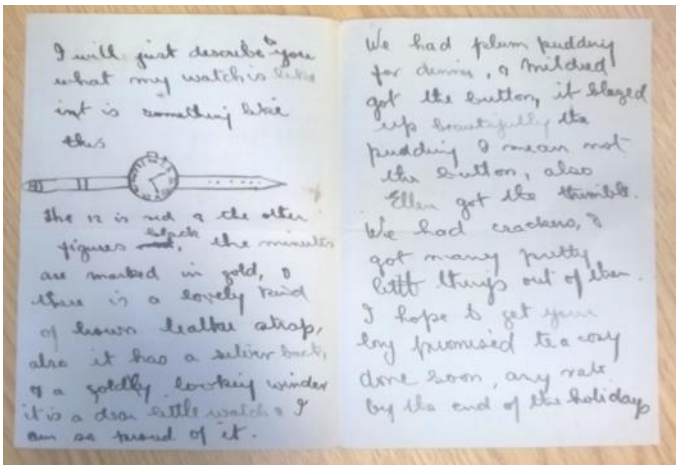


Image 2: Letter by Jens Edmonds, with sketch of watch newly bought around Christmas, Undated (PP17/1/3/2/9)

World War One

In December 1914, Jens Edmonds writes a letter enclosing a newspaper clipping, 'Sale of work and tea by the children of W.A. Edmonds', which details money raised for the Belgian Relief Fund to the amount of £7 14s 8d. In the same letter Jens says they have actually made over £8 since then. She also tells her grandmother that her mother would rather a calendar for 6d, rather than the one for 1s 6d which she, Harriett Perry, usually sends. This shows the need to cut back spending everywhere during the war period.

On 28 February 1916 Jens thanks her grandmother for 'the lovely fat egg'. She also tells of how she and her sisters made a snow sled with a piece of wood and wire. She has drawn a sketch of the activity [Image 3]. Her father also sends thanks for the fat hen's egg he got. During the war, having an egg would have been considered a luxury for many people due to shortages and rationing. On 5 November 1917, Molly says Miss Drought gave her and Mildred 'a large bag of filter nut' which Miss Drought's had sent her, again showing the importance of giving and receiving during the war period. Gas masks used by soldiers had charcoal in a compartment within them. This charcoal was extracted from peach pits, walnuts and other organic matter, so it appears that this is probably what the 'filter nut' relates to.

In World War One and World War Two, there was a practice of digging a war garden which was also sometimes called a victory garden. This was an effort to grow extra crops by civilians when food was scarce. On 18 June 1915 Molly writes of those in her household, 'one of the soldiers in our house is a sargent [sic]' who helps to dig their gardens. Two years later, on 17 March 1917 Molly says her father is 'very busy digging the garden and he is going to make it into a war garden', so it is not clear whether the earlier gardens were in the same spot as the one her father was later transforming in to a war garden.

Another interesting subject is that of a German prisoner whom they all refer to as being their mother's. In an undated letter, Jens says that 'yesterday, mother's German prisoner arrived' and that he was a very nice man. Judging from the dates of the letters of her sisters in which they also mention this prisoner's visit, he must have come in early January 1919 and she must have written the letter around the same time. On 5 January 1919 Mildred writes that they went to the pantomime and mother's German prisoner visited. On 6 January 1919 Molly says that 'Mummy's adopted prisioner [sic] came from Cambridge to see us' and that he was a very nice man. They went to 'Cinderella' and he came as well. Molly says it was pretty, but it was 'very long and rather dragged'.

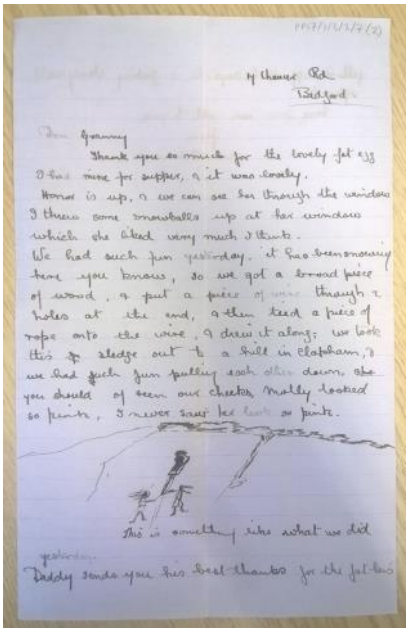


Image 3: Snow sledding in Jens' letter, 28 February 1916 (PP17/1/3/2/7)

Needlework

Unsurprisingly for the early twentieth century, the girls had numerous projects which involved needlework. In December 1914, Jens writes a letter in which she says she is planning to work on the 'cosy cover' she has promised her grandmother and she tells her what she used the money to buy which her grandmother gave her, probably for Christmas. In another, undated, letter by Jens she says she hopes to finish the 'long promised tea cosy' soon. This is quite possibly the same item, which took some time to be made and had been promised for a while. On 5 November 1917 Mildred says at last she is sending the tea cosy. She says they received a letter from Jens on Thursday saying she is homesick. From this letter, it would seem that Harriett Perry received two tea cosies from two granddaughters in three years.

On 5 November 1917, on the same day that Mildred sent her grandmother a tea cosy, Molly writes that she is sending her granny a hot water cosey [sic], which presumably means it was for a hot water bottle.

On 19 December 1915 Mildred sent a letter in which she says she is sending a pair of mittens, one of which was knitted by her and one by Jens. She herself has made Jens a bag of lavender from the silk her grandmother gave her. In a letter from about 1915, Jens herself writes that she has finished a blouse she is making in dressmaking class, except for the buttons and button holes.

Illness

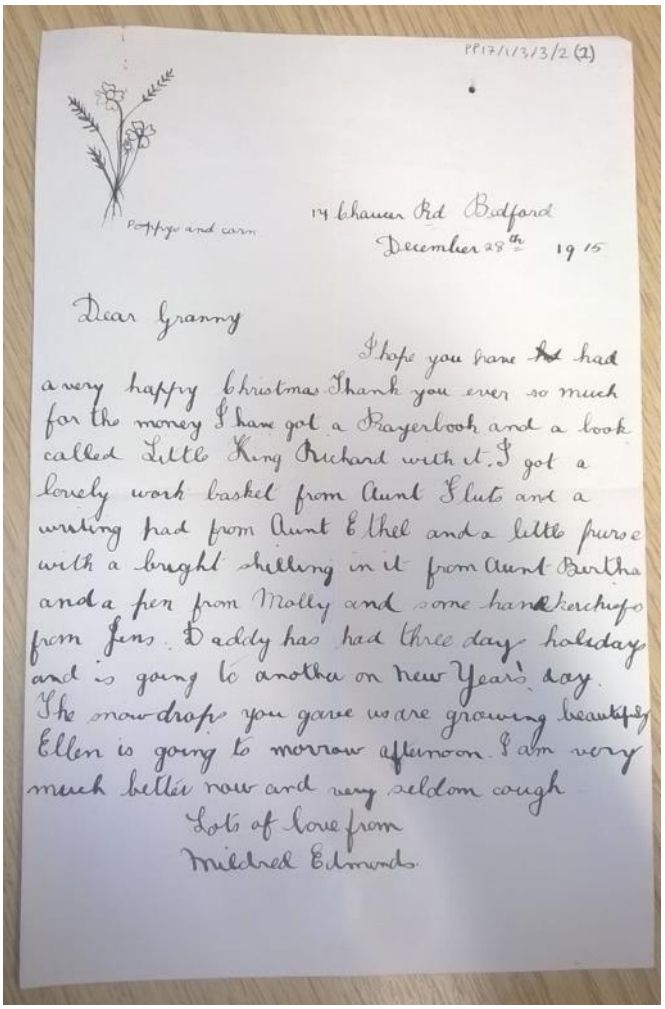
From the letters the girls write, it is also possible to trace when their grandmother was unwell. A letter written about 1915 mentions that Jens is 'very distressed to hear you have been a naughty old lady, and have been in bed with a cold'. There is an addition at the top of the page saying 'I hope you are quite well now - & not playing poor Aunt Mildred any tricks'. She is writing from Haywards Heath, rather than her usual Bedford, and says how happy she is to be going home when she can 'see my dear old mummy'.

