

Welcome to the biannual ISA

Newsletter. The Chair and committee members would like to extend warm greetings to readers at this time of uncertainty. This issue reflects the current health crisis in the article from the Military Archives, and with the fact that we have no ISA news to share with you. The Society is 50 years old this year, and we are postponing our celebrations until next year. However the Autumn issue will begin a series about Irish archives heroes, former colleagues and friends that left a mark on the profession. We hope that the autumn will find us all in a safe place again.

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Recording people and places**The archives of Ráidíó Éireann producer Proinsias Ó Conluain and of the Mobile Recording Unit**

The Mobile Recording Unit (MRU) or 'Ionad Taistil' was a van kitted out with recording equipment which began its work in 1947, usually staffed by a producer-scriptwriter, and a sound engineer. It enabled Radio Éireann for the first time in its history to travel the country and record the speech and music of both ordinary and well known people in their own environment. Among the producers connected with it were Séamus Ennis, Seán Mac Réamoinn, Proinsias Ó Conluain, and later Pádraig Óg Ó Tuama and Ciarán Mac Mathúna.



Sound engineer Ned Nugent recording on Tory Island with unnamed local man (1956) © RTÉ

They travelled all over Ireland, visiting the Gaeltachtaí in particular, recording the spoken word, songs, traditional music, or ambient sounds.

Once the van arrived back at base in Henry Street, so-called linking-scripts were written around the sound material, to create what was known as 'features', today one would say documentaries.

RTÉ Sound Archives holds thousands of acetate disks (now digitised) and many more tapes containing recordings made by the MRU, and in 2011 RTÉ deposited a large number of scripts partly connected with these recordings in UCD. Proinsias Ó Conluain (1919-2013) also donated a large tranche of notebooks, scripts, and photographs of his own that are now partly in RTÉ Radio Archives, and partly in UCD. He was a friend of mine, and when he died he left me his diaries. I have used them together with the audio and written records from the MRU for my series *Siúlach Scéalach* which has been broadcast by Raidió na Gaeltachta since 2016. The diaries are now in RTÉ and I hope to continue transcribing and translating them.

Ó Conluain was born in Benburb, County Tyrone, and worked for An Gúm before joining Radio Éireann in 1947. In his work with the MRU, he concentrated in particular on the islands and recorded much valuable material, though his talents were such that he was encouraged to produce English-language programmes also. He

was a pioneering documentary maker, produced an extraordinary volume of programmes, captured the last native speakers of Irish in areas where the language was fast disappearing, and his work was recognised by a Jacob's Radio Award in 1978, Gradam Shean-Nós Chois Life in 1998, an honorary doctorate from the University of Ulster in 2005 and Gradam Aitheantais na bPíobairí Uilleann 2006. After retiring from RTÉ, he continued his researches into aspects of our history and culture and he was one of the founders of the scholarly periodical *Dúiche Néill- The Journal of the O'Neill Country Historical Society* in 1985.



BBC sound engineers and their recording gear on Inishmore, Aran (1949) © RTE

As far as I can make out he composed all his diaries and notebooks in Irish, even when writing about the Orangemen whom he recorded in the North in 1964, or when making other English language documentaries. They add much to the surviving scripts and audio materials, in the following ways:

He usually commented on the scenery as well as the state of the roads – a big concern for manoeuvring the heavy recording van. Unsurprisingly he

describes some minor accidents and the many difficulties of getting the recording equipment on board ferries to travel to the islands.

There is much in the way of observing people's living conditions, and he would note the change from thatch to slate roofs, while sometimes emphasising a lack of cleanliness, the lack of running water, or proper sewerage systems. Likewise he was interested in people's dress, whether it was of good or poor quality – at times he passes comment on people who had no pride in their appearance.

Besides outward appearances, he described how some people were happy to be recorded where others were reluctant. I have read a little of the private correspondence between himself and people he met who wrote to him: there is a charming, but innocent, intimacy in some of the letters. The arrival of the RÉ van with Proinsias and a sound engineer could be a talking point in rural Ireland for a long time. Sometimes they became part of the local news and return visits might be suggested.



