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UNITED IRELAND

The Power of Culture

A letter from Ireland

a Chara,

This week's letter will be mostly, sort of, politics free as most of the political institutions are in recess.

At the weekend I had the opportunity to attend the GAA All-Ireland football final between Kerry and Donegal thanks to my good friend Vince. The day was rounded off with a traditional session with musicians from Ireland and the US. The tunes were flying, pints downed and songs sung. All credited to our hosts Fay and Mickey. It was a joyous day shared with friends.

Over 80,000 attended the game and many more thronged the pubs of Dublin. The game was broadcast live in Ireland and Britain. Across the globe thousands stayed up late or got up early to watch the game.

The GAA is unique. It is an amateur game played at professional standards. It is the glue that binds communities together in Ireland, the US, Canada and elsewhere.

The GAA was established after centuries of the suppression of Irish culture as part of Britain's colonial process. The GAA was founded as part of a broader cultural revival. Sport would sit alongside music and the language of Ireland. It pitted clubs in neighbouring parishes against each other. The best players would go on to represent their counties in All-Ireland competitions. To play "county" is a medal of honour that follows you to the grave. Such is the passion for Gaelic games.

On Wednesday I was in Belfast for the launch of a book on the life of my good and sorely missed friend Siobhan O'Hanlon. This event was part of Féile an Phobail (the

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The Féile is now part of the fabric of Belfast. It was established by Gerry Adams in the very different Belfast of 1988. Following a series of attacks and killing at the time our community was described as “savages”

Gerry and others decided to celebrate the true face of our vibrant community. It was agreed to host a festival, and the date would be the first week in August. This week was the anniversary of the introduction of interment without trial. It was a time marked by bonfires, and rioting. The festival would provide a positive celebration in place of violence and destruction.

Today the Féile is the largest community festival in Ireland, if not Europe, and a generation has grown up knowing the first week of August as a party and celebration. It nurtured an arts and culture movement that captured the essence of the community. Its legacy can be found in murals, plays, discussions, the Irish language and music. Kneecap the band are a product of that cultural movement.

This was all down to the vision of Gerry Adams and the community activism of people like Siobhan.

There is a line in the poem, Ode by Arthur O’Shaughnessy that reads,

“One man with a dream, at pleasure, shall go forth and conquer a crown;

And three with a new song’s measure can trample a kingdom down.”

That is the power of culture. That is what the founders of the GAA and the Feile shared.

Have a great weekend

Is mise,

Ciarán

Ciarán Quinn is the Sinn Féin Representative to North America

Siobhán O’Hanlon: A Sound Woman Book Launch at Féile an Phobail

Speaking at Wednesday’s launch of the new book, *Siobhán O’Hanlon: A Sound Woman*, Sinn Féin President Mary Lou McDonald said, “Absolutely dedicated to the freedom and unity Ireland, Siobhán Ó Hanlon helped to change the course of history.

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“Her picture proudly hangs in our head office today in Dublin.

“As we enter our office, we’re greeted by the faces of so many great Republicans who have passed, and hers is among them.

“She is still with us, challenging us everyday.

“And make no mistake, she is forever remembered and forever loved.”

“As long as you speak of someone, they never die.”

Co-author Richard McAuley said, ““Siobhan was a proud republican activist.

“She was an IRA Volunteer, a political prisoner, a Sinn Fein activist, a community activist, a peace negotiator, a strong woman, a leader, an articulate advocate of the rights of citizens but especially of women, a campaigner for women's health.

“A good friend, and a loving sister, aunt, wife and mother.

“She was, as the title says, A Sound Woman.”



Registration now open for the Martin McGuinness Peace Foundation Walk NYC

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The date for this year's walk is September 13th! 9:30-10:30 will be registration and check in. The procession will begin up the Hudson River at 10:30.

You can register here: <https://raceroster.com/events/2025/108392/2025-martin-mcguinness-chieftains-walk-nyc>

Learn more here <https://martinmcguinnesspf.org/>

The Martin McGuinness Peace Foundation 2025 Chieftain's Walk NYC

September 13, 2025

Date: September 13, 2025 @ 9:30 am

Location: Irish Hunger Memorial

Address: North End Ave &, Vesey St,
New York, NY 10280



Check our website:

<https://martinmcguinnesspf.org/>



Walk for a United Ireland

Tiocfaidh ár lá

Gerry Adams and Séanna Walsh - 2005 - Towards a New Ireland

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Adams called on the IRA leadership to end its armed struggle. Months later former IRA POW Séanna Walsh was asked by the leadership of Óglaigh na hÉireann to read out a statement announcing the end of its armed struggle.

As part of Féile an Phobail both men joined together along with Máiread Farrell TD in front an audience of hundreds to talk about what led up to that momentous year and to look to the future.



New Issue of Éire Nua

[Download the latest issue of Éire Nua for free now!](#)

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The visit on 20 June by former Fine Gael Taoiseach Leo Varadkar to west Belfast was a timely reminder that the issue of a new Ireland remains for many the political priority of our time. The packed event in St. Mary's University College was organised by Féile an Phobail and Ireland's Future and it was chaired by the Rev. Karen Sethuraman.

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