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## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **PRESENTATION OF THE 1916 RISING ORAL HISTORY COLLECTION AND VOLUME TO THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND**

The initial digitised copy of the Oral History Collection will be presented to Dr Sandra Collins, Director of the National Library of Ireland, on 21 January 2016.

The event, which will be attended by many of the people recorded for the oral history project, will take place at the National Library of Ireland, Kildare Street, Dublin on Thursday 21 January 2016 from 11.00am to 1.00pm.

**President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins** will be Guest of Honour at the event. Also in attendance will be the British Ambassador to Ireland Mr Dominick Chilcott.

The 1916 Rising Oral History Collection is comprised of 245 audio recordings, compiled between 2012 and 2015, with the sons, daughters and other close relatives of those central to events at Easter 1916. Recordings were also compiled with relatives of members of the British forces in Dublin at that time. Relatives of Patrick Pearse, James Connolly, Eamonn Ceannt, Thomas MacDonagh, Con Colbert, Michael Collins, Michael J. O’Rahilly, Captain Henry de Courcy-Wheeler and of many other historically prominent participants were recorded. The last surviving child of an executed leader of the Rising, Fr Joseph Mallin S.J., was recorded in Hong Kong for the oral history project.

An illustrated volume containing detailed indices and a synopsis of the content of each recording accompanies the audio material. This may be viewed on the Irish Life and Lore website by following this link:

<http://www.irishlifeandlore.com/featured/1916rising.php>

Since 2012, when fieldwork on the project began, previously undocumented primary source material relating to 1916 has been uncovered by Irish Life and Lore, courtesy of the families recorded for the project. Much of this material will be on display in Irish libraries during the centenary year.

“We can learn so much from the cherished family memories of the relatives of the men and women involved in 1916,” remarks Maurice O’Keeffe. “These family memories formed a vital part of their childhood years, and the warm human stories have been only partly told in the public arena. Where possible, this oral history project sets out to remedy this while also concentrating on the historical facts. We hope we have recaptured the human element which controlled and directed the seismic events of one hundred years ago.”

Jane O’Keeffe, editor of the volume which accompanies the audio material, continues, “Work on the project quickly became a race against time, and sadly several of the people recorded for the project since it began in 2012 have since passed away. As time passes, unrecorded and undocumented memories are lost forever, and it is hoped that the work that we have undertaken for this historical project may alert people to the real value of oral history and its importance to present and future historians.”

Commenting on the donation, the Director of the National Library of Ireland, Dr Sandra Collins stated: “The National Library’s holdings constitute the most comprehensive collection of Irish documentary material in the world, and we are continually collecting and preserving for now and the future. Donations form an important part of our world class collections, and enable us to share and safeguard pivotal moments in Irish history such as the Easter Rising. We are delighted to receive this important collection of oral histories as a record of the events of 1916.”

The 1916 Rising Oral History project is part of a much wider body of work undertaken by Maurice and Jane O’Keeffe since they began to compile and archive oral history collections in Ireland, from their base in Tralee, Co. Kerry, in 1990. Thousands of hours of audio material have been recorded by Maurice and a number of books have been written by Jane, relating to the oral history collections the couple have archived.

Full details of the work of Irish Life and Lore may be seen at [www.irishlifeandlore.com](http://www.irishlifeandlore.com)

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