Archives & Records Association
Cumann Cartlann agus Taifead
Ireland/Éire



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A Word from the Chair

I hope that by the time of issue, the weather remains as dry and sunny as it is as I write these words. As many of us are turning our attention towards holidays and travel over the summer months, it is perhaps timely to mention the forthcoming Archive Diaspora day, running again in July. I would encourage members to engage with the campaign and post content and stories relating to the peoples of Ireland who have travelled overseas across many centuries and contributed to society, economy and culture worldwide!

We were delighted to welcome Liam Diskin to the regional committee, with Liam taking up the role of Honorary Treasurer. We do still have an unfilled vacancy for a second training officer – so I would urge anyone who is interested to speak to myself, or Steven Skeldon as existing training officer, and we will be happy to talk to you about what's involved. Committee participation is a great opportunity to meet colleagues across our profession and add to your skills portfolio.

You will hopefully have by now received notification regarding a survey on the conservation needs of the archive sector in Ireland. Jessica Baldwin, Senior Conservator at the National Archives, Ireland is undertaking a study to better understand the challenges faced by colleagues caring for collections in the archive sector in Ireland at present. This is a great opportunity to highlight any preservation and conservation issues you are having in your own organisations, so I would encourage as many of you as possible to complete the online survey. Jessica will be presenting her results at the forthcoming ARA conference later this summer.

And on that very subject, it is wonderful to welcome the ARA conference back to the island of Ireland again this year. The conference which take place in Belfast from 30th August to 1st September, with an excellent line-up of talks and presentations arranged, and plenty of local representation on the programme. For anyone who hasn't done so, there is still time to book a place. I am really looking forward to having the opportunity to catch up with many of you in person over the course of the event. So enjoy the summer, hopefully with some downtime to relax with friends and family, and perhaps I'll see you at the conference!

Janet Hancock
Chair, ARA, Ireland

PRONI 100: Celebrating a Century

Stephen Scarth, Head of Public Services, PRONI

The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) was established by legislation on 22 June 1923 with the passing of the Public Records Act (NI) 1923. In just over nine months from its creation, PRONI would open its doors to the public on Monday 3 March 1924. To mark this anniversary, PRONI has developed a year-long programme of activities and events to celebrate the centenary.

The creation of PRONI took place in the aftermath of the catastrophic loss of seven centuries of records following the destruction of the Public Record Office of Ireland in June 1922. In the following 100 years since the fire, PRONI has proactively acted to fill the gap in the record by amassing over 3 million records emanating from both government and privately deposited archives. PRONI's first Deputy Keeper, Dr David A. Chart, and successive Deputy Keepers successfully replaced many of the lost records by approaching solicitors, business people, politicians, churches and the landed aristocracy. At the time of opening, PRONI was based on the fourth floor of a former linen warehouse in central Belfast. The premises at Murray Street were never intended to be a permanent home and PRON would move in 1933 to the newly opened Royal Courts of Justice where it endured and survived the Belfast Blitz. PRONI would celebrate its 50th anniversary at the Law Courts. This in itself was a significant anniversary as as the then Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, Basil Brooke, took the opportunity to exhort the public with renewed calls to deposit with PRONI.

The acquisition strategies of Deputy Keepers, D.A. Chart, Edward Heatly and Ken Darwin proved so successful that PRONI would once again require new accommodation, and this time it would be in new purpose-built offices in suburban South Belfast. PRONI operated from Balmoral Avenue between 1972-2010, however due to the deteriorating condition of the stores, and further expansion of both staff and archives, the premises proved to be no longer fit for purpose. This resulted in PRONI moving one more time in January 2011 to its current state-of-the-art premises in the heart of the historic Titanic Quarter.

The aim of the centenary programme will to deliver impact and maximise the visibility of PRONI as a national archive. Of particular note, PRONI is aiming to reach new and minority audiences who traditionally have not previously engaged with archives. To achieve these goals, PRONI is working with a range of partners including other parts of PRONI's parent government Department - The Department for Communities (DfC) and its arms-length bodies, the wider Northern Ireland Civil service as well as partner institutions across the island of Ireland, the UK and the Irish diaspora overseas. PRONI plans on delivering at least one significant activity or event per month from April 2023 through to March 2024. The activities are underpinned by bespoke PRONI 100 branding and tailored social media which will continue throughout the financial year.



Photo: US Special Envoy Joe Kennedy at the launch marking the loan to PRONI of an original copy of the US Declaration of Independence.

PRONI kicked the centenary programme off in April with the launch of not one but two exhibitions. The first launch was an event showcasing the UK's signed copy of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement on 3 April. This was followed by a second launch on The Declaration of Independence on 20 April by US Special Envoy Joe Kennedy to mark the loan to PRONI of an original copy of the Declaration. Both documents have been loaned from The National Archives (TNA) in London.

The Belfast Agreement loan was marked by a joint event with The National Archives of Ireland (NAI) with guest speakers, Miriam O'Callaghan (RTE Presenter). Amanda Dunsmore (Artist) Malachi O'Doherty (Journalist and Writer), Marie Coleman (Historian) and David Donoghue (former Irish Civil Servant). The proceedings were opened by Director of the National Archives of Ireland, Orlaith McBride, and Acting PRONI Director, David Huddleston.



Photo: Guest speakers at the joint event to mark the loan of the Belfast (Good Friday) Agreement to PRONI.