On 5 January 1919 Mildred is sorry to hear her granny has a bad back. She thinks her father may have got to Cape Town by now. A day later, on 6 January 1919, Molly mentions her granny is unwell and asks her not to write until she is well again. A letter from Jens in January 1919 mentions that her grandmother is unwell with rheumatism. In putting the three letters together, it is possible to piece together that their grandmother was unwell because of rheumatism in her back.

Flowers

In December 1915 Molly says the 'little pansy' her granny gave her is growing. She also thanks her for the chrysanthemums whose smell reminds her of her (Granny Harriett's) garden. Honor has a new nurse, Miss Macaulay. On 28 December 1915, Mildred writes that 'the snowdrop[s] you gave us are growing beautifully' [Image 4].

Harriett sent two letters and Honor sent four. It can be seen from the writing and the scarcity and brevity of the letters that these girls were much younger than their sisters at the time. Each has one letter which was written by somebody else, possibly one of the older sisters, on her behalf. In Harriett's of 11 February 1918, it says that she put a snowdrop in Mother's garden and Mother thought it was one of their own. This seems to suggest that Harriett, the grandmother, may have sent the snowdrop. Honor, writing on 25 March 1918, says that she now has one violet bud in her garden. Together with Harriett's letter of the previous month concerning the snowdrop, this gives the impression that the two younger girls, at least, were being taught something about cultivating plants by their grandmother, Harriett Perry.


PP17/1/3/3/2 (2)

Poppy and corn

14 Chaucer Rd Bedford
December 28th 1915

Dear Granny

I hope you have had a very happy Christmas Thank you ever so much for the money I have got a Prayerbook and a book called Little King Richard with it. I got a lovely work basket from Aunt Lulu and a writing pad from Aunt Ethel and a little purse with a bright shilling in it from Aunt Bertha and a pen from Molly and some handkerchiefs from Jens. Daddy has had three days holiday and is going to anotha on New Years day. The snow drops you gave us are growing beautifully Ellen is going to morrow afternoon I am very much better now and very seldom cough

Lots of love from
Mildred Edmonds

Image 4: Letter from Mildred Edmonds, 28 December 1915 (PP17/1/3/3/2)

Personal

I will conclude with a small section that will hopefully reflect a few other personal insights into the lives of the children. Molly frequently writes about school. In about 1915 Molly sent a letter in which she left a blank space for a word which she never put in. She writes, 'I am sending you a _____ of my class' [Image 5]. The gap was probably meant to be filled with the word 'photograph' but she may have wanted to check the spelling but not got around to it. This makes the letter more immediate because it feels like she still needs to put it in. In a letter from Molly, also around 1915, she tells her grandmother that 'Jens has gone to stay with Amy Grant'. Again in about 1915, Molly tells her grandmother that she is getting on well with tennis, has been made monitress of her form and that she will soon be able to play a piece on the violin. She also asks, on behalf of her mother, for 'six little penny dolls' for Honor's dolls' house as they cannot get them and hope Harriett Perry may be able to get them in Birr. On 20 January 1917 Molly says she was fourth out of twenty-one children in the class.

In one of her letters, Molly says she now has a good amount of money in her savings bank and wonders whether her granny likes getting letters from her, because she likes getting them from her granny. She signs that letter with her full name, 'Mary Frances Molly Edmond'. On 18 June 1915, Molly says they miss Uncle Ernest and his motor car, which shows that he had a modern form of transport. On 20 February 1918, Harriett Perry received a letter to say that Jens and Mildred had recently gone to a supper party. This shows that the girls had started to grow up since they first started writing in 1914.

It is always interesting to read a child's letter if it indicates how they may have spoken a particular word. For example, Honor in one letter in April 1918, writes 'thank you very much for the hof a crun' [half a crown]. Under the heading of 'Birthdays and Christmas' above, it is interesting to see Molly's phonetic spelling of chocolates as 'chocklets', a not unreasonable way of spelling that word, judging by how it is normally pronounced!

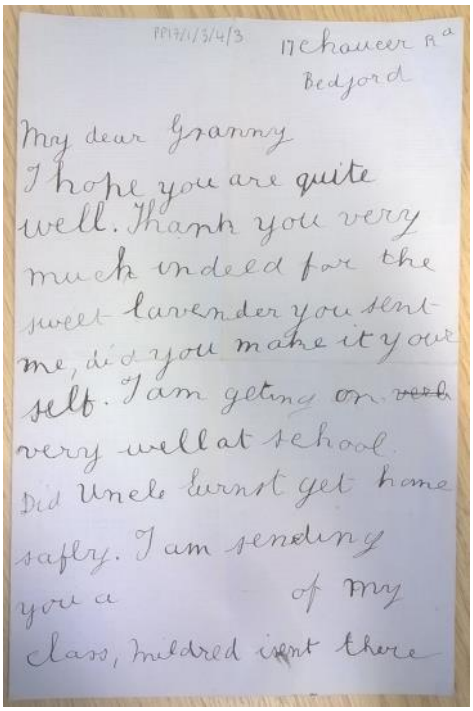


Image 5: Letter from Molly Edmonds, 'I am sending you a ___ of my class', c. 1915 (PP17/1/3/4/3)

These letters are part of the Belmont Mills Archive (PP17) in Special Collections & Archives, John Paul II Library, Maynooth University.

Miriam van der Molen
Archivist,
Maynooth University Library

Can the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland work for archives? The experience of the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland

For the last ten years, the Heritage Council has been running the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland (MSPI), to '*benchmark and promote professional standards in the care of collections*' (1). In the absence, in Ireland, of an archive accreditation programme, similar to the UK's Archive Service Accreditation, does MSPI offer a viable option for archives in the Republic of Ireland?

Background

The archive in the Royal College of Physicians of Ireland (RCPI) dates from the foundations of the College in the 17th century. As well as RCPI's own records, the archive holds records of Irish hospitals, medical organisations, the papers of physicians and medical historians.

In 2010, RCPI received Wellcome Trust funding to catalogue the archive, for the first time. This has led to a sizable increase in research access, and to new donations.

I came across MSPI when seeking a programme similar to the UK's Archive Service Accreditation. MSPI is collection based, and although I was initially looking for accreditation solely for the archive, it became clear that RCPI's complete historic collections (archive, library and objects) should be submitted for accreditation. This meant that work already carried out in creating policies and procedures for the archive could be rolled out across all the collections.

How does MSPI work?

MSPI is based around 34 standards, classified in three broad groups;

1) **Management**, including strategic and financial planning and high level policies (collection, loan and disposal)
2) **Collections Management** covering collection care (environmental monitoring & disaster planning) and collection documentation (accessions, cataloguing, loans)
3) **Public Services** covering all aspects of exhibition, education and visitor care & access.

The standards are designed to be achievable by institutions of any size, from the National Museums to local volunteer-run centres. As a result, although a standard may require a certain document, for example a loans policy, an acceptable policy could range from many pages to a much shorter and simpler document. All standards have to be met, but this can be done in a way that reflects the applicant's circumstances.

