

Letter to Members – Summer 2021



THE IRISH ASSOCIATION
for cultural, economic and social relations

Dear Member/Friend of the Association,

I hope this letter finds you and your family well after these extraordinary 18 months we have all lived through.

The Irish Association's Council has, from the earliest days of the pandemic and lockdown, been determined to maintain a level of activity which, by necessity, is mostly online. Many of the talks, seminars and guest articles from this period are now on the revamped Irish Association website - <https://www.irish-association.org>

I thought it might be useful to offer you an update on some of the planning work that has been taking place in what might have appeared to a very quiet period for the Association.

Earlier this year we were one of the successful applicants to the (UK) Heritage Lottery which ran a Shared History Fund, established to fund projects connected to the centenary of Northern Ireland. Our project – a series of three seminars along with some work on our own cultural heritage – will examine NI's all-island relations over the past century.

In particular we will examine the origins of the Irish Association in the fevered atmosphere of the late 1930s and then move to the early 1960s for the second seminar when the Irish Association's funding of fieldwork by Denis P. Barritt and Charles Carter at QUB produced the 1962 ground-breaking book *The Northern Ireland Problem – A Study in Group Relations*. This book and the ensuing debate helped create the thaw in North-South relations which several years later saw the Lemass/O'Neill meeting.

These seminars will be held in the autumn while the final seminar will be held in early 2022 and will assess contemporary North/South relations. Significantly this last event will be held in conjunction with University College Cork, a new partner for the Irish Association.

As part of the same Heritage Lottery funded project, we have also committed to depositing relevant papers to the Public Record Office in Belfast. While the Council has already identified committee papers, texts of speeches delivered at our events etc we are keen to source even more material. Can I ask you to consider whether you have any paperwork relevant to our work of recent decades which you might consider depositing at Public Record Office of Northern Ireland as part of project?

A small group of Council members is also reflecting on our 2007 Constitution. This document has worked well for us and lays out clearly our aims, ambitions and core work. However since it was adopted a

Charity Commission has been established in N. Ireland and a Charity Regulator in the Republic. The Irish Association is currently fully compliant with the demands of both bodies but as we apply to new funders and are asked to submit our Constitution as evidence of good governance, it was considered worthwhile taking an overview of this important organising document.

If there are to be proposed alterations to the Constitution they will be circulated well ahead of the next AGM.

Over the summer there are two planned Irish Association events both of which will necessarily still be online.

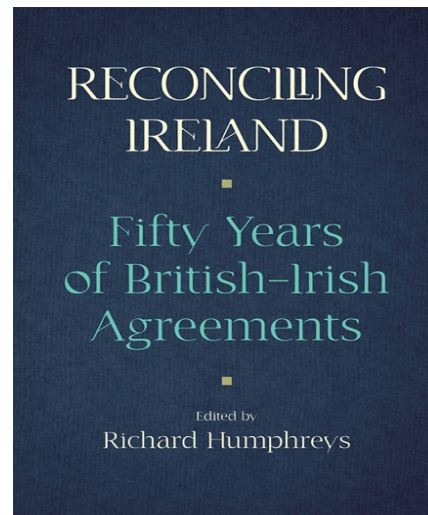
On **Tues 27th July** Dr John Fitzgerald will give an Irish Association sponsored lecture as part of the John Hewitt International Summer School held annually in Armagh.

The theme this year is Environment Crisis, under the theme, *'Staking the Future: Politics, People & Planet'*. Dr Fitzgerald is both a former Chair of the Republic's Climate Change Advisory Board and some-one with deep links to the Irish Association so he is uniquely well-placed to speak and I'm very grateful to him for accepting the invitation to participate.

The full programme for his year's summer school here:

<https://www.johnhewittsociety.org/summer-school/>

We will circulate a link to the event for members so that they can participate in John's lecture on the morning of 27th July.



On the evening of **Tues 31st August** the Irish Association will hold a book launch and an In Conversation event with Richard Humphreys, a Judge of the Irish High Court who has just published *Reconciling Ireland – Fifty Years of British-Irish Agreements* charting the evolution of the principles of the political and peace processes.

The book, despite the many and obvious obstacles, gives grounds for optimism in the future laying out as it does the complex problems that have been overcome in the past by politicians from all political parties across these islands. Again, full details to follow.

I look forward to seeing you soon when health regulations allow us to meet safely together and resume the important social dimension of the Irish Association.

Regards,

Stephen Douds

President, The Irish Association