Trinity through the Centuries: a symposium on Trinity’s history in celebration of the 425th anniversary of the University

Tuesday, 26 September 2017
Dining Hall, Trinity College Dublin
Symposium Opening
Prof Paula Murphy, Registrar
Welcome and Introduction of the Taoiseach
An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD
Opening Address
Paula Meehan, Poet and Playwright
Opening Poem: Alma Mater

17.30
Prof David Dickson, Professor of Modern History and Senior Fellow of Trinity College Dublin
Introduction to the Symposium

17.45
Linzi Simpson, Consultant Archaeologist
The prehistory of Trinity College Dublin

18.00
Fiona Fitzsimons, Research Director of Eneclann
The entrepreneurial roots of Trinity College Dublin

18.15
Dr Elizabethanne Boran, Librarian of the Edward Worth Library, Dublin
Trinity College Dublin in the Seventeenth Century: Libraries, Learning, and the Function of an Early Modern University

18.30
Prof Michael Brown, University of Aberdeen
Was Trinity in the Eighteenth Century an Enlightened Institution?

18.45
Prof Patrick Geoghegan, Trinity College Dublin
‘An Enlightened Sympathy with All’: Catholics, the College Historical Society, and the Trinity Education in the Nineteenth Century

19.00
Dr John Bowman, Honorary Fellow of Trinity College Dublin, and Historian and Broadcaster
Towards a history of Trinity in the twentieth century: some questions

19.20
Provost, Dr Patrick Prendergast
Trinity in its Fifth Century

19.35
Reception
Welcome to the Trinity 425 Symposium, our commemoration of the university's founding in 1592 by charter of Elizabeth I, on petition by Dublin's leading citizens. Since that date, Trinity has grown from a small 16th century community of theology students into today's large multidisciplinary university of 17,000 undergraduates and postgraduates; the Library has expanded from a starting collection of thirty books and ten manuscripts into an infinite richness of resources, both physical and digital; and from the site of the old Priory of All Hallows on the then outskirts of Dublin, the campus has stretched from College Green to Westland Row and recently expanded along Pearse Street to the Trinity Technology and Enterprise Campus at Grand Canal Dock.

The history of Trinity reflects the history of Ireland over the past five centuries. For this symposium, we have invited six historians, an archaeologist, and a poet to reflect on the university’s past, and its place in, and contribution to, Ireland over the centuries. Their addresses will coalesce into a fascinating overview of the forces and themes which have challenged and inspired Trinity, Dublin and Ireland since the end of the 16th century. I will be taking up the story from 1992 and projecting into the remainder of the college’s fifth century, up to 2092.

We are honoured that the opening address will be given by An Taoiseach, Leo Varadkar TD, who in this 425th anniversary year earned the distinction of being the first Trinity graduate to hold the office of Taoiseach.
Professor Paula Murphy
Registrar, Trinity College Dublin

Welcome and Introduction of the Taoiseach

Biography: Professor Paula Murphy is the Registrar of Trinity College Dublin and Professor in Developmental Biology, School of Natural Sciences. Originally a science graduate of Trinity, specialising in genetics, she carried out doctoral research at the University of Edinburgh on a then newly emerging set of genes that control shape and structure in the developing embryo. Two Postdoctoral Fellowships provided research experience at the University of Rome (La Sapienza) and the Ecole Normale Superieur, Paris, building a set of skills and approaches that allow her to examine how cells differentiate and form spatially organized tissues and organs in the developing embryo. Her research contributions are recognized internationally in the fields of morphogenesis and skeletal development. She returned to Trinity in 2001 having held research positions in Oslo and Edinburgh.

Professor David Dickson
Professor of Modern History and Senior Fellow of Trinity College Dublin

Introduction to the Symposium

Biography: A long-standing member of the Department of History and former Registrar of the university, David Dickson has published extensively on the social, economic and cultural history of Ireland. Among his publications are *New foundations: Ireland 1660-1800* (Dublin, 2000), *Old world colony: Cork and South Munster 1630-1830* (Cork & Madison, 2005), and *Dublin: The making of a capital city* (London & Cambridge MA, 2014), and he has co-edited 11 books, including *1798: A bicentenary perspective* (Dublin, 2003); *Refiguring Ireland: Essays in honour of L.M. Cullen* (Dublin, 2003); and *Irish classrooms and British Empire: Imperial contexts in the origins of modern education* (Dublin, 2012), which includes his essay, '1857 and 1908: Two moments in the transformation of Irish universities'.

