



Queensland Irish Association

Newsletter

March 2025

Join us on The Today Show this St Patrick's Day

It's a very crowded St Patrick's Day weekend of events. At the parade on Saturday morning, March 15th, we need people to march behind the QIA St Patrick float. If you would like to join us, we need you to be at the Botanical Gardens on Alice Street at 9.45am, wearing green if possible, to be part of the QIA marchers behind the 1912 Fiat truck.

Then we have the St Patrick's Eve Dinner, on Sunday, March 16th, which is sold out and promises to be an extraordinarily successful event, with Minister Emer Higgins TD from Irish Government, and celebrated author Hugh Lunn delivering the speeches.

Then, on St Patrick's Day, Monday, March 17th, there is an exciting opportunity to be featured on The Today Show. The breakfast television news and current affairs program, hosted by Karl Stefanovic and Sarah Abo, includes news and weather updates. The weather segments will be filmed in Brisbane with Queensland Irish Association members. It will be filmed at Finn McCool's Fortitude Valley from 6am. Irish favourites will be featured in crosses to the live TV show on Channel Nine. We would love you to come along and join in the fun. RSVP to mary@queenslandirish.com.au or turn up on the day at Finn McCool's before 6am, wearing something Irish or green.

Then we have the St Patrick's Day Mass at the Cathedral of St Stephen at 10am, followed by morning tea at the Cathedral.

Next is the St Patrick's Day Lunch,



from 12 noon, at Wests Rugby Union Club, Sylvan Road, Toowong.

We expect a large crowd of supporters to join this lunch which is free of admission costs and food and drinks including Guinness will be available for purchase. Tom Kimmet will provide entertainment, as will the QIA Dancers. A bus-load of supporters from the Gold Coast will swell the numbers at this highly-anticipated lunch.

Then, on the following Saturday, 22nd March, there will be the adjourned Queensland Irish Choir Concert, which will be held at The Hills Church, Everton Hills, from 2pm. The QIA Pipe Band will play in the period preceding the concert outside the church hall from 1.10pm.

Then on the following Sunday, 23rd March, we have the much-anticipated visit to the notable Irish graves in the South Brisbane Cemetery. Members are urged to attend at the Annerley Road entrance to the cemetery in

Dutton Park, for a 10am start to the tour.

A highlight of the visit will be at 11am, when we hold a graveside commemoration to Capt. Daniel O'Carroll, a volunteer for Irish freedom and compatriot of Michael Collins, who died in Brisbane on Christmas Day 1924. We are holding a commemoration of the 100th anniversary of his death at his grave. There will be a brief eulogy for Capt. O'Carroll at 11am, followed by playing of The Valley of Knockanure by Brendan Williams on the tin whistle and with a violin accompaniment.

It's a crowded period and your attendance at all of these functions would be very much appreciated.

With warm greetings in celebration of Saint Patrick,

Jeff Spender,
President,

Queensland Irish Association.

Saint Brigid's Dinner at Royal on the Park Hotel



A selection of images of Queensland Irish Association Pipe Band performing at the very successful Saint Brigid's Dinner at Royal on the Park Hotel, Brisbane, on February 1st. Pictures: Mary Allen



QIA Members to get first look at new Cillian Murphy film



Fresh from his Oscar-winning performance in *Oppenheimer*, Cillian Murphy returns to the screen in the powerful and haunting *Small Things Like These*—and Queensland Irish Association members have a golden opportunity to see it first!

New Farm Cinemas has invited us to be part of an exclusive preview screening on 30 March at 1pm, giving you the chance to experience this extraordinary film before its official release.

Set in a small Irish town in 1985, *Small Things Like These* follows coal merchant Bill Furlong (Murphy) as he stumbles upon a dark secret hidden within a local

convent. As Christmas approaches, he's faced with a moral dilemma that will test his courage and challenge the very fabric of his community. Based on Claire Keegan's acclaimed novella, this is a gripping and deeply moving story of resilience and justice.

With Murphy leading the charge fresh off his Academy Award win, this film is already generating huge buzz — and you won't want to miss out on this special event!

Tickets cost \$28 plus booking fee, with a glass of sparkling on arrival. Tickets: www.fivestarcinemas.com.au/new-farm/movie/small-things-like-these. Join us for an unforgettable night of cinema.

