

## WESTLAND ROW CBS 150<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Launch

20<sup>th</sup> November 2014

### Speech by the President of the Westland Row PPU – John Cullen

Taoiseach, we are aware that on Thursdays you enjoy some respite from hostilities in the institution up the road, but we are equally aware that the demands on your time on those days are enormous. You can imagine, therefore, how delighted and honoured we are that you could join us today to launch the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of this venerable school. The roots of the school actually go back a further 50 years when the Christian Brothers established their first school in Dublin, nearby in East Hanover St, also in the parish of St Andrews. They moved to this location in 1864, so that's the milestone we are celebrating.

And what are our plans? Our programme of celebration kicks off today, and will spill over to the middle of next year. It involves a project and a series of events. We have already laid the foundations for our project, and that is to capture the school records, photographs, and other memorabilia in digital form, so that they are safe and that they are available for research now and in the future. As you walked through the school this morning you will have noticed that the walls are dripping with history. We are very grateful to the Christian Brothers, who hold the earliest pupil records – from 1864 to 1928, and who have scanned these into digital format and made them available to us. We thank Bro Garvey for this generous gesture, and we thank Bro Frank Crummey who carried out the scanning. And we also acknowledge the presence of other members of the community who are also with us today.

The archive project is a slow burner. Most of the records have been scanned, and the early records are already yielding very interesting human stories. As you are all probably aware, our most celebrated past pupils are Patrick and Willie Pearse. We have found their entries in the early records, and they are presently available for inspection in the next room. The entry for Willie is clear and full, but his more celebrated brother has a very sparse entry, and his name is misspelt. But, we've photographs, and his exam results outside to prove he was here. In fact, he was also a student teacher here while attending university.

There's a line in Patrick's poem *The Mother* where he anticipates the anguish of his own mother after the deaths of her two sons "O Lord, thou art hard on mothers, we suffer in their coming and their going". Margaret Pearse undoubtedly suffered greatly, but spare a thought also for Mary Brennock of 1, Island Villas - just behind the St Andrew's Resource Centre. Both she and her husband reared 2 girls and 6 boys. At least 5 of the boys were pupils of this school – we've located them in the records, and three of those died in World War 1. Willie and Patrick (yes - same as the Pearses) and Thomas died between 1914 and 1917: one in the Irish Guards, another in the Royal Navy and the third in the Dublin Fusiliers. Their bodies were never brought home, a consolation denied to Mary and Michael Brennock. Our next step in the project, as resources permit, will be to make the records more easily searchable, somewhat on the lines of the 1901 and 1911 censuses.

The second event will be the Annual Mass on November 30<sup>th</sup> – St Andrew's Day. The Archbishop of Dublin, Dr Diarmuid Martin will celebrate a Mass in St Andrews Church to

celebrate the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary, and to remember past pupils who have passed away, particularly in the past year. The Mass will be concelebrated by as many of the past pupil priests serving in the diocese as are available. The Church Choir and soloist Soprano Kathryn Byrne will perform at the ceremony.

The third even will be the Past Pupils' dinner in the Westbury on Saturday, 31<sup>st</sup> January next, where we hope to get a good turnout to celebrate the year that's in it. The forth event, a gala concert will take place also in March 2015. The final event will be an open evening, hosted by the School Board and Principal, which will take place in the school towards the middle of next year. Anybody connected with the school – current and past pupils, current and former teachers, sponsors etc - will be very welcome. We will post details in due course on our website – [www.rowppu.ie](http://www.rowppu.ie). Finally, we intend to capture the entire programme, including material emerging from the archive project, in a publication, which will also celebrate the school's history and achievements in various fields.

We are looking forward to a very successful programme to celebrate the great history of this school and we call on all past pupils to support the celebration.

Some photographs from the launch by An Taoiseach, Mr. Enda Kenny TD.