Sound engineer Jimmy Mahon and children on Arranmore Island (1953) © RTÉ

So far I have managed to put together a collection of fifty photographs which he took, relating directly to his work with the MRU.

Although a lifelong agnostic he refers to attending mass wherever he travelled. He sometimes gives his own interpretation of how people lived their lives referring to 'low moral standards' in one area and he explained what he meant. In *Siúlach Scéalach* I left out any reference to this, in case people from the area would come after me! The [podcasts](#) are available online, as are a [few of the photographs](#). This is a rich resource for family history researchers, for folklorists, and Irish language enthusiasts, and much of it has yet to be tapped into.

Ian Lee (producer, RTÉ and Ráidíó na Gaeltachta)

[Office Dogs: Archival potential?](#)

Across Europe, as many as one in five workplaces are now allowing dogs. It's really no surprise: millennials, the generation who increasingly dominate the workforce, are committed pet owners. Although less likely to be married or living with their partners, they are more likely to have pets than any other generation.

Despite this increase in pet ownership, many pet dogs are spending much of their time in social isolation. For those of us who live in urban surroundings, gone are the days when dogs were free to roam off and seek out the company

of other dogs or humans if their own humans were not home. Most are confined to houses, some to single rooms, and others to small cages while their owners often spend long hours in work. For a social species such as the dog, this is a very unnatural set-up, and many dogs suffer from separation anxiety.

For those whose employers are open to the idea of allowing dogs in the workplace, taking your dog to work with you can provide a host of benefits to all involved. Employers have been shown to benefit from an increase in employee productivity, enhanced recruitment and improved staff-retention when opening their doors to employees' pets. Staff who share their workplaces with dogs have been shown to have reduced levels of stress and increased job satisfaction, lower blood pressure in stressful situations, increased social interaction, increased cohesion and team work, and improved mood. And the dogs get to have one of the things they value most in this world- companionship.

For us dog-loving archivists however, bringing your dog to work may seem like a pipedream. Jenkinson would surely turn in his grave at the mere suggestion. Imagined scenarios of dogs peeing on ancient volumes or shredding the vellum scrolls or running off with a portion of a file, rendering the original order lost forever, abound...



Taking proper care, there is no reason not to have more than one dog in the workplace

I will be honest, I had long ago come to the realisation that as an archivist, I had probably picked one of the least office-dog compatible careers out there. But, over the past couple of months, I have come across not one, but two archive dogs, with a combined 13 years' service. Documents destroyed, damaged or ingested- nil. I am pretty sure that there are archivists who can't claim to have such a clean record!

By way of an example, for Klaus, a miniature Schnauzer, an archive is one of three workplaces he regularly attends. Klaus is four years old, and started going to work as a puppy (once he was toilet trained). The archives are in a separate building on a small campus, and the archivist (his human) is the only member of staff. Needless to say, Klaus is kept out of the strong room and keeps to the office areas, and doesn't tend to be there on the days when visitors are expected. The only minor issues with taking Klaus to work

is that he can sometimes get a bit barky when he gets excited or is greeting people, and he can begin to extract items from the bin to shred if he gets over-wrought or bored. He does however love the different walks at lunchtime as it is more of a treat than a regular occurrence when he gets to go to the archive.



Needless to say, not all archive spaces would be appropriate for dogs. From my experience of working with office dogs, (and in archives) I would suggest that having a working space that is separate to reading rooms and other areas frequented by the public, as well as from the area where material is stored, might be the most important factor to consider. If you are a sole archivist, it should be a consideration whether your dog can cope well with being left in such an area whilst you go to the other area. For most other aspects of bringing a dog to work, the considerations should be largely similar to those for any other work place, and my advice on this can be found in my book (pictured above).

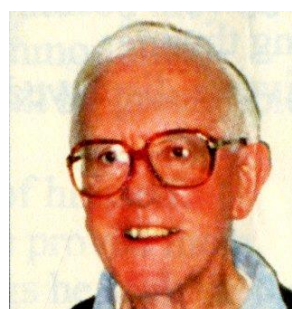
Stephanie Rousseau (Assistant Archivist, Dublin City Library & Archive)

[Fr Leo Layden CSSp \(1924-2019\)](#)

First Provincial Archivist of the Congregation of the Holy Spirit

Fr Leo Layden, who died in St James's Hospital, Dublin, on 24 November 2019 on the eve of his 95th birthday, was the last honorary life member of the ISA.

