



# Archives & Records Association Cumann Cartlann agus Taifead Ireland/Éire



*Explore Your Archive Focus Week Themes for 2025*

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## A Word from the Chair

**Niamh Ní Charra**  
**ARA Ireland Chair**

Welcome to this bumper Winter edition of ARA Ireland's newsletter. It is packed with articles on a diverse selection of archive projects happening all over the country, and I am grateful, as is our newsletter officer Nora Thornton, for all the contributions to this and previous editions. Many thanks too to Nora who has compiled a wonderful winter newsletter for your enjoyment.

I am delighted to announce that we now have a full complement of committee officers representing the four corners of the island, and to take this opportunity to introduce you all to the newest members of our team. Firstly, earlier this summer Katie Connick, Assistant Archivist at the Presentation Sister's Archives in Cork, joined as our second training officer, working alongside Jessica Baldwin. Jane Moloney joined us in October, filling the vacancy of Recording Secretary, while our previous Recording Secretary, Ashley Williams, moves into the role of Honorary Secretary. We thank Ashley's predecessor, Brett Irwin, for his wonderful work and commitment in this role. (Brett has contributed a fascinating article here on the history of photographic workshops at PRONI). Finally, we have a new EDI ally, Becky Cruze who joins us from PRONI.

Becky will be hitting the ground running, joining our training officers and fellow allies who have all teamed up to run our new EDI series of online lunchtime lectures. You can read more about this series in the article from Jessica Baldwin, but I can tell you that there is a very busy few months ahead and a great series of lectures programmed well into 2026.

The weather has taken a noticeable turn in recent weeks, with temperatures dropping to below zero at times. A perfect reminder that the focus week for Explore Your Archives campaign, and our launch, is quickly approaching. Read our Campaign officer, Erin McRae's article giving you all the latest information, and introducing our new ambassador for 2025/26 - a fantastic representative of archives who understands the work we all do extremely well, and avails of and promotes archives on a regular basis. I look forward to welcoming her at our launch on the 27th. (You need to read on further to discover who it is!). I encourage everyone, as always, to embrace and engage with the EYA campaign as much as you can, and to follow us on our social media channels, including our new LinkedIn page, which our Communications officer, Rebecca O'Neill, has recently set up.

Finally, from one Chair to another, I want to wish outgoing Chair of the Irish Society For Archives, Ellen Murphy, the very best, and thank her for her contribution to and advocacy for our sector.

Without further ado, welcome to the Winter edition of ARA Ireland's newsletter - enjoy the read and I look forward to seeing many of you in person at the EYA launch this Thursday.

**Beir bua,**  
**Niamh**



## Explore Your Archive 2025/26

**Erin McRae**  
**Campaigns Officer**



*ARA Ireland's EYA ambassador for 2025, Dr. Mary McAuliffe. Photo © Marc O'Sullivan and taken at the National Folklore Collection, University College Dublin.*

With the beginning of Samhain, it's time to mark yet another Explore Your Archive campaign which kicks off with a focus week from the 29th of November to the 7th of December! Time also to mark your diaries for the ARA Ireland launch of the focus week, which this year takes place in the Custom House Visitor Centre, Custom House Quay, Dublin, on Thursday 27th of November. For those not familiar with ARA's Explore Your Archive annual campaign, it aims to showcase the best of archives and archive services across Ireland and the UK and to make the public aware of the phenomenal array of archival collections held by organisations, both public and private, whatever their size and scale, and wherever their location. The Explore Your Archive in its current iteration has been running since 2014, with an earlier archives' awareness campaign running for at least a decade prior to this. More recent updates have shifted the emphasis from a week-long campaign in November/December to a year-long campaign with a special Explore Your Archive Day on the 10th of every month and a designated focus-week in November.

**How to take part:** As in previous years, there are many ways to participate. Through events - whether in-person, online or a hybrid of both, options may include online talks, presentations, or exhibitions. These can be shared on our EYA events page, where previous submissions can be seen [here](#).

