

Address by Kieran Hourigan, Chairperson of Grange Cross Residents Association on the occasion of the official opening of the 1916 Memorial Garden at Grange Church on 24<sup>th</sup> April, 2016

Minister, Deputy Mayor, Members of the Oireachtas, Members of Limerick City and County Council, Members of the Defence Forces, Members of the Clergy, Guests of Honour, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Media, Fellow Parishioners, Ladies and Gentlemen,

As Miriam said, my name is Kieran Hourigan, Chairman of the Grange Cross Residents Association. It is my great honour and pleasure to welcome you all to Grange today to partake in our local event to commemorate the happenings and the ultimate personal sacrifices that are associated with the Easter Rising of 1916. In doing so, we also celebrate the fact that Ireland is today a Sovereign State and a nation, highly regarded on the world stage from many perspectives. Indeed, Ireland of today is the envy of many another country.

A special Memorial Garden has been constructed and this will be formally opened today.

The Irish State is today a country where, within the laws of the land, people of differing politics, religious beliefs and personal values can co-

exist peacefully, work together and socialise without compromising personal political, religious and other beliefs or allegiances.

Grange is a relatively small locality here in South-East Limerick. It is, however, an area of great natural beauty with a rich tapestry of history of which our community is very proud. The beautiful Lough Gur is but a few hundred yards from where we are gathered and our locality is rich in archaeology of national and international importance.

Grange is proud of its many famous sons and daughters, of which there are too many to mention all. However, it is appropriate here today to refer to a number of brave men who died locally so that we could have the independent, tolerant and multi-denominational Irish State of today.

Not far from where we are gathered now, in fact just inside the church gates, five IRA Volunteers who paid the ultimate sacrifice of their lives at Caherguillamore on St Stephen's night, 1920 are interred. Several others who were subsequently gaoled, some overseas, for up to 12 months are also interred close to their comrades in this churchyard. It is appropriate that the Memorial Garden is adjacent to the resting places of these men.

As I said, we are a proud people in these parts, proud of our history, of who we are now and very much focused on leaving a clear sense of identity and legacy for those who will follow us in the future.

In Nov of 2015, Grange people published their first parish book, titled "Grange: Past and Present" - the book has been well received and reviewed - the people of Grange are very proud of this achievement.

The book includes a number of accounts of local events to do with the Fight for Independence in the early 1920s. These include the said Caherguillamore event, the Grange Ambush and, of course, the murder of that great patriot, Grangeman, Mayor Saoirse Clancy at his home in Limerick in early 1921.

And so it was, when the last Government announced plans to commemorate 1916 and when Limerick City and County Council invited community proposals, the Grange decision to make a substantial proposal to erect a memorial garden came easily. It was, indeed, a natural progression from our book publication in 2015.

The efforts and skills of many came together in order to make our event of today possible. On behalf of the Grange Cross Residents Association,

there are several acknowledgements that I must make, and I do so now in no particular order.

I thank our many dignitaries who agreed to attend today, some of whom have official functions to perform and to whom you will be introduced in due course. I can't mention everybody now, but I must mention Deputy Mayor Mitchell and Minister Noonan who has kindly agreed to perform the official opening of the Memorial Garden and to address you.

Thanks are extended to our speakers who will address you in both Irish and English.

I also wish to thank An Garda Siochana and St John's Ambulance Service, whose essential services have permitted us to proceed with our event.

Our thanks are due also to our local Roman Catholic clergy who will bless the Memorial Garden.

The Memorial Garden is located on land made available by Patrick and Fiona O'Sullivan of the nearby Lough Gur House. Thank you Fiona and Patrick

I wish to thank members of the defence forces for services provided today including, marching and flag raising.

Triona Daly will entertain us with her beautiful singing voice - thank you Triona.

Today is as much about the future as it is of the past. It is good, therefore, to have our adults of the future here today, represented by the boys and girls of Bruff National School.

The Memorial Garden looks resplendent today, I am sure you will agree. This did not emerge from a green-field site or should I say from a green-wood site, without huge planning and physical effort. There were too many involved to mention everybody. However, I will mention Patrick O'Sullivan who had the site cleared and prepared. Mickey O'Connell project managed the garden works and, indeed, did much of the actual work himself. Eamonn O'Hogain assisted greatly in designing the stone inscriptions and particularly translations to Irish. Newport Memorials skilfully inscribed the striking stonework.

Jack Clancy of Clancy's Pub, Bruff, in association with Patrick O'Sullivan kindly took on the catering role.

Of course, my fellow members of the Grange Cross Residents Association did Trojan work to make today possible and I am indebted to them all. Many of them are on duty here today.

During the course of the project, we worked closely with LCCC, availing of their direction and advice as well of their generous funding.

As there is a full programme to follow, I will conclude by thanking each and every one of you for attending our event and I hope that you will enjoy the occasion. Thank you for your attention.