Calendar

Saturday 15th March 2025

Brisbane Saint Patrick's Day Parade, Alice Street, Brisbane. Starts at 10.30am.

Sunday, 16th March 2025

QIA St Patrick's Eve Dinner 2025, Brisbane City Hall, St George's Square, Brisbane. From 6pm.

Monday, 17th March 2025

Saint Patrick's Day Mass at the Cathedral of Saint Stephen, at 10am. Followed by morning tea.

QIA St Patrick's Day Lunch at Wests Rugby Club, Toowong. From 12pm.

Saturday, 22nd March, 2025

Queensland Irish Choir St Patrick's Day Concert, Hills Church, Everton Hills, Qld. From 2pm.

Sunday, 23rd March 2025

QIA Irish History Tour of South Brisbane Cemetery, 185 Annerley Road, Dutton Park. From 10am.

Sunday, 30th March 2025

*QIA Preview Screening of *Small Things Like These* at New Farm Cinemas, 701 Brunswick Street, New Farm. Starts 1pm.*

Contact us

We welcome content from Members and friends in this newsletter.

If you have news or an article you would like to see included, email the editor, our public relations officer Mary Allen, at mary@queenslandirish.com.au

You can also reach us through our website, www.queenslandirish.com.au, and on our social media pages.

Another great way to interact with QIA is by joining our Facebook [group](#), Queensland Irish Association Friends and Supporters.

Editor and designer: Mary Allen.

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Queensland Irish Association

St Patrick's Day Lunch



Queensland Irish Association
invites Members and friends to

St Patrick's Day Lunch

on Monday, 17th March from 12pm

at

West's Rugby Club,
65 Sylvan Road, Toowong

Great food and drinks available to purchase

Irish entertainment

Admission is free

RSVP to Mavis Williams on 3849 8271

Two remarkable Irish women in Queensland

To celebrate International Women's Day on March 8th, we look back at two remarkable Irish women in Queensland history, rewritten from a story published in the centenary edition of Tara News, the former newsletter of QIA, in 1998.

The year is 1863, and the vessel is *The Fiery Star*, a sailing ship bound from London to the colony of Australia. On board is an 18-year-old girl, Kate Mary Farrell, from Dublin. Her father, a member of the legal profession, has recently remarried, and Kate Mary does not get along with her new stepmother. With remarkable courage for someone so young, she embarks on a journey to an unfamiliar world to reunite with her brother in Australia.

During the voyage, she meets John Smith, a 20-year-old piano-forte-maker from England. It is recorded that John's health was fragile, and it was feared that if he remained in the English climate, it would only worsen. He set out for the tropics in the hope of improving his condition.

John and Kate married on 27 January 1868 in Somerset, Cape York, a town once envisioned as a major centre of the young colony of Queensland. John later became the lighthouse keeper on Mornington Island, and in 1869, their son John was born—the first white child born on Thursday Island. He was the eldest of their six children. By 1874, the family had relocated to Brisbane, where John established a



Kate Mary Smith on her wedding day in 1868.

cabinet-making business in Elizabeth Street.

Alongside his furniture-making, John found a growing demand for coffins. Thus, in 1877, K.M. Smith, the funeral company still known today, was founded and named for Kate Mary. When John passed away in 1886 at their Wickham Street home, Kate Mary was left to raise their six children, then aged between eight and seventeen, and manage the company. She was 40 years old.

Despite the challenges of the time, Kate Mary Smith became Queensland's first female funeral director, or undertaker as it was

then known. She was also a certified embalmer and successfully ran the company for decades. Under her leadership, K.M. Smith thrived and remains one of the few remaining Australian-owned funeral firms today.

Her legacy continues through the business, now in its fifth generation in Queensland. Her descendants, including Allen and Denise Smith, still run the company and speak with pride of the young Irishwoman who left Dublin, became Kate Mary Smith, and took her place in history as a pioneering woman in the funeral industry.

Continued on page 6

Two remarkable Irish women in Queensland

From page 5

While Kate Mary (Farrell) was stepping up to run her family business after her husband's passing, another remarkable woman was doing much the same in Toowoomba. As the Darling Downs prospered, Ellen Fitzgerald was building a legacy of her own.

Ellen arrived in Australia as an Irish orphan in 1879. Five years later, she married Patrick O'Brien, a fellow Irish immigrant from County Clare, at St Patrick's Church in Toowoomba. That same year, they opened a store in Russell Street, laying the foundation for a thriving business.

