

When Irish Archivists are Smiling

We all know Ireland, the Emerald Isle, as the home of St. Patrick and the leprechauns, point of origin for the refugees that thronged to the United States, Australia, Canada, and New Zealand in the nineteenth century. But the nation has also played a significant role in world affairs that is sometimes overlooked. Ireland initiated the unraveling of the British Empire, since it was the first nation to establish its political independence from the United Kingdom in the twentieth century. As a result, Dublin is the site of several archives that might prove pertinent to the research agendas of individuals that belong to the Society for the Historians of American Foreign Relations.

At times U.S. foreign policymakers have had good reason to focus on Ireland. There was, of course, the massive wave of immigrants in the nineteenth century. They changed the face of American cities and filled the ranks of Union regiments in the U.S. Civil War. In the twentieth century, Ireland drew even more attention with the Easter Rising of 1916, when nationalists, tired of decades of British reluctance to grant the Irish home rule, rebelled in effort to acquire independence. The Irish in America were a major source of funding for the Irish Volunteers, the uniformed rebels who seized various strategic sites in Dublin during the rebellion. In fact, the proclamation that rebel leaders read to the crowds gathered in front of the General Post Office made reference to Ireland's "exiled children in America." The rising failed, but public opinion in Irish America limited British reprisals: they executed the leaders of the rebellion but eventually granted amnesty to the rank and file. Afterwards the legendary Michael Collins had the Volunteers take off their uniforms and fight guerilla style in the Anglo-Irish War. Irish-Americans continued to be a major source of revenue for the rebels.

After twenty-six of the thirty-two counties became the new Irish Free State, the new government established diplomatic missions abroad. The first was in London; the second was in Washington, D.C. The Irish Free State was quite active in the League of Nations and in world affairs generally during the interwar period in an effort to establish an identity separate from that of the United Kingdom. During the Second World War Ireland remained neutral, much to the consternation of many officials in Washington and the Irish-American community. There was a

good deal of effort in both London and Washington to get the Dublin government to change its mind, but Ireland stuck to this policy during the war and the Cold War that followed and as a result found itself isolated diplomatically during the middle of the twentieth century. The Irish did contribute troops to United Nations peacekeeping operations, but “the Troubles” that exploded in the six counties of Northern Ireland in the late 1960s showed that Ireland needed some help of its own. Americans were again involved in funding rebel activities. The Irish Republican Army received a good deal of support from sources inside the United States. President Clinton helped broker a peace settlement in 1998, but the campaigns of violence in Ulster have continued into the twenty-first century.

There are a number of topics that a SHAFR member could pursue in Irish archives, as this brief account shows, and there are three major institutions that a historian studying world affairs will want to visit: the National Archives, the National Library of Ireland, and the papers of Eamon de Valera at University College, Dublin. The National Archives are located in a nondescript office building on Bishop Street in the city center south of the Liffey River. The archives are open Monday through Friday from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Researchers sign in at the front desk and then store their personal belongings in lockers on the first floor. First-time visitors must get a reader’s card, but it will take only about ten minutes to fill out the required forms. Once inside, researchers can take notes with pencil and/or laptop computers and can make five copies at a cost of twenty-five cents a page by buying a card for €1.25 that runs the photocopy machine. If more than five pages are need, the staff will copy them at a cost of €1.19 per page and will mail the copied items to the researcher.

The website for the archives is at <http://www.nationalarchives.ie>, and it is a good idea to visit it before traveling to Dublin. The website lists the rules for usage, gives opening and closing hours, directions to the archives, and, most important of all, has online finding aids. Documents are released thirty years after the fact. Researchers will have to search each individual batch of releases. The computer searches for words in folder titles, which requires knowing how bureaucrats labeled items. There are also paper finding aids in the reading rooms that are organized by department and then by year of public release. Members of SHAFR will most

likely be interested in the files of the Departments of Foreign Affairs and the Taoiseach (prime minister). (One indication of how much the United States mattered to Ireland is the separate sub-file for the Washington embassy in the Foreign Affairs Department records. No other embassy is listed in such a fashion.) Historians doing research at this institution should be forewarned that the finding aids are severely flawed tools. Often the filing numbers listed are incorrect, and sometimes the finding aids are misleading, since folder titles often do not correspond with those on the actual containers. There is no clear pattern of organization to collections, making it necessary to go slowly through the entire paper finding aid page by page.

In general, the National Archives building is a good place to work. Professional archivists are available to answer your questions. There are no fetch times, so individuals can submit requests at any time, and delivery usually entails a wait of no more than twenty minutes. There is no limit to the number of items that a researcher can request in a day. There is one major qualification to this good service. When it comes time for the staff to take their breaks, they take them, even if the result is that no one is available to process requests.

