

Trinity Legacies Review Working Group

Friday 10th March 2023

11.00am

Present: Eoin O’Sullivan (Chair), Aidan Marsh (Secretary), Gabrielle Fullam (SU), Chloe Staunton (SU), Mihai Mesteru (SU), John Walsh (IFUT), Kevin Byrne (SIPTU), Clíona O’Farrelly (Fellows), Helen Shenton (Librarian), Linda Hogan (AVPEDI), Catherine O’Mahony (Comms), Sinead McBride (College Solicitor), Ciaran O’Neill, Catriona Crow, Lynn Scarff (NMI)

Apologies:, Francis O’Toole (AHSS), Siobhan Ward (HS), Patrick Wyse Jackson (STEM), Francis Hendron (UNITE),

In Attendance: Patrick Walsh

TLRWG/22-23/010 Minutes of Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting of 10 February 2023 were approved by general consensus.

TLRWG/22-23/011 Update on the Inishbofin Crania

The Provost presented the options discussed by the TLRWG regarding the remains to Board, which unanimously agreed that returning the remains was the preferred option. College has liaised with the island community, which is making arrangements for the burial. Once the community has confirmed it is ready to receive them, College will arrange to transport the crania in Inishbofin, likely through the Secretary’s Office. College representation at the funeral ceremony will be dependent on the wishes of the island community.

TLRWG/22-23/012 Discussion on Berkeley, Revised Working Paper on George Berkeley, and Possible Options

The working document of the Colonial Legacies project has been updated with a summary of the public submissions, along with notes on current international best practices.

There are presently four ways in which Berkeley is memorialised in College. These consist of the name of one of Trinity’s Libraries, two gold medals for the encouragement of the study of Ancient Greek, several portraits, and a window in the Chapel.

Gold Medals:

The TLRWG was informed that it may be more than a decade since the medals were last issued to a student, with the examination last being sat in 2017.

As it is within the remit of the TLRWG to refer matters to other relevant areas of College, it was raised that the naming of the medals be referred to Department of Classics as a local issue, as the medals are not a public memorial, with the additional suggestion that the Department consider a way to respond creatively to the issue, in line with current College values.

No disagreement was raised; however, it was noted that it will be necessary to consider the effects of this decision in light of potential future proposals. It was further suggested that the TLRWG consider amending the principles to provide a clearer guideline for delineation between matters to be dealt with at a local level and matters to be dealt with at the TLRWG’s level.

It was proposed that, as it the role of the TLRWG to consider all matters brought before it, referral to a local level should be performed as a step in the process, with the local level then producing a briefing

note with options that can be returned to the Working Group and, if necessary, thence to Board. This was accepted as a suitable means by which local matters may be assessed.

Action: The matter of the Berkeley Medals is to be referred to the Department of Classics, with a request for options to be returned to the TLRWG.

It was additionally recommended that the Department of Classics be advised to link in with the College Solicitor as any options proposed will need to be in line with the spirit of the benefaction.

Portraits:

There are three portraits of Berkeley listed as being a part of the College collection. At present one is listed as being on display in West Theatre, but this is not the case, and its whereabouts are currently unknown; one is on display in the Common Room; and one is on display in the Public Theatre.

It was felt that to make a decision on the Berkeley portraits at this stage would be unsuitable, and that it may be more appropriate to recommend that College instigate the creation of a wider policy on how portraits are displayed in the university. It was further noted that, while the TLRWG has a diverse range of representation from all areas of College, there is a necessary requirement for a more focused degree of expertise on such matters, and thus the development of any such policy would require representation from the Curator and Head of the University Art Collections. It was also mentioned that there had previously been a Committee responsible for the oversight of College artworks, and that it is understood this Committee has fallen into abeyance. Given the requirement for future-proofing of any new purchases of artworks, the preferred option of the TLRWG is that Provost re-establish this Committee as soon as is reasonably possible.

Window:

There is a stained-glass window memorialising Berkeley in the College Chapel. There was a consensus in the Working Group that the preferred option was that the stained-glass window be “retained and explained.”.

Following the discussion of the Window and the Artworks the Working Group examined means by which “retain and explain” might be carried out in these contexts, and the abolition of historical figures versus a greater explanation in line with the history of the university. Suggestions were made including the possibility of a specific exhibition on Berkeley, including exploratory portraits by contemporary persons of colour to be displayed with the other portraits.

