

Meath - Decade of Centenaries 2022

March – April 2022

April 2022

'KATHLEEN' celebrating the remarkable story of Meath-born activist and journalist Kathleen Napoli McKenna

Kathleen Napoli McKenna (1897-1988) born in Oldcastle, Co. Meath, was a witness and a contributor to one of the most significant times in Ireland's history. In her work producing the Irish Bulletin for the Propaganda Department of the first Dáil, she showed bravery, resourcefulness and dexterity. During the War of Independence, the London treaty negotiations, and the Civil War, she had confidential and volatile information at her fingertips. She was twenty-two.

'KATHLEEN' by award-winning Irish artist and educator [Leah Hilliard](#) celebrates her remarkable story. A bespoke textile work is realised on a billboard located at the roundabout on Railway Street, Navan, with a QR code linking to a video spoken-word piece. Digitisation of the original textile work, draws attention to the evidence of the human hand; 'KATHLEEN' is an individual act of making, just as the Irish Bulletin was.

"The Irish Bulletin was about to carry to the world authentic news of our country. With an air of self-satisfaction [Arthur] Griffith said I was to be its godmother. During the twenty terror-filled months in which, on point of honour, its publication never once failed. I guarded my godchild with jealous affection." - Kathleen Napoli McKenna

Leah Hilliard said, "I was particularly struck by the references to the skill and dexterity of Kathleen Napoli McKenna in laying out type. So much of the labour and success of campaigning involves intense and repetitive tasks that not only reinforce the bonds of the cause but also foster the comradeship needed to sustain commitment. The back of a piece of embroidery can be as revealing as the front; symbolising the way in which history often doesn't give the full story of a campaign."

Leah Hilliard's work is based in performance, engaging with public space, and involves spoken word, fabric and installation. With a background in event management and public art commissioning, her practice explores her long-standing interests in technology and society, particularly in relation to the lives of women and the ways in which women create formal and informal networks for the transfer of information.

The billboard on Railway Street was displayed between 28 April - 19 May 2022.

Leah Hilliard was awarded the 'Meath County Council Cultural Services Kathleen McKenna Award' in 2021. This award is supported by the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media under the Decade of Centenaries 2012 - 2023 initiative.

LINK TO VIEW VIDEO <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8okKFmfHRD8>
<https://solsticeartscentre.ie/projects/awards-and-ops-under-construction/awards-opportunities/kathleen-leah-hilliard/>



Writer – in Residence – Brian Gallagher

Brian Gallagher, an award-winning children’s writer worked with two Meath schools to increase pupils understanding of the revolutionary period.

Brian Gallagher www.briangallagherwriter.com

Brian Gallagher was born in Dublin. He is a full-time writer whose plays and short stories have been produced in Ireland, Britain, and Canada. He has worked extensively in radio and television, writing many dramas and documentaries.

In recent years he has concentrated on historical fiction for older children/young adults, and his novels cover the decade of centenaries period i.e *[Across the Divide](#)*, *[Taking Sides](#)*, and *[Friend or Foe](#)*



Brian worked with Boyerstown NS, Navan and St. Patrick's NS, Slane over a two month period, March to April, to help the children explore the history of the revolutionary period in their local areas.

Boyerstown NS was selected as it is located close to the scene of the 'Battle of Curraghtown', the major event in Meath during the Civil War.

This project followed on from two decade of centenary projects which were funded in 2021

1. Class Novel Collection
2. 'Battle of Curraghtown'

The students in Boyerstown produced a short-story 'Loyalty' as part of the project and this is now published and available to borrow online through the Meath County Library website

https://meath.borrowbox.com/product/LLC_3780728/title/loyalty

June 2022

'Unsettled Territory' – Launch – June 2022

'Unsettled Territory THE 5TH BATTALION (MEATH BRIGADE) IN NORTH MEATH 1917-1921'

Having served Ireland as a diplomatic representative for over forty years in many places around the world and having seen the tricolour raised with dignity and respect, Frank Cogan returns to his roots in north Meath, to the summer of 1954. His memory of an Old IRA commemoration in Ballinlough

cemetery, and the still-vivid shock of the discharge of weapons over a rural grave, lead him to explore his family connections with the struggle for statehood a hundred years ago.