The process of applying for MSPI is a staged one:

1) **Eligibility** – applicants submit an application showing they meet the MSPI's definition of a museum and eligibility criteria.
2) **Benchmarking** – an assessment of the current situation in the institution is carried out against all 34 standards. This is followed by a site inspection by two accessors. The feedback provides details on which standards are currently met and gives advice on measures needed to meet the remaining standards.
3) **Interim Accreditation** – an application is submitted to show the institution meets the 25 interim standards, also followed by a site inspection.
4) **Full Accreditation** – an application is submitted to show the institution meets all 34 standards, followed by a site inspection.
5) **Maintenance** – three yearly review, to confirm maintenance of all 34 of standards.

The process is quite long and can be time-consuming: the RCPI submitted our eligibility application in September 2013; interim Accreditation was received in summer 2017, and we hope to receive our Full Accreditation this summer.



RCPI Heritage Centre receives Interim Accreditation in the Museum Standards Programme for Ireland



Museum Standards Programme for Ireland award ceremony in summer 2017

Applicability for archive

A comparison between the standards outlined by MSPI and those outlined by the UK's Archive Service Accreditation (ASA) shows a great deal of alignment. As with MSPI, ASA breaks down its standards into three groups: Organisational Health; Collections and Stakeholders and their experience. These map to the three groupings under MSPI.

The first two groups, Organisational Health and Collections match, almost exactly, the MSPI's Management and Collections Management groupings. They are concerned with ensuring the institution has proper financial, strategic and workforce planning, and that the collections are preserved and documented to sector standards.

The divergence comes in the final grouping. The ASA standards relate to access and engagement, while MSPI focuses on exhibition, education and visitor care. Although expressed differently, the focus of both is on public engagement with, and access to, collections. Archives with limited space might find MSPI's focus on exhibitions off-putting, but a small dedicated exhibitions space with a set template for exhibition labels, a small annual budget to print them, and a plan for changing display items at set intervals could meet the MSPI standards. Equally, RCPI's Education Policy (a requirement of MSPI) is based around research access to the collections, and a programme of talks and tours, rather than the more common museum practice of school visits and workshops. The core difference between the ASA and MSPI standards and between archives and museums is probably rooted in terminology. The definition of a museum for the purposes of MSPI is as follows;

*Museums are not for profit institutions that collect, safeguard, hold in trust, research, develop and interpret collections of original objects and original objects on loan, for the public benefit. They function publicly as places were people learn from and find inspiration and enjoyment through the display and research of original objects (*2).

If the word 'archives' replaced the word 'museums' and the word ' 'documents' or 'items' replaced the word 'objects', I think that most archivist would find it a fairly accurate description of an archive. The terminology used throughout MSPI is based on the museum not the archive sector, and although it can easily be mapped across to archive sector terminology, it does raise questions as to whether archives should also be classified as museums and, if so, would archives risk losing their unique and special qualities.

Benefits

It is undeniable that applying for MSPI accreditation has been a lot of work, but it has also been a very beneficial experience for RCPI. While some of these benefits are probably the same for any institution involved in the programme, others are more specific to RCPI and its collections.

At the most basic level it has 'encouraged' me to put in place procedures and policies for all the things I knew I should be doing, but never managed to get round too. It is now second nature to walk round the building every Monday morning to check the environmental monitoring readings, and check the objects on display.

While the process is long, the support from the Heritage Council, the programme co-ordinator and my MSPI assigned mentor, has been fantastic. The aim of the programme is to support applicants to gain accreditation, and everything is done to make the process as smooth as possible. The Heritage Council also offers a series of free training courses, tailored to support institutions in gaining accreditation. I have attended courses on policy development, exhibition design, conservation and education programme development.

The courses are also very useful for network building with colleagues in other cultural institutions. There is huge sense of support at the events and for those, like myself, in a single person team, it is great to be able to discuss shared challenges and problems.

As a result of contacts made through the MSPI courses I have loaned items to two other institutions for exhibition, and organised a series of cultural visits for Fellows of the College.

More specifically for RCPI, MSPI has been very beneficial in bringing the management of the College on board with the development of the collections. RCPI is a medic-led organisation, and while many are interested in the history of the profession they have no knowledge of the cultural heritage sector and its practices. However, for medics, accreditation is a very important part of their profession, and RCPI itself is a professional standard setting body. As a result, MSPI, by using an easily-identifiable language, has helped the medics engage with the Heritage Centre and its development. It has also encouraged the College to view its collections in a new way, formally recognising the public interest in them, and protecting the public's right of access to them.

RCPI is not a stand-alone archive; we have a large library and sizable collections of objects. Accrediting all these collections with MSPI has encouraged a more holistic approach to managing the collections. Instead of seeing the archive, library and object collections as three distinct and separate collections, MSPI has highlighted the interlinkage between them. This has been beneficial not only for RCPI in our approach to the development of the collections, but also for researchers in finding related material.

Conclusion

In the absence of an archive specific accreditation programme in Ireland, MSPI can, with some tweaking of terminology, work well as a strong option for archives, especially where there are mixed collections. However, there still remains the abiding issue that an archive is accredited as a museum and, despite the fact that the work done by these two types of institution is very similar, they are not the same thing.

It would, I believe, be possible to build on the excellent work done by the Heritage Council in creating and delivering MSPI, and so adapt it to an Archive Standards Programme for Ireland. A strong case can be made for keeping links between the two; the sharing of resources, training and development opportunities would strengthen both the archive and museum sector in Ireland.

For more details of the MSPI programme on the Heritage Council visit, http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/museum-standards-programme-for-ireland, or contact the programme co-ordinator Lesley-Ann Hayden at lahayden@heritagecouncil.ie

I am happy to answer any questions about the programme and my experience of it, email harrietwheelock@rcpi.ie

Bibliography

(1) http://www.heritagecouncil.ie/projects/museum-standards-programme-for-ireland

(2) The Heritage Council, Museum Standards Programme for Ireland Standards and Guidelines (2004), p.7

Harriet Wheelock,

Keeper of Collections,

Royal College of Physicians of Ireland

'The path to the home of a hundred comforts': ESB Archives launches new online library of 1920s and 1930s public relations pamphlets



Leading on from last year's online launch of a selection of rural electrification public relations (PR) pamphlets (1940s–60s), ESB Archives has released a new library of 1920s and 30s pamphlets on **esbarchives.ie**.

Shortly after its foundation in 1927, ESB appointed Dublin journalist Ned Lawlor as its Public Relations Officer, the first appointment of its kind in Ireland. A national media campaign began on 1 September 1928, targeting Ireland's daily and weekly newspapers with striking print advertisements. In addition, the PR department printed and circulated booklets and pamphlets to perspective consumers.

Produced during the construction and roll-out of the Shannon Scheme, these early pamphlets sought to educate the Irish public on the relatively new concept of electricity, and to highlight its benefits for Irish homes, businesses and industry. They address all aspects of electrification, including instructions on the proper method of wiring the home, as well as the cost and efficiency of domestic electrical appliances. The selection of pamphlets contained in the online library are beautifully illustrated, portraying an 'electric home' as a 'modern home', a symbol of prosperity, and the mark of a 'good housewife'.

The empowerment of the housewife is a common trope throughout ESB's marketing strategy in the first half of the twentieth century. The first of the pamphlets released, 'Aids to Beauty in Distress' (MK/PA/2/223), argues at length that electricity is much more than a mere utility – it is a vital 'beauty aid' to any modern Irish woman, whose rescue from menial household chores will preserve her beauty, increase her leisure, lessen her labour, and save her money, as well as save her 'face from the heat of the fire, [her] hair from the dust of a fire… [her] whole body from fatigue'. It goes all the way back to the prehistoric period to illustrate its point:

> In the beginning Man did the work of his hands. Later, he thought : "This I do not like. I must find me a servant." … He discovered the power of Electricity… *Electricity is the Servant of Man.* In the beginning, Woman did the work of the home. She is still doing it… In homes served by Electricity Woman will be not the slave of the home, but its guiding genius.



