Special Edition: Reflecting on Exhibitions & Events held to mark the centenary of the 1916 Rising

The Irish Society of Archives newsletter editor wishes to sincerely apologise for the delays in issuing our bi-annual newsletter. The committee elected at AGM on 4 April 2017 will now explore options to ensure regular issues are published in a more timely manner in the future. However as we approach Easter 2017, join us in this special e-version edition of the newsletter in which we mainly reflect on some of the exhibitions and events held last year to mark the Centenary of the 1916 Rising. Also included are details of activities of the ISA in 2016. Happily many exhibitions and events featured in the newsletter can still be viewed and accessed online, a digital legacy to the 2016 Commemorative Programming. Many thanks to our contributors. Ellen Murphy, Editor, ISA Newsletter

Limerick and the 1916 Rising

The Special Collections and Archives Department at the Glucksman Library, University of Limerick is delighted to announce the launch of their new exhibition. Limerick & the 1916 Rising is drawn from the archives of the Daly family of Limerick. It communicates the story of the 1916 Easter Rising through the experiences of the Dalys, a highly politically, commercially and socially active family steeped in republican tradition.

Full-length black and white studio portrait of John Daly taken in Berlin before his imprisonment, c. 1870s, UL Daly Collection

The exhibition focuses on the life and legacy of John Daly (1845-1916), prominent Limerick Fenian and former Mayor of Limerick.

The collection’s documents, photographs and personal artefacts are used to examine Daly’s early life, his activities as Fenian organiser in the 1880s, prison experiences following conviction of participation in the Fenian Dynamite Campaign, and business activities and political rise in Limerick following his release. The exhibition also attempts to chart the relationships between Daly and key figures in the Rising such as Thomas Clarke and Seán MacDiarmada. The revolutionaries visit Daly in Limerick and also correspond on personal and political matters. Letters and photographs in the years leading up to 1916, including those of Patrick Pearse and Roger Casement, are highlighted to offer new insight into the personalities and convictions of the individuals involved.

Limerick & the 1916 Rising highlights the powerful impact that archives can have in re-telling or re-creating the past. A sombre feature of the exhibition are the last known letters of Seán MacDiarmada and Edward ‘Ned’ Daly. Ned Daly was John Daly’s only nephew and was in command of the garrison at the Four Courts during the Rising. After his execution, his possessions were returned to his family and these items, displayed against the backdrop of a period parlour, make a poignant statement on the personal toll of the rebellion on the bereaved. An audio recording of Madge Daly’s stirring account of her final visit with her brother, Ned Daly in Kilmainham Gaol in the hours prior to his
execution brings the listener directly into contact with the grief experienced by the family in pursuit of their Republican goals. John Daly died in June 1916 and the tricolour that was draped over his coffin concludes the exhibition, but it also heralds the beginning of the War of Independence that was soon to follow.

The exhibition ran at the Hunt Museum from 21 March to 15 May. A virtual experience of the exhibition harnessing the digital potential of the collection is available at www.limerick1916.ul.ie.

Evelyn McAuley, Archivist, Promotion & Outreach
Glucksman Library, University of Limerick

Surgeons and Insurgents – RCSI and The Easter Rising

Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI) housed a free public commemorative exhibition from 23rd March until 17th April 2016 that looked at RCSI doctors who treated casualties during the Rising, the rebels who occupied the College during Easter week 1916, and how in some cases, their lives became remarkably intertwined. The exhibition offered a rare opportunity to glimpse inside the rooms occupied by the insurgents, rooms which remain virtually unchanged since 1916.

Insurgents take control
St Stephen’s Green was regarded by the leaders of the 1916 Rising, as a strategic position vital to the objective of impeding British army reinforcements arriving in the city centre.