His exploration begins with the founding of the 5th battalion in north Meath in 1917, the decisive 1918 General Election, the tragic deaths of Séamus Cogan and Patrick McDonnell, the Sylvan Park and Drumbaragh ambushes, to reorganisation of the battalion and to Truce and Civil War.

In approaching this complex period in our history, Cogan's work is in keeping with the principle of the *Decade of Centenaries 2012-2023* of remembering appropriately, proportionately, respectfully and with sensitivity. His search leads him to make contact with a grand-nephew of 2nd Lieut. Albert Henry Ball who commanded the cyclist platoon of the Norfolk Regiment in Oldcastle on the fateful night Séamus Cogan was killed and who, quite probably, pulled the trigger.

Major Albert Henry Ball was my great-uncle and ... it is an honour for me to act on behalf of him and his family in firmly and warmly grasping your extended hand in a reciprocal act of friendship, peace and reconciliation.

This work takes the reader on a century-long journey from tragedy to reconciliation

Published by Meath County Council and Meath Archaeological & Historical Society with the support of the Meath Decade of Centenaries Programme 2013-2022



UNSETTLED TERRITORY

THE 5TH BATTALION
(MEATH BRIGADE)
IN NORTH MEATH 1917-1921

FRANK COGAN



Support to Hindsight History Festival @ Hinterland

A full day of lectures on the Civil War was programmed as part of **Hindsight History Festival** within the major nationally acclaimed Hinterland Festival of Literature at Kells in June 2022. The day long event was supported with funding from the Meath Decade of Centenaries Programme 2012-2023.

[Hinterland Festival Sponsors](#)



The lectures were programmed by Dr. Myles Dungan, RTE History Show and curator of the Hinterland Festival. The lecturers included Dr. Dungan and leading local, national and international speakers.



Support to the Hindsight Festival project aligned with the following themes

- To promote a deeper understanding of the significant historical events of this period, which recognizes that the shared historical experiences of those years gave rise to very different narratives and memories.
- To respond with sensitivity to the local historical context, acknowledging that there was no uniform experience within counties or across the island of Ireland.

Civil War Music commission

In 2020 Kells singer/songwriter Michael Brunnock was commissioned to write a suite of songs to compliment the Deirdre Kinahan civil war theatre commission 'Outrage'. These songs are informed by the play 'Outrage' and can also be presented as a stand-alone project. These works also compliment an independent Michael Brunnock commemorations project based on the life of Roger Casement.

Funding is allocated towards the recording of these songs and production of a CD and limited-edition vinyl. These will provide an excellent legacy piece to accompany the publication of the commemoration's theatre trilogy.

Song cycle complete, concert premiere held on June 24th to packed audience at the Courthouse Kells as part of the Hinterland Festival and supported under the LLPPS 3.

The concert was filmed and audio recorded. Film footage will be edited over the summer months. Audio will be mixed with further studio days scheduled late July to amend/add extra songs.



Curraghtown, July 1922

CURRAGHTOWN, JULY 1922



EDITED BY TOM FRENCH

Curraghtown, July 1922 is published by Meath County Council on the centenary of the battle of Curraghtown which took place on 5 and 6 July 1922, and is a companion to *Trim, September 1920*. This programme of publication forms an important part of Meath's *Decade of Centenaries 2012-2023* Programme which aims, in keeping with the principles of the national programme, to be broad and inclusive, to highlight the economic and social conditions of the period, and the shifts in cultural norms.

Between April and June 1922 clashes in Meath occurred between pro- and anti-Treaty forces in Slane, Dunshaughlin and Athboy. Following the shelling of the Four Courts in Dublin, The *Meath Chronicle* of 1 July 1922 reported 'scenes in Navan of warlike character' – significant movement of Free State troops by railway, the commandeering of cars, lorries and provisions in Skryne and Kilmessan, and the early arrests of several leading republicans in Navan and Trim.