Woman before and after electricity, 1920s

The pamphlet notes that the Shannon Scheme, which would soon begin to generate electricity for the national network in October 1929, would 'make it possible… for every Irish home to be the home of a

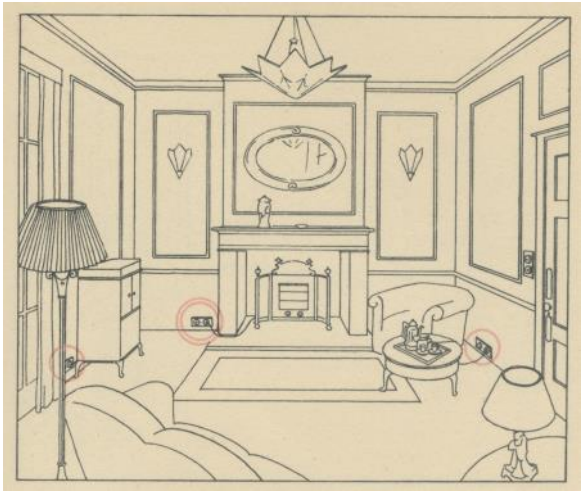
hundred comforts'. This path began with one simple step — the acquisition of an electric iron.

ESB's subsequent PR material expands its focus to the variety of other electrical appliances available, marketing electricity as a 'time-saver for the modern home', and reinforcing its association with 'convenience and hygiene' (PG/SS/PR/5). The 1930s pamphlet, 'The House you want' (PG/SS/PR/1), continues to target the Irish housewife, whose 'household worries cause so much discomfort and drudgery'. For such a new amenity, ESB were keen to put 'one unit' of electricity into perspective, translating it into terms a housewife could easily understand. With the right appliances, just one unit could: make 100 pieces of toast; boil enough water for 30 cups of coffee; run a vacuum cleaner for 7 hours; heat an iron for 3 hours; power a reading lamp for 25 hours; or heat 5 gallons of water. It promises that the cost to run these appliances is 'trifling in comparison with the advantages obtained.'



One unit of electricity, 1930s

Some pamphlets include diagrams to demonstrate the best position for electrical sockets and lighting fixtures in each room in the house. Apart from their evidential value, these drawings illustrate the ideal décor of the upmarket Irish home of the 1930s. As one pamphlet, 'The Electrical Installation of the Home' (PG/SS/PR/2), remarks in relation to the correct placement of electric light in the hallway: 'first impressions strike deep. This is equally true of men and houses.' It goes further, stating that 'no matter how complete your home may be, or how luxurious in every other particular, without Electricity it is at best cheerless and incomplete.'



The ideal placement of electrical sockets in the living room, 1930s

This equation of electricity with modernity and luxury is especially evident in the pamphlet 'You're living in 1935' (PG/SS/PR/4), included as a supplement to the magazine Irish Industry. It proudly announces that 'the all-electric home is the home of today… not merely a house' – efficient, economic and above all, a 'pleasant' place to live. It showcases a selection of all-electric homes at Mount Merrion Park, Dublin, available either through freehold or 900-year lease, featuring a range of modern Irish designs, from fireplaces to floor furnishings. Each of these top-of-the-range houses were fully wired and designed to host a variety of electrical appliances – as the author

proclaims, 'I think a drying room is one of the greatest gifts electricity has ever bestowed on modern woman'.



All-electric show house, Mount Merrion, 1935

The publication's accompanying print advertisements also reflect upmarket consumer demands in 1930s Ireland: ES Glanville & Son, marble craftsmen since 1892, boast a range of marble and terrazzo designs with a 'note of distinction' for the modern home; Irish Pharmaceuticals Ltd humbly celebrate the success of their Dawn Beauty Preparations in 'every corner of the Saorstat… never before has success come so quickly to a series of cosmetics'; and Minimax Ltd, suppliers of the Irish-made fire extinguishers installed in the Mount Merrion all-electric show house, promise 'free refills after every fire'.

Between 1929 and 1946, the Shannon Scheme brought electricity, along with its modernising benefits, to one third of Irish homes. Through the shared effort of its engineers and marketeers, ESB successfully generated, distributed and sold a new utility that quickly became 'indispensable' to the Irish consumer (PG/SS/PR/2), and which in time, was rolled out to the remainder of the country during the Rural Electrification Scheme. These pamphlets mark the beginning of an exponential rise in the availability and popularly of electrical appliances in Ireland in the first half of the twentieth century, fueled in no small way by ESB's skilled copywriters, who promised the Irish public: 'if you make full use of electricity, you may find that the home you live in has become the home of your dreams and that you would not leave it, even if you won the Sweep' (PG/SS/PR/4).

Dr Kirsten Mulrennan,

ESB Archivist

First Aid for Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis

The National Committee of the Blue Shield hosted Ireland's first ever ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) *First Aid for Cultural Heritage in Times of Crisis* course at the National Museum of Ireland Collins' Barracks .

I was very lucky to have been one of three Irish military personnel given a place on this course, along with Commandant Stephan MacEoin (the former Director of the Military Archives) and Lieutenant Colonel Steve Ryan (who represents the Defence Forces on the National Emergency Coordination Group). As well as teaching the skill sets described in its title, the course was the first step by the Irish National Committee of the Blue Shield to establish a network of cultural heritage first aiders in the country.



The Blue Shield, if you don't know, is the symbol used to identify cultural sites protected by the 1954 Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict. It is also the abbreviated version of the name of the International Committee of the Blue Shield (ICBS), which works to protect world cultural heritage threatened by natural and human-made disasters.

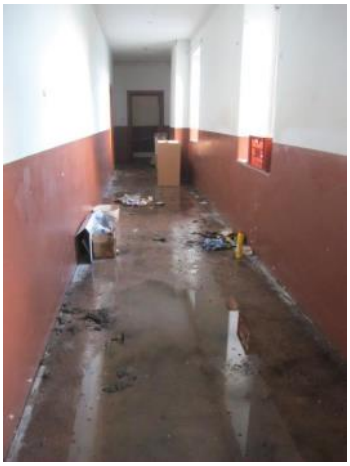
The training was expertly led by Aprana Tandon, a project manager in the collections unit of ICCROM (International Centre for the Study of the Preservation and Restoration of Cultural Property) and a woman with a vast array of field experience, ranging from Italy to Myanmar and from Iraq to Nepal to give just a few examples.



The course, which consisted of lectures, group work and a simulated disaster recovery exercise, was unanimously regarded as a resounding success by all participants, who represented a wide geographical and professional spread. As well as contributing to and complimenting the existing archival and military skill sets of those of us in attendance from the Army, it was an invaluable networking opportunity and a chance to share ideas and concerns for advocates for the protection and preservation of cultural heritage from all parts of Ireland, and with a bit of luck, the beginnings of the establishment of the first dedicated panel of cultural first aiders in Ireland.









If you get the chance of a place on this course the next time it's run, grab it with both hands!

Daniel Ayiotis,

Captain, Military Archives

Suffrage and Society
Voices from the Archive

The Representation of the People Act was an Act of Parliament approved on 6 February 1918 to reform the electoral system in Great Britain and Ireland. This ground-breaking legislation was the first to grant women the right to vote, albeit on a restricted basis, and also to extend manhood suffrage to all men over 21 without property qualification. It legislated a number of new practices in elections, including making residency in a specific constituency the basis of the right to vote.