The copy of the Declaration of Independence which is on display until late July is accompanied by an exhibition developed by partner body, the Ulster Scots Agency who curated text and panels exploring the background and legacy of the Declaration. The Declaration had been printed by Strabane-man, John Dunlap, in Philadelphia on 4 July 1776. The Dunlap print of the Declaration of Independence is one of 26 known surviving copies worldwide. The Dunlap prints were the first official printings of the Declaration of Independence of which only around 200 copies were presumed to have been printed. The prints made by John Dunlap were delivered to the founders on the morning of 5 July 1776.

These loans are the first ever loans between TNA and PRONI. It is also the first time either document has been displayed in Northern Ireland. They are also significant in facilitating the first opportunities for PRONI to work directly in partnership with the National Archives of Ireland and with the Ulster Scots Agency to deliver significant flagship events. Both events attracted considerable media coverage and were covered by both BBC and ITV.

In May, PRONI attended Northern Ireland's premier agricultural show at the Maze, near Lisburn. This marks PRONI's return to the Show after an absence of ten years. PRONI staffed a stall for all four days of the show which was attended by thousands of visitors. The PRONI stall proved to be very popular and provided a unique opportunity to engage with new and rural audiences, particularly those from outside Belfast. PRONI's UTV archive footage was integrated into the PRONI stand was proved a big draw.



Photo: The PRONI stand at the Balmoral Show, Lisburn

PRONI will continue to roll out the programme over the course of 2023/24 and future highlights will include 'Celebrating a Century' which will mark the establishment of the office on 22 June 2023. Speakers representing stakeholders from the media, academia, family history and the Department for Communities will discuss the 100 treasures of PRONI which is a new resource that will be launched on 22 June.

Of particular interest to ARA members is the forthcoming annual conference which will take place in Belfast in August 2023 to coincide with PRONI 100. The three-day conference which is expected to attract c.300 attendees will take place at the iconic Europa hotel. As part of the programme, PRONI will feed and drink delegates on the Wednesday evening and guests will have the opportunity to participate in tours of the PRONI premises and view choice items from amongst the archives.

PRONI's ambitions for the year will extend to a joint event with the Virtual Treasury of Ireland in September exploring the legacy of PRONI's first Deputy Keeper, D. A. Chart; community engagement with a range of minority groups; and a signature event to mark the opening of PRONI in March 2024. All this is being achieved against the backdrop of limited financial budget and in a very challenging financial environment. However, plans have been formulated which rely on creativity, innovation, agility and achieving results from synergies with partners. The success of the year will be measurable by how successful PRONI is with delivering visibility, demonstrating relevance and standing out from the crowd. The signs and portents following April and May look very positive and PRONI looks forward to banging yet bigger and louder drums over the next nine months.



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Archive Diaspora

Niamh Ní Charra, Communications and Campaigns Officer, ARA Ireland

#ArchiveDiaspora – Monday 3rd July 2023

A social media campaign celebrating the Irish people, both new and old, both famous and forgotten, who either left from or came to these shores seeking a new life.

The Archives and Records Association, Ireland are delighted to announce the return of our social media campaign for the third year running, taking place this year on the 3rd July. Based on the theme of diaspora, and using the campaign hashtag #ArchiveDiaspora, individuals and institutions across Ireland and around the world are invited to share material from their archives which relate to Irish people both famous and forgotten, who left these shores for a life abroad, as well as material relating to those who chose to make Ireland their home.

Celebrate the wonderful, the whacky, the brave, and the banal, the intrepid explorer, and the wayfaring stranger!

The campaign aims to encourage the public to access and explore collections, while also highlighting the rich material in archives all across Ireland and Internationally. It also hopes to raise awareness of the wealth and variety of material that exists within the community at large, and the importance of ensuring it is collected and preserved for future generations.

Participation is open to all, with an emphasis on archives, both personal and public, and those seeking more information may get in touch by contacting ARA Ireland Communications and Campaigns Officer, Niamh Ní Charra.



New multimedia exhibition in the National Archives 'The Secret Space: Palimpsest'

Zoe Reid, Keeper, National Archives of Ireland

'The Secret Space: Palimpsest' is a dynamic new multimedia installation using the records of the National Archives which has just opened to the public in our offices on Bishop Street. Created by ANU Productions, a multi-award winning Irish theatre company, this exhibition has been developed by the descendants of two key figures from Ireland's revolutionary period.

The exhibition builds on an earlier installation and performance work entitled 'The Secret Space' (2021) in which ANU's co-artistic director Owen Boss and performer Genevieve Hulme-Beaman examined the role their respective great-grandfathers (P.T. Daly and Batt O'Connor) played in the Irish revolution.

Bartholomew (Batt) O'Connor was a master stonemason, builder and member of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) and the Irish Volunteers. During the War of Independence, he constructed hiding places across Dublin for documents, funds and secret rooms for people on the run from the authorities.

Meanwhile Patrick Thomas Daly was a Dublin Corporation Councillor, a founding member of Sinn Féin, the ITGWU and the Irish Labour Party and member of the Supreme Council of the IRB. His private papers were destroyed in the 1970s leaving a significant absence in the revolutionary record.



Photo: "The Secret Space: Palimpsest" installation in the National Archives.