**Featured Archives:** Specific projects which have already taken place or which are ongoing can be promoted through our “Featured Archives” page on our website. You may find those submitted previously to be of use, and these can be seen [here](#).

**Social media:** A strong social media campaign can be highly effective in promoting our sector and its work. As in previous years, Explore Your Archive have introduced daily hashtags. We would love you to share your work, collections and experiences online to give your followers a sense of the work that goes on behind the scenes and the fabulous archives that you care for. You can use these themes to inspire your content, but don’t forget to tag us at @araireland and @exploreyourarchive and use the #ExploreYourArchive hashtags below each day.



The graphic features a vertical column of social media icons on the left, with the word 'ARCHIVE' written vertically in red across them. To the right, a list of daily themes for November and December is provided, along with the EYA logo and a smaller 'Explore Your Archive' logo.

**ARCHIVE**

**Social Media Handles:**

- X @explorearchives @araireland
- Butterfly icon @exploreyourarchive.bsky.social @araireland.bsky.social
- Instagram icon @exploreyourarchive @araireland
- Facebook icon @ExploreYourArchives @ARAireland

**Focus Week Themes:**

- NOVEMBER 29<sup>TH</sup> ~ #EYACONSERVATION / #EYACAOMHNU
- NOVEMBER 30<sup>TH</sup> ~ #EYABEAUTY / #EYAÁILLEACHT
- DECEMBER 1<sup>ST</sup> ~ #EYAMEDIEVAL / #EYAMEÁNAOISEACH
- DECEMBER 2<sup>ND</sup> ~ #EYASILENCE / #EYACIÚNAS
- DECEMBER 3<sup>RD</sup> ~ #EYAPETS / #EYAPEATAÍ
- DECEMBER 4<sup>TH</sup> ~ #EYADIGITAL / #EYADIGITEACH
- DECEMBER 5<sup>TH</sup> ~ #EYAINCLUSION / #EYACUIMSIÚ
- DECEMBER 6<sup>TH</sup> ~ #EYAANNIVERSARIES / #EYACUIMHNEACHÁIN
- DECEMBER 7<sup>TH</sup> ~ #EYAYOURARCHIVES / #EYADOCHTLANN

**EYA CUARDAIGH DO CHARTLANN**

**EXPLORE YOUR ARCHIVE**

*Explore Your Archive Focus Week Themes for 2025*

**The Launch:** We are delighted to announce that our launch will take place at the Custom House Visitor Centre, Custom House Quay, Dublin 1, 6-8pm. We are also delighted that Dr. Mary McAuliffe, our EYA 2025/2026 ambassador, will be joining us for our official EYA launch. More details can be found at the following [link](#). If you have any questions about the Explore Your Archive campaign, or wish to submit events or material for featured archives please do not hesitate to contact me at [erin.f.mcrae@gmail.com](mailto:erin.f.mcrae@gmail.com). Please note that for your events to make the press release, details need to be received as soon as possible.

## History of Photography Workshops at PRONI

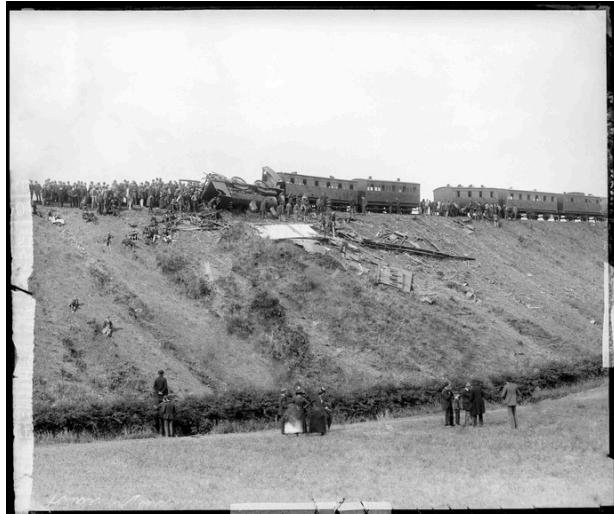
Brett Irwin  
PRONI Reprographics Manager

The reprographics team in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) held a series of four public history of photography workshops in the reprographics studio during the summer and early autumn of 2025. The workshops looked at the digital photography work of the reprographics team and a history of photography from the early 19th century to the present day.



