

GATEWAY TO INDEPENDENCE

Dún Laoghaire and the Treaty, 1921

The Anglo-Irish Treaty negotiations began after more than two years of violence in Ireland, which ended with a truce on 11 July 1921. Dún Laoghaire Harbour, the 'Gateway of Ireland', played an important role in the road to Irish independence over the following months, serving as a departure and arrival point for the delegates who travelled to London to negotiate the foundation of the new Irish state.

A huge crowd, waving hats and tricolours, gathered at Dún Laoghaire in mid-July 1921 to wish Éamon de Valera, President of Dáil Éireann, and his negotiating team well on the first journey to talks in London. Spectators lined the East Pier and local IRA members paraded to celebrate their return to Ireland on 22 July. The crowd was so large that military police created a cordon on Carlisle Pier, where local politicians and dignitaries waited to greet the delegates. However, the next round of negotiations that took place from October to December were a serious business and there was little fanfare on the many occasions that Irish delegates passed through Dún Laoghaire.



Copy Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland, and cover page of document relating to Dáil Éireann discussions of the Treaty, 1921. (Courtesy Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Papers of Joseph McGrath, Cabinteely House, LA6)



The first Irish delegation aboard the mailboat at Carlisle Pier, Dún Laoghaire, July 1921. The group were departing for London to meet British Prime Minister Lloyd George for exploratory talks following the truce. Though Éamon de Valera met Lloyd George four times at 10 Downing Street between 14 and 21 July, he controversially decided against participating in the actual treaty negotiations, which began on 11 October and continued until 6 December.

From l-r: Arthur Griffith, Robert Barton, Éamon de Valera, Count Plunkett and Laurence O'Neill, Lord Mayor of Dublin. (Courtesy National Museum of Ireland)

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A crowd gathers at Victoria Wharf in Dún Laoghaire to wave off the mailboat carrying the Irish delegation to London for treaty negotiations. The delegation was composed of Arthur Griffith, Michael Collins, Robert Barton, George Gavan Duffy, and Eamonn Duggan. Gavan Duffy and Duggan, both lawyers, were chosen for the negotiating team because of their legal expertise. Both men had close ties to Dún Laoghaire, Gavan Duffy was the town's first elected representative in Dáil Éireann, and Duggan later served as the first chairman of Dún Laoghaire Borough Corporation. Duggan, who lived at Seapoint, collapsed and died while addressing a meeting at County Hall on 6 June 1936. (Courtesy Irish Independent)

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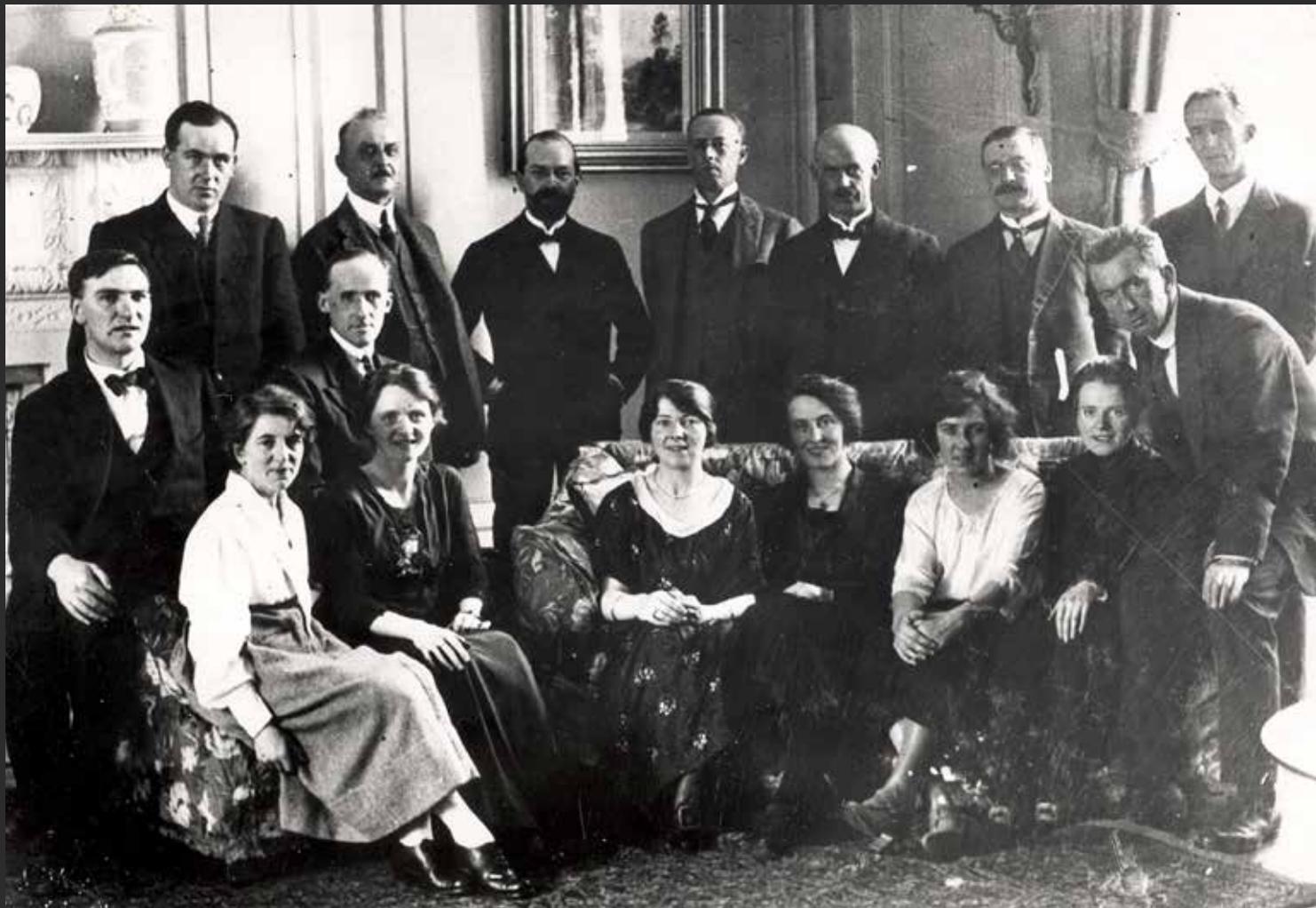