Easter Monday, April 24, 1916, saw the arrival of approximately 120 members of the Irish Citizen Army, Cumann na mBan, the Irish Volunteers and Na Fianna, under the command of Commandant Michael Mallin, in St Stephen’s Green. They proceeded to clear it of any bystanders and lock the gates. At 1pm, Mr Alfred Miller, Registrar of RCSI, phoned James Duncan, the College Porter, and instructed him to lock the doors. Oblivious to the mayhem around him, John Freeman Knott, a College academic, arrived for his daily visit. Duncan opened the front door slightly to explain to Knott that the College was closed. At that moment, Countess Constance Markievicz was leading a group towards RCSI in the hope of taking it over. This building could be of use to Mallin if the need for a retreat from the Green arose. Markievicz seized the opportunity, forcing her way past Duncan and into the College. The insurgents locked Duncan and his family into a small room in his quarters. RCSI was now under the control of the insurgents.

Wounded across the city
In April 1916, Dublin’s hospitals were already working to capacity caring for wounded soldiers evacuated from Europe’s battlefields. During Easter Week, as civilian and military casualties mounted, temporary hospitals had to be established. The most seriously wounded were transferred to the major hospitals for specialist treatment despite the surrounding danger. Due to sporadic fighting throughout the city, medical and surgical staff could not safely make their way in to hospitals to help with the increasing numbers of casualties. The surgeons and doctors who were already on duty had to shoulder this heavy burden.

Former President of RCSI, Sir Robert Henry Woods, and RCSI men, Sir Arthur Ball and Dr Charles Molyneux Benson, were on duty at Sir Patrick Dun’s Hospital. Medical staff from the hospital came forward, having negotiated a brief ceasefire so that they could treat and remove the wounded. It was reported that a great deal of bravery was shown by the medical staff who carried over 79 wounded men, including soldiers and insurgents, into the hospital.

Lives intertwined
The lives of a number of the surgeons associated with the College and those of the wounded civilians, soldiers and insurgents they treated, were interconnected in many ways before, during and after the Rising.

Sir Thomas Myles, PRCSI 1900

Sir Thomas Myles, a Fellow of RCSI who was elected President of the College in 1900, was a believer in Home Rule but he also believed that opposing political sides should be on an equal footing.

So he became involved in gunrunning for the Irish Volunteers, bringing guns in on his yacht in response to Sir Edward Carson and the Ulster
Unionists having carried out a similar expedition in 1914. Throughout Easter Week, Myles worked tirelessly along with Dr Joseph O’Carroll, Dr Pollock and Dr Mannix in Richmond Hospital treating insurgents, soldiers and civilians alike.

Lieutenant Colonel Francis Richard Tobin, a Licentiate of the College and loyal veteran soldier for 20 years, was another of the surgeons involved. Tobin was on duty in St Vincent’s Hospital, located on St Stephen’s Green during the time of the Rising. Tobin not only treated the injured that were brought into the hospital, he also attended the wounded James Connolly in Dublin Castle Hospital. A strong friendship developed between the two men. After Connolly’s execution, Tobin, with the help of writer George Russell (AE), arranged financial assistance for the impoverished Connolly family, establishing a fund to which people such as Sir Horace Plunkett and George Bernard Shaw subscribed. Connolly’s daughter, Moira, went on to study medicine at RCSI.

The Experience

Visitors to the exhibition entered through the College’s Front Door on St Stephen’s Green and were greeted with a full scale model of the Green and surrounding buildings, barricaded windows and accompanying sound effects. They then climbed the staircase to the Board Room gazing out the exact same windows the insurgents used to fire across the Green at the British Army. The main exhibition was housed in the College Hall, the very room the insurgents slept in during their occupation of RCSI Easter Week 1916. Numerous artefacts were on display including the tricolor that flew over the College during the Rising and Countess Markievicz’s will which she wrote on 30th April 1916 and was witnessed by Michael Mallin. A first aid station was re-created using items from RCSI Heritage Collections on the stage in College Hall, the same spot where the insurgents had theirs and treated their wounded comrades.

