

Ireland in 1926

Anne Ellen Cassidy was born into a young Irish Free State still forming its own institutions, public voice and national symbols. These selected events are not a full history of the year. They are a small frame around the Ireland into which she was born: broadcasting, census-taking, politics, language, public tragedy and the everyday signs of statehood.

2RN and the first Irish Free State broadcasting service

On 1 January 1926, 2RN began broadcasting from Little Denmark Street in Dublin. It was the first radio broadcasting station in the Irish Free State and was run through the Irish Post Office under the Department of Posts and Telegraphs.

The call sign **2RN** is widely understood as a phonetic echo of “**to Erin**”, linked to the song *Come Back to Erin*. At first, the station broadcast for three hours most nights, and for two hours on Sundays.

For a young state, this was more than a technical novelty. It gave the Free State a new public voice.



SATURDAY, Irish Independent JANUARY 2, 1926.

OPENING OF THE DUBLIN BROADCASTING STATION

BEGINNING OF A NEW ERA

DR. DOUGLAS HYDE SPEAKS TO THE PEOPLE

RECEPTION REPORTED UNSATISFACTORY

"Our enterprise to-day marks the beginning not only of a new year, but of a new era, an era in which our nation will take its place amongst the other nations of the world."

Dr. Douglas Hyde spoke thus last night at the opening of the Dublin Broadcasting Station. His speech was relayed to all British stations.

Reports from Waterford, Galway, and Cork agree that the reception was not satisfactory. "A complete failure," is the phrase used by our Cork correspondent.

The programme for to-night will be found with the other week-end programmes.

IN ENGLISH FIRST AND THEN IN NATIONAL LANGUAGE

Dr. Douglas Hyde, speaking in English, said:—

"I have been asked to open this Broadcasting Station to-night in the National language of Ireland.

"Our enterprise to-day marks the beginning, not only of a new year, but of a new era, an era in which our Nation will take its place amongst the other nations of the world.

MAKING A NATION.

"A nation has never been made by Act of Parliament. A nation cannot be made by Act of Parliament. No! Not even by a Treaty.

A nation is made from inside by itself; it is made, first of all, by its language, it it has one, by its music, songs, games, and customs.

"These make it an entity different from others, and give it meaning and an individuality.

ONE OF OLDEST CIVILISATIONS.

"So while not forgetting what is best in what other countries have to offer us, we desire to especially emphasise what we have derived from our Gaelic ancestors, from one of the oldest civilisations in Europe, from the heritage of the O's and the Mac's, who still make up the bulk of our country.

"This much I have said in English for any strangers who may be listening in. Now I address my own countrymen."

ATHRU MOR.

to him on a set which was tuned in to Daventry, the big English station, **thus showing that the relaying all over Great Britain was perfect.**

In the waiting-room next to the studio the artists, a number of P.O. officials, including Mr. P. S. O'Hegarty, and some friends, listened to the remainder of the programme coming through a loud speaker. The reception was very clear.

IN THE STREET.

In Henry St. a large crowd listened to the programme from a loud speaker installed in a shop window.

Mr. Seamus Clandillon, the Director, received the following telegrams shortly before the station opened:—

"Best wishes from 2LO, 5XX and all stations of the B.B.C. for a Happy New Year and a successful opening."

"Please accept our best wishes for the success of your opening.—Belfast Broadcasting Station."

"CERTAIN PENALTIES."

In connection with the advertisement issued by the Minister for Posts and Telegraphs that persons using wireless apparatus without a licence render themselves liable to certain penalties, Mr. Sean McGarry writes:—

"I may be permitted to ask what is meant by 'certain penalties.' Under which Act or Acts are they to be enforced? A layman like myself would assume that the authorities for these 'certain penalties' would have been quoted and the penalties stated.

"I am no lawyer, but it is new to me to know that any Minister, external or otherwise, can on his own list declare 'certain penalties' without quoting their authority or giving a schedule of the penalties to be incurred. This is rather a serious matter to the public. Are we to have government by An Dail Eireann or by a new Warwick?

An "Irish Independent" representative learned yesterday that the penalties referred to will be included in a suit legislating the position of wireless in the Free State, which will be introduced in the Dail shortly after it re-assembles this month.

Dr. Douglas Hyde.