'The Secret Space: Palimpsest' reflects on the relationship between individual idealism and the practical establishment of a new Irish Free State and features many examples of modernist architecture focusing on two in particular: the Ardnacrusha Power Plant (1929) in county Clare and the Irish Pavilion at the New York World's Fair (1939), both of which were designed to promote a modern image of Ireland at home and abroad.

The National Archives also hosted a panel discussion 'And They All Lived Happily Ever After! on Tuesday 23 May 2023. The discussion explored the ideals of the revolutionary participants and the early architectural ambitions of the new Irish Free State using archives held in the National Archives, architecture and art. Panel speakers included Owen Boss (Co-Artistic Director, ANU Productions); Lar Joye (Port Heritage Director, Dublin Port Company); John McLaughlin (Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor of Architectural Design, University College Cork); and Dr Sorcha O'Brien (Lecturer in Design History, Institute of Art, Design & Technology, Dún Laoghaire).

On Saturday, May 27, Owen Boss and Michael McDermot led a walking tour of various locations connected to the exhibition. The group made their way from Harcourt Terrace to the Canal at Charlemont Bridge, then down to Harcourt Street, the Irish Labour office on Aungier Street, and finally into the National Archives to view the exhibition.

Please see www.nationalarchives.ie/news/event-the-secret-space-palimpsest for more information on our exhibition and the soundcloud recording of the panel discussion. Do drop in, we'd love to see you!

Exhibition information

Venue: National Archives, Bishop Street, Dublin 8.
Dates: 18 May–30 June 2023
Opening hours: Monday to Friday, 10am–5pm



Photo: "The Secret Space: Palimpsest" installation in the National Archives.

From the Archives: the Great Seal of the Central Bank

Erin McRae, Archivist, Central Bank of Ireland



Photo: Meštrović design for Coinage Competition 1927, taken from "75 Years of Change: The Story of the Central Bank of Ireland"

The Seal of the Central Bank was adopted in December 1965. The design was created by Croatian sculptor Ivan Meštrović and depicts a female harpist playing the Dalway harp.[1]

Ivan Meštrović was born to a peasant family in Vrpolje in 1883, and began working as a shepherd minding his father's flock of sheep. In his spare time, Meštrović carved wood and soft stone. Meštrović caught the attention of a stone-cutter named Pavle Bilinic in 1899 and went on to live in the latter's workshop in Split, Croatia.[2] From there he went on to study at the Art Academy in Vienna.[3] Meštrović became an internationally recognized artist and travelled widely as a result. Meštrović's most famous works include the national Yugoslav monument, the Temple of Kosovo, and many of his religious sculptures; one being the relief-sculpture of the Madonna in Washington, which he completed in 1957. In addition, his work of the statue of Gregory of Nin in Split, is pictured below as well as images of the Meštrović Gallery, also in Split. Meštrović died in 1962 in the United States.[4]





Photos: Meštrović Gallery in Split, Croatia. Images taken by Bank Archivist on holiday in Split in 2022





Photos: Meštrović Gallery and Statue of Gregory of Nin (Grgur Ninski) in Split, Croatia. Images taken by Bank Archivist on holiday in Split in 2022.

In 1962, the Central Bank sought advice from counsel surrounding a new seal of a different design to that of the existing Seal (c. 1943) which was adopted in response to Section 10 of the Central Bank Act 1942.[5] Counsel agreed that a new design for a Seal may be adopted by the Bank and submitted to the Board for approval.[6} In consultation with various experts many ideas were suggested, such as the portrait of Lady Lavery; the riverine head on the back of the £1 (Series A) note; or the bull design which had been submitted to the Coinage Committee of 1926-27.[7] Other suggestions included ancient Irish gold ornaments, such as the gorget or lunula, among others.[8] Further to the above in 1963, the design by Ivan Meštrović was then put forward as a suggestion for the Seal.[9]

The design itself was first introduced as a contender for the Coinage Competition, in response to the Coinage Act of 1926.[10] A committee was set up and included Senator W.B. Yeats as Chairman; Dermod O'Brien, President of the Royal Hibernian Academy; Lucius O'Callaghan, who at the time was the Director of the National Gallery (he later resigned this post); Thomas Bodkin, a Governor of the National Gallery and subsequently its Director; and Barry M. Egan, who, while serving as part of the Committee, became a member of Dáil Eireann for the City of Cork.[11]

The first meeting of the Committee was held in June of 1926 and was attended by Joseph Brennan, then Secretary to the Department of Finance and later the Currency Commission's first Chairman and subsequently after the Currency Commission dissolved, first Governor of the Central Bank.[12] The conditions surrounding coinage designs were threefold, firstly, the harp would have to have a presence on most if not all coins; secondly, inscriptions on the coins should be in Irish only; and thirdly, no effigies of modern persons should be included in the designs.[13] Eventually, the use of animals and birds on the new coins was decided and a selection of Irish and international artists were selected to participate in the coinage competition which included Ivan Meštrović. However, Meštrović's design was not submitted in time for the competition and it was disqualified.[14]



Photo: Old Seal. Central Bank of Ireland

The use of Meštrović's design as the Seal was favoured by the Governor (Maurice Moynihan), who in 1963 wrote, "The Coinage Committee of 1926-27 were very much impressed by this design, which they described as 'a magnificent piece of work, eminently suitable for reproduction in medallic form', and they recommended it 'to the Government's consideration, in the hope that an opportunity may arise at some future date for making use of it as a medal or seal'." Once the questions of ownership and copyright were settled the Meštrović design was used as the Seal of the Bank.[15] The Seal has since changed as the Central Bank of Ireland was restructured in 2003 and renamed as the Central Bank and Financial Services Authority of Ireland, requiring a new seal. The new seal ended up being based on the original design but, did not have any legend adopted henceforth.[16]

