

## PRESS RELEASE

Monday, 8<sup>th</sup> February 2016

### National Library of Ireland launches MacDiarmada and MacDonagh 1916 Digital Collections

The [National Library of Ireland \(NLI\)](http://www.nli.ie), as part of its 1916 Digital Collections, has today (08.02.16) made personal papers and photographs related to Seán MacDiarmada and Thomas MacDonagh available online. The unique collections are related to the seven signatories of the Proclamation and tell the story of the momentous events of 1916.

These collections of material relating to MacDiarmada and MacDonagh papers are now available online to the public free of charge at [catalogue.nli.ie](http://catalogue.nli.ie) and join the Éamonn Ceannt collection, published in December to coincide with the launch of the National Library's 2016 Programme, and the Tom Clarke and James Connolly collections which were published last month.

The 1916 Digital Collections is a culmination of years of intensive work by the NLI team, and more than 20,000 items will be available online by April 2016. 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 MacDiarmada and MacDonagh Digital Collections

Highlights from the MacDonagh papers include family photographs and letters. These include a letter from MacDonagh to Muriel Gifford, dated 20<sup>th</sup> October 1911, referring to their engagement. In a light-hearted mock-legal document entitled 'Testament of Intentions', MacDonagh describes himself as "bachelor of arts and artfulness, being in a state of perfect poverty and health (barring a slight cold)" and says: "It is my intention to wed, marry and spouse the said Lady".

In a poignant letter to MacDonagh from Muriel, by then his wife, she relates their son Donagh's bold behaviour on the way home on the tram. She says: "The Don was a bad boy in the tram coming back. I won't tell you what kind of badness but you may guess. I feel terribly lonely and blank without you darling...While I am writing this the boy is wandering around the floor and singing a little song with Dadda as the refrain."

A request slip for books at the National Library, with notes scribbled on it by MacDonagh, also features in the collection, as does an application by MacDonagh for appointment to the chair of history, English literature and mental science in University College, Galway, dated 10<sup>th</sup> February 1913. In the testimonials which are part of the application, WB Yeats writes: "Mr Thomas MacDonagh has enthusiasm and character and an original mind...He has great gifts of expression, and will, I believe, do valuable work for scholarship."

Highlights from the Seán MacDiarmada material, collected by Irish American Joseph McGarrity, include a letter from MacDiarmada's sisters Kate and Rose to Joseph McGarrity, thanking him for his "kind words of sympathy and comfort" following Seán's death.

Also included in the collection are a personal letter from MacDiarmada to Joseph McGarrity regarding his health, doubts about Jim Larkin's nationalism and memories of his father, dated 12<sup>th</sup> December 1913, and an image of Josephine 'Min' Ryan, who was romantically involved with MacDiarmada before his death.

Speaking at the announcement of the MacDiarmada and MacDonagh collections today, Dr Sandra Collins, Director of the National Library said: "As we get closer to Easter we are delighted to make the third tranche of digitised materials of the Proclamation signatories available online. The MacDiarmada and MacDonagh collections give a very personal insight into the people behind the historic events of 1916. They show the strong bonds between the signatories and their families and friends.

"The National Library of Ireland was at the heart of Irish life in 1916 and is proud to take its place in the centenary events 100 years later. Our ambitious digitisation programme will be complemented over the coming months by exhibitions and events that we hope will be enticing for everyone. We are committed to opening our archives and making them accessible for people all over the world. Please explore and enjoy."

In March 2016, the NLI will issue the material related to Patrick Pearse and Joseph Plunkett concluding the 1916 Digital Collections.

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 will present selected documents related to the seven signatories.

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](http://www.nli.ie).

For more information visit [www.nli.ie](http://www.nli.ie).

**ENDS**

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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
- In March 2016, the NLI will issue the material related Patrick Pearse and Joseph Plunkett concluding the 1916 Digital Collections.
- 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/1S3nHEA>
  - Application form to read within the National Library of Ireland, with manuscript annotations by Thomas MacDonagh, undated.
  - Application of Thomas MacDonagh for appointment to the chair of history, English literature and mental science in University College, Galway, 10<sup>th</sup> February 1913.
  - Letter from Donagh MacDonagh (possibly written by Muriel) to Thomas MacDonagh saying that he was "a very good boy when you were out", undated.
  - Short letter from Thomas MacDonagh to Donagh MacDonagh asking how the pony and the bunny are, undated.
  - Letter from Thomas MacDonagh to Muriel Gifford in which he makes a proposal of marriage: A loving, light-hearted mock-legal document entitled "Testament of Intentions", dated 20<sup>th</sup> October 1911, in which MacDonagh describes himself as "bachelor of arts and artfulness, being in a state of perfect poverty and health (barring a slight cold)" and says "it is my set intention to wed, marry and spouse the said Lady".
  - Letter from Isabella Gifford (Muriel's mother) to Thomas MacDonagh inviting the family to the Gifford house on Christmas Day and apologising for an earlier awkwardness: "I am sorry if I said anything to annoy you today...I have been so harassed by all the trouble and anxiety that I have had, that I probably said more than I had intended." [21<sup>st</sup> December 1915]
  - Letter from Thomas MacDonagh to his daughter Barbara saying that he is troubled by the fact that she is not sleeping. Barbara was a tiny baby at the time the letter was sent, so it was intended for Muriel: "I am troubled to know that you have been crying a whole long day, and that poor Mamma gets so little sleep." [21<sup>st</sup> June 1915]
  - Letter from Muriel MacDonagh to Thomas MacDonagh relating Donagh's bold behaviour on the way home on the tram in which she says: "The Don was a bad boy in the tram coming back. I won't tell you what kind of badness but you may guess. I feel terribly lonely and blank without you darling...While I am writing this the boy is wandering around the floor and singing a little song with Dadda as the refrain." [20<sup>th</sup> May 1914]
  - Photograph of Thomas and Muriel MacDonagh with their son Donagh.
  - Portrait photograph of Thomas MacDonagh.
  - Letter from Seán MacDiarmada to Joseph McGarrity regarding his health, his father's death, doubts about Jim Larkin's nationalism and actions and plans for a Wolfe Tone Memorial. [12<sup>th</sup> December 1913]
  - Letter from Kate and Rose, sisters of Seán MacDiarmada, to Joseph McGarrity, thanking him and his family for their "kind words of sympathy and comfort" [upon the death of Seán], and how well Seán MacDiarmada used to speak of him. [23<sup>rd</sup> May 1916]

- Image of the Ryan siblings (Josephine "Min" Ryan was romantically involved with MacDiarmada before his death).
  - Photograph of Seán MacDiarmada from the Keogh collection.
- 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](http://www.nli.ie), @NLIreland.