The couple worked side by side—Patrick managing the produce store while Ellen ran the grocery department. Their enterprise flourished, and as their family grew to ten children, they moved into a larger store across the road, living above the shop.

According to granddaughter Mary Rafferty, Ellen and Patrick were true partners—he provided the business acumen, and she gave it heart. Patrick was known for his long walks through the countryside, often accompanied by Ellen, who had spent the whole day on her feet in the store, listening to his ideas and learning the trade.

Ellen was as generous as she was hardworking. She ensured struggling grain merchants never left the store without tea and sandwiches, and when drought struck, she lent money to those in need. Her sharp instincts led the



Ellen Fitzgerald O'Brien.

O'Briens to become partners in a flour mill, which later became the Defiance Milling Company.

In 1906, Patrick died suddenly at Sandgate, leaving Ellen with ten children to support. With banks unwilling to loan money to a wid-

ow, it was the very farmers she had helped who stepped in to assist her. She persevered, keeping the family business afloat and guiding it through hardships, including a devastating fire in 1911.

Ellen also bore great personal loss—her son William was killed in France during World War I. But through it all, she remained a force in Toowoomba's business world, continuing to run the store and serve as Chairman of Defiance Milling until her death in 1924. By then, she was the largest ratepayer in Toowoomba.

Despite her many business ventures, Ellen lived simply. To those who knew her, she was more than a successful entrepreneur — she was a devoted mother and a steadfast friend, leaving behind a legacy of resilience, generosity, and quiet strength.

Thank you to Joseph Thompson for sending in the Tara News article.



The funeral of Ellen Fitzgerald O'Brien in Toowoomba, 1924.



Queensland Irish Association

St Patrick's Day Parade 2025



*Join the parade
and walk with us!*

*Queensland Irish Association invites you don the green and walk with us in the
Brisbane parade behind our float with the star of the day, Saint Patrick.
Members and friends of all ages are welcome to take part!*

Join us
on Saturday, 15th March
from 10am (for 10.30am parade start)
meet us near the front of the parade
at

Brisbane Botanic Gardens, Alice Street, Brisbane CBD



Queensland Irish Association

The Irish of South Brisbane Cemetery



Queensland Irish Association
&
Friends of South Brisbane Cemetery
invite you to

The Irish of South Brisbane Cemetery tour

on Sunday, 23rd March 2025 at 10am

Cash donation (suggested min. \$10) welcome to Friends of South Brisbane Cemetery on the day
For further information, email mary@queenslandirish.com.au

*This tour will involve one and a half hours of walking/standing.
Bring comfortable, enclosed shoes and clothing suitable for the weather.
Meet at 9.45am at the Annerley Road entrance to the cemetery. Parking available in cemetery.*

O'Donovan Collection added to UNESCO world register

The Queensland Parliamentary Library's O'Donovan Catalogue Origins Collection has been officially included in the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register, a prestigious recognition of its historical significance. This momentous inclusion was strongly supported by the Queensland Irish Association (QIA), who championed the work of Denis O'Donovan, the former Parliamentary Librarian whose efforts brought the collection to life.

QIA President Jeffrey Spender expressed the Association's pride in supporting the nomination: "The Association gave its strong support to the application by the Parliamentary Library of Queensland to have the O'Donovan Library included in the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register. In our ongoing efforts to foster interest in Irish culture, we were delighted to learn of the plans to promote the work of Denis O'Donovan. The O'Donovan Catalogue Origins Collection beautifully demonstrates the rigour that Mr O'Donovan brought to his appointment, resulting in the creation of a world-leading library catalogue."

Born in County Cork, Ireland, on 23 August 1836, O'Donovan was a passionate scholar and intellectual who traveled widely across Europe, gaining recognition for his writings and academic pursuits. He lectured on languages, art, architecture, and the classics, and his work was well-regarded by figures such as French Emperor Napoleon III. In 1867, he moved to Australia, where he would eventually take on the role of Parliamentary Librarian in Queensland.

O'Donovan's catalogue not only reflects his scholarly commitment to his role but also underscores his dedication to preserving and



O'Donovan Library and, inset, Denis O'Donovan. Credit: Parliament.qld.gov.au

enhancing the resources of the Queensland Parliamentary Library. His advocacy for Irish language works, including the *Senchus Mor* (an important legal text), is a notable example of his influence, which significantly contributed to the inclusion of the Irish community in the library's historical narrative.