NOT CLEAR ENOUGH

WATERFORD & GALWAY

Waterford, Friday, 11.50 p.m.—The Dublin wireless broadcast was received in Waterford to-night with mixed opinions.

On the whole, the programme was not as clear as it was expected to be.

Most private owners of sets complain that outside high power stations interference considerable with the clarity of the reception, and were of opinion that the items would have been more distinct had the broadcasting from the new Dublin Station was a complete failure.

Not only was the programme incapable of reception on anything less than a six-valve set, but even with this powerful unit only faint signals could be heard by putting the ear close to a loud speaker, although several English stations were distinctly received.

The failure was all the more surprising because the Dublin test programmes came quite clearly.

THE PROGRAMME

SINGING TO AN UNSEEN AUDIENCE

(By H.R.W.)

The studio—a long, narrow room, thickly carpeted, with the walls and ceiling so heavily draped that almost every trace of resonance is removed.

The studio is, however, brightly illuminated and comfortably furnished. At one end stand two grand pianos at different pitches to suit the performers. A couple of gramophones, a couch, and an easy chair completes the simple furnishing of the room.

THE MICROPHONE.

The microphone stands in the centre of the studio. Two electric bulbs, one red, the other white, indicate the period of actual broadcasting.

The moment the red light is turned on no sound is uttered save that made by the performers.

Precisely at 7.45 Mr. Hughes, the Announcer, advanced to the microphone, and in an easy and natural voice introduced the fact that Dr. Douglas Hyde would deliver his opening speech.

DIFFERENT SOUNDS.

It is evident that musical sounds are more sensitive in reproduction than the average speaking voice, for

while speakers address their audience quite close to the microphone singers and players stand at a distance varying from ten to fourteen feet.

The new experience of singing and playing to an audience which was not there produced a nervous feeling in most of the artists, a feeling which was not lessened by the deadening effect of the drapery.

SATISFACTORY.

The selections by the Army No. 1 Band were relayed from Beggar's Bush. These came through effectively. I heard the No. 1 Irish Fantasia through the medium of a loud-speaker, which is usually ineffective, but the general results were satisfactory.

The reed tone is better than the brass. The heavy brass instruments dull the ensemble. The solo work by the clarionet and cornet was admirable.

VIOLIN SUCCESS.

Mr. Arthur Darley's violin solos were delightfully clear, because he was very restrained.

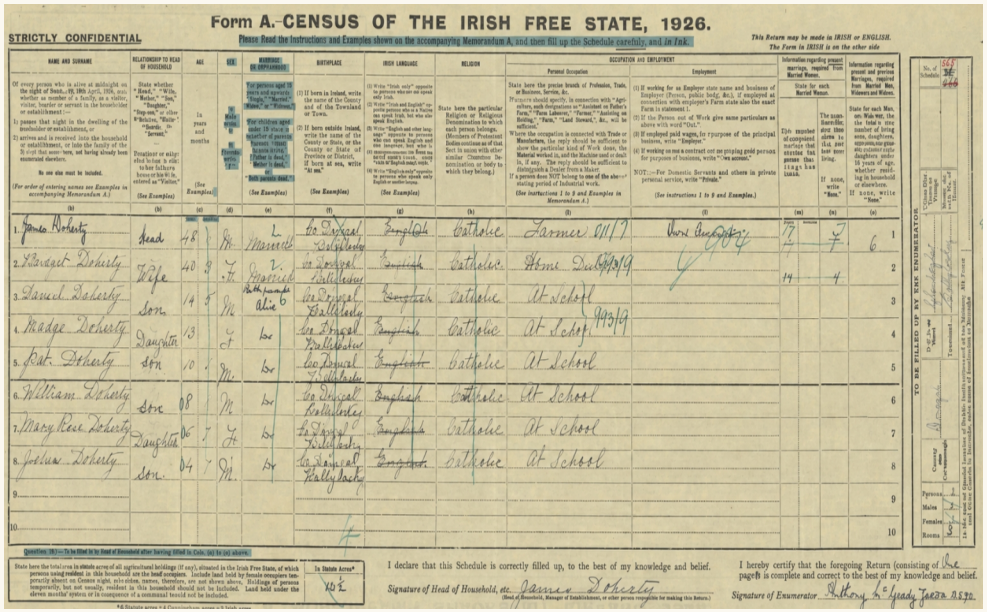
Miss Annie Fagan's harp solos reproduced with all the clearness of a piano, and Miss Dora Copeman's playing of Chopin's Polonaise in E Flat was judicious in its treatment. It was not too hurried, nor was the detail

Irish Independent report on the opening of the Dublin broadcasting station, January 1926

The 1926 census

The census taken on 18 April 1926 was the first census conducted by the Irish Free State. It covered the 26 counties and recorded the people, households and townlands of the new state.