The exhibition was accompanied by a very successful free public lecture series that looked at different aspects of the Rising including: what life was like in Dublin as part of the British Empire, how the material culture surrounding the Rising can shape our thoughts on it and the vital role of the St. John Ambulance during the fighting. Each talk has been recorded and will be made available to view online.

http://www.rcsi.ie/2016

The exhibition drew on the College’s own archives to provide the material, both written and visual, for the surgeon’s profiles bringing to light previously unseen and unknown material, as was the case with the eye-witness account left by James Duncan, the College Porter.

The exhibition moved to the Lexicon Library in Dun Laoghaire May-June 2016, and to Dublin City Library and Archive for July-August 2016.

Meadhbh Murphy, Archivist, RCSI

After Easter: Photographs of Dublin in 1916 by Thomas Johnson Westropp

An exhibition which features new large-format prints of photographs of central Dublin taken by the antiquarian Thomas Westropp in the aftermath of the Easter Rising opened in the Architecture Gallery of the Irish Architectural Archive in February 2016. The images are a vivid, still shocking, record of the destruction wrought to the centre of Dublin between 24 and 29 April 1916.

Westropp title: The D.B.C. Restaurant, Sackville St May 1916

The Dublin Bread Company (DBC) Restaurant loomed over Lower Sackville Street. One of the earliest works of architect George Francis Beckett, scion of a long established Dublin building firm (which unsurprisingly
On 25 January 1916, Thomas Johnson Westropp (1860-1922) delivered his Presidential Address to the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland (RSAI). It was the apogee of a career spent in what he himself referred to as ‘the severe and less popular type of archaeology’. Born in 1860 to a wealthy Limerick landowning family, Westropp graduated from Trinity College, Dublin, as a civil engineer in 1885. His independent means ensured that he was able to devote himself on a full-time basis to antiquities. He published over 300 articles, and his comprehensive surveys of the prehistoric monuments and medieval buildings of Limerick and Clare stand amongst his finest achievements. His camera was a vital archaeological tool, and collections of his photographs have found their way into the National Museum, National Library, Trinity College, Royal Irish Academy and Irish Architectural Archive.

The Archive holds twelve albums of photographs by Westropp. Each album bears an inscription inside its front cover indicating that they were sent by Westropp to his sister Mary Johnson O’Callaghan of Lismehan, Co. Clare, over the period 1898 to 1921. There are usually two photographs on each album page, and each photograph is individually identified in Westropp’s own hand. The subject matter is overwhelmingly antiquarian, with a strong geographical bias in favour of Clare and Limerick.

Three months after Westropp delivered his RSAI Presidential Address the Easter Rising erupted. The events of Easter Week 1916 clearly affected Westropp; he turned his camera away from the past to focus very much on the present. His position and reputation provided him with privileged access, and between May and June he took at least forty-four photographs of the damaged city. A set is in the National Library, a set in Trinity College, a set in the Royal Irish Academy, and in Volume 10 of the albums of antiquarian photographs held in the Irish Architectural Archive there are twenty-four photographs headed ‘Dublin after the Sinn Fein Rebellion’. Twenty-two are presented in this exhibition in large format prints derived from the original images in the albums.

Westropp title: The Ruined Portico, General Post Office May 1916 One of the most impressively composed of all Westropp’s Dublin photographs, this image at first glance seems to give the distinct impression that nothing untoward has occurred in the centre of Dublin City. An alert soldier on sentry duty hints at the unusual circumstances, but the only sign of the devastation all around is the missing roof of the GPO portico.

The exhibition ran until 31st August 2016 in the Architecture Gallery, Irish Architectural Archive, 45 Merrion Square. The Architecture Gallery is open to the public from 10 am to 5 pm, Tuesdays to Fridays. Admission is free.

Colum O’Riordan, Irish Architectural Archive

National Library of Ireland Web Archive Project

Since 2011, the National Library of Ireland (NLI) has been archiving the Irish web. The web is a fragile and fluid place and even though we don’t often acknowledge it, websites are as vulnerable to loss, as paper based records, if not more so. Websites are constantly changing, be it a changed URL or domain name, new content added or just simply disappearing completely in the blink of an eye. This is a frustrating reality for archivists and researchers. The need to pursue digital preservation spurred the National Library of Ireland to preserve the online life of Ireland. Beginning with a pilot project on the 2011 General Election, the web archive team in the NLI have been identifying, collecting and preserving websites that are of Irish significance. By working with the Internet Memory Foundation, our technical partners, we have been able to engage in a selective web archiving programme based on criteria set out in our Collection Development Policy. Our web archive is based on sites of Irish interest organised around specific...
themes and events in the life of the nation as well as themes and events that align with existing NLI collection strengths built up over many years.