*History of Photography workshops at PRONI - PRONI Reprographics Manager, Brett Irwin*

The workshop began with a brief introduction to PRONI and the role it plays being the official archive of Northern Ireland and the preservation remit for government and privately deposited records. We then explored the digital photography work of the team and looked at some of the work areas that the team contributes to in PRONI including digital restoration work. The archival concepts of preservation and access were discussed with no prior knowledge of this being assumed by the attendees. The digital photography work in PRONI fits neatly within these concepts as it facilitates access to archival material while preserving the original document and reducing further handling once captured. Digitised online collections and the Digital Asset Management System (DAMS) were shown as clear examples of digital photography work. Some project work we do with external partners was explored, notably, the Virtual Record Treasury of Ireland, which is an award winning project restoring and reimagining archives destroyed in 1922 during the Irish Civil War, and the Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN), which is a partnership with the University of Ulster and relates to PRONI archival material from the conflict known as 'The Troubles' in Northern Ireland being made available online.



**D2886/3 - restored digital image from the Armagh train disaster which occurred on June 12, 1889. This was the worst railway disaster in Irish history, resulting in the deaths of over 80 people and injuring 260 others. The image is taken from the original broken glass plate.**

The workshop then looked at the history and evolution of photography. A copy of the first photographic image ever recorded by Joseph Niepce in 1828 was discussed with a detailed look at the processes behind the development of the captured image from his early experiments in photography. The workshop then moved into the work of French chemist, Louis Daguerre, and the first publicly available photographic process known as the daguerreotype in the 1840s. The daguerreotype process involved polishing silver-plated copper plates to make it sensitive to light, capturing the image in a camera obscura (a precursor to the modern camera), and developing the image by applying mercury vapor. This continued alongside the invention of another photographic process known as the calotype by Henry Fox Talbot. The calotype was the first photographic process to use the negative image and allowed for multiple positive prints to be made from a single negative. All key milestones that contributed to the evolution of photography such as the tintype, Thomas Edison and the invention of the light bulb, and George Eastman and the box camera (which completely democratised photography by making it available to people of all social classes in 1888) were discussed and photographs from PRONI's collections were used as examples.



**D4315/2/3 - example of a tintype image - small portrait of an unknown woman- a thin sheet of metal that were affordable and easy to produce. Became popular in America in the 1860s.**

The workshop then concluded by looking at photography in the digital age and some of the challenges we all face with emerging technologies around AI and the manipulation of the image. This involved group participation in identifying real and manipulated images. A very thought-provoking session indeed!

Some great questions were asked from members of the public with a lively discussion held after each workshop.

All images used with permission from the Deputy Keeper of the Records, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI).

## Irish Distillers and Ancestry Partner publish Midleton Distillery Barley Purchase Books from 1825- 1834

**Carol Quinn**  
**Head of Archives, Irish Distillers Pernod Ricard**

In September 2025 we again partnered with Ancestry, the global leader in family history, to publish historic barley purchase records from the firm James Murphy & Co., then owners of Midleton Distillery in Co. Cork. The collection comprises three ledgers dating from 1825 to 1834, documenting barley purchases from East Cork farmers during the pre-famine period.

These unique volumes record the names of local farmers who supplied the distillery in its early years, along with the quantities of barley sold, offering a rare insight into the early history of Midleton Distillery and the farming communities that supported the production of Irish whiskey.