Arthur Griffith, centre, with members of the Irish delegation and their administrative team at Holyhead, Wales. The mailboat brought the Irish delegation as far as Holyhead, from where they took the train to Euston Station in London. Griffith led the negotiating team and was the first delegate to accept the Treaty terms on 6 December, establishing Ireland as a self-governing dominion within the British Commonwealth, believing that it offered Ireland the best possible opportunity to advance towards full independence in future. Griffith defended the Treaty in the ensuing debates and became President of the Dáil following Éamon de Valera's resignation on 9 January 1922. Griffith did not survive to see Ireland at peace, dying of a brain haemorrhage at the age of 51 on 12 August 1922.

(Courtesy dlr Local Studies)

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Members of the Irish delegation including administrative staff at 22 Hans Place, London, 1921. Seated, from l-r: Joseph McGrath, Lily O'Brennan, David Robinson, Ellie Lyons, Evelyn 'May' Duggan, Brigid Lynch, Kathleen McKenna, Alice Lyons, and Fionán Lynch. Standing, from l-r: Michael Knightly, John Chartres, George Gavan Duffy, Robert Barton, Eamonn Duggan, Arthur Griffith, and Erskine Childers. Childers, one of the secretaries to the negotiations, was disliked and distrusted by Griffith. He became a strong opponent of the Treaty and was later executed for possessing a pistol, gifted to him by Michael Collins, in November 1922. David Robinson also rejected the Treaty and took the anti-Treaty side in the Civil War. A friend of Childers, Robinson was arrested with him in 1922 and spent nearly two years in prison. Fionán Lynch served as assistant secretary to the delegation and was responsible for organising accommodation for the team in London, at 22 Hans Place and 15 Cadogan Gardens. Michael Knightley, a journalist, served as the official reporter of the Treaty debates. He was later first editor-in-chief of the reporting staff of the Irish government. At age 59, John Chartres was the oldest member of the team and acted as second secretary to the delegation, sitting opposite Lloyd George during the London negotiations. (Courtesy Irish Independent)

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Alice Lyons, Kathleen McKenna, and Ellie Lyons in London during negotiations. The Lyons sisters came from Dublin, where they both trained as stenographers. They worked as typists for Michael Collins in the fledgling Department of Finance from 1920 and were valuable members of staff during the War of Independence. The sisters were two of four women chosen as secretaries for the Treaty delegation. Kathleen McKenna acted as messenger between Dáil departments during the War of Independence and served on the editorial staff of the *Irish Bulletin*. Following the truce, she accompanied the Irish delegation as private secretary to Arthur Griffith. She supported the Treaty but experienced the estrangement it brought between friends and family. She later worked as private secretary to the Boundary Commission and wrote articles for the *Freeman's Journal*. She married an Italian captain in 1931 and lived in Libya, Albania, and Italy. She died in Rome in 1988 at the age of 91. Her account of the revolutionary period in Ireland, *A Dáil Girl's Revolutionary Recollections* was published in 2014. Lily O'Brennan, the fourth female secretary, came from a nationalist family. She worked as a teacher and wrote several plays. A member of Cumann na mBan, she took part in the Easter Rising. O'Brennan was described as 'indispensable' during the Treaty negotiations. She took the anti-Treaty side and was imprisoned for a number of months during the Civil War. She died at her home in Churchtown in 1948 and is buried in Deansgrange Cemetery. (Courtesy Military Archives, PRCN/63/08)

