

## **Trinity Legacies Review Working Group**

**Wednesday 23<sup>rd</sup> November 2022**

**10.00am**

**Present:** Eoin O’Sullivan (Chair), Aidan Marsh (Secretary), Chloe Staunton (SU), Mihai Mestru (SU), Francis O’Toole (AHSS), Evi Numen (HS), Rachel Moss (IFUT), Kevin Byrne (SIPTU), Francis Hendren (UNITE), David Quinn (Craft Unions), Helen Shenton (Librarian), Tom Molloy (Comms.), David O’Shea (Dev. & Alumni), Sinead Mac Bride (College Solicitor), Ciaran O’Neill (Colonial Legacies Project)

**Apologies:** Gabi Fullam (SU), Clíona O’Farrelly (Fellows), Linda Hogan (AVPEDI)

**In Attendance:** Patrick Walsh (Colonial Legacies Project), Catherine O’Mahoney (Comms.)

### **TLRWG/22-23/001      Opening**

Prof O’Sullivan opened the meeting of the new working group with introductions, highlighting representation from across the college community.

### **TLRWF/22-23/002      Terms of Reference**

A copy of the Terms of Reference for the new working group was circulated to all in attendance, and the chair summarised the purpose of the working group, as outlined in the Terms of Reference.

### **TLRWG/22-23/003      De-Naming of George Berkeley Memorials**

A petition has been put forward by the Students Union that the Berkeley Library, named in 1978 after the philosopher and Trinity alumnus George Berkeley, be de-named. It was noted that in addition to the Library, there are other memorials to this individual including the Bishop Berkeley Gold Medal awards presented to undergraduate students, and the Berkeley Window which is mounted in the College Chapel.

Dr Patrick Walsh of the Colonial Legacies Project gave a presentation to the Working Group outlining the legacy of George Berkeley, including evidence relating to slavery, the TCD connection, TCD memorials, and actions being taken by peer institutions.

It was recognised by the Working Group that it would be wise to consider the totality of the legacy during any deliberations on de-naming, and whether a legacy should be removed in its entirety, or whether elements should be permitted to remain using a “retain and explain” model. It was suggested that the principles for de-naming set out by colleagues at Harvard University may prove useful for members of the working group to review with regards to considering matters of de-naming. It was also noted that de-naming and renaming should be considered as separate matters.

Following a query regarding what the limits of the working group are with regards to presenting options to Board, it was confirmed that there are no constraints on the recommendations that may be made to Board, or to other College bodies as necessary.

It was noted that in cases such as bequests it will be necessary to examine the conditions under which those gifts were initially given before an informed decision can be made, as they may include specific legacy-related requirements. The Berkeley Window and Medals were highlighted as specific examples; however it was subsequently noted that the Berkeley Window holds no such requirement.

As it was recognised that public consultation would be a necessary part of any examination of legacy issues as part of the mandate of the TLRWG, the working group discussed how large the media

campaign should be regarding the name/de-naming of the Berkeley Library. The wider context of the Library was raised in regard to the media campaign and any reputational impact that might effect the current philanthropic campaigns of the Library. It was recognised by the working group that reputational impact was likely to occur, but it was felt that the size of the campaign would not overly affect this, and there was consensus that a larger media campaign would be more suitable for this circumstance.

Discussion moved on to how public submissions should be received. It was confirmed that a website is being established for the purpose of public information, and that an email address would be created for the purpose of receiving submissions. The working group deliberated how the request for submissions should be pitched to the public, and there was consensus that submissions should be requested as evidence-based, although it was recognised that there would likely be other feedback submitted as well. It was further suggested that identities should be attached to any submissions which are displayed on the website, and that if this were to happen it must be clearly communicated.

With regards to how long the submission process should remain open, consensus was reached that a closing date for submissions at the end of January would provide a suitable length of time for additional public input and evidence to be gathered, and that the working group would then proceed on the issue at a meeting to take place at the beginning of February.

#### **TLRWG/22-23/004      Future of Haddon-Dixon Collection Human Remains from Inisbofin**

Dr Ciaran O'Neill of the Colonial Legacies Project gave a presentation to the working group outlining the broader context of the Haddon-Dixon Collection, the practice of collection, the provenance of the human remains, and the evidence of their removal from Inisbofin from a primary source. It was noted that while there are clear guidelines and modes of practice on international returns of human remains, there is little regarding national returns.

The presentation also reference actions being undertaken by peer institutions regarding similar requests. The Karolinska Institutet of Stockholm received a request to return a number of skulls in their collection to the Sami people. While the Institutet has issued an apology, the skulls have not been returned. Also referenced were the practices of Edinburgh University, who have a comparable collection to TCD, and who manage their collections using guidance issued by Museums & Galleries Scotland.

Evi Numen, as Curator of the Old Anatomy Museum, gave additional context about the remains from research being done by the Anatomy Collection that was not yet in the working paper. A greater description of the remains was provided, and it was explained that they were originally taken from the island as research material in the Celtic Revivalist movement in order to examine the hypothesis that individuals from Western Ireland, and particularly the isles, were more "pure Irish" than others at the time. It was noted that the remains were an important part of the disproval of this hypothesis.

While it was not contested that the remains were taken from the island by Hadden without the consent of the Islanders, it was felt by the Anatomy Collection that the research which had been done on the remains, and research that may occur in the future, should be considered by the working group, and that the group should be cognisant of how the subject is approached. There was concern for both the collection, and that of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI), should an unsuitable precedent be established for returning remains to a national community. The Anatomy Collection are currently in

consultation with the NMI with regards to the commissioning of reports, and precedence for the return of remains.

Finally, it was noted that the Anatomy Collection have presented a proposal to College regarding a suitable display of the collection as part of a Medical Heritage museum that would provide full context for all displays and be the first museum of its kind in Ireland. While it was acknowledged that the remains may be replaced by replicas in such an institution, it was argued that genuine remains would provide greater educational value as humans respond more favourably towards genuine items.

**Action: Inisbofin Remains Working Paper to be updated with additional input from Anatomy Collection**

The working group were informed that a community outreach meeting with the residents of Inisbofin had taken place with reasonably good attendance. The community acknowledged that the issue of the remains was a complex one and expressed a desire for Trinity to work with the community to develop a plan and for a consultation process to take place. It was noted that Anatomy Collection representatives had wished to have a representative at the community meeting but had not been made aware that it was taking place.

The working group discussed the context of the initial appropriation of the remains. It was noted that they had originally been removed by Haddon with scientific intention, and that while the methods of testing were flawed, the findings were, and still are, relevant to the field of forensic science. It was further explained that it is difficult to say if scientific research of the remains can be exhausted as the rapid evolution of technology is giving rise to ever-increasing research possibilities. An example was given of an in-development research project into historical forensic pathology, which could potentially use the remains to study the spread of historical diseases, though it was recognised that it had yet to be decided as to whether the Inisbofin remains would be included in that project.

The working group recognised that there was a desire that options for resolution of this issue be placed before Board sooner rather than later. As such there was consensus that a shorter period of public consultation should take place to allow the group to meet and decide on options for the final Board meeting of 2022.

**Next Meeting to take place 9<sup>th</sup> December 2022**