*Carol Quinn with some of the barley purchase books*

With few, if any, individual records of farmers surviving from this period, these documents may be the only written trace of many of the families listed, making them an invaluable resource for genealogical research. Beyond the names, the ledgers provide a rare snapshot of community life before the Famine, even recording the names of female farmers who were leading households and managing farms across East Cork. We have already had contact from a number of people still farming their family lands who have found their ancestors in the books!



*Detail of some of the barley purchase books*

This was one of our signature projects for 2025, the 200th anniversary of the founding of the Distillery and it was a special way of acknowledging the debt we owe to the farming communities who produce our grain.



*Detail of one of the barley purchase books*

This latest release adds to a growing collection of records made available through the partnership between Irish Distillers and Ancestry, including over one million Jameson employee records spanning more than a century, and historic agreements between John Jameson & Son and Irish publicans. Together, these archives offer a unique window into Ireland's social and whiskey heritage and are all accessible on Ancestry.ie.

Link to records: [Ireland, Midleton Distillery Barley Purchase Books, 1825-1834](#)

## Celebrating Ten Years of *Waking The Feminists*

Della Keating  
National Library of Ireland



*Photocall outside the Abbey Theatre ahead of the first public meeting.*

*Photo: Fiona Morgan NLI Waking The Feminists Collection.*

In 2017 the National Library of Ireland (NLI) started a pilot project to acquire born digital archival material in response to the challenge of collecting and making available Ireland's unique literary, visual and documentary heritage in digital form. A number of collections were acquired as part of this initiative of which the #WakingTheFeminists collection is one. This collection documents the spontaneous online grassroots campaign that developed as a response to under representation of women in the world of Irish theatre. It was a short lived but highly effective campaign which had worldwide reach to further the cause for gender balance/women's equality in the world of Irish theatre and inspired a movement that continues to influence cultural life today.

The NLI acquired the born digital aspect of the #WakingtheFeminists Collection in a series of accruals from 2019-2023. It contains minutes of meetings, event planning documents (spreadsheets, budgets, scripts etc.), campaign photographs, and speaking notes, covering the frenetic and spontaneous inception of the campaign and the campaign itself.

To mark the important 10th anniversary of the campaign, the National Library of Ireland (NLI) is delighted to share a newly catalogued selection of born digital photographs from this collection. The selection, chosen by the NLI's Born Digital Archival team in collaboration with campaign coordinator Lian Bell, captures some key moments from the early rallies and Abbey Theatre events to the community of artists, activists, and audiences who came together under the banner of equality. Each photograph is accompanied by detailed captions supplied by Lian Bell and is made available through the Library's online catalogue. They represent only a small portion of the larger #WakingtheFeminists Collection which is currently being processed.

### The selection includes:

- The original Facebook post that sparked the conversation around equality for women in Irish theatre.
- An accidental but symbolic photograph taken before the first public meeting.
- The iconic photocall outside the Abbey Theatre ahead of that meeting.
- Regional gatherings of women working in arts and theatre in Galway and Limerick for Nollaig na mBan, January 2016.
- A never-produced mug design, complete with its backstory.

You can access the selection on the Library's catalogue [here](#)



**Screenshot of the #WakingTheFeminists Facebook account after One More Thing, the final public event at the Abbey Theatre. Photo: NLI Waking The Feminists Collection.**



**Limerick gathering for Nollaig na mBan NLI Waking The Feminists Collection.**



**Design for mug. NLI Waking the Feminists Collection**



**Accidental but symbolic photograph taken ahead of the first public meeting. Photo: Fiona Morgan NLI Waking The Feminists Collection.**

The National Library also holds additional material relating to the #WakingTheFeminists campaign. Archived versions of the campaign website are accessible through the National Library of Ireland's Web Archive [here](#), with captures from January 2019 and November 2024 ensuring that the voices, visuals, and digital heritage of the movement remain discoverable for future generations. There is physical material, acquired by the Department of Special Collections, which includes ephemera as well as printed and manuscript material related to the campaign. The National Library also holds related publications, including the Gender Counts report that emerged from the initiative and the recently published *WTF Happened: #WakingTheFeminists and the Movement That Changed Irish Theatre*, by Sarah Durcan and Lian Bell.