The forms captured names, ages, relationships, birthplaces, occupations, language and religion. They also recorded more detailed family and employment information than earlier census returns.



Form A.—CENSUS OF THE IRISH FREE STATE, 1926.

STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL

Please Read the Instructions and Examples shown on the accompanying Memorandum A, and then fill up the Schedule carefully, and *in Ink*.

This Return may be made in IRISH or ENGLISH.

The Form in IRISH is on the other side

NAME AND SURNAME	RELATIONSHIP TO HEAD OF HOUSEHOLD	AGE	SEX	MARRIAGE OR SURVIVORSHIP	BIRTHPLACE	IRISH LANGUAGE	RELIGION	OCCUPATION AND EMPLOYMENT		Information regarding present marriage, required from Married Women.		Information regarding present and previous Marriages, required from Married Men, Widowers and Widows.	
								Personal Occupation	Employment	Ulv number of completed surface that stories has person thas lingshas tomah.	The nomberofic ores shis is tha par bas been living.	If none, write "None."	If none, write "None."
(a)	(b)	(c)	(d)	(e)	(f)	(g)	(h)	(i)	(j)	(m)	(n)	(o)	
1. James Doherty	Head	48	M	M	Co Donegal Ballyloskey	English	Catholic	Farmer own	Own Account	7	7	6	1
2. Bridget Doherty	Wife	40	F	M	Co Donegal Ballyloskey	English	Catholic	Home Duties		14	4		2
3. Daniel Doherty	Son	14	M	Single	Co Donegal Ballyloskey	English	Catholic	At School					3
4. Madge Doherty	Daughter	13	F	Single	Co Donegal Ballyloskey	English	Catholic	At School					4
5. Pat Doherty	Son	10	M	Single	Co Donegal Ballyloskey	English	Catholic	At School					5
6. William Doherty	Son	08	M	Single	Co Donegal Ballyloskey	English	Catholic	At School					6
7. Mary Rose Doherty	Daughter	06	F	Single	Co Donegal Ballyloskey	English	Catholic	At School					7
8. Joshua Doherty	Son	04	M	Single	Co Donegal Ballyloskey	English	Catholic	At School					8
9.													9
10.													10

I declare that this Schedule is correctly filled up, to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature of Head of Household, etc. James Doherty

I hereby certify that the foregoing Return (consisting of One pages) is complete and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief.

Signature of Enumerator Anthony J. Grady Date 1926

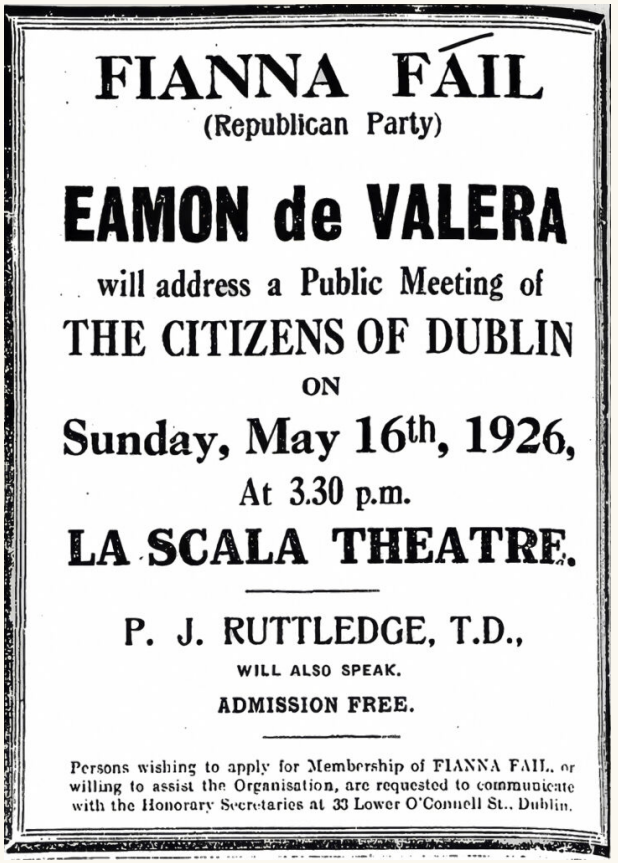
TO BE FILLED UP BY THE ENUMERATOR

1926 Census - Ballyloskey, County Donegal: the Doherty (Newman) household return from Ballyloskey, County Donegal from the first census of the Irish Free State

