

New book remembers one of Ireland's most devastating maritime disasters - RMS *Lusitania*: The Story of a Wreck

Ministers Madigan and Canney Launch New Book on RMS *Lusitania*

Ms Josepha Madigan, T.D., Minister for Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht (DCHG), and Mr Seán Canney, T.D., Minister of State, Department of Communications, Climate Action & Environment, today (Thursday 5th December, 2019), announced the publication of a new book on the RMS *Lusitania* - ***RMS Lusitania: The Story of a Wreck***

The RMS *Lusitania* was the largest and fastest ocean-going liner in the world when launched in 1906 - a wonder of the age. On the afternoon of 7 May 1915, a German U-boat torpedoed *Lusitania* 18km off the southern coast of Ireland inside the declared war zone. The liner sank in 18 minutes, killing 1,197 passengers and crew. The sinking was a contributing factor in the United States declaring war on Germany two years later. Given the dramatic circumstances of its loss, the wreck has been the subject of much investigation, research and survey work since its loss over 100 years ago and was protected by Underwater Heritage Order in 1995. Ongoing collaboration between the National Monuments Service (DCHG) and INFOMAR (Geological Survey Ireland and the Marine Institute) has been furthering research into the wreck leading to the production of this new book which not only tells the story of the ship itself but also of the World War I losses generally off Ireland's coast. Images from newspapers, postcards, paintings, photographic collections and a variety of other sources, show the impact the sinking of the *Lusitania* had globally.

Recent acquisition of detailed high resolution scans of the wreck carried out by **INFOMAR (INtegrated Mapping FO**r the Sustainable Development of Ireland's **Marine Resource)** provides new imagery of how the shipwreck looks on the seafloor today. As well as drawing on expertise from the National Monuments Service's Underwater Archaeology Unit, the Geological Survey of Ireland, The Marine Institute and the National Museum of Ireland, there are contributions in the publication from independent researchers, divers and specialists.

Pointing out that the publication reflected her Department's commitment to creating an awareness and appreciation of heritage and archaeology in particular, Minister Madigan said

“This very readable and meticulously researched book will be an essential work of reference for all interested in heritage studies and maritime affairs for many years to come.

Minister Madigan added:

“As we continue through our decade of centenaries, there are few greater tragedies to remember than the sinking of the *Lusitania*. Most of the 90 Irish men, women and children listed as passengers were lost when the liner went down. There would also have been many unlisted Irish working on the ship; men who had emigrated to Liverpool and found work as firemen, trimmers, stokers and greasers in the *Lusitania’s* boiler rooms.

“Their loss tells us of the enduring story of Ireland, of the pendulum of emigration and immigration, of people seeking better lives on one-way journeys to new lives in America or those able to visit back home, or coming home for good..”

Minister Canney commented that “For the past 20 years, Ireland’s offshore waters and coastal seas have been subject to one of the largest seabed surveys in the world. Integrated Mapping for the Sustainable Development of Ireland’s Marine Resource (INFOMAR) is Ireland’s national marine mapping programme, the follow-on project to the Irish National Seabed Survey (INSS) which began in 1999. Through INFOMAR state-of-the-art sonar imagery of the wreck of the *Lusitania* has been acquired creating a valuable dataset for the monitoring of this historically significant wreck site.

This collection of data along with the story of this great liner provides us with a platform to raise further awareness of the importance of our maritime history and to allow further research and analysis to be undertaken”.

Both Ministers Madigan and Canney congratulated the main authors, Fionnbarr Moore, Connie Kelleher and Karl Brady of the National Monuments Service, Charise McKeon of the Geological Survey of Ireland and Ian Lawler of Bord Iascaigh Mhara all the other contributors and highlighted the book as an excellent example of two government departments working in partnership to bring together expertise in archaeology, history and marine mapping while also highlighting Ireland’s leading role in seabed mapping and the promotion of our underwater cultural heritage.

RMS Lusitania - The Story of a Wreck is available from the Stationery Office and major booksellers priced at €20

Notes to the Editors

INFOMAR Project

INFOMAR is the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCA) funded national seabed mapping programme, jointly managed and delivered by Geological Survey Ireland and Marine Institute.

INFOMAR is Ireland's national seabed mapping programme and is funded by the Department of Communications, Climate Action and Environment (DCCA). It is jointly managed by Geological Survey Ireland and Marine Institute, and is tasked with fully mapping Ireland's territorial waters for the sustainable development of Ireland's marine resource.

INFOMAR will continue until the end of 2026, enabling effective management and accelerated growth to support Harnessing Our Ocean Wealth.

www.infomar.ie

The Underwater Archaeology Unit (UAU) is an integral part of the National Monuments Service, Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, and is responsible for the management, protection and recording of underwater archaeological sites and wrecks in Ireland's inland and coastal waters. Since its establishment in 1997 the UAU has created an extensive archive of shipwrecks, with over 18,000 documented to date. The UAU's brief includes the quantification of the underwater cultural resource, licensing of dives on protected sites, dealing with threats to underwater archaeology and mitigating development impacts. The UAU has also undertaken surveys and excavations at previously known and newly discovered sites, adding a new layer to our existing knowledge of our island's history.

The work of the UAU in this regard is helping to ensure that the evidence for past connections to the sea and inland waterways is recognised and protected for the enjoyment and benefit of all.

Geological Survey Ireland (GSI), founded in 1845, is the National Earth Science Agency and a division of the Department of Communications, Energy & Natural Resources. The GSI is responsible for creating a broad range of products, including maps, reports and databases, and acts as a knowledge centre and project partner in all aspects of Irish geology.

The National Monuments Service (NMS) is part of the Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and plays a key role in the protection of our heritage. The National Monuments Service has a wide remit including the Archaeological Survey of Ireland which documents the rich archaeological heritage that is to be found in our landscape. The NMS also works closely with our colleagues in the OPW on the conservation and management of our National Monuments for which the Department of Culture Heritage and the Gaeltacht has ultimate responsibility. The NMS regulates archaeological excavations, the use of metal detection devices for archaeological purposes and diving on historic wrecks and underwater archaeological sites. It implements the legislation in relation to the protection of monuments and sites and provides advice to planning authorities, local groups and individuals.

Marine Institute (MI) is the State agency responsible for marine research, technology development and innovation in Ireland. MI is a joint partner in the INFOMAR programme.