

## EMBASSY OF IRELAND NEWSLETTER



### LETTER OF INTRODUCTION

#### from Eddie Brannigan, new Acting Head of Mission

Hei! Dia dhaoibh! Hello all! My name is Eddie Brannigan, and I am the new Acting Head of the Embassy of Ireland to Finland. It's an honour to join Deputy Head of Mission Emma McCarron and the rest of the Embassy team in Helsinki, an exceptionally beautiful and surprising city.

First, belated best wishes to Maeve Collins who left for Brussels in September to take on the very demanding position as Ireland's Deputy Permanent Representative to the EU. (By coincidence, I came here from that same diplomatic mission, where I was Head of Press Relations unit since 2014).



# AUTUMN 2019 ISSUE

A warm thank you for the hearty *Tervetuloa* given to me since arriving on 16 September. It has been a privilege to meet so many remarkable people so quickly. An early thrill was meeting **Helsinki Harps GAA** club members in my first weekend, at the final round of the Nordic GAA Games tournament. Lovely to see **so many nationalities playing the games here (over 10 nationalities – from four continents – I met Finns, US, Peruvian, Italian, and more)**. **Special applause goes to the Woman Player of the Tournament, Marta Saez**, a Spanish PhD student living here who took up GAA only a year ago! Bualadh bos (applause) to all involved. Helsinki Harps always welcomes new players – training every week - more details below.



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In September the **Irish Business Club (IBC)** Finland celebrated 30 years in existence. Yes, the IBC was founded in March 1989, just months before the ‘Iron Curtain’ fell. The IBC and Embassy marked the anniversary with a gathering, and we were honoured by the attendance of former President of Finland Tarja Halonen and Ireland’s first resident Ambassador to Finland, Dáithí Ó Ceallaigh.

Dáithí gave a fascinating talk, recalling Finland’s profound contribution to the peace process in Northern Ireland. Earlier that day the IBC hosted an intriguing, funny talk on the Book of Kells, at the National Library of Finland, given by Professor Jaakko Tahkokallio. The IBC has presented a replica to the National Library in Helsinki. Congratulations to IBC President Tarja Uitti, and all IBC members, present and past.



## AUTUMN 2019 ISSUE

Also in September, the **Finnish Irish Society**, longstanding friends of Ireland - Paula Uitto et al - hosted an Irish Festival night in Helsinki, with entertaining night of excellent musicians and the superb, jaunty, *Green Lights* dance troupe. A memorable evening.



Further North, a big - very big - happening on the cultural front was the **Irish festival of Oulu**, the most northerly Irish festival in the world. What a surprise! What a line-up. A real joy to see and meet so many people passionate about Irish culture. A special note of recognition and admiration for Brent Ó Cáisíde, the driving force. The Embassy were also delighted to bring Irish dancer **Nada Ní Chuirrín** from Connemara to teach a Sean Nós [Old Custom] dancing course at the festival, and Emma McCarron attended Nada's brilliant fully-booked dance class in cultural centre Valve.

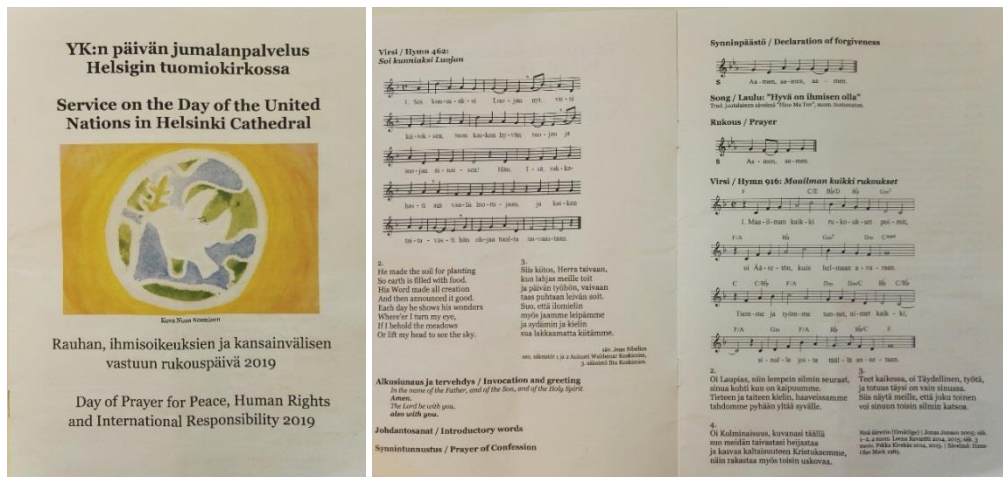
By the way, Oulu aims to be a European Capital of Culture in 2026, and several visitors from Galway came to talk about the experience of the City of The Tribes. I spoke at that seminar on 'the role of culture in the conduct of foreign policy', drawing from personal experience in previous postings.



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In mid-October, Helsinki Cathedral hosted a beautiful multi-denominational Service on the Day of the United Nations in and remember our overseas peacekeeping missions. Many readers will be aware of the long history of Irish and Finnish troops serving together in The Lebanon with UNIFIL (*Disclosure: my late brother served several tours of duty there in the early 1980s. I well remember receiving news in blue UN-issue envelope-letters*).

As the service closed, the closing hymn sounded familiar. It transpired that the Irish song *May the Road Rise to Meet You* (classified as Virsi 979) has been admitted into the official hymnbook of the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Finland, after an application process that apparently took over a decade.



In late October, the Embassy was delighted to co-host an Irish Whiskey tasting reception together with **Glendalough Distillery**, and to learn all about distilling in Wicklow.



What else? In the day job, I've been very busy meeting people across the Finnish government and administration. And listening, talking, reading, learning, writing. That continues.

A final snippet. Before coming here, I was repeatedly advised that (i) to Finns, the sauna is sacred, and (ii) to get to know the country, a sauna visit is essential. I've never been before, so in early-October, I took the plunge at the famous Sompasauna. I can report that it was memorable.

*Eddie Brannigan, 31 October 2019*

## OTHER NEWS

### CLASSICAL AND IRISH MUSIC LESSONS

Flute and tin whistle lessons available by Helsinki based Irish musician Robert Tobin. Adults and children welcome. Groups can be created by request.

For more info contact:

[Robert-tobin@hotmail.com](mailto:Robert-tobin@hotmail.com)

041 319 69 30

#### **GAA - HELSINKI HARPS – Men's and Ladies Teams**

*The HELSINKI HARPS GAA club is always seeking new members!*

*Training takes place each Sunday at 19.00 at Talin Urheiluhalli. Bus number 235 or 38 from city centre. Contact [helsinkiharpsclub@gmail.com](mailto:helsinkiharpsclub@gmail.com) for more information.*

### EXPANSION OF PASSPORT ONLINE SERVICE

Expansion of passport online service will allow first time applicants resident in Ireland, Northern Ireland, Great Britain, the EU, EEA and Switzerland to apply for their first passport through our online service from 1 November. Apply for a new passport or renew your old one [here](#).

#### **From Bundoran to Bruges**

The Online Passport Renewal Service is available to Irish adults and children, anywhere in the world, anytime of the day!

Renew a passport book or card, or apply for a first passport card, faster and cheaper at:

[www.dfa.ie/passportonline](http://www.dfa.ie/passportonline)

[@PassportIRL](https://twitter.com/PassportIRL)

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## HAVE SOMETHING FOR THE NEWSLETTER?

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If you have an Irish community or cultural event that you would like to publicise, email us at [helsinkiembassy@dfa.ie](mailto:helsinkiembassy@dfa.ie).



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