In the past five years, the National Library has captured over 700 websites, ranging from websites of political parties, to local festivals and government websites. The idea of preserving websites is relatively new in Ireland and the technology is always adapting to new developments, such as capturing the latest forms of social media. The website selection process around each theme or event is based on high level criteria set out in our Collection Development Policy such as being of Irish interest, and documenting significant aspects of the history, social or cultural life of Ireland, or defining aspects of Irish identity. As part of the selection process we then consider more specific collection based criteria.

In 2016, as part of the National Library’s programme for 2016, we captured websites that tell the story of this special year online. Our project, Remembering 1916, Recording 2016, aims to capture the essence of this year’s centenary commemorations of both the 1916 Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme.

In the case of our Remembering 1916, Recording 2016 collection this includes criteria such as ensuring coverage of local events nationwide, as well as the state led events. We are striving to collect websites that focus on not only the official view of the commemorations, but also preserving the websites of smaller organisations, artists and cultural institutions both nationwide and internationally. We have aimed to capture the more unique aspects of this year’s commemoration such as the commercial element which has arisen from the 1916 Easter Rising commemorations. We have engaged with various groups, such as teachers, lecturers, relatives of participants in the 1916 Rising, historians and have been delighted with the levels of positive feedback.

Extensive scoping of this collection produced far more sites than we have the resources to archive and this meant a ruthless appraisal process. Once decisions around site appraisal and selection were finalised we could then engage in the permissions process. Other considerations such as finalising the best dates for capturing websites and the frequency we crawl them must be taken into account as the major events are spread out throughout the year.

It is our aim that the National library’s web archive will contribute to the national conversation around this year’s commemorations by providing unique contemporary online records of Ireland’s 2016 formal, local and international events. We hope that our digital collections will complement the National Library’s traditional collections, affording people the opportunity to compare and contrast the 100 year commemorations of both the Rising and the Somme with those of the 50th anniversary in 1966.
Two little girls, Easter Rising Memorial, Arbour Hill, Dublin, 1966. The National Library of Ireland collection, NLI WIL 19[7].

At the National Library of Ireland you can study our collections on the Rising, the aftermath and the commemorations in 1966. Soon you will be able to view our 2016 collections on our web archive.

We know that the National Library’s web archive will become a much used resource, not just for students and researchers, but for all. We invite everyone to have a look at our collections and explore the recent past, which are freely available through the National Library’s website. We will be adding to our collections throughout the year as we make our 2016 crawls available.

If you would like to learn more or even explore the web archive. Please visit us at http://www.nli.ie/en/web_archive.aspx
Keep up to date with our progress on Twitter @NLlreland and Facebook. You can also follow our progress on the NLI blog http://www.nli.ie/blog/

Maria Ryan, 2016 Web Archivist, National Library of Ireland

Nelson’s Head at Dublin City Library and Archive

The iconic Nelson’s Pillar is still greatly missed by Dubliners of a certain age. It was blown up on 8 March 1966 and – after many travails – the ‘Head’ of Nelson took up residence in the Reading Room of Dublin City Library and Archive in 2004. We now have a comprehensive collection relating to the Pillar – apart from the Head, we have books, newspapers and photographs; files relating to the destruction and compensation for destroyed property, from the archives of Dublin City Council; files relating to the excavation carried out by Margaret Gowan Ltd held in our Dublin City Archaeological Archive; and a memoir project where we collected stories relating to the Pillar.