The National Library of Ireland has several component parts spread out over Dublin, but the main building is on Kildare Street near the city center. The website is at <http://www.nli.ie>. The main reading room is on Kildare Street near the city center, and its hours of operation are Monday through Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 9 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 5 p.m.; and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.

The library's most important holdings in the realm of political and diplomatic history are its collection of parliamentary documents. In the last 250 years, Ireland has had three different legislative assemblies. Until 1801, Ireland had its own bicameral legislature, and the library has an impressive collection of the statutes and debate journals that this body produced. After 1801, Ireland sent its politicians to London to sit in the Parliament of the United Kingdom. This library has an almost complete set of the records of its proceedings (Hansard). The third Irish Parliament was installed after the Anglo-Irish War. The library has a complete set of the papers and records of the debates of the Dáil Éireann and Seanad Éireann, which are also available online at <http://www.oireachtas-debates.gov.ie>. The library also has copies of the numerous reports and studies

that the Irish government has published. Ireland is a member of the European Union and several other international organizations, and the National Library has good holdings on the publications of these various transnational governmental organizations. Many are stored off-site, however. As a result, researchers must make requests twenty-four hours in advance. Most documents, but not all, are listed in the online catalogue available through the website. Some documents will require the use of paper finding aids.

The Department of Manuscripts is in a separate facility located at 2-3 Kildare Street. The hours of operation are Monday through Wednesday, 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m.; Thursday and Friday, 10 a.m. to 4:30 p.m.; and Saturday, 10 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. SHAFR members will be interested in the political papers that document many of the Irish independence movements since the eighteenth century. Many of the individual nationalists leading these causes had strong ties to the United States. The holdings are particularly strong for the 1916-1923 period.

Doing photo research concurrently with manuscript collections investigations is a good way to save a lot of publication-related problems. The National Photographic Archive is part of the National Library but is located in Meeting House Square, Temple Bar. This archive is open Monday through Friday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m., but access is by appointment. The online catalogue allows researchers to do a lot of work before arriving at the library. Copies of photos can be ordered in either black and white or color. Researchers can order slides or copies ranging from 8"x 10" to 24"x 20". Prices range from €12.70 to €38.10 depending on size and color. A full price list is available on the library's web site.

The papers of Eamon de Valera are housed at University College, Dublin. De Valera was a major figure in Irish history during the twentieth century. The last of the battalion commanders to surrender during the Easter Rising, he was elected to a seat in Parliament after his release from prison, but the nationalist political party, Sinn Féin, which won a majority of Irish Parliament seats in 1919, boycotted Westminster, assembled in Dublin, and declared Ireland independent. De Valera was elected president of this new assembly during the Anglo-Irish War, yet he actually spent most of the war touring the United States to raise funds. Born in Manhattan, he was always mindful of public opinion in America.

De Valera appointed the delegation that negotiated the peace settlement bringing an end to the Anglo-Irish War and creating the Irish Free State. Although he was opposed to certain terms in the treaty—namely, its failure to create an Irish Republic and its division of Northern Ireland from the rest of the island—and he supported the losing side in the Irish Civil War that followed the ratification of the treaty, de Valera became Taoiseach in 1932, a position he would hold for sixteen consecutive years and then reclaim two more times before serving two terms as president of the Republic. During the interwar period, Ireland pursued an almost bipartisan foreign policy in the sense that all Irish officials, regardless of their domestic politics, supported efforts to establish a foreign policy for Ireland that was independent of that of the United Kingdom. During this period, de Valera served as president of both the League of Nations council and assembly.

Needless to say, the de Valera papers can be quite useful for studying certain periods in U.S.–Irish diplomatic history. The campus where they are located is a short driving distance from the city center. A number of buses terminate on campus or have stops in front of the main entrance. The Archives Department of the university library is open Monday to Thursday, 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. The reading room is quite small, so appointments are required, and it is best to contact the staff *at least* a week in advance of your trip. (While I was there a researcher who wanted to visit later that week was turned away). The Archives Department has two useful web pages for researchers. The first is on planning your visit and is at <http://www.ucd.ie/archives/html/planningyourvisit.htm>. This page contains all sorts of information, including the buses that reach campus, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and maps of campus. The second page of interest is on the de Valera papers, and is at <http://www.ucd.ie/archives/html/collections/devalera-eamon.htm>.