To compliment activities organised by the UK Houses of Parliament and the Houses of the Oireachtas in Dublin, Northern Ireland's (NI) Department for Communities (DfC) is developing events and resources to help local communities understand the

social and political landscape at the time of the Act, and discover some of those who championed change (see www.nidirect.gov.uk/rotpa).

The objectives of the project are to:

- mark the centenary
- educate young people on its significance; and
- build a legacy for the future by encouraging young women into political and public life.

As a core part of the Department's activities, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) is co-ordinating a NI wide programme of events and resources, the first of which was the Suffrage and Society conference held on 6 February 2018 in partnership with Queen's University, Belfast and the Ulster Society for Irish Historical Studies.

The role of archives in unlocking contemporary opinions on suffrage became significant during the conference, with a session dedicated to the words and experiences of four very different individuals, all represented in the PRONI archive.

The words of each individual was offered to the audience without interpretation to encourage personal reaction and synthesis.



Figure 1: Suffrage and Society conference at PRONI on 6 February 2018, the hundredth anniversary of the 1918 Act.

John Stuart Mill, feminist writer.

Mill was elected Member of Parliament for the City of Westminster in 1865 on a platform including votes for women. In 1869 Mill published an essay, '*The Subjection of Women*' (PRONI Reference: D2037/6), in opposition to established opinions on women's rights. Mill states:

'*the legal subordination of one sex to another – is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement; and that it ought to be replaced by a system of perfect equality, admitting no power and privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other … there remains no legal slaves, save the mistress of every house*'.

Although Mill's arguments were well received by suffragists and the Kensington group who filed the 1866 petition for women's suffrage, traditional views still won out. In 1884, Sir Joseph Pease spoke in the House of Commons, stating:

'*Women is endowed with, a most delicate organisation which, sways the whole course of her life; it influences her actions, and her mode of thought, and its effect is to make mankind afford her protection rather than turn her adrift in the vortex of political life*'.

"Marie-Ann", workhouse inmate.

In 1867, "Marie-Ann" was admitted to the Belfast workhouse with her one-year-old and one-week-old daughters five times, each time remaining for several days. In total, they spent 25 nights out of 31 in the workhouse. Workhouse officials recorded "Marie-Ann's" occupation as "prostitute" (PRONI Reference BG/7/G/51).

The minute book of Ballymena Board of Guardians reveal the experiences of such a silenced voice, where it was resolved that:

'*females admitted labouring under venereal disease, common prostitutes or women who have each more than one bastard child be separately classed in the ward over the idiot ward, to be termed the Penitentiary. Inmates of this ward are not to go into the dining hall at meals, not to attend divine service but to be supplied with prayer books and testaments*' (PRONI Reference BG/4/A/2).

There is no evidence that "Marie-Ann" was a prostitute, however, the "prostitute" label would transform her experience in and out of the workhouse. "Marie-Ann" had a champion in suffragist Isabella Tod, who in 1871 established the Belfast branch of the Ladies' National Association to repeal the Contagious Diseases Acts (CDAs). Under the Acts, suspected prostitutes, such as "Marie-Ann", could be arrested and forcibly examined. By 1886, the CDAs were repealed and subsequently replaced by the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease, which promoted the treatment of men and women (see PRONI Reference LA/7/9/BB/12).

In 1872, "Marie-Ann" died in child labour.

Sir John Cowans, Quartermaster General at the War Office.

Sir John was keen to establish an active role for women when men were at war. In a letter from Cowans to Edith, Lady Londonderry, dated 7 September 1915, he advises:

'*A very large part of the work in all hospitals can be undertaken by women thereby allowing the transfer of non-commissioned officers and men to other medical units at home or abroad*' (PRONI Reference D3099/3/10).

Supporters of suffrage later used these wartime developments to call for parity in the franchise, including George Cave in 1917:

'*War … has brought us nearer together, has opened men's eyes, and removed misunderstandings on all sides*'.

Mabel Small, suffragette.

Mabel had a loud and public voice, as an active suffragette. A newspaper article regarding an attack on the Old Town Hall, Belfast states that:

'*a young woman named Mabel Small appeared in the dock, wearing a green costume and carrying a bunch of daffodils … accused of maliciously damaging the window*' (PRONI Reference BCT/3/1/7).

During her hearing, she called out:

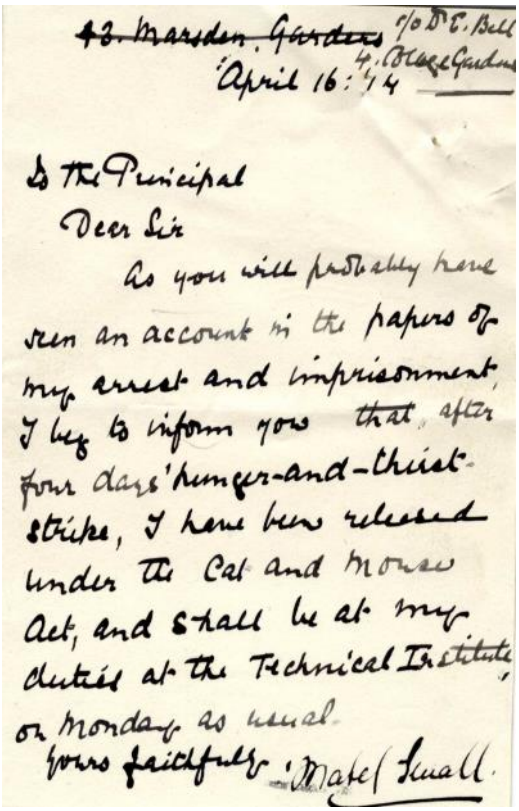
'*Did you find anything on me*?'

In response the arresting Constable replied:

'*In your bag were four half bricks*'.

Two letters reveal the confidence with which Mabel spoke, including a letter to the Principle of the Municipal Technical Institute (see Figure 2), where she notes:

'*I beg to inform you that after four days hunger-and-thirst strike, I have been released under the Cat and Mouse Act, and shall be at my duties at the Technical Institute on Monday as usual*' (PRONI Reference BCT/3/1/7).


43. Marsden Gardens c/o D.C. Bell
4, Blacks Gardens
April 16: 14

To The Principal
Dear Sir
As you will probably have seen an account in the papers of my arrest and imprisonment, I beg to inform you that after four days' hunger-and-thirst strike, I have been released under the Cat and Mouse Act, and shall be at my duties at the Technical Institute on Monday as usual.
Yours faithfully Mabel Small.

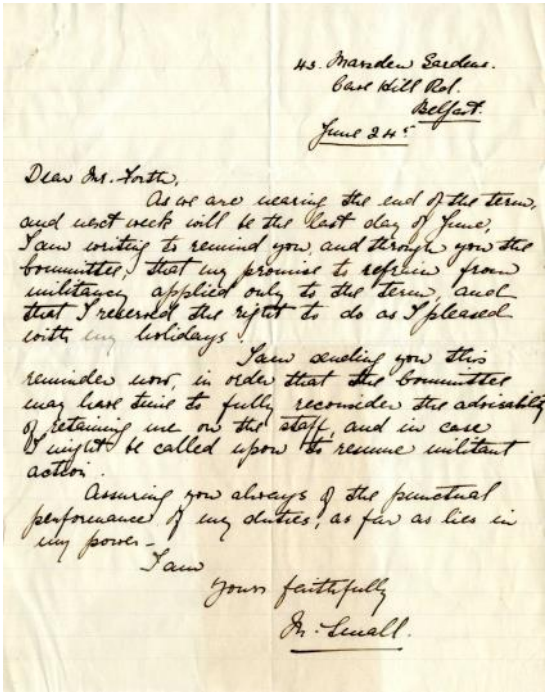
***Figure 2**: Letter from Mabel Small to Municipal Technical Institute, 16 April 1914*
PRONI Reference BCT/3/1/7
Reproduced with kind permission from the Deputy Keeper, PRONI

In acknowledge of her letter, the Institute replied:

'*I put it to you that it is an understanding in this place that everyone is required to abstain from propaganda work and give their whole energy to the work of the Institute. As far as possible staff are expected to use the holidays for regeneration of their efforts so that they may return to their work with full vigour*' (PRONI Reference BCT/3/1/7).