Dr Elizabethanne Boran
Librarian of the Edward Worth Library, Dublin

Trinity College Dublin in the Seventeenth Century: Libraries, Learning, and the Function of an Early Modern University

Abstract: This presentation will focus on three factors affecting the development of Trinity College Dublin, as a university in the seventeenth century. First, it will investigate the library as a lieu de memoire in the new institution. Secondly, it will examine the role played by famous scholars such as James Ussher (1581-1656), in nurturing the new institution and placing it firmly on the map of the European Republic of Letters. Thirdly, it will examine how Trinity College weathered the challenges of the 1641 rebellion, the English Civil War and the Glorious Revolution.

Biography: Dr Elizabethanne Boran is the Librarian of the Edward Worth Library in Dr Steevens Hospital, Dublin. She is the editor of the three-volume Correspondence of James Ussher, 1600-1656, published by the Irish Manuscript Commission in 2015; editor of Aldines at the Edward Worth Library (Dublin, 2015); and co-editor (with Professor Mordechai Feingold of Caltech), of Reading Newton in Early Modern Europe (Leiden: Brill, 2017). In addition, she has written on the history of early modern science, book-collecting, libraries and, more generally, the seventeenth-century history of ideas and universities. She is Leader of Work Group 4: Documents and Collections of the COST Action IS1310: ‘Reassembling the Republic of Letters, 1500-1800: A Digital Framework for multi-lateral collaboration on Europe’s Intellectual History’ and she is the Irish member of the International Commission for the History of Universities.
**Abstract:** Of Trinity's four centuries of history, none can have been as transformative as the twentieth. In 1900 Trinity was a 'cold house' for women, for Roman Catholics and for Irish nationalists. All of that changed in the course of the twentieth century, indeed by 1970 Trinity was unrecognisable from the university it had been in 1900.

How did all of this happen? To what extent was it driven by forces within Trinity? And to what extent did outside forces shape Trinity's transformation? And why did it not happen sooner? All of these questions could justify years of research. This short presentation tentatively offers some guidance to where the answers might be found.

**Biography:** John Bowman is a broadcaster and historian. He has presented current affairs, historical and election-results programmes on RTE radio and television since the 1960s including *Today Tonight* in the 1980s and *Questions and Answers* from 1988 to 2009 when he began researching his history of RTE. He has since published *Window and Mirror: RTE Television, 1961-2011*, the first comprehensive history of Irish television. His PhD, *De Valera and the Ulster Question: 1917–1973*, was published by Oxford University Press and won the Ewart-Biggs Prize for its contribution to North-South understanding. He was elected an Honorary Fellow of Trinity College Dublin in 2009 and awarded an Honorary Doctorate by UCD in 2010. His latest book is *Ireland: the Autobiography* published by Penguin.
Was Trinity in the Eighteenth Century an Enlightened Institution?

Abstract: When compared to the remarkable reputation of its Scottish counterparts, Trinity College Dublin in the eighteenth century can appear to be something of a sleeping sister. It was certainly subject to public criticism from some of its alumni. However, Trinity played a vital role in the nurturing of Ireland's intellectual capital. Thinkers, writers and critics all graduated from its rosters and made a substantial contribution to the debate about Ireland's place in European and Anglophone culture. Highlighting the work of Thomas Leland this paper suggests that Trinity's vexed location as a pillar of the Church of Ireland in a Catholic society complicated and informed its vision of how Enlightenment ideas could be applied in a multi-confessional society.

Biography: Michael Brown holds a chair in Irish, Scottish and Enlightenment History at the University of Aberdeen. He is also co-Director of its Research Institute of Irish and Scottish Studies and Dean of Research for Arts and Social Sciences. He is the author of Francis Hutcheson in Dublin (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2002); A Political Biography of John Toland (London: Pickering & Chatto, 2012) and The Irish Enlightenment (Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press, 2016). A commissioning editor of the book series Poetry and Song in the Age of Revolution with Routledge and associate editor of the Journal of Irish and Scottish Studies, he is a co-editor of six collections of essays. He is currently writing a textbook entitled A Cultural History of Europe, 1688-1914 and a collection of essays provisionally called Making Up Britain in the Eighteenth Century.
Abstract: In the mid-1500s, the Tudor State conferred greater powers on local Corporations in towns across England and Ireland. The idea was to govern through ‘small knots of reliable men.’ [Colm Lennon, *The Lords of Dublin in the age of Reformation*, pp. 37-39]. This policy concentrated political, social and economic power in the hands of the City Council, itself dominated by the Dublin Merchants Guild.

As a group, the Dublin Merchants were not simply ciphers who stooped to royal instructions. Between 1568 and 1592 they ran a successful campaign to found a university in the city. Their motives were those of entrepreneurs, not religious reformers. In an audacious move, they even called the college after their own guild - the Holy and Undivided Trinity.

