

Artists tackle peace building

BY GERRY MOLUMBY

IN a wide-ranging speech made at the University of Liverpool's Institute of Irish Studies, Irish Ambassador to Britain Adrian O'Neill reminded the audience that "the Good Friday Agreement did not drop from heaven".

In his lecture, marking the 20th anniversary of the signing of the Agreement, entitled 'Believe A Further Shore Is Reachable From Here': The Good Friday Agreement Twenty Years he told those gathered the ultimate signing of the important peace treaty was the result of many years spent building on fledgling peace moves.

He went on to highlight the role played over many years by so many elected and community leaders and also the role played by women in the Peace Process.

Citing the "soundtracks of our years" he recalled being in secondary school and about to



GREETING: Ambassador O'Neill with students from the Institute of Irish Studies and the exhibition organisers (Picture Gerry Molumby)

leave school at the height of the Troubles, and later, when, as a press officer at the Embassy of Ireland in Washington, he followed the events of Good Friday 1998 with great nervous anticipation in the days when the "pendulum kept swinging".

During his speech, Ambassador O'Neill affirmed his conviction that despite the current political impasse in Northern Ireland, which he called "deeply concerning",

he is confident for the future. Earlier that day, the Ambassador, as a guest of The Irish Studies Faculty, visited Agreement: A People's Process - their major exhibition at the Victoria Gallery and Museum.

Combining photography, painting, sculpture, installations, animation and textiles, the exhibition examined the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement and violent conflict in Columbia, Iraq and Argentina.



EXHIBIT: Kenny Donaldson, Director of Services, South East Fermanagh Foundation (SEFF), and curator of Your Legacy Lives On, explains the memorial quilts provided by SEFF to Ambassador O'Neill and Professor Peter Shirlow, Director of the Institute of Irish Studies at University of Liverpool

SUPPORT: Members of the University of Liverpool Staff Choir perform before the speech by Ambassador Adrian O'Neill



CATCH UP: Ambassador O'Neill with John Kennedy and Professor Peter Shirlow (Picture: Gerry Molumby)

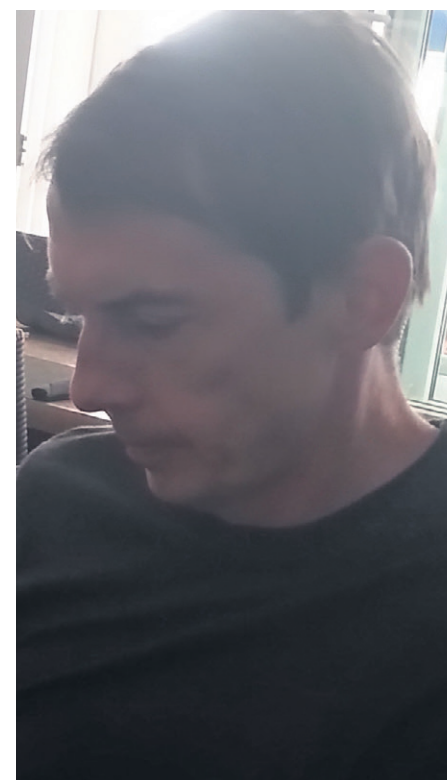


ARTWORK: The Ambassador with the audio installation 'Keys'



MANY HANDS: Artist Raymond Watson with his Hands of History work (Picture: Gerry Molumby)

10 minutes with...



BORN in Birmingham to Irish parents, author Aidan Conway claims his Mayo father and Tipperary mother are his heroes. He adds that it was his mother that "fostered a love of books" within him. Living in Italy since 2001, Conway holds an MA in Irish Writing from Queen's University Belfast. In keeping with his love of language and literature, he has been a bookseller, proofreader, language consultant, freelance teacher, translator and editor for the United Nations FAO. Today he works as an assistant university lecturer in Rome, where he lives with his family, and, when not working, indulges his passion for writing. He published his first novel *A Known Evil* last month, under the Killer Reads imprint. To purchase a copy visit www.killerreads.com.

AIDAN CONWAY

What are you up to?

I've just finished the first round of edits on *A Cold Flame*, the second book in the Inspector Michael Rossi crime series set in Rome, so while I am waiting to tackle the nitty-gritty of the line edit in a week or two, I'm teaching and reading a lot and spending time with my family when not promoting *A Known Evil*.

Who are your heroes?

My Mayo dad, for being stubborn and determined in the face of adversity while never losing his humanity, humour and wisdom. My Tipperary mom for keeping us all on the straight and narrow and fostering a love of books, ideas and justice.

What's been the best decade of your life so far and why?

The '90s was a lot of fun and highly formative for me as I got my degree, started working in books, and then began writing in earnest while at Queen's for my MA.

What record/song sends a shiver down your spine?

One by U2 from Achtung Baby.

What is your favourite place in Ireland?

The West in general, but Connemara is hard to beat for the wonderful light and isolation and the super-friendly people.

What makes you angry?

Corruption, people who



can't be bothered to do their job properly, politicians lining their pockets while hoodwinking the poor and the needy.

What book influenced you most?

The Collected Stories of Ernest Hemingway has to be up there.

What was the worst moment of your life?

Losing my dad in 2016.

Which local star in any field should the world outside Ireland know about?

The poet, musician and novelist Ciaran Carson influenced me a lot when I lived in Belfast.

If you could change one thing in your life, what would it be?

I live in a flat so I would love a garden, or a house in the country where I could write undisturbed, maybe.

Can you recommend an interesting website?

The Griffiths Valuation archive on the website www.AskAboutIreland.com is a fascinating genealogy tool.

What is the best lesson life has taught you?

Follow your instincts, but listen to the right people too.

What is your favourite film and why?

The Godfather Parts I and II are sublime pieces of drama and technical accomplishment.

What do you believe in?

Being yourself and standing up for what you know is right.

What trait do others criticise you for?

It used to be pretentiousness - what do you mean you wanna be a writer? But now it has to be laziness and procrastination and an inability to collaborate in the kitchen.

Where do you live and what are the best and worst things about that place?

Rome. A breathtakingly beautiful city but it can drive you mad. For details, read the book.

On what occasion is it OK to lie?

I prefer to be up front or say nothing, but sometimes to save someone's feelings or get the better of a nasty piece of a work.

Who is/was the love of your life?

Graziella is.