All of this material can be found on the NLI catalogue which can be accessed through the National Library's website at [www.nli.ie](http://www.nli.ie)

I would like to thank Leah Leslie, Kasia Kamieniecka and Joanna Finegan for their assistance with this article.

## CIÉ Group Archives Online Catalogue Launched

Kevin Forkan  
CIÉ Group Archivist

The CIÉ Group, Ireland's largest public transport provider, has a substantial archive that dates back to the eighteenth century and contains the corporate records of almost eighty predecessor railway and other transport companies. These include the records of the first railway company in Ireland, the Dublin and Kingstown, industry giants such as the Great Southern and Western, the Waterford and Limerick and the Great Northern (Ireland), and a range of small and medium-sized companies throughout Ireland, from the Cork and Bandon to the Finn Valley, the Dublin and South Eastern to the Ulster Railway Company, and from the West Clare to the Cavan and Leitrim. We hold corporate records relating to Dublin tramways, canals and river navigation, and road transport companies from the early nineteenth to the mid-twentieth centuries. Through a series of mergers from the late nineteenth century onwards, most of these companies became subsumed into the Great Southern Railways Company in 1925, which subsequently became CIÉ in 1945.



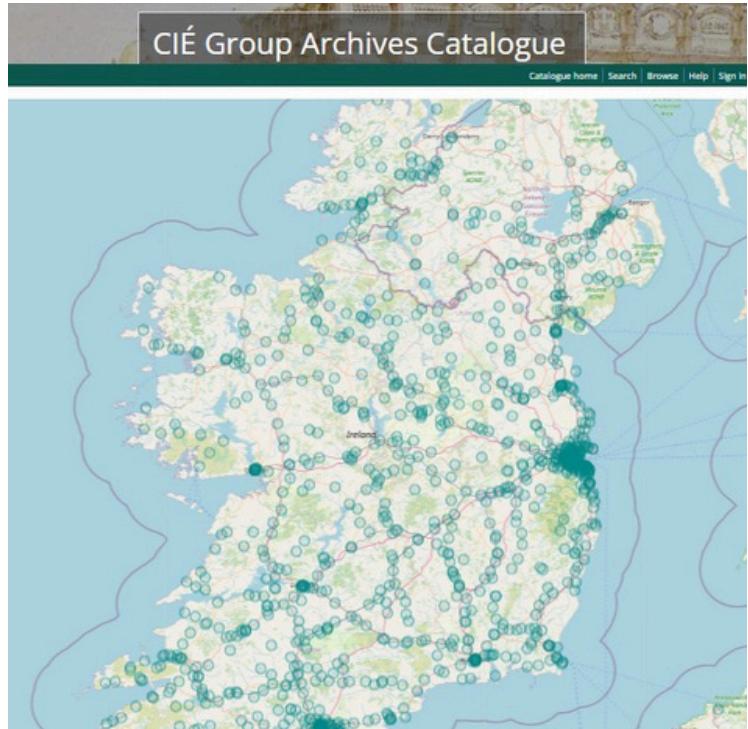
[CIÉ Group Archives online catalogue homepage](#)

Since 2023 the Group has undertaken a programme of preserving, cataloguing and digitising its archives. The core corporate records of these predecessor companies, consisting of board minute books, committee minute books and shareholders' meetings minutes were prioritised for cataloguing. Added to this were other records, some of genealogical interest, including house rental books, employment records, land purchase records, letterbooks, and company files.

