

Irish Elderly Advice Network

Summer Newsletter 2016

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Welcome to our Summer Newsletter. As you know, there is a referendum on June 23rd on Britain's membership of the European Union. The Irish Government have encouraged Irish citizens to reflect upon the future peace and prosperity of Ireland and Britain when we, the Irish diaspora, cast our votes. We hope older Irish people will have your say and use your vote, and we are pleased to have below a statement written for this newsletter by the Irish Ambassador to Britain, His Excellency Dan Mulhall.

Alice Kennedy, Chair of the Irish Elderly Advice Network

Message from Ambassador Dan Mulhall, the Irish Ambassador to Britain, regarding the EU Referendum and the impact of the decision on Ireland

This year so far the Embassy has been very busy organising events to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the Easter Rising and following developments connected with the forthcoming UK referendum on EU membership. I like to think that these twin themes actually complement each other. One commemorates Ireland's emergence as a proudly-independent state following a period of conflict with Britain. The other relates to how Ireland and the UK have grown closer and friendlier as a consequence of our membership of the European Union.

In Ireland, we value the close, constructive, and mutually-respectful relationship we have built with the UK in recent decades. It is our earnest hope that our ties with the UK will continue to strengthen in the years ahead. The best way to achieve this in my view is for the UK to remain a member of the European Union. As someone who has served Ireland as a diplomat since 1980, I look back at how things have changed for the better since that time. When Ireland and the UK joined the EEC in 1973, we were living in a very different world. Those were dark times in Northern Ireland and between Ireland and Britain. Ireland was a much poorer country back then. Too many of our people had to emigrate. As you will remember, visits home were onerous and expensive. Family farms often struggled to survive on account of low prices for our beef and dairy produce.

Membership of the European Union has helped to transform Ireland. It's now a different country from the one you left decades ago. European policies have made it far easier and cheaper to travel to Ireland. Our farmers benefit from European support and EU funding has helped develop our economy, giving our young people today opportunities that were not available to earlier generations. As EU members, we have learned to work together with our nearest neighbour. Ireland and the UK share very similar views on many issues discussed in Brussels. We support each other quite a lot as we have many interests in common.

Without Ireland and the UK being partners in Europe, I doubt if we would have been able to develop the trust-filled relationship that enabled our two governments to work together in bringing peace to Northern Ireland. The EU was a source of support and encouragement for the Peace Process and continues to be so. I fear that a British exit from the EU would be bad for Ireland, for Northern Ireland and for our friendship with Britain. A UK vote to leave would pose

a number of risks. It would risk the imposition of customs and identity checks along the border in Ireland and between Ireland and Britain.

We also don't want to risk damaging the £1 billion of trade that flows each week between Ireland and the UK. This would be put at risk if we had to impose tariffs. This would pose a threat to jobs and livelihoods for many people on both sides of the Irish Sea. And we do not want to risk undermining the friendly, neighbourly relationship built between our two countries as partners in Europe.

We want our partnership with the UK to flourish and believe that this can best be achieved through our two countries continuing to be together as members of the European Union. This is why the referendum on 23 June matters so much to Ireland. We have a unique relationship with the UK based on the presence in this country of so many people who are Irish-born or of Irish descent. We are the only country in Europe with a land border with the UK. We want that border to continue to be an open border so that our people can travel back and forth for business, pleasure or to see family members. We also want Irish people to continue to have the right to live and work in Britain.

For all of these reasons, we hope that the UK will decide to remain in the European Union when you vote on 23 June. I hope that the Irish in Britain, when making up their minds how to vote, will bear in mind the importance of this decision for the country of their birth. But the decision is yours. I trust that my views will be of interest to you.

INVITATION TO ALL OLDER IRISH PEOPLE

**TO A PUBLIC MEETING ON THE EUROPEAN REFERENDUM
WITH AN IRISH GOVERNMENT MINISTER**

Where: London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, London, NW1 9XB

When: 1pm, Thursday 16th June

- We are very pleased to invite you to hear about the impact of the EU decision on Ireland and on Irish people in the UK
- Have your say: Question and Answer session with Guest Speakers, including an Irish Government Minister
- Hear expert views: We are delighted to announce that this meeting will be attended by an Irish Government Minister

**Chaired by Sally Mulready, Director of the Irish Elderly Advice Network
Admission is free, refreshments will be provided, disabled access**

1916 FILM – Reflections of older Irish emigrants



The Irish Elderly Advice Network is delighted to have been given £1000 by the Irish Government towards the filming of older Irish emigrant reflections on 1916, the Rising and the commemorations. We have fundraised for the remaining cost of the film and we are very grateful to all who have donated to make this possible. We wanted to ensure that older Irish emigrant voices were part of the 1916 recollections, and we are delighted that the film has turned into a very special project. It will give a wonderful insight into the lives and thoughts of the thriving older Irish population here in London.