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Members of the Irish delegation and staff on the mailboat, 6 December 1921. From l-r: Fionán Lynch, John Chartres, Desmond Fitzgerald, Brigid Lynch, Arthur Griffith, Eamonn Duggan, Evelyn 'May' Duggan, Robert Barton, and Charles Gavan Duffy. The four female secretaries, Kathleen McKenna, Ellie Lyons, Lily O'Brennan, and Alice Lyons, stand on the bench at right. The Treaty had been signed just after 2am that morning in the Cabinet Room at 10 Downing Street. A large number of local IRA formed a guard of honour for the signatories as they disembarked at Dún Laoghaire, and this was reported as a breach of the truce. Arthur Griffith was met at Carlisle Pier by his wife, Maud, and he raised his hat to the cheering crowd waiting at the harbour. Michael Collins, not included in the photograph, followed Griffith off the boat and gave a military salute to the crowd. (Courtesy RTÉ Archives)

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TDs Joseph McGrath, Michael Collins, Seán McGarry, Pádraig Ó Máille and W.T. Cosgrave at a Pro-Treaty meeting in College Green, Dublin, March 1922. The Treaty, particularly the inclusion of an oath of allegiance to the British Crown, proved to be deeply divisive, leading to bitter civil war in Ireland until 1923. During the Dáil debates of the Treaty, Collins remarked 'I do not regard the passing of this thing as being any kind of triumph over the other side. I will do my best in future, as I have done in the past, for the nation...we should unite on this...I say some kind of understanding ought to be reached to preserve the present order in the country'. Despite adamant objections from Joseph McGrath, Collins travelled to Cork in August 1922 where he was assassinated. McGrath, a close friend of Collins, had acted as manager and accountant to the Irish delegation in London and reluctantly supported the Treaty. McGrath was appointed Director of Intelligence during the Civil War and later lived at Cabinteely House until his death in 1966. The homes of McGarry and Cosgrave were burnt by anti-Treaty forces during the Civil War, and McGarry's young son died from burn injuries. Ó Máille was shot and badly wounded in December 1922. (Courtesy dlr Local Studies)

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Though the negotiating team travelled to and from London by rail and sea, they were also prepared to use air travel if necessary. A Martinsyde aircraft was discreetly purchased in October 1921 to provide an alternative travel route to Dublin if the talks in London broke down. The proposed landing place was Leopardstown racecourse. The plane, pictured at Casement Aerodrome in Baldonnel in 1923, was later named 'The Big Fella' in honour of Michael Collins, and was used by the Irish Air Corps. The aircraft was disposed of in 1937 though the propeller hub is on display in the Officers' Mess at Baldonnel today. (Courtesy Military Archives, PRCN/66/2658).

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CONFERENCAID NA hÉIREANN
NA hÉIREANN
CONFERENCE OF IRELAND

29 / 12 / 21

OCTOBER 11th - DECEMBER 6th, 1921.

BRITISH DELEGATION.

IRISH DELEGATION.

- Mr. Lloyd George.
- Mr. Chamberlain.
- Lord Birkenhead.
- Mr. Churchill.
- Sir L. Worthington-Evans.
- Sir Hanser Greenwood
and
- Sir Gordon Hewart.

- Mr. Arthur Griffith.
- Mr. Michael Collins.
- Mr. Robert Barton.
- Mr. E.J. Duggan.
- Mr. Gavan Duffy.

Secretaries.

Secretaries.

- Mr. Thomas Jones.
- Mr. Lionel Curtis.

- Mr. Erskine Childers.
- Mr. Pionan Lynch.
- Mr. John Chartres.
- Mr. Diarmuid O'Hegarty.

TREATY BETWEEN GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

Articles of Agreement.

6. 12. 21

SIGNED

December 6th, 1921.

*Apr 20 1922
Richard Gordon
Mead O'Connell*

George Gavan Duffy

Erskine Childers

Typed page with list of delegates to 'Conference on Ireland', 6 December 1921. The document includes the signatures of Arthur Griffith, Robert Barton, Michael Collins, Erskine Childers, and George Gavan Duffy. (Courtesy Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown County Council, Papers of Joseph McGrath, Cabinteely House, LA6)

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