A native of Arigna, County Roscommon, Leo Layden was born on 25 November 1924. He was schooled in Rockwell College before moving to the Spiritan Novitiate in Kilshane, so beginning an association with the Congregation of the Holy Spirit, popularly known as the Holy Ghost Fathers, which would last for the rest of his life. He was professed in 1944 and moved to Kimmage Manor. University followed, with a BA in philosophy from UCD and, after four years of study in Rome, an STD from the Gregorian University.



Fr Leo Layden CSSP

Leo was ordained in Rome in 1952 and posted to Nigeria the following year where he served in a combination of pastoral and educational roles in Holy Trinity parish, Onitsha. However, ill

health intervened and he returned to Ireland in 1959 and worked successively in Kimmage Manor and Kilshane.

In 1971 he was asked to take on the newly created role of Provincial Archivist and set about transforming a collection of dusty boxes which held the records of the Congregation in Ireland from 1859, into a modern archive in Temple Park, Dublin. He informed himself about his new responsibilities initially through membership of the English based Catholic Archives Society and subsequently through summer schools and short courses which were organized by the Archives Department, UCD specifically for members of religious orders who had been given archival responsibilities.

Leo was the founding father and first chairman of the Association of Religious Archivists of Ireland which was influential in developing a greater sense of archival awareness among the religious orders. He was later instrumental in transforming the Association into the Association of Church Archives in Ireland (ACAI) which provides a home not just for Catholic religious but also for archivists from other religious denominations.



Leo was also an active member of the Irish Society for Archives and served as vice chairman from 1991 until 1997. He retired in 2000 and moved to the Community at St Mary's College in Rathmines.

His illness caused him periodic discomfort and he dealt with this by simply getting on with things. As a result he was, at times, a little impatient with those who could not do likewise. However, for the most part he was an invariably helpful archivist and a cheerful companion who liked nothing better than a day's fishing in Co. Roscommon.

Raymond Refaussé (Archivist, formerly of the Representative Body Library and Archive)

[Covid-19 and archival work on the Military Service Pensions Collection](#)

[Solutions to current restrictions: the view of a team member](#)

Following the initial government announcement that all non-essential work activities would cease it was then decided, with the approval of the Department of Defence, that the Military Service (1916-1923) Pensions Collection (MSPC) team would work on a rotational basis. This was in order to adhere to the social distancing recommendations put in place. Both Michael Keane and I stay in regular contact with the Project Manager, Cecile Gordon to keep her up to date with progress.

As an archivist who spends some 80 per cent of my time working with original material, being office based is somewhat essential. I would visit our storage area to retrieve files several times a day. When working from home, processing files is out of bounds so many other tasks have been brought forward. This has allowed me to dedicate more time to the social media element of the project, in particular, researching and writing blog posts. Researching is a task that can at times feel an infringement while office based but lends itself well to remote working. It is important that as a Project we continue to maintain output during these difficult times. Conducting research for blog posts has also given me a new appreciation for our researchers who access the MSPC online catalogue and I have noted some suggestions to help improve the user experience.



Access enhanced despite closure

Sticking with the theme of outreach, I have been asked by Galway County Council to present the MSPC at the annual Loughrea Memorial Group Conference later this year. Working from home has certainly given me a jump start on putting together my presentation. Having delivered a talk last year as part of the MSPC Provincial series I was delighted to be asked to return. The organising committee invest a lot of time and effort in the one-day conference and it is always well attended and an ideal opportunity to engage with users.

The final task that I can continue to do from home is reviewing descriptions. With a release of thousands of files planned for some time later this year, I have got a head start on reviewing many of the descriptions that are due to be released into the public domain. Although some aspects of our daily work have been curtailed, this has been an opportunity to get on the inside track of tasks for the future, for we must remember that normalcy will return!