The film has been built around what Irish independence and Irish nationhood has meant to older Irish people in Britain, and how the older generations have kept the Irish cultural legacy of Ireland alive through music, song, dance, literature and the

Irish language. The film also looks at the strong sense of community there is now amongst older Irish emigrants and explores why being Irish remains of such great importance to so many, even when they left Ireland 40, 50 and even 60 years ago and more.



As part of the filming Sally Mulready met with Bridie Brennan (left), one of the earliest Trustees of the Irish Elderly Advice Network over 20 years ago. In a very moving interview, Bridie talked about what being Irish meant to her and how listening to Irish music and song evokes such strong memories and feelings to this day. We are very grateful to Bridie for being part of this film.

The film also includes footage of dozens of interviews with older Irish people who have made their lives here in the UK. There is also

very special footage of interviews with a wide cross section of the older Irish population here in London, footage of interviews with three women from Connemara in their 70s for whom Irish remains their first language, interviews with traditional Irish singers and musicians, older Irish theatre rehearsals, an historic trip by Irish emigrants to West Cork, a musical collaboration between the Irish Pensioners Choir and Hackney School of Folk singing Raglan Road as a choir of 60 people, aged 5 to 90, filming of a reading of the Proclamation of Irish Independence by 100 older Irish people in London's East End, and the singing of Kevin Berry. We are very grateful to the film crew for their support and encouragement, and to all those who have taken part in the making of the film.

FILM PREMIER: The film will be released later in 2016 and we are very pleased to announce that this will be a public screening, with free entry for all older people. More details to be confirmed.

Were you resident in a Mother-and-Baby Home in Ireland (either as a mother or a child)? Or do you know someone who was?

Currently there's an Investigation looking into the Mother-and-Baby Homes that existed in Ireland. Anyone with any information is invited to share any information they may have, in confidence. The Commission are especially keen to hear from anyone who was resident in, worked in, lived nearby or had connections with these homes.

If you have information you'd like to share, you can either travel to Dublin where all of your travel and accommodation expenses will be covered, or you can speak to the Confidential Committee when they will be taking evidence in the UK (date to be confirmed). The Irish Women Survivors Support Network ([IWSSN](http://www.iwssn.org.uk)) is working with the Commission to promote the Investigation in the UK, and can provide support with giving evidence. To find out more, please contact IWSSN on: 0207 267 9997 or email info@irishsurvivorsuk.org.uk. Or you can contact the Commission directly, by calling: 00 353 1 6445088.

If you are affected by this issue and wish to speak to someone in confidence, IWSSN can make referrals to a free counselling service that they work in partnership with.

Older Irish Emigrants' Historic Trip to West Cork

In May 2016 the Irish Elderly Advice Network organised an historic trip to West Cork for a group of 32 older Irish emigrants living in London, Essex and Coventry. The aim of the trip was to give older Irish people the opportunity to learn and experience stories of Irish independence, in a part of the country so important to Ireland's history.

Walking on Inchedonney Strand

We started the trip with a visit to the magnificent Inchedonney strand, just outside of Clonakilty. The change from the cities of London, Essex and Coventry, to the stunning landscapes of West Cork was very special for people. Here is Cecilia, aged 80, pictured overlooking the strand.



Ireland's History

We also visited the Michael Collins Centre and were grateful to Tim and Delores Crowley who gave us a tour of the sites of historic importance to the story of independence and the aftermath of the civil war. For many, visiting the childhood and family home of Michael Collins was incredibly powerful and something they will never forget. Below is a picture taken on the site of Woodfield, birthplace of Michael Collins. We also visited the Skibbereen Famine Project, Muckross House in Killarney, Co. Kerry, both of which were humbling and emotional experiences for people



Michael Collins (1890 -1922), Irish revolutionary and Chairman of the Provisional Government, was born on the 16th of October 1890 at Woodfield near Clonakilty, County Cork. He died in action at Béal na Bláth County Cork, during the Civil War in August 1922.

