

April at the Museum!



In Ireland "The Easter Lily" was introduced in 1926 by Cumann na mBan. At that time there were no pension funds or social welfare and widows and orphans were left to fend for themselves so the Women of Ireland got together to organise a way of gathering funds. Proceeds from the sale of the badge went to the 'Irish Republican Prisoners Dependants Fund'. Traditionally, the badges were sold outside church gates on Easter Sunday. In the early years of their existence, people from a broad political spectrum - from Fianna Fáil to Sinn Féin - wore lilies, which were sold by members of those political parties as well as the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Fianna Éireann, and Conradh na Gaeilge. As a spring flower, it calls to mind the Easter Rising of 1916, while the colors of green, white and gold naturally remind us of the tricolor.

The events of 1916 through 1923 are being commemorated in Ireland and it has often been tricky for the government to navigate - especially given the tension and unresolved issues around Brexit. We at the Museum commemorated the 100th anniversary of the First Dáil, and will also mark the anniversary of the Easter 1916 Rising by reading the Proclamation. But history and commemoration can be a divisive issue - and especially Irish history, where the

War of Independence killed many Irish people on both sides, did not deliver an independent thirty-two county state, and resulted in a horrific civil war which arguable dominated Irish politics for decades. This article in the Irish Times, January 5th 2019 was an interesting exploration of things as they stand:

Ireland's Decade of Centenaries has reached its midpoint with the end of the centenary of the first World War and the 1918 British general election. The decade actually lasts 11 years. It began in 2012 with the centenary of the first Home Rule Bill and will end in September 2023 when the Irish Free State joined the League of Nations.

Ahead lie the most difficult commemorations. The War of Independence, the Civil War and partition remain contested history in Ireland. They all have the potential to resurrect old enmities for a new generation.

Before Brexit, relations between Britain and Ireland had never been better. The visit of Queen Elizabeth II to Ireland in 2011 with her wonderfully couched euphemism that "with the benefit of historical hindsight we can all see things which we would wish had been done differently or not at all" seemed to presage a new era of mutual reconciliation.

Yet the next phase of the decade of centenaries is happening against a background of growing distrust between the Irish and British governments and mounting incredulity in Ireland at the fathomless ignorance of British politicians and commentators when it comes to Irish history. There is also the absence of a Stormont government and no hope of a common narrative emerging in the North over the coming years.

If a hard border emerges in the coming years, the British will be blamed for it at a time when the centenary of various atrocities carried out by the Black and Tans are being commemorated. President Michael D Higgins, in an interview with this newspaper before the presidential election, warned against turning the collective memory into "hatred's forge - rekindling old conflicts rather than healing them".

The next phase of the decade of centenaries will begin in earnest on January 21st next year when the twin centenaries of the ambush at Soloheadbeg, the event that started the War of Independence, and the first Dáil will be marked. A joint sitting of the houses of the Oireachtas will take place in the Round Room of the Mansion House, the place where the first Dáil met on January 21st 1919. It will be a celebration unlike so many other events in the decade of centenaries which will be commemorations where people lost their lives. The durability of Irish democracy is something which will be celebrated unequivocally. This will be a State event; Soloheadbeg will be organised locally.

The Soloheadbeg ambush is a microcosm of the type of commemorations that are likely to take place to mark the War of Independence. These were usually small-scale engagements and the dead on both sides were predominantly Irish. At Soloheadbeg, Royal Irish Constabulary constables James McDonnell and Patrick O'Connell were killed while escorting a consignment of gelignite to a local quarry. The former was a fluent Irish speaker and a widower with six children. They were both paid agents of the British state in the eyes of republicans and largely written out of the narrative afterwards. The Soloheadbeg committee has agreed to invite the relatives on both sides to the commemoration which will take place on Sunday, January 20th so as not to clash with the centenary of the first Dáil. "That was quite important for us," said [Tim Hanly](#), PRO for the Soloheadbeg centenary committee. "We have made contact with the McDonnell and O'Connell families. We want to be inclusive and reflective that this was a painful history. We don't want a glorification of war," he said.

Some 550 RIC men were killed in the War of Independence. They found themselves on the wrong side of Irish history. The Harp Society, which remembers all the former Irish policemen who died in various conflicts, is determined not to allow the War of Independence centenary pass without ensuring that the men who died in police uniforms are properly commemorated.

