

PRESS RELEASE

Monday, 7th March 2016

National Library of Ireland launches Plunkett and Pearse 1916 Digital Collections

The [National Library of Ireland \(NLI\)](#) has today (07.03.16) made personal papers and photographs related to Joseph Plunkett and Patrick Pearse available online. This material forms part of the 1916 Digital Collections - unique documents related to the seven signatories of the Proclamation that tell the story of the momentous events of 1916.

The Plunkett and Pearse papers are now publicly available, free of charge, at [catalogue.nli.ie](#). They join the Éamonn Ceannt collection, published in December to coincide with the launch of the National Library's 2016 Programme, and the papers of Tom Clarke, James Connolly, Seán MacDiarmada and Thomas MacDonagh, which were published in January and February.

The 1916 Digital Collections are a culmination of years of intensive work by the NLI team, with more than 20,000 items now available online. The digitised papers include diaries, postcards and photographs that tell the stories of the family and working lives of each signatory, alongside dramatic records of their activities during Easter Week 1916.

Highlights from the Plunkett and Pearse Digital Collections

Highlights from the Joseph Plunkett papers include a passport issued to Plunkett by the German Imperial Government in 1915 and a typescript extract from his 1915 diary. Beginning with an entry for St. Patrick's Day and ending on Friday, 30th April, Plunkett recounts the story of his circuitous journey through Europe to Germany, to seek German aid for an Irish uprising.

Love letters from Plunkett to Grace Gifford, whom he married just prior to his execution, also feature prominently in the collection. In one such letter written on 22nd April 1916, just two days before the Rising, Plunkett writes "Here is a little gun which should only be used to protect yourself. To fire it push up the small bar with the word 'safe' and pull the trigger - but not unless you want to shoot. Here is some money for you too, and all my love forever."

Another letter written on 29th April 1916, the Saturday of the surrender, from "somewhere in Moore Street", poignantly concludes with: "Darling darling child I wish we were together. Love me always as I love you. For the rest, all you do will please me. I told a few people that I wish you to have everything that belongs to me. This is my last wish so please do see to it. Love xxxxxx Joe."

Highlights from the Pearse papers include letters, photographs and poetry. A childhood photograph of Patrick Pearse with his brother provides a glimpse into his early family life. The half-length image of Willie and Patrick Pearse as babies, inscribed by Margaret Pearse in 1929, reads: "This is my dear little Willie, and my dear little Pat." An undated poem entitled 'The Mother' can also be found in the collection.

Pearse's career as an educator is documented in many letters, including one from a neighbour complaining about the behaviour of the boys in St Enda's. Others track his move towards armed insurrection, with Pearse writing in 1914 to Irish American Joseph McGarrity that the Volunteer movement "is sweeping through the country like a whirlwind".

A summary written by Pearse in Kilmainham Gaol of his statement made at the court martial at Richmond Barracks, dated 2nd May 1916, also features, as does a photograph of him in uniform at the funeral of O'Donovan Rossa.

Speaking at the announcement of the Plunkett and Pearse collections today, Dr Sandra Collins, Director of the National Library, said: "As we approach the centenary of one of the most significant events in our history, all our 1916 Digital Collections are now available worldwide with the release of the Plunkett and Pearse papers. The NLI team is privileged to share their stories of love and loss, of politics and poetry, of hope and hardship. Through this digital content, a worldwide audience can explore the people behind the historic events of Easter 1916.

Ambitious digitisation goals, a full and varied schedule of events and exhibitions, a welcome for researchers and learners of all ages and backgrounds – these are at the heart of the National Library's commitment to opening our collections and making them accessible for people all over the world, for 2016 and beyond."

The NLI will offer a series of free events and activities throughout 2016 to mark the centenary commemorations of the Easter Rising. Highlights of the NLI's 2016 programme include:

- 'Inspiration Proclamation': a series of public interviews with major figures on themes of the Proclamation and their relevance for Ireland in 2016 and beyond;
- 'Readings from the Rising', a series of performances of literary work accompanied by music and staged throughout the NLI's historic buildings;

- A public lecture series in conjunction with UCC's new revolutionary history, 'Atlas of the Irish Revolution', which will examine existing and ongoing research into the revolutionary period.
- Family history workshops to help visitors trace their ancestors in this period.

The NLI also offers a series of curated perspectives on 1916 onsite at the National Library's buildings on Kildare Street and in Temple Bar, Dublin 2 and online. These include 'Rising': a flagship photographic exhibition in the National Photographic Archive, and 'Signatories': an exhibition in the NLI's Kildare Street building, which introduces the seven signatories and the women who were so important in their personal and political lives.

Details of the NLI's full 2016 programme of events, from exhibitions and public events to major digitisation projects, are available on the NLI's website www.nli.ie/1916

For more information visit www.nli.ie/1916

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Note to Editors

- Interviews available on request.
- The dedicated hashtag for the NLI's programme of events to mark 1916 is #MyNLI1916
- Details of a number of items from each of the digital collections (including the items mentioned above) are listed below.

