A Bridging Ages International Conference from the Organizers Perspective

The Bridging Ages international conference "A place, border – different stories" took place in Dundalk, Ireland on June 2-5th 2015. There were 70 people from 13 countries that took part.

When I think of this year's Bridging Ages conference in Dundalk, a certain book from 1928 comes to my mind*: Entitled 'An t-Oileanach (The Islander)*', the book details the nature of life of Thomas O'Crohan, a fisherman on the Blasket Islands on the south-west coast of Ireland. Its opening line*, Ní bhéidh ár leithéid ann arís* – our like will never be seen again. That week in June 2015 we were afforded the opportunity to renew old friendships and make new ones. During formal and informal discussions we were treated to a variety of papers which ultimately provided all those present with insight and inspiration in equal measure.

Through the various presentations made before us were a variety of opportunities and structures, ideas and initiatives to establish new ways of engaging with the past in manner that facilitated discussion, investigation, empathy and understanding.

As conference organizer and someone new to the principle of the Bridging Ages I found the week to an invigorating experience. To make so many new friends, to have my eyes opened to so many different

historical meetings and life encounters was and is both humbling and life-affirming. To have the opportunity to discuss new ideas and entertain the possibility of new projects, to me, represents the ultimate professional opportunity. This is something which many people are unable to enjoy, experience or even contemplate and yet, for that week in June such opportunities were palpable in every conversation.

Ultimately I would hope that delegates enjoyed the opportunity to savour just some aspects of Irish culture, history and hospitality. These are the qualities that define us as a race; they reflect who we are and our values – in many ways the Bridging Ages value system strikes at this core and remind us of the veracity of O'Crohan's opening line - *Ní bhéidh ár leithéid ann arís.*

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