The collection, which consists of rare documents and early Australian explorers' journals, is also a testament to O'Donovan's commitment to include Irish history within the library. His successful advocacy for the acquisition of Irish language works, including the *Senchus Mor*, an important legal text, highlights the Irish community's contribution to Queensland's early political and cultural life. Among the collection's items are handwritten book suggestions by Queensland parliamentarians, many of whom were Irish-born or of Irish descent, including Sir Maurice O'Connell, a relative of Irish political leader Daniel O'Connell.

Madeleine Midgley, former member of the Queensland Parliamentary Library team, expressed pride in the success of the nomination. She shared the announcement in an email sent to collaborators, including the QIA: "I am pleased to inform you that we were successful in having the O'Donovan Catalogue Origins Collection included in the UNESCO Australian Memory of the World Register. This has been the highlight of my working life, and I am proud of our collective effort to preserve this important piece of history."

The Queensland Parliamentary Library's success in this nomination was officially communicated in December, and the ceremony for new inscriptions will be held in Canberra on March 27th.

The inclusion of the O'Donovan Catalogue Origins Collection in the UNESCO register ensures that the legacy of Denis O'Donovan's groundbreaking work will be recognised and preserved for generations to come.



St Patrick's Day Concert

2.00pm Saturday 8 March

Doors Open 1.30 pm

Hills Church Auditorium

79 Queensland Road, Everton Hills

Queensland Irish Choir

QIA Dancers

**CONCERT POSTPONED
to Saturday 22nd March**

QIA Pipe Band (Outside 1.20pm – 1.50pm)

Tickets: <https://www.qldirishchoir.org/events>

\$25 Adults \$10 under 15 years

At the Door – if not previously sold out



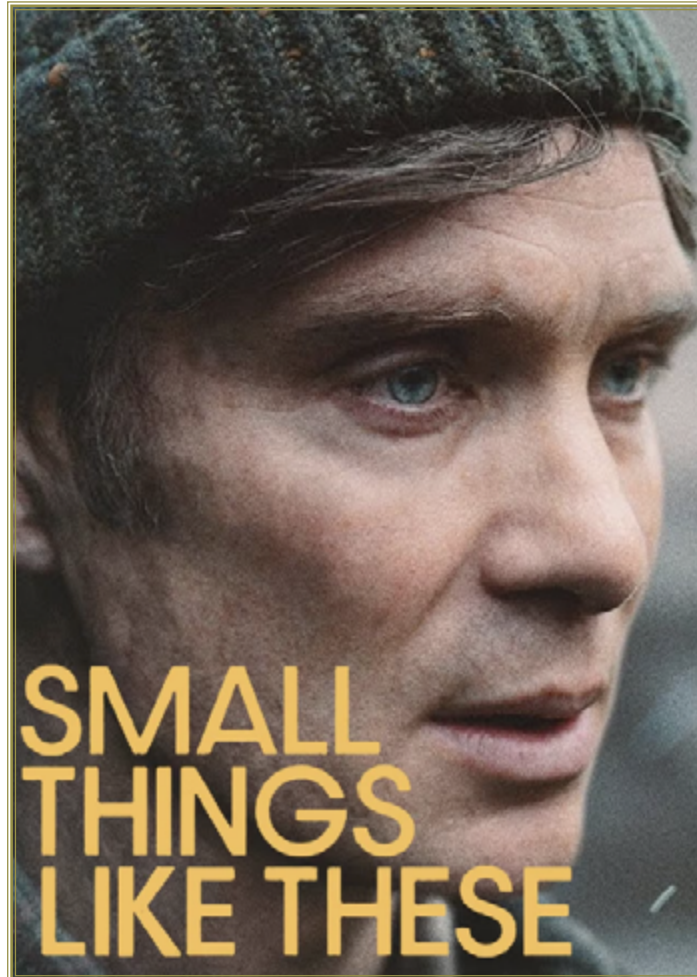
Enquiries
0493 455 487





Queensland Irish Association

presents Small Things Like These



Join us on Sunday, 30th March at 1pm
for a special preview screening of
Small Things Like These
starring Best Actor Oscar winner Cillian Murphy

at Five Star Cinemas, New Farm

Tickets \$28 with glass of sparkling on arrival
Book [here](#)

Northern Ireland's camino celebrates 10th anniversary

2025 marks the 10th anniversary of St Patrick's Way, a walking trail that connects key sites relating to the saint and Christian heritage.