In reply, Mabel sent a further letter to the Institute to clarify her position (see Figure 3):

'*my promise to refrain from militancy applied only to the term, and that I reserve the right to do as I pleased with my holidays*' (PRONI Reference BCT/3/1/7).



46. Marsden Gardens.
East Hill Rd.
Belfast.
June 24th

Dear Mr. Forte,

As we are nearing the end of the term, and next week will be the last day of June, I am writing to remind you, and through you the Committee, that my promise to refrain from militancy applied only to the term, and that I reserved the right to do as I pleased with my holidays.

I am sending you this reminder now, in order that the Committee may have time to fully reconsider the advisability of retaining me on the staff, and in case it might be called upon to resume militant action.

Assuring you always of the punctual performance of my duties, as far as lies in my power -

I am
Yours faithfully
M. Small.

***Figure 3**: Letter from Mabel Small to Municipal Technical Institute, 24 June 1914*
PRONI Reference BCT/3/1/7
Reproduced with kind permission from the Deputy Keeper, PRONI

By drawing upon representative voices from the archive, something of the experience of women and the advocacy of men during the 96 year struggle for equal franchise can be unlocked for local communities to discover.

Resources and Activities

To watch the Society and Suffrage conference, and listen to the reaction and discussion on the day, please visit:
www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/proni-youtube

To join the discussion, please comment on PRONI Facebook:
en-gb.facebook.com/publicrecordofficeni

PRONI is partnering with the Nerve Centre in Derry~Londonderry to produce a suite of interactive resources specifically aimed at engaging young people and community groups. This includes: a graphic novel based on Constance Markievicz, an Irish Republican and the first women elected to the UK Parliament, and Edith, Lady Londonderry, a Unionist and prominent advocate of women's suffrage; updating an existing PRONI resource into an iResource which highlights archives relating to suffrage; and commissioning a drama on the theme of suffrage.

PRONI is also curating a new touring exhibition, entitled *Voices and Votes*: *Suffrage and Representation of the People 1832-1928*, which will launch in July during Democracy Week, to coincide with the 90th anniversary of universal suffrage in the UK.

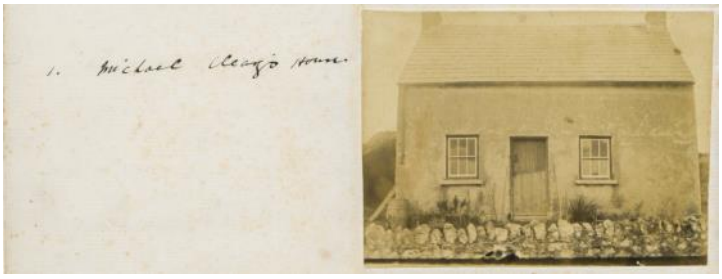
Visit PRONI to access a wide range of archives relevant to the theme of suffrage, including the Lissadell Papers (PRONI Reference D4131), which contain the archive of Countess Markievicz and her sister Eva Gore-Booth, who was a passionate suffragist. Also held by PRONI are the Londonderry Papers, including the records of Edith, Lady Londonderry (PRONI Reference D3099) and also her mother-in-law Theresa, Lady Londonderry who comments on suffrage in her correspondence (PRONI Reference D2846). The correspondence and diaries of Lady Lilian Spender, whose husband was Sir Wilfrid Spender, army officer and civil servant (PRONI Reference D1633), and the papers of Charlotte Despard, novelist and activist (PRONI Reference D2479) also shed light on the thoughts of local ladies.

For information on visiting PRONI, please visit www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni.

Why not sign up to the PRONI Express, a monthly e-newsletter, to watch out for new resources and forthcoming events: www.nidirect.gov.uk/services/subscribe-pronis-enewsletter.

Glynn Kelso,
Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

Bridget Cleary murder trial records at the National Archives



GPB/PEN/1895/27 The house where Michael and Bridget Cleary lived

There are few Irish crimes in the nineteenth century that captured more attention than the murder of Bridget Cleary in Ballyvadlea, near Clonmel, County Tipperary in March 1895.

Examinations of the religious, political and sociological attitudes surrounding the case were to uncover Ireland's attitude towards women, religion and the supernatural, an often sentimentalised aspect of Irish history.

Contemporary newspaper reports of the murder case of Bridget Cleary gauge the political reaction at a time of unrest. The unionist Dublin Evening Mail drew comparisons between the death of Bridget Cleary and the Home Rule question contending that the people of Ballyvadlea were lawless and considered the law of the land an English one, to be ignored. The Freeman's Journal distanced itself from the crime reporting on 'the strange death in Clonmel'.

Bridget Cleary was twenty six years old in 1895. A talented dressmaker and egg seller, she was married for eight years to Michael Cleary and without children. Her cousin Johanna Burke would later say in court that the couple were on good terms, she "never saw them quarrel or dispute." (1)

Bridget's husband Michael Cleary, who was 35 years old at the time, was a cooper from Killenaule, Co Tipperary. The Clearys had met when both worked in Clonmel and had returned to the area where Bridget grew up. With significant income in comparison to their neighbours they were known to be well off, with Bridget owning her own sewing machine.

Bridget had become ill with a cold in the days prior to her death. She had been delivering eggs in Kylenagranagh, the site of a fairy ring, according to local folklore. Over the coming days her house would be occupied by a number of relatives and neighbours amid a growing concern that there was a supernatural element to her illness. Trial records were later to suggest that this idea may have been put forward by John Dunne, a neighbour who was known to be more aligned with old faery traditions that were dying out in Ireland (2).

Relatives of Bridget Cleary were to become more convinced as the days passed that there was a faery

changeling in the house. A faery changeling was a duplicate put in the place of a real person – often a woman or child – after they had been abducted by faeries.

There were several attempts to have the doctor and the priest visit the house, as well as an herbal doctor. As the days passed Bridget's fever did not improve. By Friday 15th March 1895 tensions were running high in the small cottage with Michael repeatedly asking his wife who she was. She angered him by asserting that his mother had gone off with the faeries. She also stated that she could see the police at the window in an effort to be left alone.

Michael repeatedly attempted to get her to say her name while getting her to eat three slices of bread. When she did not reply to the third time of questioning, he stripped her, doused her in oil and set her alight. He shouted that it was not his wife but a witch he was burning.

There was confusion after the event as members of her extended family were locked inside the house by Michael Cleary. Later that night he got help from Patrick Kennedy in removing the body from the house. Bridget Cleary's remains were to be found in the days that followed in a shallow grave close to the house.

Records at the National Archives

National Archives of Ireland hold a number of records relevant to the case, which throw significant light on events in the days leading up to Bridget's death.