The first World War was part of the shared history of Britain and Ireland, and something in

which nationalists and unionists had an equal stake. That cannot be said about the next phase of the decade of centenaries.

In its 2017 British general election manifesto, the DUP spoke of an Expo 100, a public holiday, new public art and a legacy project to mark the centenary of Northern Ireland in June 1921. Sinn Féin says it will take no part in any centenary celebrations to celebrate 100 years of the "little statelet" as Sinn Féin president Mary Lou McDonald put it.

Sinn Féin has also set out its stall as to how it intends to commemorate the Civil War. A series of parliamentary questions was put down by Cork TD Pat Buckley earlier this month to the Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Josepha Madigan who has responsibility for commemorations. Will the Government be apologising to the families of those who were executed by the State in the Civil War? he asked. There were 77 in total. Will they be apologising for Ballyseedy? This refers to the notorious incident when National Army soldiers tied eight anti-Treaty republicans to a mine in Ballyseedy, Co Kerry, and blew them up in March 1923.

The minister did not address the question directly except to say that commemorating all those who lost their lives will be based on the "respectful, sensitive, appropriate and authentic approach that has become the hallmark of the decade of centenaries commemorative programme".

There will be many such demands in the coming year. There will be demands for the British to apologise for the activities of the Auxiliaries and the Black and Tans, and for the partition of Ireland. The Irish Government will be asked to apologise for the atrocities of the Civil War - for which there are usually counter-atrocities by those on the anti-Treaty side. UCD Professor of History Diarmaid Ferriter says the State has "nothing to apologise for how it came into being" but suggests that the British do have explaining to do for its refusal to recognise Dáil Éireann in 1918 and for its subsequent policies of coercion in Ireland. "They have to take responsibility for that refusal and the things that flowed from it," he maintains, but adds that the approach by the British to the Irish War of Independence centenary may depend on which government is in power at the time.

Navigating the decade of centenaries has been entrusted to the expert advisory group comprising of the country's finest historians and chaired by Dr Maurice Manning. It is independent of the Government. It has recommended that aside from a number of showpiece centenary events, the Government should leave the War of Independence centenaries to local communities. A successful template was set in this regard with the decision to fund local authorities in 2016 and communities responded accordingly with thousands of events to mark the Easter Rising. The advisory group has told the Government that "consideration should be given to the organisation of specific initiatives to commemorate the RIC and the Dublin Metropolitan Police and to acknowledge their place in history". The group is silent on whether or not there should be a commemoration for the Crown forces killed in the War of Independence as there was for British soldiers who died in the Easter Rising.

However, it does state that there should be a formal commemoration for all those who died in the War of Independence which should take place on July 11th, 2021, the centenary of the Truce or the most suitable date closest to that centenary. The group has recommended one major event to remember the Civil War with the possibility of a memorial to those who died. Interestingly it recommends that the State should adopt a neutral stance in relation to who was right and who was wrong 100 years ago.

It states: "The State's task is to encourage a reflective and a reconciliatory tone that recognises that neither side has the monopoly of either atrocity or virtue and that this was true of words as well as actions."

This in itself is a contentious comment, as many in Fine Gael believe the Cumann na nGaedhael government implemented the democratically expressed will of the people in enforcing the Treaty and that Michael Collins was subsequently vindicated when he

suggested the Treaty provided the "freedom to achieve freedom".

There was considerable alarm among historians when the Taoiseach Leo Varadkar suggested earlier this year that the Decade of Centenaries should not end on a "downbeat" note with commemorations to mark the Civil War. Instead, he proposed that marking the 75th anniversary of the Republic in 2024 would end it on an "upbeat and optimistic note". Unsurprisingly, the advisory committee has not taken his suggestion on board. Instead it has posited that an end to the decade of centenaries should happen in September 2023 with Ireland's entry into the League of Nations.

Ronan McGreevy, Irish Times, January 5th, 2019.