The 130km (82-mile) St Patrick's Way: The Pilgrim Walk stretches from Armagh, the ecclesiastical centre of Ireland, to Downpatrick, where the island's patron saint is said to be buried.

Passing through some of Northern Ireland's most spectacular scenic landscapes, the trail gives walkers and pilgrims the chance not only to reflect on the life and influence of St Patrick, but also to connect deeply with the natural world.

The trail was the brainchild of Alan Graham, who was inspired by the Camino de Santiago in Spain and the exploits of the famous Irish explorer Sir Ernest Shackleton. He planned the route and developed it with support from local district councils and Tourism NI.



Franciscan Abbey, Palace Demesne, Armagh City.

Starting at the Navan Centre in County Armagh, an ancient site of great historical importance, the route is split into seven sections, some of

which can be completed in a day. Section one, Navan Centre to Armagh city, is short but there are many historical and heritage sites to visit in this area including Armagh's two cathedrals, each called St Patrick's.

From Armagh it's a picturesque walk through a mixed landscape that includes the Mourne Mountains, the Newry canal towpath, forest trails and the beautiful County Down coastline. The trail also passes through towns and villages which each have their own attractions. Pretty Scarva is known for its award-winning floral displays, Rostrevor is associated with CS Lewis and Narnia, and Newcastle is a vibrant seaside resort.

The connections to St Patrick along the way include the hermit's cell and an oratory on Slieve Donard, both constructed by St Donard who was an important disciple of St Patrick. The Lecale area, south-east of Strangford



Rostrevor, County Down.

Continued on page 13

Northern Ireland's camino celebrates 10th anniversary



Murlough Bay, County Down.

Continued from page 12

Lough, is said to be where Patrick brought his boat ashore and is dotted with churches and holy sites.

The trail ends at Downpatrick Cathedral, a place of Christian worship since the fifth century, and where St Patrick is said to be buried under a large stone slab in front of the building.

Downpatrick is also home to the Saint Patrick Centre, the only permanent exhibition dedicated to St Patrick in the world, where state-of-the-art interactive audio-visual presentations tell the story of Christianity in Ireland.

Walkers can pick up a Pilgrim's Passport at any of the Visitor Information Centres in the area and collect a stamp at 10 locations along St Patrick's Way. Those who complete the Passport will get a Certificate of Achievement at the Saint Patrick Centre.

Words & Pictures: Ireland.com



Saint Patrick's Way Camino Walk and Lunch, Downpatrick.



The Saint Patrick Centre, Downpatrick.

Writer Conal Creedon wins Monaco bursary award

It has been announced in Monaco that Irish writer Cónal Creedon will receive the 2025 Ireland Funds Monaco - Princess Grace Library Bursary Award.

Cónal Creedon a novelist, playwright, documentary filmmaker and collaborative artist will be appointed resident writer attached to the Princess Grace Library Monaco 2025. While in Monaco Cónal planned to work on his next novel and present a series of lectures. The first lecture titled *A Sense Of Place*, took place on 27th February, and was inspired by Cónal's most recent book *Spaghetti Bowl*, an anthology of essays which explores the downtown streets of Cork City.

Princess Grace Library Monaco was established in memory of Grace Kelly who was born into a prominent Irish-American family in Philadelphia. Following her meteoric rise in the world of theatre and film, Grace achieved critical acclaim and artistic recognition including receiving an Oscar and three Golden Globes. Grace Kelly retired from acting at age 26 to marry Prince Rainier III of Monaco, where she began her duties as Princess Grace of Monaco. Princess Grace's charity work focused on advancing the opportunity for young children and the arts. In 1964, she established the Princess Grace Foundation to support local artists. Her organization for children's rights, *AMADE Mondiale*, gained consultative status within UNICEF and UNESCO. Since her untimely death in 1982, her son continues the work she began, Prince Albert was instrumental in establishing the Princess Grace Awards in 1984, set up to recognize emerging performers in film, theatre, and dance.