Every five years, Dublin City Library & Archive holds a Nelson Memory morning and this year we marked the 50th anniversary of the explosion on its due date, 8 March 2016. Our Conference Room was full and the presentation included poetry read by Alastair Smeaton; a talk from Donal Fallon, author of The Pillar: the Life and Afterlife of Nelson’s Pillar; and songs and ballads from Tony Fitzpatrick and Luke Cheevers. The anniversary captured the imagination and the ‘Head’ was featured in Evening Herald, Irish Independent and Sunday Telegraph; and on TG4’s Nuacht and RTE’s Nine o’Clock News.

Mary Clark, Dublin City Archivist

Editor’s Note: Nelson’s Head makes regular contributions to Dublin Public Libraries and Archives Blog, providing his own unique perspective of events and collections of City Archives. http://www.dublincity.ie/story/dear-friends-and-fellow-sailors-introductory-blog-nelsons-head

Representative Church Body (RCB)

The Representative Church Body (RCB) is pleased to announce the appointment of Dr Susan Hood as Librarian and Archivist of the RCB Library, where are conserved and maintained many records associated with the work and history of the Church of Ireland.

Dr Hood has served as Assistant Librarian and Archivist with the RCB since 1998 and is a co-editor of Irish Archives, the journal of the Irish Society for Archives. She succeeded Dr Raymond Refaussé who retired as Librarian and Archivist at the end of June 2016.

Welcoming Dr Hood to her new role, the Archbishop of Armagh, The Most Revd Dr Richard Clarke said: ‘I have known Susan Hood well for many years, and am very aware of her deep commitment to maintaining a record of the work of the Church of Ireland during her years in the RCB Library. I am delighted to welcome her to this new role, as she prepares to take charge of the future direction and development of the Library. The Library has always played an important part in the life of the Church, acting as a vital resource for those in training for future ministry and for many involved in research, in addition to conserving the record of our witness as a Church in the island of Ireland. Susan is well-known across the Church for her promotion of
different facets of the life and ministry of the Church through her writing for the Church’s website, including the highly acclaimed “Archive of the Month”, and papers in many research journals. I wish her well as she takes up her new responsibilities as Librarian and Archivist.

RCB Library Publication

Dr Dr Ray Refaussé, Roibeard O Gallachoir, Professor Gillespie, Bishop of Clogher, Dean of Belfast

The seventh volume in the RCB Library’s ‘Texts and Calendars’ series has been launched in St Anne’s cathedral, Belfast, by the Bishop of Clogher, the Rt Revd John McDowell, who is a member of the RCB’s Library and Archives Committee. The series is edited by Dr Raymond Refaussé and published by Four Courts Press.

Preaching Belfast, 1747-72: a selection of the sermons of James Saurin has been edited by Professor Raymond Gillespie from Maynooth and Roibeard O Gallachoir, a graduate of the MA in Historical Archives in Maynooth, who has recently joined the staff of the RCB Library.

The volume takes the form of a selection of 24 sermons from the collection of 61 which are preserved in seven volumes in Belfast Cathedral. Saurin, a member of a well known Irish Huguenot family, was Vicar of Belfast, 1747-72, and his sermons are one of the largest collections of parochial sermons surviving for 18th century Ireland. They provide a vivid insight into the mind of a Church of Ireland clergyman in a rapidly changing provincial town at the middle of the 18th century and illuminate many of the key issue of the world of provincial Ireland.

Dr Ray Refaussé, RCB Librarian and Archivist

ISA Matters

ISA Journal

2015 Edition of Irish Archives dedicated to business records

Archivists, historians, ISA members and those of the business community gathered at the Guinness Storehouse, Dublin on 10 November 2015 for the launch of Irish Archives, Ireland’s only dedicated archives journal and the showcase publication of the Irish Society for Archives (ISA).

Introducing the guest speaker, ISA chairman Dr Raymond Refaussé welcomed the positive collaboration between the business community and archivists that had made the journal’s focus on business records possible this year, thanking particularly Diageo which generously hosted the event in the headquarters of Guinness, and Gina Quin, CEO of the Dublin Chamber of Commerce, for launching the journal.