The de Valera papers are an exceptionally well organized collection. The three-volume finding aid is quite detailed and easy to use. Since de Valera played such a large role in Irish history, his papers are used quite regularly. To minimize the wear on the documents, the archives staff made microfilm copies of the collection, which is what a researcher will see rather than the originals. As a result, little time passes between placing a request and receiving the film. The

staff did not make copies of certain items in this collection, like photographs. If researchers need to look at such material, they must put a request in at least a day in advance. Researchers can take notes in pencil or on a laptop computer. It is possible to make photocopies from the microfilm, but at €1 per page the document had better be exceptionally important.

Transportation

Dublin has become a major weekend destination for the rest of Europe. As a result, travel to Ireland is exceptionally cheap. Low-fare airlines are quite popular in Europe, which also helps. Travelers from the United Kingdom can get round-trip tickets for less than €20, if they are willing to fly at odd hours. Individuals traveling from North America are going to pay more, but they should still be able to find tickets for between €300 and €400.

Buses are the best form of transportation to Dublin from the airport and within the city itself. The Aircoach runs regularly from the city center to the airport and has a pickup point in front of University College, Dublin. The service is fast and more regular than the train. The Aircoach costs €6 and has a website at <http://www.aircoach.ie/>. Dublin has an adequate internal bus network that runs on a regular basis and goes to almost every part of the city. The only catch is that the buses take coins and give no change. The web site for Dublin Bus is at <http://www.dublinbus.ie>. The bus service becomes exceptionally expensive after midnight and much less frequent. Taxis are also quite plentiful.

Currency Conversion

Ireland uses the euro of the European Union. The Bureaus de Change at the airport basically offer the same rate as major outlets in Dublin itself, so one might as well convert cash at the airport. An ATM is a better bet, though, for people whose banks charge no fee for using a foreign machine.

Travel Guides

Anyone traveling to Ireland should have a travel guide for getting the most out of the country. The best guide to Dublin and Ireland is *Lonely Planet*; placing a close but clear second

is *Let's Go*. No other publishers come close to producing a volume as useful as these two. Each contains far more information than could be presented here.

Housing

While Dublin's designation as a major party destination for the rest of Europe has made airline tickets quite cheap, it has made housing costs outrageous. Not only are prices high, but rooms are hard to come by during the travel season (March through October).

One of the better-located hostels in Dublin is Ashfield House at 19/20 D'Olier Street. This hostel offers dorm-style or en suite rooms and is located near a train station, bus stops for routes that go to University College, Dublin, an Airbus stop, and many of the more interesting parts of the city center. The lobby has computers with Internet access. The web site is at <http://www.ashfieldhouse.ie/>. Rates range from €13 to €57.

Another hostel worth considering is Kinlay House at 2-12 Lord Edward Street (telephone: +353 1 679 6644). Its website is at <http://www.kinlayhouse.ie>. Rates range from €19 to €50. The prices for rooms are modest by Dublin standards and include a small breakfast. The environment is lively. The only drawback is the communal showers.

If you are planning on doing a good deal of research at University College, Dublin, you should consider the Montrose Hotel, which is across the street from the campus on Stillorgan Road. The hotel is a full-service establishment with a bell staff, restaurant, and currency conversion service that offers a decent exchange rate. The hotel is also across the street from an Aircoach stop. Since it is away from the center of the city, it is less expensive than others.

A livelier lodge is the Arlington Hotel at 23-25 Bachelors Walk, O'Connell Bridge (telephone: +353 1 804 9100). Its website is at <http://www.arlington.ie/>. This 116-room hotel is on the northern banks of the Liffey and houses the Knightsbridge Bar, one of the biggest pubs in the city. Irish jig dancers are a regular evening feature and are worth seeing in and of themselves, and there is a good selection of traditional Irish meals. The website gives rates, which range from €129 to €246.

Eating and Dining

At University College, Dublin, there are several eating options on campus within a short walk of the Archives Department. Nine One One is a small sandwich shop in the library-student union complex. It offers blended fruit drinks and custom-made sandwiches, each for under €5. There is a counter where you can eat, but there are better places to eat outside.

The news kiosk in the student union is the cheapest option on campus. Sandwiches are roughly €3 and drinks go for between €1 and €3. The Café in the student union offers a limited fare of sandwiches and chips. The price range is slightly higher than that at the news kiosk.

Researchers at the National Archives have many more options when it comes to eating. There are no dining facilities at the Archives, but it is located in the center of the city and there are many options in a number of different price ranges all within a walk of less than 10 minutes on Kevin Street or Wexford Street. One of the best is Café Sora at 6-11 Lower Kevin Street. Its website is at <http://www.cafesora.com>. This café is a nice little coffee shop with pastries and custom-made sandwiches. Meals are roughly €5. Another restaurant worth visiting is Eddie Rockets on Wexford Street (telephone: +353 1 475 2324). Its website is at <http://www.eddie-rockets.ie>. This eatery is part of a national chain of 1950s-style U.S. hamburger joints. The burgers are tasty and cost between €5 and €6. A meal with fries and a soft drink will be about €11. The website lists the menu.