Rob McEvoy (archivist, Military Archives/ Military Service Pensions Collection)

[The archives of the Guinness Choir](#) An initial investigation

The prominent brewing family, Guinness, has made very significant contributions to the life of Dublin through many philanthropic avenues. The brewery was founded by Arthur Guinness in 1759. His grandson, Sir Benjamin Lee Guinness, provided for a

magnificent restoration of Saint Patrick's Cathedral in the first half of the 1860s. His sons subsequently made substantial financial subventions to support the musical establishment at the cathedral, and there is more information on the family's contribution to choral music in Kerry Houston, Maria McHale & Michael Murphy, *Documents of Irish Music History* (2019). Iveagh House (now housing the Department of Foreign Affairs) and the adjacent Iveagh Gardens were gifts to the state from the family. Another significant venture was the establishment of the Iveagh Trust to provide social housing and to alleviate poor living conditions.

Victor Leeson, a young member of the management staff of the Guinness Brewery, founded Saint James's Gate Musical Society, afterwards to become the Guinness Choir. The society presented its first performance when the Rupert Guinness Hall, Watling Street, was opened in May 1951. The members were drawn from the staff of Guinness.

The opening event was a performance of Gilbert and Sullivan's *Trial by Jury*. While the choir still performs some popular material, it normally concentrates on a more serious mainstream repertoire and often embraces adventurous contemporary compositions. It participated in the premiere of Gerard Victory's monumental work *Ultima Rerum* in 1984, and Leeson's circular sent to the choir after this performance is retained in the choir archives: 'I hope the members of the choir who took part derived some musical and literary profit to compensate for the effort

required and felt privileged to be able to contribute to the first performance by the country's leading composer. I cannot assume that all enjoyed learning the music but if you did, then that is an extra bonus.' As it approaches its 70th anniversary the choir has only had three musical directors – Victor Leeson (1951–84), John Dexter (1984–91), and David Milne (1991–present).

An interesting photograph in the archives dating from the early 1980s shows the choir in the National Concert Hall before the installation of the organ.

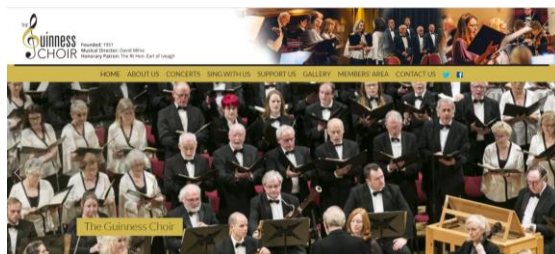


A performance of Bach's Christmas Oratorio, NCH 1981 (© Lensmen)

Membership of the choir was gradually expanded, and by the 1990s the rules stated that membership was 'open to all employees and pensioners of Guinness Ireland Companies and to their families and friends'. The inclusion of 'and friends' meant that the choir was now open to a much wider population in Dublin. The choir's committee was composed of eight officers but the positions of Chairman, Secretary and Treasurer were restricted to employees or pensioners of the brewery, reflecting the substantial financial contribution being made by Guinness at that time. After Guinness was subsumed into the Diageo Group, the support which the

brewery had provided waned somewhat. The accounts for the choir 1994/95 show that more than 50% of its income in that year came via a grant from the brewery (IR£12,500)—this was reduced over subsequent years.

2001 marked the 50th Jubilee season and the programmes included Arvo Part's *Passio* and the Irish premiere of John Adams' *Harmonium* together with William Walton's very demanding *Belshazzar's Feast*. There is considerable correspondence about this Jubilee year in the archives.



The Rupert Guinness Hall became rather neglected resulting in the choir needing to find alternative venues for rehearsal. However, its extensive vocal and instrumental scores together with its administrative records remained in the hall. More recently plans to redevelop the now very dilapidated building meant that the choir's library and archives were in peril and indeed there was a fear that they could inadvertently end up in a skip.