Wonderful Welcome from the People of Clonakilty



The group was given a wonderful welcome by the people of Clonakilty, and we were delighted to spend an evening in the company of the Monseigneur Aidan O'Driscoll, and the Mayor of Clonakilty, Mayor Cionnaith Ó Súilleabháin. Mayor Ó Súilleabháin presented the Chair of the Irish Elderly Advice Network with a beautiful Michael Collins statue, engraved with a commemoration of this trip. This has taken a very special place in our office and will be

treasured by us in our work. We are also very grateful to Clonakilty GAA for putting on an Under 12s hurling match especially for the group. *(The group is pictured below with the Under 12s Clonakilty hurlers.)*



We would also like to say a huge thank you to the businesses in Clonakilty for their hospitality and for making us feel so welcome: Philomena Shanley of Shanley's Bar, O'Donovan's Hotel and Bar, the Quality Inn Hotel and the wonderful greeting we received from the Management at Cork airport. We hope to return again very soon.



Future Trips

We aim to do another trip for older Irish emigrants in the future. If you would be interested in coming on a future trip run by the Irish Elderly Advice Network to Ireland please let us know by writing to: Sally Mulready, Irish Elderly Advice Network, 50-52 Camden Square, London, NW1 9XB

Please include your name, address, phone number, where you are from in Ireland and your date of birth. Our trips are open to all older Irish people. (Please note, participants meet their own flights and accommodation costs.)

Thanks to our Funders - We were very grateful to Tourism Ireland, the Electricity Supply Board and the John Kennedy Trust for assistance with funding for the Trip. We are also very grateful to all our other funders for their ongoing support for our work, including the Ireland Fund of Great Britain and the Emigrant Support Programme (Irish Government).



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



Nuns' Chorus

By Sally Mulready

Tickets on Sale NOW for London Community Tour and Theatrical Debut

Performed as a community play by older Irish people from the Irish Pensioners' Choir and friends

A production by the Irish Elderly Advice Network



It's 1950s Ireland. A group of Carmelite nuns from an enclosed order are sent beyond the convent walls for the first time in many years. Their 'enforced holiday' to Galway Bay sees them explore the paths which led them to convent life, and to a deepening understanding of the meaning of their sisterhood. This is a sensitive, honest, at times funny, at times deeply moving journey through a very challenging part of Ireland's story.

The play also includes Irish music, song and dance, and references to great Irish literature. Audience participation is encouraged!

Starring members of the Irish Pensioners Choir and Theatre

Group and one professional actress. Musical accompaniment throughout the play is provided by Billy Faughnan.

DATES AND VENUES

We are delighted to be taking the play to 6 different boroughs throughout London, at community venues accessible to older people and in the heart of our older Irish communities. We are grateful to all the venues who have facilitated this London Community Tour. We hope you will find a show near you so you can come along.

HACKNEY: Monday 27th June, doors 7pm, show at 7.30pm, St Thomas More Hall, 9 Henry Road, London, N4 2LH

KILBURN: Weds 29th June, doors 7pm, show at 7.30pm, Mazonod Hall, Quex Road, London, NW6 4PS

CAMDEN: Monday 11th July, doors 2pm, show at 2.30pm, MacNamara hall, London Irish Centre, 50-52 Camden Square, London, NW1 9XB

NEWHAM: Tuesday 12th July, doors 12.45pm, show at 1.15pm, Durning Hall,. Earlham Grove, Forest Gate, E7 9AB

HARINGEY: Thursday 21st July, doors 7pm, show at 7.30pm, Haringey Irish Centre, Pretoria Road, N17 8DX

Tickets: £5 on door or at www.nunschorus.wordpress.com.

Theatrical Debut!

Park Theatre, Clifton Terrace, Finsbury Park, London, N4 3JP

**Monday 18th July, doors 7pm, show at 7.45pm,
(Tickets for Park Theatre must be pre booked. Thank you.)**

We are delighted to announce that Nuns' Chorus will be performed for the first time ever at a theatre in London. The Park Theatre has been described as 'a piece of the West End in North London', and so we are truly humbled to be able to put the play on here. Performed by older Irish people, none of whom had performed in a play prior to this project, this is a very special night. There will be lots of Irish media, as well as people from the Irish welfare and cultural community, VIPs and people who themselves do so much to keep alive Irish culture and heritage in London. This night will also include a **one-off performance of Raglan Road** by an intergenerational choir of 50 people, aged 5 to 90. This is a collaboration between **Hackney School of Folk and the Irish Pensioners Choir.**

TICKETS

Tickets (£5) are available to the public but will sell out fast so please contact us on 02074280471 to secure your ticket. Alternatively, you can book online via www.nunschorus.wordpress.com.

