

BOOKS

JAKE HURFURT
HISTORY

Centenary: Ireland Remembers 1916

Edited by Ronan McGreevy
Government Publications
€24.99 ★★★★★

Relecting on two connected events at either end of a 100-year stretch of history marked by countless revolutionary changes is difficult. The best way to do this is by focusing on people, what they remember, how they remember and how they link stories told a century apart.

Capturing the energy of the celebration is no easy task but Centenary does it beautifully with page after page of stunning high-resolution photographs bringing moments to life.

With a luxurious fabric cover and quality feel, the book makes for a lovely memento of the anniversary of the Rising. It is something to treasure for years to come and will be perfect to show the next generation a glimpse of the past.

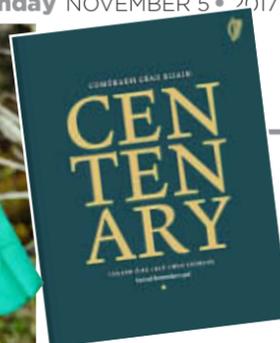
Events centre around people and, in putting together the story of the commemorations, the editor has used images and accounts that get to the heart of what it was all about, bringing people together to celebrate and reflect.

Few things bring the country together like Gaelic football and last year the National Football



MEMORIES: Marking the Rising 100 years on

Putting people centre stage, this glorious memento of 1916 keeps the flame alive



HONOUR: Sheila O'Leary, whose parents were at the GPO in 1916, with Capt John Forde



WORTHY TESTIMONY TO THE RISEN PEOPLE

League final was played exactly 100 years on from the start of the Easter Rising. The GAA is central to a modern Irish identity and this reach into the heart of communities up and down the country helped the association draw on the culture of all of Ireland to mark the occasion with perhaps the most impressive spectacle of 2016 – one to tell the grandchildren about.

After all, 'the Gaelic League was founded not upon hate of England, but upon love of Ireland' – in the words of our first president Douglas Hyde – and the images of how our country came together to

celebrate the role models of 1916 and 2016 in the book show the vibrancy of Ireland today.

The Proclamation 'guarantees religious and civil liberty, equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens', and Centenary makes the role of women in the Rising and the celebrations a vital point. The book does well with powerful insights into how the 77 women of 1916 are commemorated and how Irish society continues to strive to the ideals of equality outlined 100 years ago.

Today people all over the globe feel a connection to this small island, with up to 70 million peo-

ple counting themselves as at least partly Irish.

This is why the Rising, one of the most important events in our nation's history, was marked by events the world over.

These days, Ireland is a modern nation looking to forge relationships in every corner of the globe and, by commemorating the universal values of the Rising globally, Ireland can continue to pass its values and its warmth to everyone who encounters it.

Opening with the words of President Michael D Higgins, the book sets out what the Rising meant and continues to mean to a

country and how we can connect people to events slowly moving out of living memory.

Tapping into Ireland's values today, their connection with the principles of the Rising and how they are channelled through our people, Centenary captures a moment in time poignantly and cements the legacy of the Rising as well as how we celebrate it.

Centenary is a record about people. Their accounts and their stories are the book's strength. Everything is put into context by real people and this is how the Rising and the commemorations are best preserved.

Sylvia: America's own doomed genius

GOLDEN: Sylvia Plath on holiday in 1953

The tragedy of Sylvia Plath, the beautiful young American poet who gassed herself to death following the end of her marriage in 1963, has become one of the great set-pieces of post-war English literature. In the 54 years since her death in a frozen north London flat, while her children slept in another room, Plath's persona has become fixed as a doomed genius, driven to despair by her faithless ex-husband, Ted Hughes.

Except it wasn't like that, or at least not in the beginning. In this magisterial collection of her young letters, many of them published here for the first time, Plath emerges as no-one's idea of a victim. Growing up in post-

KATHRYN HUGHES
LITERATURE

The Letters Of Sylvia Plath, Vol 1

Edited by Peter R Steinberg and Karen V Kukil
Faber & Faber €49
★★★★★

war Boston, she is a sparky, all-American kid destined for a golden, if somewhat unimaginative, future. To all intents and purposes 'Sivvy' is living the

American Dream – until it all starts to unravel just as she is leaving her teens. In a particularly harrowing, little-known letter from 1953, she tells an old friend how she recently descended into depression, almost managed to kill herself and ended up in a psychiatric hospital. These events later went

into *The Bell Jar*, Plath's posthumously published novel, in which she gives a barely disguised autobiographical account of a clever young college student's descent into madness.

This intimate, unedited collection contains more workaday surprises too

like just how stingy Plath could be. Recollections from friends who knew her much later describe her as an American princess who bought all-new home furnishings and casually stole food from someone else's fridge.

The great pleasure of this magnificent edition is being able to follow the events of her extraordinary life as they are unfolding, rather than read about them in condensed form in one of the many biographies. The climax comes, inevitably, in 1956 when Sylvia, at Cambridge, walks into a party and sees a 'big, dark, hunky boy' on the other side of the room, Ted Hughes. The rest, as they say, is history.



IT'S A FACT
In the Seventies, vandals enraged by her supposed treatment by Ted Hughes repeatedly scratched out the name 'Hughes' on Plath's headstone in Yorkshire.