In 2007, the Croatian National Bank in cooperation with the Central Bank & Financial Services Authority of Ireland issued a commemorative silver coin of the Seal's design by Meštrović (pictured below).[17]



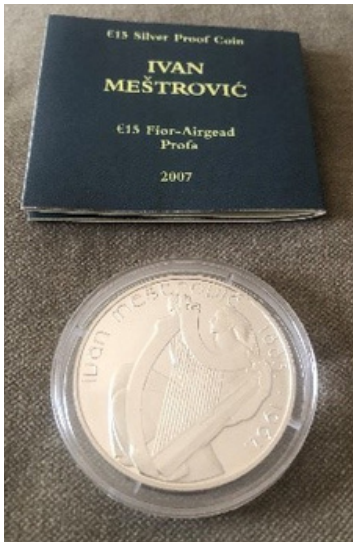
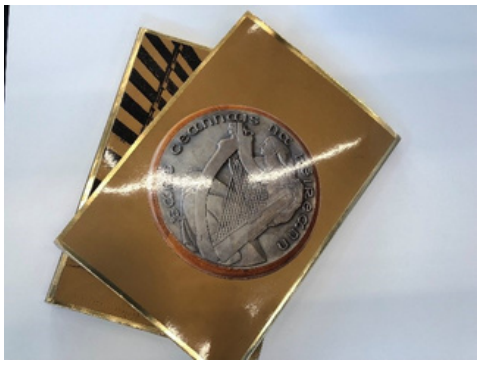


Photo: Commemorative Coin issued in 2007 by the Croatian National Bank and Central Bank & Financial Services Authority of Ireland. Source: Private Collection.

The Seal is currently used along with the Governor's signature on legal documentation, and has also been used as cover art on the reverse of annual reports (pictured below).





Photos: Annual Reports for the year 1992: Central Bank of Ireland Archive.

The Seal of the Central Bank is emblematic of many things. It is steeped in the historical origins of the Irish Free State and the Currency Commission, which preceded the Central Bank of Ireland. It serves as a reminder of the development of Ireland as an independent free state with its own currency and financial regulation but it also foreshadows the coming of a unified Europe under one currency. The Seal having been designed by Ivan Meštrović, a fellow European, symbolizes elements that make Ireland unique while simultaneously bringing to mind one of the aims of the European Union, to "enhance economic, social and territorial cohesion and solidarity among EU countries".[18] The Great Seal of the Central Bank is a symbol of unity, collaboration and a celebration of what Europe, and Ireland as a nation within this larger context can offer when brought together, creating a balanced and prosperous economic and financial system.

Endnotes

[1] "75 Years of Change: The Story of the Central Bank of Ireland," Central Bank of Ireland: Ireland, 2018, accessed May 6, 2022, https://www.centralbank.ie/docs/default-source/tns/events/75th-anniversary-brochure-english.pdf?sfvrsn=8#:~:text=In%20December%201965%2C%20a%20design,harpist%20playing%20the%20Dalway%20harp.
[2] Maria Mestrovic, "Background," Ivan Mestrovic Papers (MST), University of Notre Dame Archives (UNDA), Notre Dame, IN 46556.
[3] Ibid.
[4] Brian Cleeve, "Afterword," in W.B. Yeats and the Designing of Ireland's Coinage. Texts by W.B. Yeats and Others Edited with an Introduction by Brian Cleeve, ed. Liam Miller (Dublin: Dolmen Press, 1972), 68-69.
[5] Central Bank of Ireland Archive, Dublin, Ireland.
[6] Ibid.
[7] Ibid.
[8] Ibid.
[9] Ibid.
[10] James O'Brien, "Controversy follows 1927 Irish coin design competition results," The Old Currency Exchange, last modified September 7, 2014, https://oldcurrencyexchange.com/2014/09/07/the-controversial-1927-irish-coin-design-competition/.
[11] Central Bank of Ireland Archive, Dublin, Ireland.
[12] Ibid.
[13] Ibid.
[14] Ibid.
[15] Ibid.
[16] Ibid.
[17] "Ivan Meštrović," Hrvatska Narodna Banka (Croatian National Bank), November 20, 2017, https://www.hnb.hr/en/-/ivan-mestrovic.
[18] "Aims and values," European Union, accessed December 23, 2022, https://european-union.europa.eu/principles-countries-history/principles-and-values/aims-and-values_en#:~:text=The%20aims%20of%20the%20European,and%20prevent%20and%20combat%20crime.

Presidents Robinson, Biden and the Ballina connection

Niamh Ní Charra, archivist, University of Galway

The visit of President Joe Biden to Ireland last April understandably brought great excitement, nowhere more so than Ballina, County Mayo, his ancestral home in the West. The town has not one, but two presidential claims to fame – it is also where Mary Robinson, former President of Ireland, was born and raised. The University of Galway, also on the West coast, is proud to house the Mary Robinson archive, and to have a strong link with Ballina through its partnership with the Mary Robinson Centre. Her recently restored and extended childhood home, beautifully situated on the River Moy, the Centre is due to open within a year and through this partnership plans to use her archive as a catalyst to inspire others to address the causes she has championed in her career.