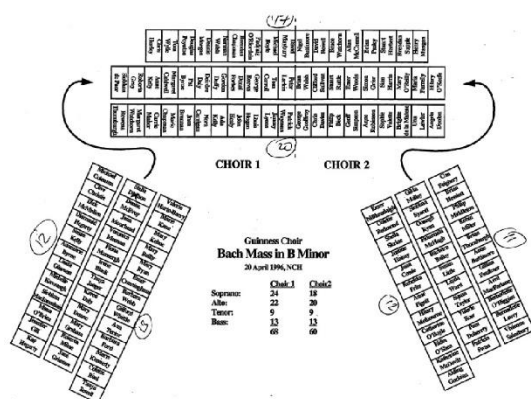
The choir was interested in forging a partnership with TU Dublin Conservatoire to provide opportunities for up and coming singers and instrumentalists and offered the valuable library resources for the Conservatoire to use as part of this partnership. The Conservatoire is moving to new purpose-built facilities at Grangegorman in September 2020

and this provides an historic link with Victor Leeson, who held the post of organist of All Saint's Church Grangegorman from 1943 for more than 40 years.

I went to the Rupert Guinness Hall with Henry Mangan (choir librarian) and other committee members to look at what was stored there. I was most impressed by the very large library that was housed in the hall, albeit in very cramped and unsuitable storage. There was very little lighting in the storage room so we had to use the beam from Henry's mobile phone to look at much of the material. I thought I was only going to see music but I was also shown boxes of administrative records and ephemera. This immediately switched on my archival and musicological mind. It seemed like a perfect subject for a very timely masters or even doctoral study, seeing the upcoming 70th anniversary. I suggested that the library be moved to our own at the Conservatoire but that the administrative material be moved to our research office for an initial assessment. Henry Mangan provided a complete listing of the musical items. The administrative and financial records together with related ephemera were neatly packed but without box listings.

The Guinness Choir archives will be added to the projects under the umbrella of the Research Foundation for Music in Ireland (www.musicresearch.ie). Meticulous records have been kept since the foundation of the choir. Comprehensive correspondence

relating to the planning of programmes, contracts for the conductors, orchestral musicians and vocal soloists reveal some robust negotiations. Other fascinating aspects of the archive include correspondence relating to the planning and publicity of concerts. The documents referring to the practicalities include detailed diagrams of how the choir were to stand on stage. In addition, some of these diagrams go as far as including the names of where each individual member of the choir would stand. A good example of this is the diagram below displaying the complex layout for the double choir requirement for a performance of Bach's *Saint Matthew Passion* in the National Concert Hall on 20 April, 1996.



An initial assessment of the archives has identified a repository of many of the programmes for performances since the foundation of the choir. Press releases and reviews (whether complimentary or not) are a prominent part of the archive. Other items of interest are the pragmatic post mortems of concerts. These provide a very fertile source for a future project to write a comprehensive history of the choir. Such a history will place its work

in the wider context of choral music in Ireland, while also containing some fascinating personal stories and filling in many gaps in the history of choral music in Dublin.

Kerry Houston (senior lecturer in musicology, Technical University, Dublin)

Covid-19 and records management

The current restrictions and work at the Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport

I have been working from home since Monday, 15 March, as have the majority of my colleagues in the Department. Thanks to many hours of overwork done by our ICT section, people were provided with remote or direct network access, some with hardware, and thanks to the platform Starleaf we are connected via video and chat. Because these are transient formats akin to phone-calls, people are encouraged to file notes in Word to record substantive decisions.



Waiting until normal work resumes

We do not run an archival service: like other Departments and government bodies, we transfer records worthy of

permanent preservation to the National Archives when they are 30 years old (my Department does not fall under the 20-year rule).

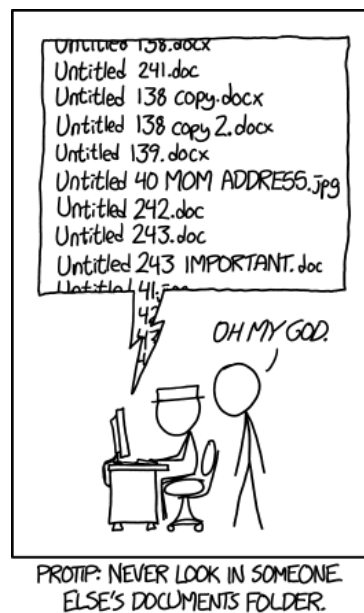
It does happen that access requests are received for materials over 30 years old which have yet to be transferred, and one of the things on my to-do list is an access policy.

The lockdown means that none of our divisions are currently able to work on their paper records, whether to appraise them for archives or to prepare them for transfer. For me, it means I had to halt an inventory of our departmental file store, and also to stop preparing a particular archival series from the maritime sections for the National Archives. And it means also that we cannot dispose of records which were certified for disposal by the National Archives.