It was also noted that broader concerns had been raised about the gender balance of the portraits in the Public Theatre, and that there is the possibility that the portrait of Berkeley which hangs there may be removed anyway to allow a different portrait to be hung there.

It was additionally noted that any actions taken concerning the Berkeley portraits will undoubtedly have knock-on effects as regards other portraits and works in the College Collection, and that there may need to be an examination of the full catalogue, without regards as to where the works are positioned in College.

Library:

Ninety-three submissions were received from the public call, and there was a majority of support among the public for the Berkeley Library to be de-named, there was also a general consensus within the Working Group. Under the TLRWG Terms of Reference there is an obligation for the Working Group to provide multiple evidence-based options for review by the Provost and it is not within the remit of the Working Group to make specific recommendations.

It was suggested, given the available evidence, that the options provided regarding the name of the Berkeley Library be to either “Retain and Explain” or “De-name” followed by “Re-name”. There is no evidence to support retaining the name with no explanation. It was additionally noted as unnecessary for the options to come with specific details as to how it may be carried out as the mechanics of the option decided upon will be formulated after the decision. The Working Group did note that there are significant opportunities for the university to be creative in implementing the final option, and to be inclusive and consultative in its processes.

It was recognised by the Working Group that any de-naming or re-naming of the Berkeley Library will carry implications regarding time scales. The Berkeley Library has held its name for 47 years, and as such the name is strongly interwoven with many library systems including, but not limited to: The Library Catalogue, Location Codes linked to 3D maps, Teaching & Research Support Materials, Physical Signage, College Maps, the University Website, the Library Website, Google Maps, and any online link and printed publication that mentions the Berkeley Library. Should the decision be made to de-name the library there will be a requirement for extensive changes, which will be accompanied by significant time and resourcing implications. An example given was the considerable length of time taken to transform the systems of the Public Record Office into those compatible with its new status as the National Archives of Ireland. . It was noted that this was not an argument against the option to de-name, but it needed to be recognised that any change would take time and resources to implement across the system. The Working Group acknowledged that changes may lead to confusion, however it is hoped that the worst of the immediate confusion may be mitigated with preparation and communication. Mention of these practical considerations will be included when presenting options to the Provost and Board.

It was noted that, should the Provost and Board decide to proceed with the option to de-name the Library, College will need to articulate in communications that it is not about “cancelling” Berkeley as a writer, philosopher and intellectual historical figure; that his work would still be taught at Trinity and that there will be a need to demonstrate that Berkeley’s work is still relevant today. It was also highlighted that there may be a nostalgia factor that needs to be recognised and taken into account.

TLRWG/22-23/013 Initial Discussion on Draft Guidelines and Procedures on Legacy Issues at Trinity College

The Draft Guidelines & Procedures document circulated to the Committee was summarised as the beginning of a possible document.

It was discussed that it may be useful to show a clear distinction as to how College and the Working Group deal with collections and types of collections, vs monuments and memorials. Further to that the question was raised as to how prescriptive the guidelines should be about the types of issues that are expected to be handled by the Working Group, and if there should also be statements about what may be the domain of other fields such as Curriculum, Disciplinary Boundaries, and Intellectual

Legacies. It was also noted that it may be useful to provide reference to the policies of peer institutions.

A suggestion was raised that it would be useful, and likely necessary, for investment into a database of collections and provenance to provide a starting point for investigations by the working group, and that it would be worthwhile raising this matter at higher levels of College. It was noted that an audit had been conducted by the Trinity Colonial Legacies project which contained information on possible legacy issues, and that this document would be circulated to the working group.

It was raised that it would be useful for the Working Group to have an agreement about what happens next for the purposes of communications with the suggestion that there be an annual Call for Submissions for a period of five years allowing members of the public and College community to bring forward legacy issues. This would allow College to demonstrate that bringing resolution to legacy issues such as the Inishbofin crania and the Berkeley Library are not one-offs but part of a process. It was further raised that in addition to this the Group should consider how it might be more proactive with regards to finding and resolving legacy issues.

It was requested that clarity be sought as to where the Working Group fits in with other committees in College, particularly in the light of the forthcoming governance changes in 2023/4 onwards.

Another meeting will be held in April for further examination of the draft guidelines as well as reviewing the Working Group Terms of Reference.

TLRWG/22-23/013 AOB

No other business