This month is Easter and a lot of the rituals from ancient Celtic spring and fertility rites are still visible - the hare or Easter rabbit, bonfires, exchanging eggs, and even hot cross buns, are all holdovers from pagan traditions. In my parish at home, one of our priests said Mass at dawn, up on the side of a hill, with a huge bonfire. It was very inspiring and uplifting to watch the dawn rise with the fire blazing, which Fr. Moore said symbolized the birth of a new life for us as the risen Lord had sacrificed himself and so we were all born into a new day. (RIP Fr. Moore.) And of course, it is a great time for families to celebrate together as Good Friday is a holiday at home - in fact, famously it was one of two days (the other being Christmas Day) when the bars were closed in Ireland. Although that tradition ended last year when new legislation was passed that allows bars to open on Good Friday for the first time since 1924! Happy Easter to all!

Traditional Music in the Rambling House at the Museum with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann Thursday April 4th 7pm. Donations Appreciated.

Join us at the museum for our own rambling house and an informal music and song session by Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (the Irish Musicians' Association). This is a monthly event at the museum and very popular. Bring your party piece or instrument! Audience participation welcome and encouraged by our friendly group. Hear traditional Irish music, and old songs, stories and poems in a traditional format that still happens in many Irish homes (and bars) today.

The motto of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann is "ceol agus gaol" (music and kinship). Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, headquartered in Ireland, is the primary Irish organization dedicated to the promotion of the music, song, dance and the language of Ireland. There are branches of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann all over the world.

Light refreshments will be provided.



"Billy Yank: the Common Soldier of the Union Army"

Robert E. Mulligan, Previously Associate Curator at the New York State Museum - Military Curator

Tuesday March 9th, 7pm.

The Civil War began on April 12 with the firing upon the US flag over Fort Sumter. It "ended" on April 9th, with the surrender of Lee's Army of Northern Virginia.

An estimated 150,000 Irish Americans served in the Union armies, and an estimated 40,000 in the Confederate armies. These figures do not include the Scotch- Irish Presbyterians who fought, particularly in the Southern armies.

Robert Mulligan will take us through an authentic account of the daily lives of the "noble boys in blue." With a replica uniform, bedroll, cap and ball musket and bayonet, as well as the other accoutrements of a typical private of the 43rd New York Volunteers, we will learn how the Civil War soldiers ate, slept, marched, and fought - and how they were drilled, disciplined, and tested in the theater of war.



Film Club: Revolution in Color, Ireland 1912 - 1923

Thursday April 11th, 7pm, \$5.

The 90-minute film, which is narrated by *Downton Abbey's* Alan Leech, includes footage of the funeral of Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, the aftermath of the Easter Rising, the Treaty negotiations and the shelling of the Four Courts which started the Civil War, and features historical figures such as Michael Collins, Patrick Pearse, Edward Carson, and John Redmond. The Irish Times reports that British Pathé had tried to make a similar film in 1935, but were stopped from doing so by the government under Eamon de Valera. At the time, Pathé had sent the government 43 reels of film, which were then confiscated. The colorized footage is amazing - really letting us see the events as they happened and not in some detached way. The film, which is scripted by Trinity College Dublin historian Eunan O'Halpin, is the result of a collaboration between the British Pathé archive and Zampano Productions.

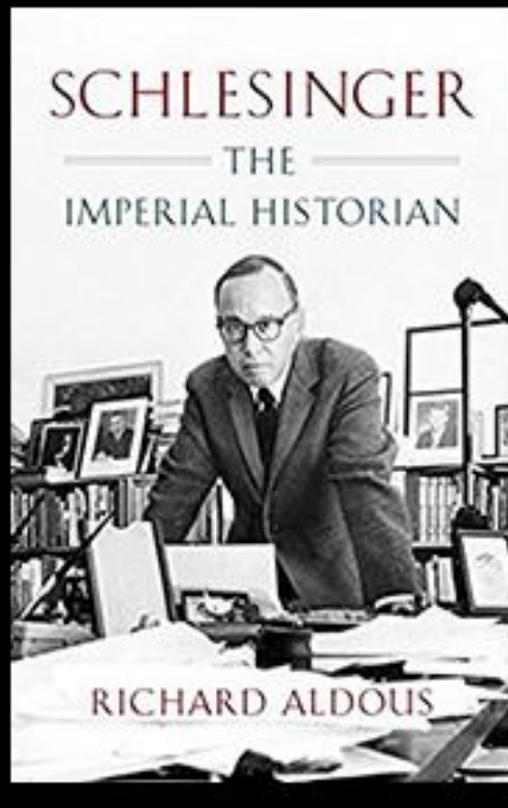


Brexit: What Now?