Formation of Fianna Fáil

On 16 May 1926, Éamon de Valera founded Fianna Fáil, meaning *Soldiers of Destiny*. The party emerged from opponents of the Anglo-Irish Treaty and set out to create a united Irish republic, politically and economically independent of Britain.

The party was originally abstentionist, but the following year de Valera led it into the Dáil. From 1927 onwards, Fianna Fáil became one of the major forces in Irish political life.



Notice for Éamon de Valera public meeting, La Scala Theatre, Dublin, 16 May 1926

Dromcollogher cinema fire

On 5 September 1926, a fire broke out during a cinema showing in Dromcollogher, County Limerick. A candle or other flame source ignited highly flammable nitrate film in a crowded, makeshift upstairs cinema.

The blaze spread rapidly and trapped many of those inside. Forty-eight people died, including women and children, making it one of the worst disasters in the history of the Irish Free State.



THE WORLD'S NEWS. TUESDAY, Irish Independent SEPTEMBER 7, 1926.

APPALLING IRISH CINEMA DISASTER

AWFUL TRAGEDY RESULTS IN FORTY-EIGHT DEATHS

HEARTRENDING SCENES ENACTED

PICTURE HOUSE BECOMES A RAGING FURNACE

IMPOSSIBILITY OF ESCAPE FOR MANY

THE TERRIBLE STORY TOLD AT THE INQUEST LAST NIGHT

OWNER AND THE OPERATOR EXAMINED

BOTH MEN PLACED UNDER DETENTION BY THE CIVIC GUARD

Drumcollogher, Co. Limerick, was, on Sunday night, the scene of a tragedy, which resulted in a death roll almost unparalleled in the history of Irish disasters. It occured when a fire took place in a building mainly composed of wood, in which a cinema performance was being given, and involved the deaths of 48 persons.

When the fire broke out the audience made a wild rush for the only exit which the place afforded, and in the struggle to get through many were trampled upon, including women and children. Others were trapped in the building, which almost instantaneously became a raging inferno, and amidst terrible scenes were compelled to await painful and agonising deaths.

throbbing life, and of death, grim and terrible death.

All round the square were hundreds of motor cars, many of them from far distant places, for the news of the awful holocaust had travelled far and fast.

SEEKING RELATIONS.

There were thousands of people, too, in the little village, men, women and children, who from early morning flocked into the place of horror. They had come, many of them, to view that awful sight of 48 charred corpses in the fear that they might identify one of those terrible things as a relative.

In the other little villages through which I passed the same shock and terror could be sensed. Everybody seemed to be out of doors talking and discussing the tragedy. There was gloom everywhere. It is hard to describe or try to write in face of this appalling catastrophe. Those who were in the hall are slow to talk.

TRYING TO FORGET.

One doesn't blame them. One can easily understand their anxiety to try to forget that awful night of their escape from so shocking an end. Everywhere one went amongst the crowds that thronged the village one heard stories told and retold of the loss of relatives and friends.

The motor man who drove me had already brought two car loads of relatives to the death village.

He was at the removal of the bodies. I will give his own words:—"I never saw such a sight, sir," he said. "I have seen terrible things in France, and I was there four years, but nothing so terrible as what I saw this evening."

MORE REMINDERS.

Nothing so terrible, and he was four years in France. He knew. He had his stories of horror, too, some of them true, some half true and exaggerated, if one could exaggerate the awfulness of such an awful tragedy.

Coming near the village one got more reminders of the tragedy.

"In that house there," said my driver, "there were two girls lost."