In her engaging speech, Ms Quin commented that the chosen theme ‘could not be more appropriate as the economy recovers and how the role of business in society needs to be re-established’, adding that ‘archives do this in a wonderful way, reminding us of the human stories that are extant in all businesses and also the way in which businesses shaped the city and countryside around them’.

Far from finding the seven articles contained in this colourful production to be ‘just about accounts and stock lists and plans and specifications’, she demonstrated how ‘they actually are a vivid picture of the people who worked in those businesses and of the Dublin and Cork and Belfast of the day’. She spoke of the Guinness company’s benevolence, not least shown by their treatment of more than 800 employees who fought during the Great War.

Ms Quin also referenced the anecdote recorded in the archives of Irish Distillers Limited explaining how the whiskey that we all know as Paddy’s got its name and recalled her fond memories of the smell of baking biscuits at the Jacob’s Biscuit Factory on Bishop Street, where the National Archives is based today. She paid tribute to this company’s paternalistic role where employees were provided with a swimming pool, a roof garden, medical care and canteen facilities and
recounted how when the factory was occupied during the 1916 Easter Rising, perhaps as a testament to the affection in which Jacob’s was held in the hearts and minds of the Irish people, it was found that when the owners resumed control on 1 May, ‘no malicious damage had been done’.

In addition to the stories of Guinness, Irish Distillers Limited and Jacob’s which Irish Archives 2015 brings to light, the journal includes further articles of local interest on the papers of Young and Mackenzie, architects and civil engineers of Belfast who designed some of the most impressive Victorian and Edwardian buildings in that city, together with the rich collections of business records held in the Cork City and County Archives, including those from the world famous Cork Butter Market.

Finally, the lead article on the work of the Business Records Survey (which was initiated by the Irish Manuscripts Commission in 1970) charts the nationwide efforts to salvage and preserve the records of businesses of varying sizes and activities and includes vivid accounts of recovering materials from redundant attics and basements. Approximately 1000 such collections of account books, invoices, files, maps and plans from a vast range of enterprises have been collected, all of which are now stored securely for the future in the National Archives.

Had it not been for the truly heroic work of successive business records surveyors over four decades, there would have been little to celebrate either in the ISA journal Irish Archives 2015 or its successful launch.

Irish Archives 2015 is richly illustrated throughout and available directly from the editors (for €12 including postage to the UK or €10 for postage in Ireland).

For further information please contact either:

Susan Hood, co-editor Irish Archives susan.hood@rcbdub.org

Elizabeth McEvoy, co-editor Irish Archives emcevoy@nationalarchives.ie

ISA Membership
To become a member or renew membership of the Irish Society for Archives, please contact: Ms Antoinette Doran, Hon. Membership Secretary, Irish Society for Archives, c/o National Archives, Bishop Street, D8 or email isasubscription@gmail.com

ISA Lecture Series & Seminars 2016-2017
The ISA delivered a varied and entertaining lecture program for 2016-2017. This included two ‘Hidden Pages: Seminars’. The first in 2016 focusing on little known archival sources relating to 1916 Rising, and the second in February 2017 focused on Sports Archives and Sports History. A third seminar will be held on 2 May 2017 on the history and archives of the Electricity Supply Board. The seminar will mark the 90th anniversary of its foundation and will be held at Dublin City Library and Archives, 138-144 Pearse Street, D2. The proceedings of the Seminar will published in the 2017 ISA Journal. Full details of speakers will circulated in advance.

Dr Jason McElligott, Keeper of Marsh’s Library delivering his fascinating lecture to ISA titled: ‘Awkward, Uncomfortable and Evil Items in Manuscripts and Archives’, 4 April 2017 at Dublin City Library and Archives.

ISA Social Media and Website
Coming soon: We will shortly be launching our brand new re-vamped website which has been created by ISA website editor. Keep an eye on the URL www.irishsocietyforarchives.com/

Did you know we also have a twitter and facebook account? Please follow us at www.facebook.com/irishsocietyforarchives and @Irish_Archives