On 5 July 1922 Michael Hilliard's Navan IRA company based at Curraghtown House, was joined by companies from Kilberry, Rathkenny, Clongill and The Commons, bringing their strength to thirty-three men. A force of 200 Free State troops surrounded the house and a battle ensued that continued through the night. By the time Father Ellis of Dunderry and Father Kilmartin of Navan had brokered a surrender, George McDermott from The Commons and Seán Nolan of the Free State army lay dead.

Curraghtown, July 1922 brings together letters, minutes and other archival material from Meath County Archive, the National Archives of Ireland, and the Military Archives of Ireland, and combines them with contemporary newspaper accounts to provide an overview of a lesser-known incident of the Civil War in Meath



September

Culture Night @ The Courthouse, Kells

Meath Arts Office presents an intimate evening of music and theatre featuring award winning artists singer- songwriter Michael Brunnock and playwright Deirdre Kinahan. Accompanied by James Mahon (Kila) on uilleann pipes, flute & whistle, Michael will perform an acoustic version of his song suite *The Land* commissioned by Meath Arts Office as a response to events 1916-1923. Joining him on the evening, Deirdre Kinahan will read extracts from her Decade of Centenaries Theatre Trilogy – ‘*Raging*’ including Wild Sky, Embargo and Outrage. An evening of music, theatre and chat not to be missed. Kells Courthouse Tourism & Cultural Hub, 7.30pm September 23rd 2022, free but ticketed, ticket outlet tbc.

Commissioned & supported by Meath County Council Arts Office with assistance from the DTCAGSM Decade of Centenaries 2021-2023 initiative, Meath Local Live Performance Programming Scheme 4 and the Arts Council.



Testimonies Project

Playwright Deirdre Kinahan currently working on script for two 6 – 8 min. pieces based on the testimonies of Kathleen McKenna, Oldcastle Co Meath and Mrs Woods, Morehampton Rd Dublin. Both women played significant roles during the period. Both women’s testimonies also informed Deirdre Kinahan’s ‘Raging’ Decade of Centenaries Theatre Trilogy. Ms Kinahan has invited Local historian Myles Dungan to work with her on a third male testimony. Plans are underway to secure identified actors, costume and make up designers for the filming of the piece. A rehearsal and filming schedule will be drawn up for early autumn once actors’ availability confirmed.



22nd October 2022

Meath History Workshop – Seminar on the Decade of Centenaries in Meath

The Meath History Workshop is a collective of history scholars, researchers, and academics. The group led by Dr Peter Connell includes fellow Meath based authors and researchers including Dr Danny Cusack, Dr Marion Rogan, Dr Brian Casey, Dr Liam McNiffe, Dr. Ciarán McDonnell and Dr Myles Dungan.



The group will host a seminar in Meath County Council HQ, Buvinda House, Navan on the 22nd October 2022 with guest speakers invited to reflect on the commemorations to date.

The seminar will be open to the public.

Further details will be available closer to the date.

Ongoing

Máire Ní Raghallaigh

Four-part project to commemorate the life and work of Maire Ní Raghallaigh (1867 – 1941)) .Similar to many female revolutionaries Máire Ní Raghallaigh's role as a cultural revolutionary has been largely forgotten. Máire's role as a leading figure in the Gaelic League and her promotion of the Irish language through her bookshop on Dorset Street will be commemorated in her native Drumconrath. These projects will be delivered in partnership with Drumconrath Cultural and Heritage Group.

1. Portrait – Commission contemporary Meath portrait artist, Bríd Fanning to produce a portrait of Máire Ní Raghallaigh.

The painting will be presented to the community and displayed prominently in Drumconrath Community Centre to encourage community engagement with the subject matter and demonstrate the commitment of Meath County Council to supporting the work of local artists.

2. Present an Irish Language Children's Book Collection in memory of Máire Ní Raghallaigh to Drumconrath NS., to commemorate Maire's abiding love of the language and books.
3. Commission a researcher to scope and proceed with an academic work on the Life of Máire Ní Raghallaigh with a view to publication in book form in 2023.
4. Translate a 16,000-word article on Máire Ní Raghallaigh from English into Irish and prepare a shortened version for publication in various Irish language publications.