

Reply to President Higgins, January 16th, 2022 – an address from the Descendant Treaty Group

Thank you, President and Mrs Higgins for inviting us today to your home and for your thoughtful words on the significance of the Treaty Delegation Team.

A special thanks and appreciation also to your wonderful Team at the Aras - all true public servants - for enabling this occasion to happen despite being today at the peak of the COVID pandemic. As a GP, I know the importance of people and teams, and the importance of affirmation at a time of great challenge and risk.

Thank you. We are very grateful to you **all** on TEAM ARAS.

We are a group of descendants of the Dail Treaty Delegation, who came together simply to remember all the men and women involved in public service to the emerging State during the Treaty. In a way, President Higgins, you inspired and encouraged us through your call for “ethical remembrance” and “machnamh”.

Our journey started 4 years ago - when a number of tea-chests were found in the attic of Laurelmount – the Fawsitt family home in Cork. In the attic were the long-lost papers, diaries, letters, documents of **Diarmaid Fawsitt** – my grandfather - a Cork man, involved in the Irish cultural revival, the Celtic Literary Society, the founding of Ring College (where he met our grandmother), a co-founder of the Cork Industrial Development Association, the Irish Volunteers in Cork and the first Irish Consul for the Dail in NYC in 1919-21. Later he became a Judge. In 1915 he was deported for sedition to the US under DORA and was involved in bringing Henry Fords’ Tractor Factory to Cork in 1917 – delivering jobs for 7,000 people in Cork over 3 generations. He was an economics advisor to the Dail Delegation; he stayed in Hans Place, London and we found his letters from there.

We indeed found many **treasures in the attic**. Letters and reports to/from Collins/Barton/Griffith and personal diaries of those historic days in London.

We began initially to research it as a family group. Julitta Clancy, an archivist, and the Fawsitt family in Cork were hugely helpful to this. We immediately saw the bigger picture.

We realised then that there were many other people involved in the Delegation, 34 at the start - later up to 70 involved - not just Collins, Griffith, Barton etc. Many other families and descendants, unknown today, would have stories and maybe other treasures in the attics. From the cook to the chiefs, both men and women, everyone had a role to play. Everyone had a story to tell.

Willie Fawsitt, our cousin, was the spark behind this. Willie sadly died recently after a long illness. We are delighted that Anne, his wife, is here today. Willie would be very proud of the project he helped to inspire.

With Willie’s vision, we wanted to create a commemoration that focused on all the people involved in the Delegation - their humanity - – not their politics – the **team** members who supported the mission – and we wanted it to involve everyone, **from both sides** where possible. So, we approached other families, one by one, and we were met everywhere with interest, participation and enthusiasm.

We formed a **Descendants Steering Group** - many are here today. Two years on, like 1921, this has been a remarkable TEAM effort. They are truly an amazing group of people and I feel very privileged to have met and worked with them.

Among the group are:

Richard Fawsitt our tireless SG Chair - who structured our project to succeed

Judge Bernard Barton – a Barton and Childers cousin - who reminded us that the Southern Unionist constituency were dis-enfranchised by the Treaty – yet played their full part in Public Service to the State.

Dr Dermot Lynch - son of Fionan Lynch - a Primary Descendant – a GP in England and lifelong servant to public healthcare

Prof Tim Lynch - similarly serving the public today in the Mater Hospital Dublin

Aine Broy another primary descendant – whose father Ned Broy was a remarkable public servant who later became Garda Commissioner.

Teresa McKenna Napoli in Rome - herself an inspirational daughter of Kathleen McKenna – her Manning cousins are here today

Prof Eda Sagarra MRIA - prolific author and academic with exceptional insight into people - and a great team player

Fiona Murray – who with great energy and skill co-wrote and co-edited our book

Carol Fawsitt who made early contact with Maurice Manning Chair of the Expert Advisory Group and successfully delivered Descendant participation at the UCC Conference.