Biography: Fiona Fitzsimons is research director of Eneclann, a company she founded in 1998 with her husband Brian Donovan. As graduate students passionate about their discipline, they set up a campus company within the School of History of Trinity College Dublin. Fiona combines a rigorous academic training, with 25 years as a practitioner in Irish family history. She has led the Eneclann research team to investigate over 15,000 individual research commissions. Research credits include multiple episodes of Who do you think you are (2005 to the present), PBS’s Finding your Roots/ Faces of America. She is a columnist in History Ireland and Irish Lives Remembered, and is a regular contributor to Irish national newspapers. She has contributed family history pieces (roots of President Barack Obama, Bram Stoker’s inspiration for Dracula) for Radio – RTE and BBC. In 2017-18 Fiona will teach a course in Irish Family History, for the College.
‘An Enlightened Sympathy with All’: Catholics, the College Historical Society, and the Trinity Education in the Nineteenth Century

Abstract: This short presentation looks at the nineteenth century and examines the admission and integration of Catholics into the university. In the popular mind, Trinity barred its doors to Catholics, and was a hostile and forbidding place until the 1970s. The reality is that Roman Catholics were legally allowed enter Trinity from 1793 (and some were allowed attend classes in College before that, despite the legal restriction) and the Provost of the day was one of the people who argued forcibly in parliament for a change in the laws. In the nineteenth century, students like Denis Caulfield Heron (the first Catholic auditor of the College Historical Society) played a significant part in helping to make Trinity a much more inclusive place, long before the ban of Archbishop McQuaid. The presentation will explore how student societies like the Hist helped bring together students of different religions and different political viewpoints, and enabled Trinity to become a place where ideas were tested and challenged. In a broader sense, the College Historical Society provided the kind of more expansive ‘Trinity Education’ that was championed by Thomas Davis and others, and allowed students to learn about parliamentary procedure and debate, as well as the different traditions on the island.

Biography: Professor Patrick Geoghegan is Professor in History at Trinity College Dublin and is an expert on constitutional nationalism and republicanism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The winner of the Provost’s Award for Teaching Excellence, he served as Senior Lecturer/Dean of Undergraduate Studies between 2011 and 2014. He presents the award-winning radio programme, ‘Talking History’ on Newstalk, now in its eleventh year, and is currently on secondment to the government where he is a special adviser to the Taoiseach.
Abstract: The 25 years since 1992 oscillate from the highs of the Celtic Tiger - which brought in a huge expansion in research funding - to the lows of the bailout - which gave us cutbacks, austerity and hiring freezes - to the current recovery, as the College responds to global shifts in the higher education landscape by scaling up ambition. Perspective is difficult, perhaps impossible, when you’re in the thick of it. This presentation looks at recent history and the national and global trends in higher education which are likely to determine the future. What are the key strategies and initiatives Trinity needs to put in place to build on its achievements over four and a quarter centuries? What can we predict about the remaining 75 years of Trinity’s 5th Century?

Biography: Patrick Prendergast was elected 44th Provost of Trinity College Dublin in 2011. Previous officer roles with Trinity include Vice-Provost /Chief Academic Officer (2008-2011) and Dean of Graduate Studies (2004-2007). Prior to his election as Provost he was Professor of Bioengineering. His research publications are on the design of medical implants, and on computer simulation of the response of biological tissue to mechanical strain for which he was elected an international Fellow of the Royal Academy of Engineering in 2013. Recent publications are on addressing global research challenges and on university leadership in times of change. He is a member of the Governing Board of the European Institute of Innovation and Technology, a body of the European Union.
Abstract: This paper discusses the prehistory of Trinity College, based on study of the archaeological remains of the medieval priory of All Hallows that preceded it, founded by King Dermot MacMurrough in the early 1160s. Archaeological investigations revealed human remains in Library Square, which were probably those of deceased canons of the Priory. Furthermore, later investigations outside House No. 1 found the western wall of the medieval monastic quadrangle. These excavations proved for the first time that the College founded in 1592 occupied and re-used the earlier monastic buildings, the exact location of which can now be identified in the modern topography of the College.

Biography: A graduate in history and ancient history and archaeology from Trinity College Dublin, Linzi Simpson has worked as an archaeologist, archaeological consultant, and buildings specialist in the private sector for over twenty-five years, and carried out numerous excavations, especially in Dublin city and county. For much of this period she has also overseen archaeological investigations in relation to Trinity College’s building works and infrastructural projects, work which has helped piece together the archaeological profile of the entire College.

Linzi Simpson has published extensively, including a number of monographs arising from her largescale research-led excavations preceding the Temple Bar rejuvenation and on her rediscovery of the lost Smock Alley Theatre. In particular, her specialism in the archaeology of Dublin from the Viking Age onwards has resulted in numerous publications, including a number on the archaeology of Trinity College which have appeared in Seán Duffy’s Medieval Dublin series (Four Courts Press).