Dr. Richard Aldous, Eugene Meyer Professor of British History and Literature, Bard College.

Tuesday April 16th, 7pm

Assuming that the April 12th deadline is met, we might be in a slightly more informed place to discuss what the EU and Britain will look like! Join us for a discussion covering all of the hot topics coming out of the UK lately: future UK trade policy, the Irish border question, deal or no deal?, immigration policy and Brexit from a historical perspective.



Carroll Lecture Series: From De Valera to Varadkar: The Transformation of Irish Politics

Dr. Peter Moloney

Thursday April 25th, 7.30pm. College of St. Rose.

The rise of Sinn Féin in Ireland was dramatically underlined over 100 years ago with the election of Éamon de Valera in the Clare East by-election. One thing Sinn Féin came to rely on during that election and beyond was youthful enthusiasm, vigour and focus, in contrast to an older and tired Irish Parliamentary Party. As with all generational shifts, it caused tension. Later, Lemass's Fianna Fail had to sustain the momentum and convince its members and the electorate it could deliver something new and different and that it had a new project for a new generation: advancing the cause of Irish nationalism well beyond the limited home rule that had been part of the constitutional crusade at Westminster in previous decades. Peter will examine how successive governments in Ireland changed the political landscape in Ireland, and whether Varadkar is a major departure from his predecessors.



The 2018-2019

Carroll Lecture Series

6 lectures, 4 colleges, 1 museum

Contemporary Ireland

Peter Moloney, PhD

EU scholar, writer, and professor



Lecture #6:

***“From DeValera to Varadkar :
The transformation of Irish Politics”***

Thursday, April 25, 7:30 pm

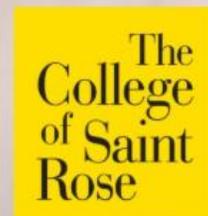
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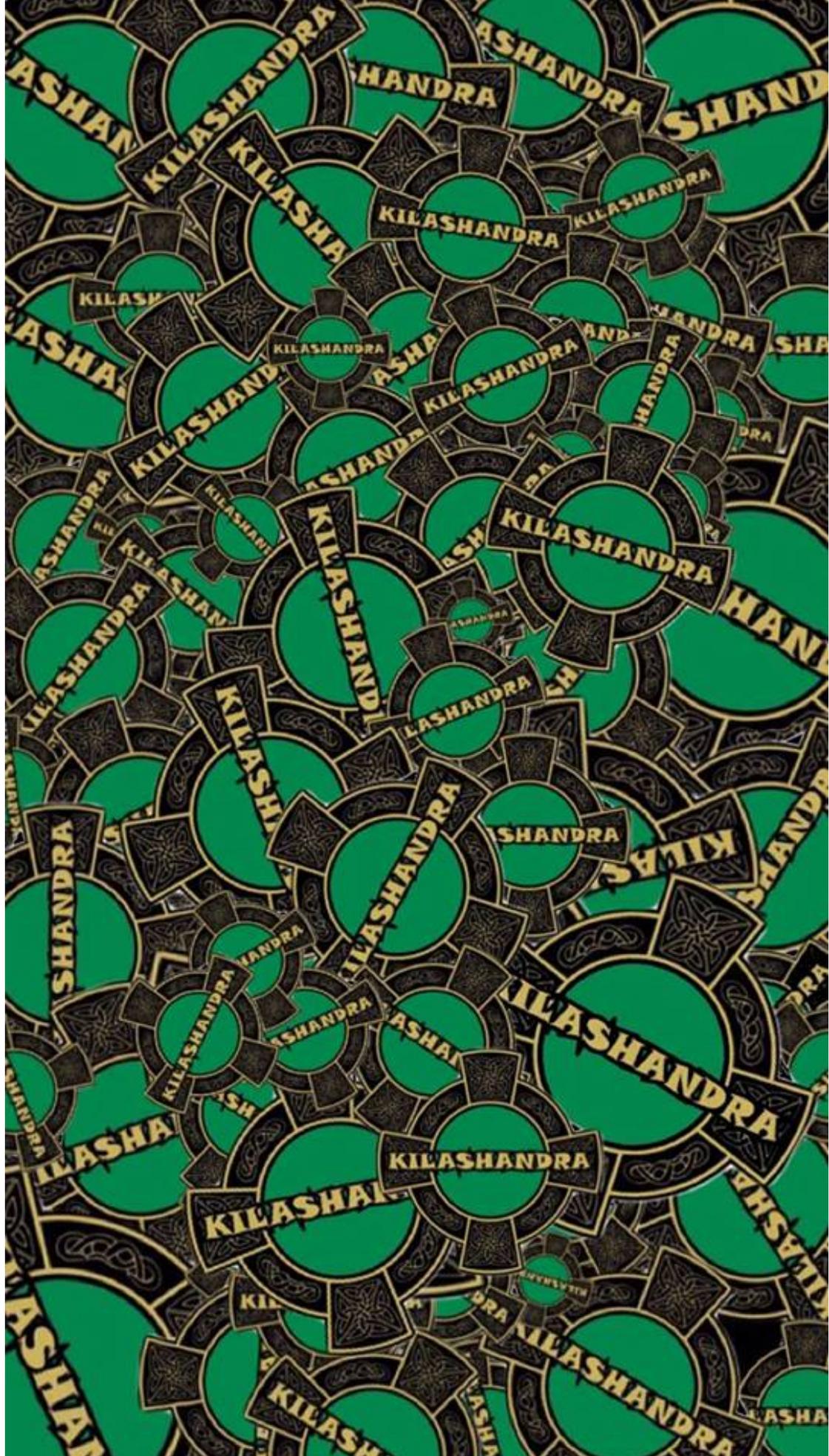
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**Kilashandra play the music of the Magnificent Flanagan Brothers
Saturday, April 27th, 7pm
\$5 members, \$7 non-members.**