This selection is also available for review here: <http://bit.ly/1QXG2Dg>

- Letter from the young Plunkett, St. George's College, Weybridge, England, to his mother, with news of his brothers, school life, sporting activities and a fight he was in: "Last evening i had a fight with a big boy about twice my weight ...I gave him 5 on the head and then the bystanders separated us. NB He came over afterwards and shook hands. He did not hurt me at all." [11th December 1904]
- Passport issued to Joseph Mary Plunkett by the German Imperial Government. [19th April 1915]
- Proposal of marriage from Plunkett to Grace Gifford, where he says: "Since yesterday everything is different...You know what my sort of love is. It is a poor thing beside the splendours of your heart. But such as it is you have. I do love you...By the way, I am actually a beggar. I have no income and am earning nothing." [2nd December 2015]
- Letter written on the night of his proposal, saying: "Darling, Darling, Darling, I can't believe it. It's crazy, it's impossible. I was never meant to be so happy...I love you, love you, love you altogether, body soul and spirit." [2nd December 2015]
- Typescript extract of Joseph Plunkett's diary, beginning with an entry for St. Patrick's Day 1915 and ending with Friday, 30th April 1915. These entries recount the story of Plunkett's circuitous journey through Europe to Germany, to seek German aid for an Irish uprising. [17th March – 30th April 1915].
- Letter by Plunkett to his fiancée Grace Gifford, written on pages from his field notebook "somewhere on Moore Street" on the Saturday of the surrender. It concludes: "Darling darling child I wish we were together. Love me always as I love you. For the rest, all you do will please me. I told a few people that I wish you to have everything that belongs to me. This is my last wish so please do see to it. Love xxxxxx Joe". [29th April 1916]
- Letter to Grace Gifford in which Plunkett says: "Listen darling Grace I can't live without seeing you - it hurts too much." [26th December 1915]
- Letter to Grace Gifford in which Plunkett writes: "I want to put my arms around you and my head on your breast and to feel that you are mine and I am yours to do what you like with and that nothing can separate us." [31st January 1916]
- Note from Joseph Mary Plunkett to Grace Gifford on Valentine's Day 1916, asking her to come and see him. [14th February 1916]
- Poem from Joseph Mary Plunkett to Grace Gifford "on the morning of her Christening" (Gifford was baptised into the Catholic church ahead of their planned marriage at Easter 1916). The poem ends: "Your burning heart now spreads its wings/In the wild beauty of your love". [7th April 1916]
- Letter from Joseph Mary Plunkett on Holy Saturday written just two days before the Rising. In it, Plunkett says: "Here is a little gun which should only be used to protect yourself. To fire it push up the small bar with the word 'safe' and pull the trigger - but not unless you want to shoot. Here is some money for you too, and all my love forever." [22nd April 1916]
- Photograph of Grace Gifford with fellow artist William Orpen. [circa 1904-1910]
- Photograph of Grace Gifford smiling in garden. [1915]

- Portrait photograph of Joseph Plunkett. [Undated]
- Half-length portrait photographs of Willie and Patrick Pearse as babies, inscribed by Margaret Pearse in 1929: "This is my dear little Willie, and my dear little Pat."
- Photograph of Patrick Pearse in barrister's robes and wig.
- Typescript letter of complaint from R. J. McKiernan to Patrick Pearse outlining his annoyance towards the students of St. Enda's for trespassing on his premises, causing damage to his property, their use of offensive language and remarks towards his wife. [8th March 1910]
- Photograph of O'Donovan Rossa funeral, graveside in Glasnevin Cemetery, showing Patrick Pearse in uniform with a white lapel badge and cap in his hand to the right of centre.
- Copy of letter from Patrick Pearse in the USA to the pupils of St. Enda's School, about his trip in the States and asking them to work hard at their studies, and promising "a special holiday in commemoration of my safe return, and happy escape from sea-sharks and land-sharks." [1914]
- Letter from Patrick Pearse to Joseph McGarrity regarding fundraising in Philadelphia for the Irish Volunteers, in which he says that "the movement is sweeping through the country like a whirlwind". [19th June 1914]
- Black notebook with notes on the vocabulary in 'Treasure Island', expenses for an 'Aeirdheacht', a feis on 5th September 1915, class timetables for St. Enda's School and drill entries with lists of attendees for the Irish Volunteers, 1915.
- 'The Mother', a poem by Patrick Pearse. [Undated]
- Summary written by Patrick Pearse in Kilmainham Gaol, of his statement made earlier at the court martial at Richmond Barracks. [2nd May 1916]
- Circular letter from Patrick Pearse appealing for donations to the St. Enda's College Building Fund. [Undated]
- The mission of the National Library of Ireland is to collect, preserve, promote and make accessible the documentary and intellectual record of the life of Ireland and to contribute to the provision of access to the larger universe of recorded knowledge. It is open, free of charge, to all those who wish to consult the collections. The Office of the Chief Herald in Kildare Street and the National Photographic Archive in Temple Bar are both part of the National Library. Further information is available at www.nli.ie, @NLIreland.