Thanks to remote access to shared folders however I've never been so busy. Records management is built on classification of records which in turn depends on surveys, and two weeks ago I gave training remotely to some of our Records Management Liaison Officers who will carry out surveys in their sections. The Department currently has 37 sections, with regional offices in Shannon (regulation and administration of motor tax and vehicle ownership), Loughrea (regulation and certification of road transport operators), and Killarney (grant and policy administration for tourism and sport). Giving training online is not

ideal, and I hope that the next event can be done in situ again, especially since we can then include a short module on appraising paper records for archives. Classroom teaching, to me, will always be preferable to talking to a cohort of invisible people with muted microphones.

Thanks to the availability of shared folders staff are encouraged to tidy up their mail boxes and review their shared folders, with due attention to folder and document names.



© XKCD

The illustration above is not in the least indicative of departmental practice, but like anywhere else, spring cleans are necessary. They and the record survey will make sure that we can transfer reliable archival records when the time comes.

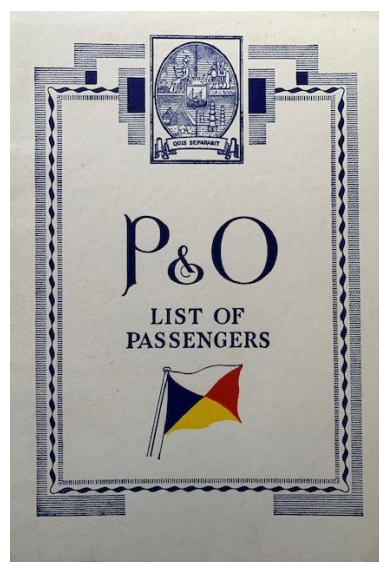
Vera Moynes (archivist, Department of Transport, Tourism and Sport)

The Papers of Captain Arthur Estough Green

It is interesting what can sometimes turn up at country auctions. A couple of years ago I purchased a small cache of records relating to the distinguished career of an Irish engineer, who spent most of his adult working life in India. The collection, which comprises three archival boxes, gives a wonderful insight into the professional and personal life of Captain Arthur Estough Green CIE OBE MC, and includes correspondence, reports, plans, drawings, and pamphlets, covering a 30-year period from 1919 to 1949.

Born in County Antrim on the 16th December 1892, Arthur Green was educated at King's School, Pontefract and Leeds University. He received a commission as a 2nd Lieutenant, West Yorkshire Regiment (Territorial Force) on the 28th of August 1914, just after the outbreak of the Great War. Promoted Captain on the 1st of June 1916, he was awarded the Military Cross in 1917. He transferred to the West Riding Divisional Engineers, Royal Engineers (Territorial Force) in October 1918.

He was appointed to the Indian Public Works Department as Assistant Engineer on probation on the 24th November 1919 for posting to Bihar and Orissa. He took passage from Liverpool on the SS Patricia on 7th February 1920 and arrived in India on the 21st of March 1920.



P&O passenger list for the SS Corfu, Bombay-London (1936)

The ship left Liverpool in an overcrowded and utterly insanitary state and he notes ruefully in his papers that the consequent delays resulted in him losing a month's salary. His papers include some interesting correspondence, soon after his arrival, with the Record Department of the India Office, London, seeking plans of a bridge over the Barakar River which he was repairing. The Office stated that no plans of the bridge, which had been constructed in the mid-19th century, had been sent to them, but they were able to provide transcripts of references to the bridge from other records they held.

His papers reflect the range and diversity of his responsibilities. There are notes and reports on a wide range of engineering works - railway bridges, dams, wells, and road construction. He seems to have been particularly involved in utilising concrete as a construction material.