The Flanagan Brothers were among the most brilliant and colorful Irish performers in America in the 20th century. There was Joe on vocals and button accordion, Mike on tenor banjo, tenor guitar and vocals and Louis on harp guitar. Natives of County Waterford the family emigrated to the USA in 1910. Mike and Joe were virtuoso musicians and made a living playing in the Irish American dance halls that proliferated in New York in the early decades of the century. They became famed for their hard driving exuberant music, honed in the era before the invention of microphones. Occasionally joined by Louis they made over one hundred and sixty 78 rpm recordings of songs, tunes and skits for a variety of record companies and were regulars on radio which was beginning to sweep the country at that time. Their heyday was the 1920's when vaudeville was the most popular form of commercial entertainment in America and the performing style of the Flanagan Brothers was highly influenced by the top professional performers of that era in American vaudeville. Kilashandra will perform some of these songs, as well as others from their own popular sets.



**Irish Film Club: After the Dance.
Tuesday April 30th 7pm. \$5.**

In this funny and moving documentary, acclaimed film-maker Daisy Asquith tells the very personal story of her mother's conception after a dance in the 1940's on the remote west coast of Ireland.

By exploring the repercussions of this act, Daisy and her mother embark on a fascinating and emotional adventure in social and sexual morality. Her grandmother, compelled to run away to have her baby in secret, handed the child over to 'the nuns'. Daisy's mum was eventually adopted by English Catholics from Stoke-on-Trent. Her grandmother returned to Ireland and told no-one. The father remained a mystery for another 60 years, until Daisy and her mum decided it was time to find out who he was.

Their attempts to find the truth leads Daisy and her mum to connect with a brand new family living an extraordinarily different life. Moving, revealing and surprisingly humorous, this is a remarkable portrait of an Ireland rarely seen on film before.



**Book Club in association with Humanities New York.
Time and Dates to be decided on demand.**

Join our new book club celebrating women's history. 2017 marked the Centennial of Women's Suffrage in New York State, and in 2020 the nation will celebrate 100 years of the 19th Amendment. The history of the women's suffrage movement in our state and nation spanned seventy years, from the 1848 meeting convened by Elizabeth Cady Stanton in Seneca Falls to the tactics wielded by Alice Paul and includes overlooked stories and actors such as the African-American suffragists. Our book selections - which include history, biography, and fiction - provide a window into this chapter of American social progress and a springboard into ongoing discussions of women's - and by extension, our society's - past, present, and future. The museum will provide the books. If you are interested, email info@irish-us.org and we will send out a poll to determine time and dates which suit people best.



H U M A N I T I E S
N E W Y O R K

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