Photo: U.S. President, Joe Biden addressing the crowds at St Muredach's Cathedral, Ballina, 14/04/2023

During Biden's visit, the Centre proved an ideal base for Irish and visiting press, being perfectly situated across the river from the stage where all the evening's events were taking place. In fact, with it's beautiful pristine white walls, and large Irish and American flags on display, it was hard to miss it. This was particularly true when Mary Robinson herself, during her speech, cued the lighting of the famous lamp which was then shone out from her former childhood bedroom. This lamp, the same one she had commissioned during her presidency to shine out in welcome to the Irish diaspora, has since been replicated, with the later version now in permanent use in Áras an Uachtarán. The original will eventually find a new home in the Mary Robinson Centre when it is complete, and is meanwhile in safe-keeping at the University of Galway.



Photo: Plaque marking birthplace of Mary Robinson, President of Ireland, now the Mary Robinson Centre, Ballina.

Not to miss out on all the fun, it was decided that I should display a mini-exhibition of material from the Mary Robinson archive in the same childhood bedroom, open to whoever might be whittling away time before the main event! Visitors included journalist Teresa Mannion, who wrote an article and presented a news item for the national media. Mary herself visited, along with her brother and sister-in-law, before being whisked off to do multiple interviews.



Photo: Mary Robinson Archive material on display in her childhood bedroom, with archivist Niamh Ní Charra

As an archivist, it was a privilege to be present on such a historic day, and to be able to share a selection of material from the archive including that relating to previous American presidents and strong Irish-US connections, while all the time being very cognisant of records that were being generated as I watched, that might make their way into future presidential archives! (Yes – I kept the access pass and lanyard to add to the archive! No – I didn't get to keep the Biden coffee cup, but it wasn't recyclable so I don't think Mary would mind!).



Photo: Niamh Ní Charra, archivist, Susan Heffernan, Project Manager, Mary Robinson Centre, and Hugh Trayer with Joe Biden Coffee cups

It was also a privilege to witness the final performance of The Chieftains, the world famous, Grammy award-winning Irish Traditional Music supergroup that had spent over six decades touring internationally. Matt Molloy, Kevin Conneff and Seán Keane, of the original band, were joined by many other musicians, singers and dancers, all of whom had toured at various stages with the band, in what was advertised as The Chieftain's final gig. Missing was one of the original band-members and lead mischief-maker, uilleann piper Paddy Moloney, who had passed away in 2021.

This then was a celebration of the band, in memory of Paddy, and taking place in County Mayo, home of Matt. On stage were friends I had met along the road myself, as a fellow musician, and as I watched from across the river, I felt, expected and understood their excitement and joy to be part of such an event, while nostalgic to be at the end of their own joint story. Little did anyone on stage, or amongst the 27,000-strong crowd lining both sides of the Moy know that it was also to be Seán Keane's last performance. He died suddenly, on the 7th of May, at the age of 76. The Irish Traditional Music Archive paid a fitting tribute to this giant of a man, and legend of Irish Music here.

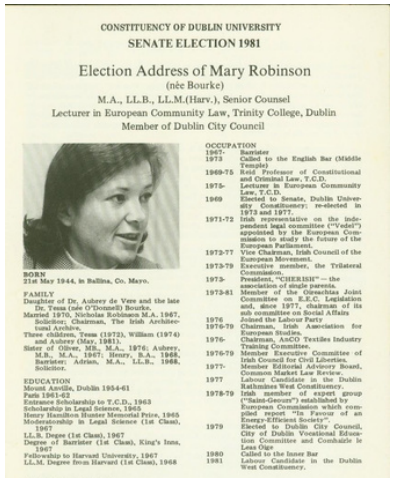


Photo: The lamp for the Irish Diaspora in Mary's childhood bedroom window, with The Chieftains visible performing on the other side of the River Moy.

Work continues on both the Mary Robinson Centre in Ballina, and on cataloguing the archive in the University of Galway, with the first of many tranches of material due for release later this year. This immensely rich archive consists of material relating to Mary Robinson's work from 1967 to the present and includes material covering her time as a barrister, legislator, senator, professor, President of Ireland, United Nations (UN) High Commissioner of Human Rights, UN Special Envoy for the Great Lakes, UN Special Envoy for Climate Change and El Niño, Chair of the Elders, founder of Realizing Rights - The Ethical Globalization Initiative, and founder of the Mary Robinson Foundation - Climate Justice.
While the task of cataloguing the archive continues, it seems an opportune time to share a small selection of items from the archive which were showcased on the day. A blog written ahead of Biden's visit features these and more, and can be viewed here.

Student to Senator

Mary Robinson is perhaps best known in Ireland for her role as its first female President (1990-97), but she was breaking records and making waves well before that. In 1967 she became the first female auditor of the Dublin University Law Society at Trinity College (TCD). During her maiden address she advocated removing the prohibition of divorce from the Irish Constitution, eliminating the ban on the use of contraceptives, and decriminalizing homosexuality and suicide.



CONSTITUENCY OF DUBLIN UNIVERSITY
SENATE ELECTION 1981

Election Address of Mary Robinson
(née Bourke)

M.A., LL.B., LL.M.(Harv.), Senior Counsel
Lecturer in European Community Law, Trinity College, Dublin
Member of Dublin City Council

BORN
21st May 1944, in Ballina, Co. Mayo.