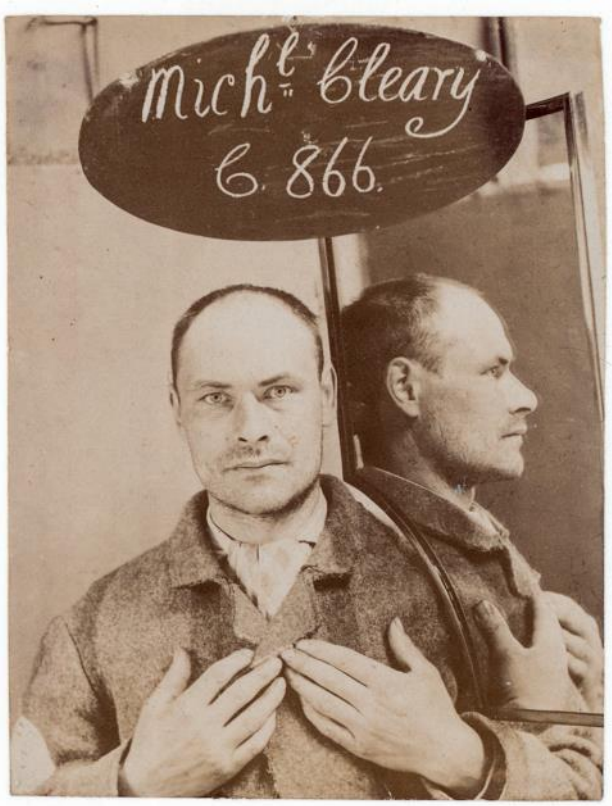
All ten people who had been in the house in the days surrounding the murder were arrested but only the men involved were given sentences ranging from six months to twenty years. Court records from the trial give remarkable detail from those who became witnesses, including Bridget's cousin Johanna Burke and her ten year old daughter Katie. Court records show Michael Cleary was sentenced to twenty years for his part in the murder and on his release went to Liverpool and then onto Canada.

A significant body of evidence lies in the Crown and Peace records. Originally two separate offices the courts of Crown and Peace were amalgamated in 1877 and were administered by a Clerk of the Crown and Peace, an office similar to the modern County Registrar. Within the Crown and Peace records are the records of the Courts of Assize. The Courts of Assize were the precursor to the High Court. They dealt with the most important civil and criminal matters and sat on circuit twice a year.

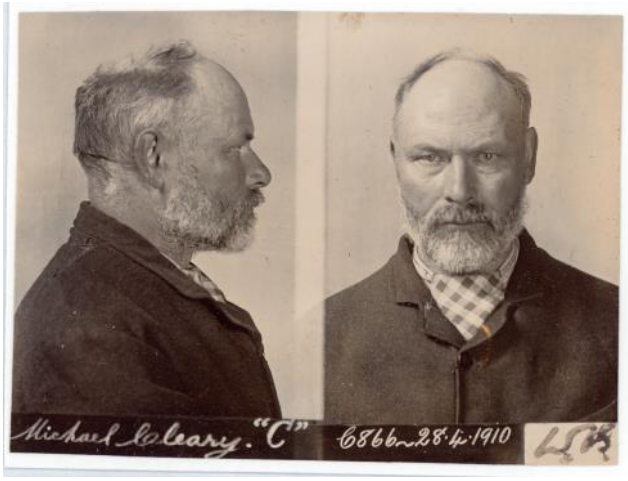
Crown and Peace Office Tipperary South Riding Crown files at Assizes 1895 includes evidence and statements of Katie Burke, Alfred J Wansborough, John Dunne, Johanna Burke, Patrick Boland, Denis Ganey, Patrick Egan, Mary Simpson, Thomas Smyth, Henry St Jones and the Rev Cornelius Fleming Ryan, all witnesses to events in the days surrounding Bridget Cleary's death.

General Prisoners Board records date from 1852-1946 and include minute books, annual reports, penal servitude registers and penal records. These records include the penal records for Michael Cleary, Patrick Kennedy and John Dunne, their neighbour who had been convicted for his role in spreading the faery lore which was to kill Bridget.

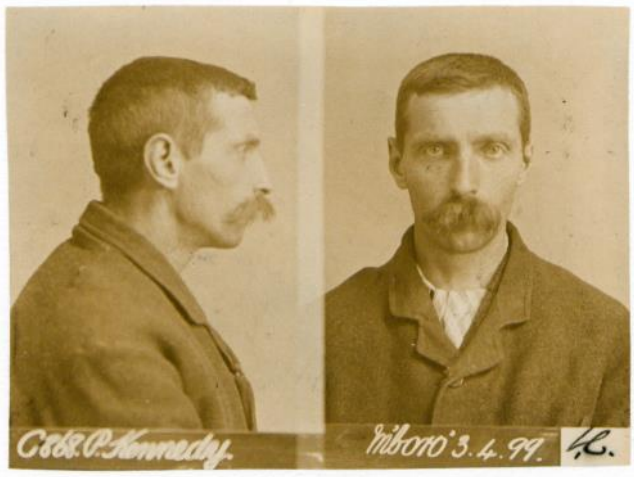
Penal records were held for prisoners in the nineteenth century prison system. They hold evidence of the convict throughout his or her incarceration, their record sheet and medical history sheet. Michael Cleary' penal servitude register (GPB/PEN/1910/28) gives significant detail on his incarceration, including three photographs. John Dunne's penal record (GPB/PEN/1897/110), includes medical history and his petitions sheet. The penal record for conviction for Patrick Kennedy (GPB/PEN/1899/27), includes two photographs of the prisoner.



GPB/PEN/1910/28 Michael Cleary mugshot upon entering prison



GPB/PEN/1910/28 Michael Cleary mugshot upon release



CBS/1895/9617/S Patrick Kennedy Mugshot upon entering prison

The records of the Chief Secretary of Ireland's Office constitute one of the most valuable collections of original source material for research into Ireland in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. The registered papers mainly comprise incoming correspondence of the Chief Secretary's Office 'registered' by a clerk in that office. The correspondence consists of letters, petitions, memorials, memoranda, affidavits, recommendations, accounts, reports, and returns.

The Chief Secretary's Office Registered Papers (CSORP) Police and Crime Division holds a report on the case (CSO/RP/1895/6694). This report includes a letter from a magistrate in Clonmel to the under-secretary detailing the inquiry and a necessary adjournment.

A second report from the CSORP Royal Irish Constabulary Office (CSO/RP/1895/6695), includes telegrams from Clonmel detailing the case.

The CSORP Crime Branch Special papers hold a file with accompanying five photographs of the crime scene (CBS/1895/9617/S). The photographs detail the outside of the Cleary house, the room where Bridget slept the kitchen of the house, the second bedroom and the area where Bridget Cleary's body was discovered.

There is a further file in this series (CBS/1895/9786/S) stating there was a photograph in evidence of the scene of outrage but no photograph has survived. There is only one document on the file.

Petitioning the Lord Lieutenant was the only real hope of obtaining a commutation of sentence in the nineteenth century. Petitions, also known as memorials, were prepared by the convict or by a representative and referred directly, in the first instance to the Lord Lieutenant. He then referred them, via the Chief Secretary's Office, to the trial judge, the local constabulary and sometimes to the governor of the local gaol to confirm statements made by the convict protesting innocence, age, size of family, or state of health as mitigating factors. All petitions were investigated thoroughly.

The accumulations of documents which gathered as investigations progressed are known as Prisoners' Petitions and Cases (PPC), from 1778 to 1835, and as Convict Reference Files (CRF), from 1836 to 1853. The convict reference file for Michael Cleary (CRF/1910/ Misc/1619) details his petitions for release over the years of his incarceration. This file also includes the petitions filed for Patrick Kennedy, Michael Kennedy and John Dunne.

Records from these collections are used to research crimes throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in Ireland. As a research topic the murder of Bridget Cleary is an excellent example of the variety of records the National Archives hold in relation to nineteenth century crime.