There are also a number of good places to eat that will give you a good feel for the city. Among them are:

Gallagher's Boxty House at 20 Temple Bar (telephone: +353 1 677 9723, website <http://www.boxyhouse.ie>). A boxty is a traditional Irish potato pancake that is wrapped around marinated lamb and beef. The desserts are exceptional, and main courses cost between €12 and €20. Live traditional Irish folk music adds ambiance without being overpowering. The menu even explains where to buy CDs of the music. The website provides a map and a menu and accepts online reservations, which is helpful, since the place fills up quickly during regular eating hours. Highly recommended.

Captain America's at 44 Grafton St. (telephone: +353 1 671 5266; website <http://www.captainamericas.com>; hours: seven days a week, 12 p.m. to 12 a.m.). For slightly

overpriced American food try this Marvel-comics-meets-Hard-Rock-Café eatery. Movie and film memorabilia signed by the likes of Mel Gibson, Eric Clapton, and U2 adorn the wall alongside Marvel comic book covers. Murals of a World War II-era Captain America doing battle with the Red Skull add to the atmosphere. The fare is burgers, chicken, and pasta of average quality, with main meals costing around €10. The website includes a map and a menu.

Thunder Road Café on Fleet Street in Temple Bar. (Telephone: 353 1 679 4057, website <http://www.thunderroadcafe.com>). Inspired by a Bruce Springsteen song and a Robert Mitchum film, this restaurant attempts to be the Hard Rock Café of biker bars. Menu items are roughly €15, but lack something in taste. The website includes a menu and hours of operation and accepts online reservations.

Pubs

Oliver St. John Gogarty at 58/59 Fleet Street (telephone: + 353 1 671 1822, website <http://www.olivergogartys.com/>). Many travel guides list this pub as one of the more plastic tourist traps in Temple Bar. That said, it is a venue for a good deal of entertaining music that draws large crowds of tourists and Dubliners during the weekends. It also serves pub and restaurant fare on its three floors

O’Shea’s Merchant at 12 Lower Bridge Street (telephone: +353 1 679 3797). The only thing Irish about this pub is the name. The multinational staff offers up high-quality food in heaping portions, but it is not for the diner interested in the tradition of the Irish. The live music is good, but it just as likely to be John Denver-style country as Irish folk.

Attractions of Interest

The building at 2 College Green that once housed the Irish Parliament is now the home of the Bank of Ireland, but it still holds the chambers of the House of Lords. When the Act of Union of 1800 merged Ireland into the United Kingdom, the Irish Parliament Building became unnecessary. When the British government sold the structure to the bank, it included a stipulation that the building be altered to remove any indication that it had ever contained a national legislature. The financiers met only half of this requirement, and as a result the chambers of the House of Lords remain intact and open for tours. Telephone: +353 1 671 1488. Hours of

operation: Wednesday through Monday. Tours at 10:30 a.m., 11:30 a.m., and 1:45 p.m.

Admission is free.

Three buildings that were important during the Irish fight for independence are worth visiting: the General Post Office, Fourcourts, and the Custom House. The General Post Office was the headquarters of the rebels during the Easter Rising of 1916. The building remains a working post office and still bears the scars of artillery and rifle fire from ninety years ago. Fourcourts was—and still is—a center that housed the judiciary, but the Irish Free State Army shelled it during the Irish Civil War when the rebels of the Irish Republican Army occupied the complex. Most of the damage has been repaired. The Custom House was the site of battles in both the Anglo-Irish War and the Irish Civil War. This building has also been repaired. All three are on the north side of the Liffey River and are within easy walking distance of each other.

Another worthwhile destination is Kilmainham Gaol Museum on Inchicore Road in Kilmainham (telephone: +353 1 453 5984). Built by the British to house Irish political prisoners, the jail is now a museum that uses penal practices to examine Irish social and political history. The tour goes into the cell areas and culminates in the courtyard where the British executed the leaders of the Easter Rising of 1916. Ticket prices start at €4.40. There are special discount packages for families. Hours of operation: 9:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., seven days a week.

Hopefully this information will help historians have a productive and enjoyable experience in Dublin. For more suggestions about what to see and do in the city, pick up a free copy of *Events of the Week* or visit its website at <http://www.dublinevents.com>. This weekly publication lists events, functions, and festivals, along with many other things worth seeing in the greater Dublin area.