FAMILY
Daughter of Dr. Aubrey de Vere and the late Dr. Tessa (née O'Donnell) Bourke.
Married 1970, Nicholas Robinson M.A. 1967, Solicitor, Chairman, The Irish Architectural Archive.
Three children, Tessa (1972), William (1974) and Aubrey (May, 1981).
Sister of Oliver, M.B., M.A., 1976; Aubrey, M.B., M.A., 1967; Henry, B.A., 1968, Barrister; Adrian, M.A., LL.B., 1968, Solicitor.

EDUCATION
Mount Anville, Dublin 1954-61
Paris 1961-62
Foundation Scholarship to T.C.D., 1963
Scholarship in Legal Science, 1965
Henry Hamilton Hunter Memorial Prize, 1965
Moderatorship in Legal Science (1st Class), 1967
LL.B. Degree (1st Class), 1967
Degree of Barrister (1st Class), King's Inns, 1967
Fellowship to Harvard University, 1967
LL.M. Degree from Harvard (1st Class), 1968

OCCUPATION
1967- Barrister
1973 Called to the English Bar (Middle Temple)
1969-75 Reid Professor of Constitutional and Criminal Law, T.C.D.
1975- Lecturer in European Community Law, T.C.D.
1969 Elected to Seanad, Dublin University Constituency; re-elected in 1973 and 1977.
1971-72 Irish representative on the independent legal committee ("Veder") appointed by the European Commission to study the future of the European Parliament.
1972-77 Vice Chairman, Irish Council of the European Movement.
1973-79 Executive member, the Trilateral Commission.
1973- President, "CHERISH" — the association of single parents.
1973-81 Member of the Oireachtas Joint Committee on E.E.C. Legislation and, since 1977, chairman of its sub committee on Social Affairs
1976 Joined the Labour Party
1976-79 Chairman, Irish Association for European Studies.
1976- Chairman, AnCO Textiles Industry Training Committee.
1976-79 Member Executive Committee of National Council for Civil Liberties.
1977- Member Editorial Advisory Board, Common Market Law Review.
1977 Labour Candidate in the Dublin Rathmines West Constituency.
1978-79 Irish member of expert group ("Saint-Geours") established by European Commission which compiled report "In Favour of an Energy-Efficient Society".
1979 Elected to Dublin City Council, City of Dublin Vocational Education Committee and Comhairle le Leas Óige
1980 Called to the Inner Bar
1981 Labour Candidate in the Dublin West Constituency.

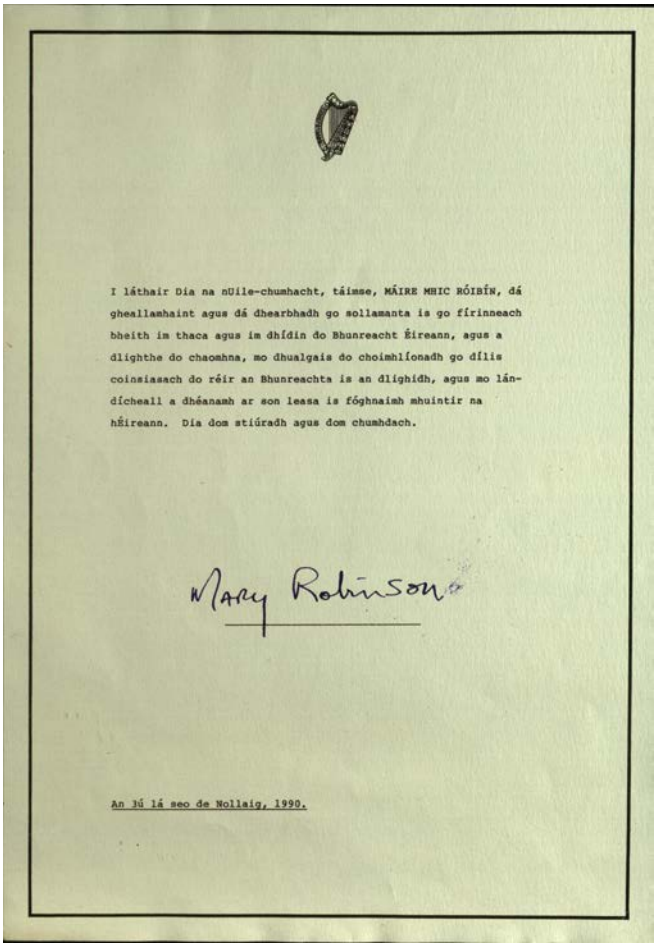
Photo: 1981 Seanad election flyer. (c) Mary Robinson Archive, University of Galway Library.

She was awarded a fellowship to attend Harvard Law School, receiving an LL.M [Master of Laws] in 1968. It was an incredible year which influenced her thinking and her character immensely - Martin Luther King and Robert Kennedy were both assassinated, and American students were trying to avoid being drafted, were criticising the Vietnam war and many were becoming more radical. She left Dublin, in her own words "a shy girl", and returned an "impatient one" – impatient to start changing the law.

At the age of 25, in 1969, she became Ireland's youngest professor of law, when she was appointed Reid Professor of Constitutional and Criminal Law, at TCD. In the same year she was elected to Seanad Éireann [Ireland's Senate] as an independent candidate and served as Senator for twenty years, during which time many of the issues she raised and campaigned to reform saw some success - contraception had been legalized, women could now serve on juries and the marriage bar on women in the civil service had been lifted.