A pamphlet issued by the Concrete Association of India (1934)

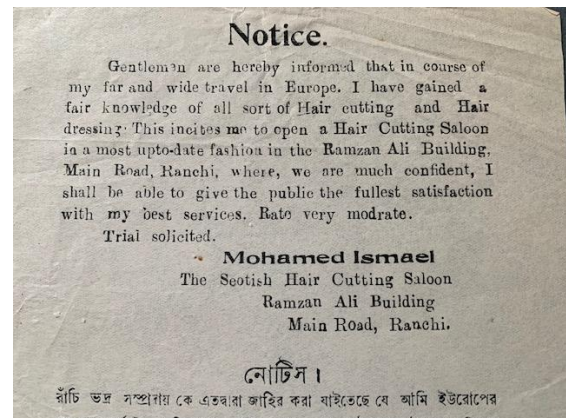
The work was hard but the leave, taken after several years' service, was long. He appears to have travelled widely when on leave, on ships little more comfortable than the one that brought him to India. The odd document pinpoints his location during these long leaves. A printed brochure listing the passengers on the SS Cracovia, shows that he sailed from Trieste, on the 1st of January 1926.

In 1929 he married Frances Margaret Savage, daughter of Colonel William Henry Savage CMG of Cushendall, County Antrim. A daughter was born in Ranchi in September 1930, a son in March 1932 and another son in December 1939.

Late in 1933 Captain Green was granted leave for 11 months and 15 days, on average pay for five months and half average pay for the remaining period, with effect from the 20th November 1933. He returned home on the SS Tuscania, which left Bombay at

12 noon on the 23rd of November 1933 and arrived in Liverpool at 8 a.m. on the 13th of December 1933.

While he was on leave a devastating earthquake struck Bihar on the 15th of January 1934. A letter from one of his superiors in Patna, dated the 15th of February, 1934, gives a graphic account of the damage done in North Bihar by the earthquake exactly a month before. Captain Green offered to return from leave early to assist but was advised that there was no necessity. On his return to duty he played a major role in the reconstruction works carried out in the aftermath of the disaster. His efforts would be recognised a few years later when he was awarded an OBE.



A curious press-cutting regarding a new 'hair-cutting saloon' in Ranchi (undated)

He appears to have had very good relations with his Indian subordinates and his papers include many letters thanking him for his kindness and fairness.

One such letter from Basant Singh, dated 5th of November 1936 states 'I am so sorry to learn that you are leaving the post of Inspector of Local Works ... that actually tears came out of my eyes.'

In spite of the fact that many a times I committed serious mistakes, but you have always overlooked like a Father. I shall ever pray to God for your long life and prosperity'. He took a year's leave from October 1936 to October 1937 and returned to London on the SS Corfu with his wife and two children. He stayed with his father in law, Colonel Savage, at his home in Cushendall, County Antrim.



A Telegram congratulating Green on his OBE (1937)

His years in India appeared to have affected his health and when he received his OBE in 1937, he was excused attendance at the investiture due to illness.

Captain Green returned to India with his wife and daughter on the SS Ranchi in September 1937. He was granted leave for two months in 1941 and an interesting file survives relating to an intended fishing trip to Srinagar in April and May 1941. An Irish friend, Major Ernest Maxwell, recommended a reliable agent to handle the trip.

Green was appointed Chief Engineer and Secretary to the Government of Orissa in 1942 and apart from his

normal duties, played a major role in organising the visit of the Governor of Orissa, Sir William Hawthorne Lewis, to various locations in late November and early December, 1942. The printed programme for this visit survives among Captain Green's papers and is 24 pages long, reflecting the elaborate arrangements of official engagements even in the dying days of Imperial rule.

In 1947, the year of his retirement, he was awarded a CIE (Companion of the Indian Empire) an order founded in 1878 to reward the good work of British and 'native' officials who served in India.

Following his retirement Green corresponded with many old friends in India. One of the last items in the collection is a letter from Tikayet Sailendra Narayan Bhanja Deo, leader of the opposition in the Orissa Assembly, dated the 31st of March 1949, giving him news of recent developments. He comments that the burden of taxation was becoming disappointingly heavy though the government was well intentioned and sincere and he encloses a speech he made regarding the Hirakud Dam Project and its effect on delta formation.

Captain Green spent his later years at Drumawillin House, Ballycastle, County Antrim.

Brian Donnelly (senior archivist, National Archive)

ISA NEWS

The Annual General Meeting: will be held when it is practical to do so again.

Do also visit our webpages at irishsocietyforarchives.com for any news.

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