Special thanks to the Ireland Fund of Great Britain, the Emigrant Support Programme (Irish Government), Irish pensioners Forum of East London, Kilburn Irish Pensioners, London Irish Centre, St Thomas More parish, Sacred Heart Parish, Park Theatre, Hackney School of Folk Music and Haringey Irish Cultural and Community Centre.



Welfare Update

The Irish Elderly Advice Network provides advice on housing, pensions, welfare, care at home, wills, moving back to Ireland and many other issues of interest to older Irish people.

If you would like advice or support you can contact us in the following ways:

- Phone: 02074280471: we give advice over the phone
- Email: you can email our Welfare Team – margaret@irishelders.org.uk and lesley@irishelders.org.uk
- Drop in – Our office is open from 10am to 4.30pm, Monday to Friday
- Appointments – we do appointments at our office and we can visit you at home if you have difficulty with mobility. Please call us to arrange.

OUTREACH SERVICES

- **Kilburn Outreach Advice Service** - Every Wednesday, 10am to 1pm – Mazenod Community Centre, Quex Rd (Adjacent to the Sacred Heart Church)
No appointment necessary
- **East London Outreach Advice Service** - Every Thursday, 10.30am to 1pm – Durning Hall Community Centre, Earlham Grove, London, E7 9AB.

Important Update on Disability Living Allowance: Disability Living Allowance (DLA) is ending for people who were born after 8 April 1948 and are 16 or over.

If you were born before 8th April 1948 and you currently receive DLA, there will be no change for you.

If you were born after 8th April 1948 and you currently receive DLA, you will continue to get DLA until the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) writes to you to:

- Tell you when it will end (You can visit: www.gov.uk/pip/overview) to find out when you'll be asked to claim
- Invite you to apply for the new health benefit, Personal Independence Payment (PIP)

What is Personal Independence Payment?

Personal Independence Payment (PIP) helps with some of the extra costs caused by long-term ill-health or a disability if you're aged 16 to 64.

You could get between £21.80 and £139.75 a week. (The rate depends on how your condition affects you, not the condition itself.)

You'll need an assessment to work out the level of help you get. The government has said that the rates will be regularly reassessed to make sure people are getting the amount they consider to be correct.

We understand that this may be quite stressful for people, but we have a lot of experience in applying for PIP for people now and are available to help you. For advice on any of this, please contact us on 02074280471.

The Irish Elderly Advice Network's Cultural and Education Programme

We are in the process of developing a wonderful new Cultural and Education Programme for older Irish people. Before we agree the programme, we would be grateful to know the level of interest in the following possible options. Please contact us to register your interest: [02074280471](tel:02074280471) or kathy@irishelders.org.uk or by post.

Bernard Canavan, Irish Artist and Historian



We are delighted to have the opportunity to work with world renowned Irish artists, Benranrd Canavan. Bernard is an expert on Irish social and cultural history, and Irish emigrant social and cultural history. We are pleased to be able to offer both of the following:

- History Seminars with Irish historian and artist, Bernard Canavan
- Art Classes with Bernard Canavan

About Bernard Canavan: *Bernard was born in Ireland in 1944 and grew up in County Longford in the Irish midlands. He has lived in London since the 1960s. He paints figurative and expressive pictures about Irish and immigrant life.*

Contemporary Dance with an Irish Influence, designed for older people

We are pleased to have the opportunity to work with Molly Wright on a movement and dance project for older people, influenced by Irish music, dance and culture.

About Molly Wright: *Molly has a wealth of experience working with older people on dance. She has worked with the NHS on a specialist project aimed at increasing movement and flexibility in older people, and has worked with Creative Dance 60+ and Leap of Faith Dance Company.*

In Memory of Mollie Ormonde and John Courtney two dear friends of the Irish Elderly Advice Network and members of the Irish Pensioners Choir



Mollie Ormonde - We send our sincere condolences to Mollie's family. Mollie was a very caring and passionate person and despite her great age of 91 she was always there to support the Choir. She also was famous for her performance of Bidy Mulligan and had a great sense of fun and joy and we shall miss her presence in the Older Irish Community

John Courtney - Musician, singer and beautiful friend John Courtney passed away. John Courtney (also known as Wexford John) died recently after a long illness. His wife Rosie has all our deep sadness and condolences on her great loss. He was a wonderful, kind warm hearted man and the Irish Pensioners Choir have lost a great singer and a great friend.