President

In 1990, Mary became the first female President of Ireland, and the youngest president at that time. She is widely seen as having revolutionised the role of the Presidency, broadening its scope through her knowledge of constitutional law, developing new political, cultural, and economic links with other countries, reaching out to local communities at home and abroad, and using her platform to bring attention to the suffering of others such as her visit to Somalia in 1992.



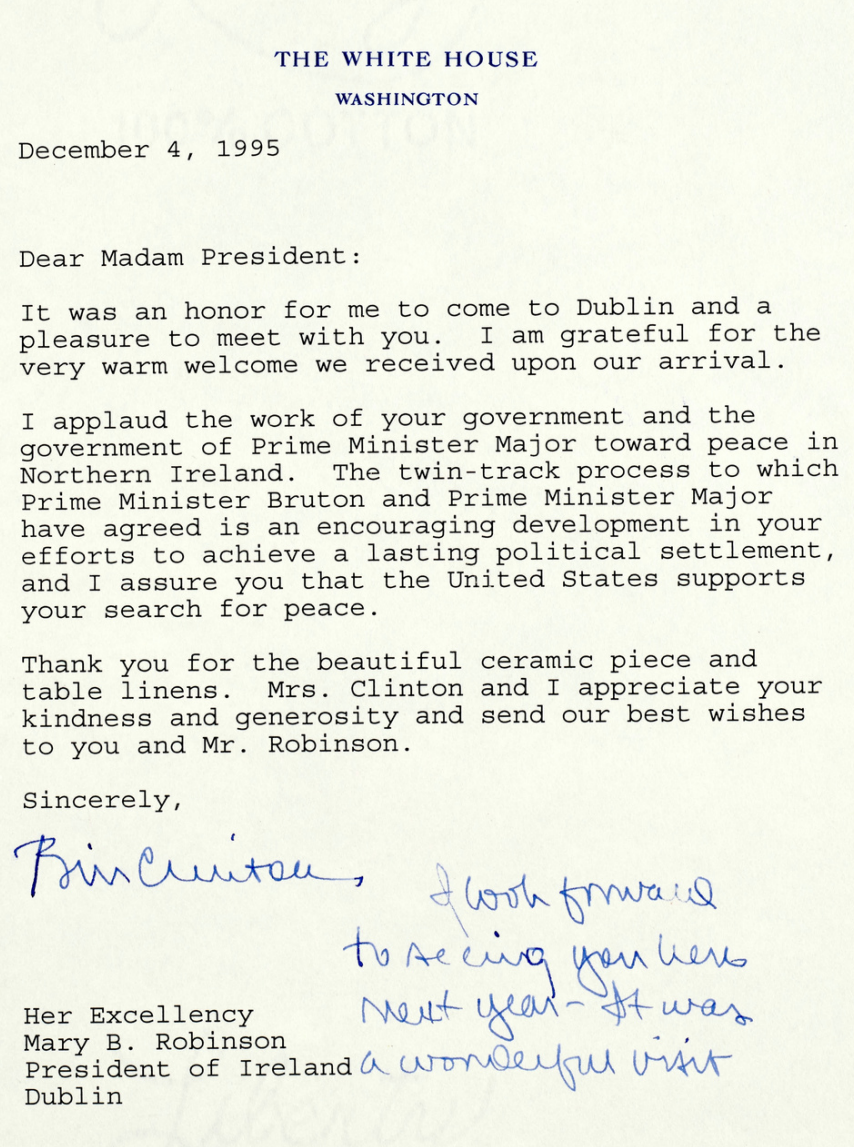
I láthair Dia na nUile-chumhacht, táimse, MÁIRE MHIC RÓIBÍN, dá gheallamhaint agus dá dhearbhadh go sollamanta is go fírinneach bheith im thaca agus im dhídin do Bhunreacht Éireann, agus a dlighthe do chaomhna, mo dhualgais do choimhlíonadh go dílis coinsiasach do réir an Bhunreachta is an dlighidh, agus mo lán-dícheall a dhéanamh ar son leasa is fóghnaimh mhuintir na hÉireann. Dia dom stiúradh agus dom chumhdach.

Mary Robinson

An Jú lá seo de Nollaig, 1990.

Photo: Signed declaration by Mary Robinson on day of her inauguration as President of Ireland, 03/12/1990. (c) Mary Robinson Archive, University of Galway Library.

Great Britain and Northern Ireland



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

December 4, 1995

Dear Madam President:

It was an honor for me to come to Dublin and a pleasure to meet with you. I am grateful for the very warm welcome we received upon our arrival.

I applaud the work of your government and the government of Prime Minister Major toward peace in Northern Ireland. The twin-track process to which Prime Minister Bruton and Prime Minister Major have agreed is an encouraging development in your efforts to achieve a lasting political settlement, and I assure you that the United States supports your search for peace.

Thank you for the beautiful ceramic piece and table linens. Mrs. Clinton and I appreciate your kindness and generosity and send our best wishes to you and Mr. Robinson.

Sincerely,

Bill Clinton

I look forward to seeing you here next year - It was a wonderful visit

Her Excellency
Mary B. Robinson
President of Ireland
Dublin

Photo: Letter from U.S. President Bill Clinton, in relation to Northern Ireland, 1995 (c) Mary Robinson Archive, University of Galway Library.