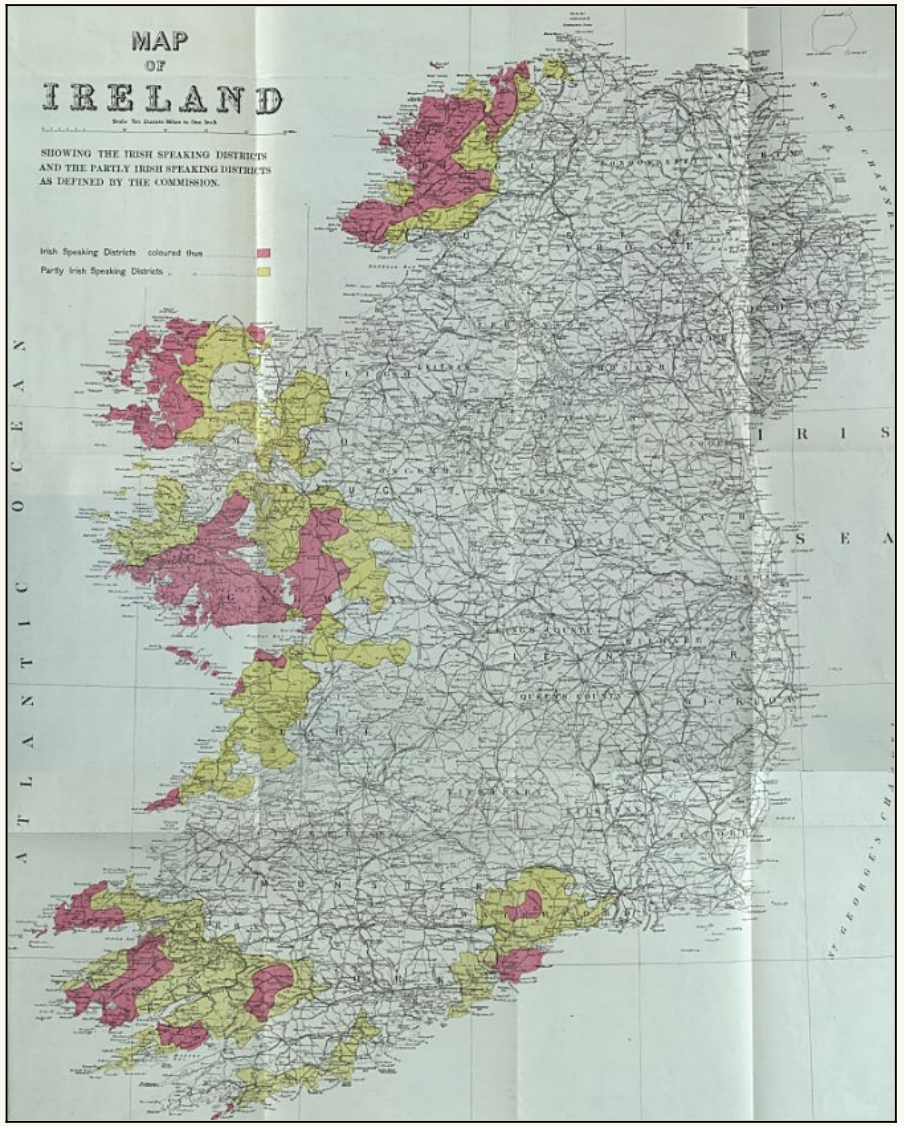
We sped on another half mile. "There," he pointed, "another girl

Irish Independent report on the Dromcollogher cinema fire, September 1926

Official recognition of the Gaeltacht

Official recognition of the Gaeltacht began with the 1926 Gaeltacht Commission Report. The new state sought to identify and preserve districts where Irish was still the language of the home.

The Commission, *Coimisiún na Gaeltachta*, surveyed the survival of the Irish language and mapped districts where a significant share of the population spoke Irish.



The 1926 Commission map.

Website: image may be enlarged, but it does not need the same zoom priority as the clippings or census form.

New Saorstát Éireann coinage

The **Coinage Act, 1926** established the legal framework for the Irish Free State to issue its own token coinage, paving the way to replace British coins in everyday use.

A committee chaired by *W. B. Yeats* oversaw the designs.

The coins used the Irish harp on one side and animals associated with Irish life and agriculture on the other: woodcock, sow and piglets, hen and chicks, hare, wolfhound, bull, salmon and hunter horse.

The coins entered circulation in 1928, but the legislation and design work belong to the state-building story of 1926.



Saorstát Éireann coin designs: harp and animal motifs