Wally Young – who immediately saw the vision and helped make it happen with wisdom and purpose

Michael O'Mahony – a true Collins descendant who constantly affirmed our focus and direction

Kevin Finnan an honorary descendant - who looked through all the public records and archives to find descendants – Sandra Milroy is here today because of his research work.

Julitta Clancy MBE - our descendant archivist who kept us focused on always doing the right thing

Others, including **Erskine Childers** and **Cathal Brugha** are on our committee but can't be here today – all have made a huge contribution to the various projects.

We worked together as a TEAM over 2 years, despite COVID - through weekly ZOOM Meetings.

The team conceived, proposed, and participated in the 2-day **UCC Conference on “Negotiating the Negotiations”** with descendant participation, presentations, and a round table. We supported British involvement in the presentations. The British Ambassador addressed the Conference. The Taoiseach gave the opening address. It's now available on YouTube.

We participated in a special RTE **Nationwide Documentary** on the Treaty and its descendants broadcast on Dec 6th - the date of the signing.

With Richard's help we developed a **Website** on the Treaty Delegations which will grow organically and assist future research.

We've now published our Book: **The Men and Women of the Anglo-Irish Treaty Negotiations 1921** - edited by Fiona and Eda - with participation from the families, the RIA, the British Embassy and many others - a truly collaborative project – again focused on the people – not the politics – written by

descendants and involved families. It was launched last week at the King's Inns, in the presence of The Lord Mayor, by Mr Simon Coveney TD, Minister for Foreign Affairs, and HE Paul Johnston, British Ambassador to Ireland.

Yesterday, Conor Mulvagh, Historian (also on our SG) in response to our proposal to the EAG - gave a paper at the **TCD/Dublin Castle Hand-Over Conference** event - on the people and process behind the London negotiations.

In between, we turned up at the Mansion House, The Irish Embassy in London, and at 10 Downing Street - on noteworthy dates, for special commemorations, interviews, and photo-shoots. We just kept going, despite challenges and COVID – and never a split!

Perhaps today is our most special day yet – perhaps this is the finest hour for our relatives and for the **TREATY TEAM** – for all of them to be recognised and affirmed - by the highest office in the land.

The Men and Women who went to London did important work for Ireland. They came from differing backgrounds and communities. They worked as a TEAM with a deep commitment to public and civil service - for all the people of Ireland. They gave it their best shot. Many paid a high personal, public, and political price for the stress and trauma they went through. Some gave their very lives.

Most of the Delegation participants were lost to history in the shadow of the larger players and in the trauma and tragedy that followed. They, and their families, became silent, traumatised and largely invisible. That trauma was carried through the generations and through the families that followed.

We know that now - scientifically - through behavioural science and the emerging field of epigenetics. Our country and our people had a similar trauma – the effects of which are still palpable a century later.

Those of us who are medics know **that trauma causes shame, guilt, stigma, anxiety, rage and silence** – with silence being the favoured Irish solution to trauma. For a century those families were silent. Today is different.

On days like today, where our relatives are finally recognised, and we the descendants can speak openly about those extraordinary men and women, who gave Ireland their very best shot, we can begin to release all of us from that **collective unspeakable shame** of brother against brother, friend against friend, and from the judgement, rage and blistering silence that followed.

So today is a day of affirmation, progress, and hope for us all - and a day to celebrate the **importance of public and civil service** to our ever-evolving State.

Thank you, President and Mrs Higgins for this opportunity.

Finally, as a gesture from our group – from one Team to another- in the spirit of **machnamh and ethical remembrance** - we invite Fiona Murray and Eda Sagarra to present to you, President and Mrs Higgins, a signed copy of our Book: **The Men and Women of the Anglo-Irish Treaty Negotiations 1921** as a token of **our** respect, affirmation, and gratitude to you **both** - and to your great ARAS TEAM.

Thank you.

Ronan Fawsitt. Grandson of Diarmaid Fawsitt - Economic Advisor to the Treaty Delegation 16th January 2022