Her visit to Great Britain in 1993 where she met Queen Elizabeth II at Buckingham Palace was historic and paved the way for a reciprocal visit hosted by Mary's successor President McAleese. Equally her numerous visits to Northern Ireland where she reached out to communities on the ground, and politicians of all hues were hailed by people on all sides as vital in the search for Peace.

Ireland and the Choctaw Nation



Photo: Choctaw Certificate. (c) Mary Robinson Archive, University of Galway Library.

Mary Robinson received many awards throughout her presidency but perhaps none more poignant than that of "Honorary Chief of the Choctaw Nation". The relationship between Ireland and the Choctaw Nation began in 1847, when the Choctaws collected $170 to support the Irish during the Famine. The gift was significant, considering the Choctaw people had only a few years earlier been forced to walk the Trail of Tears. Robinson visited the Choctaw Nation in 1995 to rekindle and re-establish the friendship and thank Choctaws for their aid. In 2020, the Irish people once again honoured that gift, giving back to Native American tribes hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic, in memory of the Choctaw Nation's act of generosity.

Medal of freedom



The President of the United States of America

Awards this

Presidential Medal of Freedom

to

Mary Robinson

For Mary Robinson, the fight to end discrimination and suffering is an urgent moral imperative. She has been a trail-blazing crusader for women's rights in Ireland and a forceful advocate for equality and human rights around the world. Whether courageously visiting conflict-stricken regions, or working to inject concern for human rights into business and economic development, Mary Robinson continues this important work today, urging citizens and nations to make common cause for justice.

The White House
Washington, D.C.
August 12, 2009

Photo: Medal of Freedom awarded to President Robinson by President Barack Obama in 2009. (c) Mary Robinson Archive, University of Galway Library.

In July 2009, Mary was awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom, the highest civilian honour awarded by the United States. Coincidentally, it was also awarded to fellow Elder, Archbishop Desmond Tutu the same year, and to President Biden in 2017, while he was serving as Vice-President. On presenting her with the award, U.S. President Barack Obama said,

"As a crusader for women and those without a voice in Ireland, Mary Robinson was the first woman elected President of Ireland...Today, as an advocate for the hungry and the hunted, the forgotten and the ignored, Mary Robinson has not only shone a light on human suffering but illuminated a better future for our world."

Fitting then, that President Biden's first words, standing facing Mary's childhood home in Ballina, were "I see the light, Mary".



Photo: Crowd at President Biden's address, Ballina, 14/04/2023. © Picture Courtesy of Andrew Downes XPOSURE & DFA.

For further information on the work being carried out to process, preserve and catalogue the Mary Robinson Archive, check out this blog.

International Council on Archives Section on University and Research Institution Archives (ICA-SUV)

Annual Conference

Access to Archives: Tradition and Variation 29th-31st May 2023.

Nora Thornton, archivist, National Library of Ireland.

UCD was the location for ICA-SUV Annual Conference which took place from the 29th-31st May. The topic this year was access. It is always good to meet up with colleagues from near and far and the attendees and speakers came from as far away as the USA, Canada, South Africa, India, Estonia as well as the UK and Ireland. It is vitally important to attend such events to meet, chat and hear about what our colleagues in other institutions are up to and what challenges and successful projects they are involved with.



Photo: Conference brochure

The conference was being hosted by the National Folklore Department in UCD so there was an emphasis on folklore archives in the talk topics and I was afraid that they would not be of much relevance to me and my role in the National Library of Ireland. Thankfully I was wrong and there were plenty of interesting and extremely relevant talks.

Obviously the topic of access is relevant to every archive and many of the talks discussed the importance of digitisation in improving access to collections, especially during the recent COVID-19 pandemic. Digitisation is always a popular topic and thankfully no one uttered the dreaded phrase "Why don't you just digitise everything...?"

Artificial Intelligence is another hot topic and AI can be useful for for text recognition and other uses, we must be careful about relying on it too much.



Photo: Conference attendees

All papers were of interest but two in particular stood out to me. Úna Bhreathnach of DCU spoke about Bailiucháin Béaloidis Árann, the Folklore of Árann Collection. https://bba.duchas.ie/en This is a collection of photographs, audio recordings and video all about life on Árann the largest of the Aran Islands. Crucially it was collected by the islanders themselves who approached DCU when they became aware of the need to ensure preservation of the collections which the National Folklore Collection and Duchas/DCU provided.

The other paper what stood out was "Witnessing the War in Ukraine: Making traumatic records accessible" by Maryna Chernyavska, of the Kule Folklore Archives. This collection "Writings from the War" is a collection of testimonies of Ukrainian people dating from the Russian invasion of Ukraine in February 2022. It is an important archive detailing people's experiences of bombing and violence and many of the statements may be traumatic or difficult to listen to. However, it is important to provide access to such records to preserve the voices and experiences of the victims of war and violence and to perhaps prevent similar actions in future.

Everyone I met was so passionate about their work and it always great to meet like-minded people. If you get the chance to attend a conference in future, go. It is a great way to connect with international colleagues as well as ones closer to home.

After lunch on the final day, attendees were invited to visit one of three locations. I chose the UCD Special Collections Department where we viewed some manuscripts from their Franciscan Collection. A lovely end to a jam-packed few days.



Photo: A visit to the James Joyce Library University College Dublin