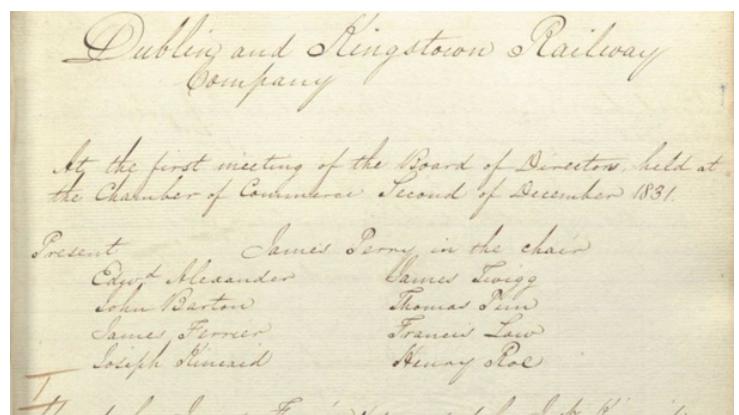
Along with the cataloguing of the records, a names database was created that holds the names and basic biographies of almost 19,000 persons and organisations that worked for or were otherwise related to CIÉ and the predecessor companies from the mid-nineteenth century onward. About 7,000 names from this database have been released to the public, the remainder will be released incrementally in keeping with data protection precautions.

A programme of digitisation was undertaken, using our in-house scanner and also offsite services. The board minute books of the predecessor companies have been prioritised and at this point most have been digitised with the remainder to be completed by mid-2026. Some records of genealogical interest were also digitised.

An important part of this work was the selection of a collections management system that would hold the archives catalogue, names database and digitised content, and allow it to be made available to the public. Following a procurement process, the Epexio system developed by Metadatis was selected and implemented. We worked with Metadatis to configure the system to our needs, both the backend cataloguing area and the public-facing online catalogue. This CIÉ Group Archives online catalogue was officially launched by Minister for Transport Darragh O'Brien TD on 6 November 2025.



Online catalogue map search interface



Extract from the first minutes of the Dublin and Kingstown Railway Company, 1831

## **The online catalogue currently contains:**

- The corporate records of 68 railway companies that operated in Ireland from the 1830s to the 1970s
- The corporate records of 10 other transport companies (canal, road, tram, sea) that operated in Ireland from the 1810s to the 1980s
- The Board minutes of CIÉ from 1945-1994
- Other corporate records from CIÉ from 1945-1990s
- A genealogy search facility containing 7,000 names and short biographies of persons who worked for or otherwise engaged with transport companies in Ireland, 1850s-1950s
- A map search tool that allows users to see archives related to particular places

***Extract from a Great Southern and Western Railway Company Rental Book, 1850s***

The online catalogue is available at <https://archives.cie.ie/>. Further information on CIÉ's heritage and information on how to visit the archives is available on our Heritage and Archives webpages at <https://www.cie.ie/who-we-are/heritage-and-archives>.



*Aidan Murphy, Chair of the Board of CIÉ, Kevin Forkan, CIÉ Group Archivist, Darragh O'Brien, Minister for Transport, and Fionn O'Shea, CIÉ interim CEO, at the launch of the CIÉ Group Archives online catalogue, 6 November 2025.*

## Diversity and Inclusion Online Lecture Series

**Jessica Baldwin & Katie Connick**  
**ARA Ireland Training Officers**

ARA Ireland has developed a Diversity and Inclusion online lecture series, which is open to all ARA members. The lunchtime talks promote the principles of diversity and inclusion across archival collections and the wider record-keeping community. A series of speakers working across Ireland will present their unique experiences focusing on community engagement and collection development. They will share examples of best practice to expand community knowledge and awareness of contemporary Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) issues using diverse archival material, with the aim of forging new paths for positive change.

**Booking is essential and details of upcoming and past lectures are available [here](#):**



Group of Traveller children, Mountbellew, 1950s' Ward Family Photographs, Mincéirs Archive, University of Galway Library Archives.

**Get involved: If you have a topic that you think would be suitable for this lecture series, please contact the Training Officers at [ARAI.TO2@archives.org.uk](mailto:ARAI.TO2@archives.org.uk)**