Bibliography

(1) Crown and Peace Office Crown files at Assizes 1895

(2) Ibid

Patricia Fallon,
Archivist,
National Archives of Ireland

'Czeching out the OSCE archives in Prague'

Prague: native city of Kafka, Navrátilová and…the Documentation Centre of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE). The world's largest security-oriented organisation, the OSCE's origins can be traced to the early 1970s when its predecessor, the Conference on Security and Co-operation (CSCE) was established as a multilateral forum for dialogue and negotiation between East and West during the peak freeze of the Cold War.



OSCE Documentation Centre in Prague plaque.

From the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975 which inaugurated the CSCE until the late 1980s, the Organisation functioned mainly as a series of conferences that built on and extended the commitments of its member countries in Europe and North America. Momentous changes came with the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, the reunification of Germany in 1990 and the subsequent collapse of Communism in the Soviet Union and former Eastern Bloc countries, developments which sent the CSCE in a dynamic new direction as it sought to grapple with the challenges and uncertainties posed by the new geopolitical reality and re-drawn borders in Europe.

As part of its response to these epochal events and over the next four years, the CSCE acquired permanent institutions, operational capabilities and, at the invitation of then Czech President Václav Havel, a home in Prague. In the process, it changed its name from the CSCE to the OSCE in December 1994 to signify its wider remit and as its scope and mandate expanded, the Organisation moved its Secretariat to Vienna but retained its Documentation Centre in Prague.



The Documentation Centre in Prague.

So, what exactly does the OSCE do that differentiates it from similar international organisations such as the UN, NATO and the EU with whom it regularly co-operates? An inclusive platform for discussion and joint action to promote regional security and ongoing democratisation across its 57 participating states and 11 partners for co-operation, the OSCE engages in early warning and action, conflict prevention, crisis management and post-conflict reconstruction and rehabilitation.

By taking a comprehensive approach to three key dimensions of security – the politico-military, economic and environmental and human – the OSCE engages in a broad range of issues to improve people's lives including good governance, promotion of human and gender rights, arms control, migration management and counter-terrorism activities.

Given its size, structure and the often competing agendas of its member countries, how does the OSCE reach agreement on major issues? It achieves this by consensus, using politically and not

legally-binding decisions, which can be a challenge to accomplish considering the 68 countries directly or more loosely associated with the Organisation. Nevertheless, it is the very principle and practice of implementing consensus-based political decisions that is one of the Organisation's major strengths. It enables the OSCE to respond relatively quickly in emergency situations without having to factor in vetos that can sometimes paralyse organisations such as the UN.

A test of this response mechanism came in the spring of 2014 when fighting broke out in eastern Ukraine between armed pro-Russian separatists and Ukrainian government forces. The OSCE quickly mobilised and deployed the SMM (Special Monitoring Mission to Ukraine), a team of impartial observers which reports objectively on the state of affairs on the ground there and facilitates dialogue among all parties to the crisis. It cannot intervene militarily in the conflict – Europe's bloodiest since the wars in the former Yugoslavia – which has been simmering for the last four years. However, the fact that civil war has not engulfed the entire country can possibly be attributed in part to the ongoing work of the SMM and the OSCE's diplomatic engagement between the protagonists behind the scenes.

So, what has any of this got to do with archives? Last April, the writer responded to a vacancy notice for the position of Senior Documentation and Information Assistant in the OSCE's Documentation Centre in Prague and four months later, packed her bags for an adventure in mitteleuropa.

Based in Bubeneč, Prague's embassy belt, with seven local staff, the Documentation Centre is designated as the official repository for the permanent records of the CSCE and OSCE. The office holds all major CSCE conference and policy documents in hardcopy format from 1972 to 1994. Together with key OSCE material from 1995 to the present, most of these documents have been digitised and are chronologically arranged in series organised by the negotiating and decision-making bodies that released them.

Such bodies include the Permanent Council – the principal decision-making body for regular political consultations and for governing the day-to-day operational work of the OSCE – the Forum for Security Co-operation, the Secretariat and closed field missions in locations such as Belarus, Croatia and Georgia. These collections are the legacy records of both the CSCE and OSCE and those records which are open can be accessed electronically by staff using the Organisation's in-house document management system, DocIn.



Archives of the OSCE Secretariat in the Documentation Centre in Prague

In addition to preserving documentary evidence of the CSCE's and OSCE's operation, governance and activities, the Documentation Centre is also charged with making the records available to visiting re-searchers, often through its Researcher-in-Residence programme which marks its 20th anniversary this year. In addition to accessing the CSCE/OSCE historical archives, researchers participating in the programme are provided with work spaces connect-ed to the digital archive collections, finding aids and databases while the Centre's archives staff are on hand to advise and provide access to the material.

Staff also disseminate information about the OSCE's work and assist officials, delegates and members of the public with varied research requests.

The hardcopy historical collection and more recent material are held on-site in the Documentation Centre while records of closed field missions are held in off-site storage in a glamorous location – as off-site storage locations are wont to be – close to a forbidding-looking prison on the outskirts of the city. The Centre is currently engaged in a retrospective digitisation project where gaps in the electronic collection have been identified and are being filled by digitising earlier hardcopy material. During 2017, over 4,500 documents were scanned for the period 1998–2016 and it is intended that there will be an electronic surrogate for the hardcopy collection in the near future. Documentation Centre staff also streamline the flow of electronic documents circulated by the Document Distribution Centre in Vienna by categorising them into 'Open', 'OSCE+' (open to staff, participating states and partners for co-operation) and 'Restricted' (open only to delegations) and preserving them in designated folders.

And what of the daily work of the writer? Chief among the projects undertaken since last September have been the writing of a new acquisition policy for the Documentation Centre; liaising with the Communications Team in Vienna to create a new section for the Centre on the OSCE's website (which it does not currently have and which will go live in the coming weeks); rewriting promotional material; revising file-naming protocols; giving presentations to visiting groups on the work of the office; co-writing a project funding proposal and co-operating with her fellow Senior Documentation and Information Assistant in managing the team in its daily work. All of this has kept the writer off the streets.



Consulting the archives

Presenting a paper at a records management seminar in Priština last October was a great opportunity to meet colleagues responsible for preserving the Organisation's institutional memory in often difficult circumstances eg reduced staff and under-resourcing, problems with which many archivists and records managers can identify. Among the memorable presentations at the seminar was that given by a former NARA employee appointed by the OSCE as SMM records manager to preserve the records being generated by staff in OSCE offices across Ukraine. Conscious of the evidential importance of records in such a febrile situation where ceasefire violations and border breaches are common, 35 GBs of video footage from border cameras in some areas are being generated and kept on a daily basis!

The sudden closing of field missions as happened last year in Yerevan and Baku can often mean that urgent efforts are required to ensure that records of enduring value are preserved and transported firstly to the Records Management Unit in Vienna – with whom the Documentation Centre co-operates closely – for financial and personnel records to be retained, while programmatic material (project

records, policy development, documentation relating to information exchange about weaponry etc) is transferred for permanent preservation to Prague.

As the writer types, the Russian flag billows in the wind from the roof of its vast embassy which hulks over the Documentation Centre – a vista somewhat different to that of the Dublin Mountains from her office window in the National Archives of Ireland (NAI) and one to which she will return next month. So as this wonderful career break draws to a close, what have been the highlights of daily life in Prague? Seeing the castle complex and St Vitus's Cathedral on the way to work every day. Enjoying concerts in the glorious Rudolfinum by the meandering Vltava. Making the most of this perfect central European location to go off gallivanting to other neighbouring jewels such as Vienna, Dresden and Berlin. And the lowlights? Dumplings. In any shape, size or flavour. If I never see another one again, it will still be an aeon too soon.

Nashledanou, Praho – budeš mi chybět!

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