Cónal's creative practice is described as a forensic exploration of



Cónal Creedon with his book *Spaghetti Bowl*. Picture: Fiona O'Toole / Supplied

the inner-city neighbourhood in Cork city, Ireland – where his family has lived and traded for generations. This detailed investigation across many creative genres is acknowledged by the World Cultural Council as: “revealing insights into the universal nature of the human condition and constitutes a significant contribution to the creative legacy of artistic expression.”

The diversity of Creedon's artistic practice spans over thirty years and is expressed through various creative genre and spoken word collaboration with an array of musicians including, orchestral, choral, singer-songwriter, sound art and DJ club-mix. When examined in its entirety, Cónal's eclectic output comes together as a single cohesive body of work that resonates far beyond the streets of his native Cork.

Cónal's erudite entertaining and engaging style has made him very popular on the international performance circuit. He has presented his work at

New York University (USA), Fudan University (China), Zurich University (Switzerland), Irish American Heritage Centre Chicago (USA), People's Normal University Shanghai (China), Florence University (Italy), The Ke Centre For Creative Art Shanghai (China), The Irish American Cultural Institute (USA) – and at numerous International literary festivals.

Most recently, Cónal was invited to present the 2024 Beatty Lecture at McGill University, Montreal Canada which was broadcast across multiple networks including, CBC Radio 1 Canada, US Public Radio, ABC Radio Australia, World Radio Paris. 2024 marked 70 years of the prestigious Beatty Lecture which continues to present a wide range of voices; from the Nobel to the Pulitzer, from the Kremlin to Carnegie Hall. Previous invited speakers include, former President of Soviet Union Mikhail Gorbachev and Nobel Peace Prize winner Maria Ressa.

New doc shines light on a forgotten Irish Rebel

A powerful new documentary, *Rebel Wife*, is set to captivate audiences with the remarkable story of Mary Jane O'Donovan Rossa, an often-overlooked figure in Irish revolutionary history. Directed by her great-grandson, Williams Rossa Cole, the film offers a deeply personal and compelling portrait of a woman who played a crucial role in Ireland's struggle for independence.

Following its well-received premiere at the IndieCork Film Festival in December 2023 and a national broadcast on RTÉ One, *Rebel Wife* is now available for worldwide streaming, giving history enthusiasts and supporters of Irish heritage a rare opportunity to engage with this extraordinary story. The virtual screening event, an exclusive chance to see *Rebel Wife* outside of the Republic of Ireland, begins on March 8th, 2025, allowing ticket holders a 10-day window to view the film.

Mary Jane O'Donovan Rossa was much more than just the wife of the Fenian leader Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa. She was a force in her own right — an eloquent writer, poet, and public speaker who tirelessly raised funds and awareness for the Irish cause while her husband was imprisoned. Her



Mary Jane O'Donovan Rossa. Picture: Supplied

unwavering commitment helped shape the narrative of Ireland's fight for freedom, yet her contributions have often been overshadowed by those of her male counterparts. *Rebel Wife* seeks to change that.

Director Williams Rossa Cole, a NYC-based great grandson of Fenian Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa and his wife Mary Jane, told Queensland Irish Association Newsletter: "I made

the film *Rebel Rossa* in 2016 that was broadcast on RTÉ and is still on Amazon. Last year, I completed *Rebel Wife*, a film about Mary Jane O'Donovan Rossa - a largely unknown story of a woman in Irish history who was pivotal in the road towards Irish freedom. The film is on RTÉ One but outside of Ireland I am organising a virtual screening event from March 8th to 31st. The film

will be available everywhere outside of Ireland in this window. It not only highlights an important woman in Irish history but also outlines many events leading up to the Easter Rising."

In addition to the documentary screening, audiences will have access to exclusive bonus content, including a live Q&A session on March 30th, 2025, featuring director Williams Rossa Cole and historians who will discuss Mary Jane's impact and legacy.

Tickets for the virtual event are priced at US\$15, with proceeds supporting independent film-making and historical storytelling. This screening provides a chance not only to witness the incredible journey of a fearless woman but also to engage with the broader conversation about the role of women in revolutionary movements.

Don't miss this opportunity to experience the untold story of a woman who helped shape Ireland's history. More information and ticket purchases are available via the official event platform at <https://watch.eventive.org/rebelwife/play/678fb9f-063d83ab6f1b7c85a>

We are pleased to offer a 20% DISCOUNT CODE for Queensland Irish Association Members: V5X-Z9NVPEJL2P2C