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Newsletter of the Irish Family History Foundation

LAUNCH OF THE IFHF ONLINE RESEARCH SYSTEM

The launch of the first phase of the Irish Family History Foundation's Online Research System took place at the Navan Centre, Armagh, on Friday, November 30th, 2007.

The system was officially launched by the Church leaders of the four main denominations in Ireland whose records form the core of the genealogical database; Cardinal Sean Brady, the Most Rev. Alan Harper, Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All Ireland, the Most Rev. John Finlay, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, and the Most Rev. Roy Cooper, President of the Methodist Church. The ancient cathedral city of Armagh was a fitting venue for the launch as it is the historical capital of Ulster, the city of Saint Patrick, the burial place of Brian Boru, and the ecclesiastical capital of Ireland. The event was attended by Mayor Rolleston of Armagh, Ms. Susan Elliott, US Consul General, Mr. Conor Murphy, MLA, Mr. Barry McElduff, MLA, representatives of Armagh City Council and the county genealogy centres of all over Ireland.

The Irish Family History Foundation with its cross-border network of local centres is the largest provider of professional family history research services in Ireland. The IFHF operates on an all-island basis with each county centre having a local computer database comprising various church records of baptisms, marriages & deaths; civil records of births, deaths & marriages; Griffith's Valuation; Tithe Applotment Books; the 1901 & 1911 census records; gravestone inscriptions. The bulk of the computerization of genealogical material has been completed and to further bring together many millions of records as a searchable database online is a remarkable proposition. It is now possible to offer the ability to anyone with an internet connection, anywhere in the world, to access and search for information on their ancestors across all the main Irish genealogical sources and to retire the original sources from general use.

Vast amounts of time, effort and money have been put into developing this resource. All of the centres operate on a



Church Leaders switch on the Online Research Service

From left: Most Rev. John Finlay, Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland, Cardinal Sean Brady, Most Rev. Alan Harper, Archbishop of Armagh & Primate of All Ireland, Most Rev. Cooper, President, Methodist Church

strictly not for profit basis with all revenues going towards the continual improvement of the service, and without these revenues the further computerization of the remaining sources will not happen. Initially, there will be a searchable online site for each centre and then a single search capability across all centres.

Mayor Rolleston of Armagh welcomed everyone to Armagh, speaking of its historical significance, followed by Senator Labhrás Ó Murchú, chairman of the IFHF, who spoke about the creation of a virtual national treasure and its potential. He also recognized the contribution of the many people in the local centres over the last 20 years who have created the databases. Mr. Barry McElduff, MLA of the Northern Assembly's Culture, Arts and Leisure Committee, said that name and place were at the heart of this great project. He stressed the importance of funding arts and heritage resources thus making Ireland a better visitor attraction and benefiting the economy. He called on the relevant ministers, north and south, to get behind the initiative. Cardinal Sean Brady had just returned to Armagh the previous evening following his elevation to the College of Cardinals in Rome. He congratulated the

Foundation and spoke about the importance of the material. He said “We all need to regain contacts with our roots... but we must not forget that we belong to the family of the human race. We all ask who we are, where we come from, who we are related to, so that we can become more secure within ourselves, more at home.” He also said the project was an outstanding example of co-operation.

Archbishop Harper said he commended this project to everyone. He said “The questions people ask are, who am I, where did I come from, who belongs to me and to whom do I belong, and its this kind of question which a database like this is designed to help people answer. If you are connected with your roots you know where you come from. In commending the IFHF in having achieved so much let me encourage them to complete the task.”

Ms. Susan Elliott, US Consul, spoke about the tedious process in the past of searching for one’s roots and the difficulties in finding connections. She spoke about the links between Ireland and the United States of America where at least 16 Presidents had Irish ancestry and said that this database was a wonderful accomplishment of the IFHF. A presentation was then made to the Church Leaders, Ms. Elliott, Mayor Rolleston and Mr. McElduff.

The following centres’ records were online for the launch with their birth, baptismal, marriage and death records: Armagh, Cork North and East, Dublin North, Dublin South, Fermanagh, Galway West, Kildare, Leitrim, Roscommon, Tipperary North, Tipperary South and Tyrone.

It is planned that a central site and central search system will be in place by March 2008 which will allow users to search the records of all participating counties on one database.

The board of the IFHF would like to thank all the centres who have made their data available online to date and look forward to working with everyone in developing the service in the future. The IFHF would also like to acknowledge the role of BRS Systems Ltd. in the delivery of this online service; their professional expertise has allowed it to run smoothly. Finally, we would like to thank the musicians from Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann who added to the atmosphere in the Navan Centre on the day.

Karel Kiely,
Secretary, Irish Family History Foundation



Labhrás Ó Murchú greets Cardinal Brady watched by Rev. Finlay and Archbishop Harper



The church leaders with Nora O’Meara, Tipperary North, Susan Elliott, US Consul.



The Church leaders with Mayor Rolleston, Susan Elliott, US Consul, Barry McElduff, MLA, Conor Murphy, MLA, Fergal O’Donnell, Armagh Ancestry, and members of Armagh City Council.



The audience



Presentation to the Church leaders and Mr. McElduff, MLA