

Annual Release 1975 files

Introduction

2005 saw the full implementation of the Freedom of Information Act and the beginning of the gradual phasing out of the 30 year rule governing access to records. The FOI Act (2000) has created a new access to information regime and all records were reviewed in accordance with the FOI Act and the Data Protection Act. Nevertheless, records will continue to be brought forward for release as they approach 30 years for the foreseeable future. This involves the referral of files to the Responsible Authority for sensitivity review. This entails a page by page review examination to ensure that a record contains nothing sensitive as defined by the FOI Act and DP Act.

This year's annual release covers the official files with a terminal date of 1975. Of the 549 Departmental files examined, three were subject to full closure, with an additional 19 subject to partial closure or redaction. Partial closure and redaction (blanking out) are methods to release the bulk of a file and facilitate research by temporarily removing a limited amount of information, the inclusion of which would have resulted in the entire file being closed to the public for an extended period. In the majority of cases, the reasons for extended closure were contravention of the principles of the Data Protection Act (1998) and S38 Health & Safety and S40 Personal Information exemptions of the FOI Act (2000).

A further 28 court records were brought forward for release, 9 were subject to full closure and with an additional 10 subject to partial closure or redaction on the same basis as stated above.

1975 FILES RELEASED AT PRONI

Constitutional Convention

CONV/1/10 Office of the Chairman's papers – contains a paper prepared by Maurice Hayes entitled *Reflections on a Convention*, dated November 1975.

CONV/1/12 Chairman's briefs and notes – contains papers prepared by Maurice Hayes, John Oliver and others including Bernard Crick, on the way forward, options for progress, etc.

CONV/1/4 Chairman's meetings with party leaders – contains briefing papers and notes of meetings with the main political party leaders.

CONV/1/1 Miscellaneous meetings: Notes for the Record – minutes of meetings between Convention officials and the Chairman, Sir Robert Lowry, Chairman and political parties, NIO and Convention officials, and the Chairman and the Secretary of State, Merlyn Rees.

CONV/7/19 Political Parties: pre-election discussions with Chairman – includes notes of meetings between the Secretary of State and Northern Ireland political parties to discuss the IRA ceasefire.

Central Secretariat

CENT/1/3/24 Constitutional Convention Discussion paper 1974 – includes a memorandum by Ken Bloomfield on the Northern Ireland power-sharing Executive and his assessment of the political parties and personalities of the time.

CENT/1/3/11 Northern Ireland Act, 1974 – contains preparations for the bill, and the Constitutional Convention, a review by NI departments of progress during the year, and drafts of speeches for the Secretary of State, Merlyn Rees.

CENT/1/4/26-30 Northern Ireland Economic Council Executive Committee files – includes minutes of meetings and related papers, charting the economic situation in Northern Ireland in 1975, concerns about the local economy and government role, etc.

CENT/1/4/35 Cross Border EEC Studies – Londonderry/Donegal – includes criticism by Dr Garret Fitzgerald of the government dragging its feet over cross border studies and the views of the Secretary of State concerning sensitivity about border issues generally.

CENT/1/3/58 West Belfast Study – meeting with civil servants and local representatives regarding socio-economic problems and potential solutions, includes discussions of Bog Meadows.

CENT/1/3/54 Visits of Civil Servants to Problem Areas: meetings with the Army – contains details of arrangements but also reports of visits to areas such as Andersonstown, Shankill, etc.

CENT/1/3/7 Gardiner Committee Report – published January 1975 includes reports on various political and paramilitary reactions to the report.

CENT/1/3/9 Police Authority – includes papers on security measures following Army withdrawal; notes of a meeting on the role of the Police and Army, Stormont Castle, July 1974; paper by Maurice Hayes on 'Policing' includes suggestion of '... some form of national service for the 17-19 age group. It would involve training in arms ...', dated 16 July 1974; formation of a Community Corps; and minutes and correspondence regarding the future of PANI and its role.

CENT/1/4/13 Cooperation between Army & Civil Government – includes details of relations between the army and NI departments regarding lines of communication, etc.

CENT/1/3/33 Executive Members – Personal files – includes signed Official Secrets Act declarations of the 1974 power-sharing Executive ministers, and a memorandum from Ken Bloomfield to Gerry Fitt concerning his unique position as a member of the Executive and as an MP at Westminster.

Policy Co-ordinating Committee

PCC/1/4/1-27 Minutes of meetings chaired by Sir David Holden, Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service and comprising the heads of the NI departments, on the development of policy, legislation, etc

PCC/1/4/5 – details of the Constitutional Convention, preparations, etc

PCC/1/4/7 – security vetting of civil servants – proposal

PCC/1/4/10 – Constitutional Convention – guidance and advice on how to deal with Convention Members

PCC/1/4/15 Law & Order – Public expenditure – regarding compensation, and prisons and police funding over the next 5 years

PCC/1/4/20 Public Debt & Civil Disobedience

PCC/1/4/25 Paper on relations between security forces and civil government and also co-operation and co-ordination across all levels of government

Information Service

INF/2/16 Minutes of the Information Policy Coordinating Committee – the topics include the 'Brightening up Ulster Campaign' and suggestions range from Morecambe & Wise or Frank Sinatra performing at Stormont to a beauty competition for the title of 'Miss Good Cheer'. The minutes also contain details of the 'propaganda war'.

INF/2/15 Information Policy Coordinating Committee – including minutes and papers relating to 'propaganda overseas' and 'the undermining of the IRA's will to fight'.

Department of Community Relations

DCR/1/171 De Haaf Conference – The topics covered include community relations with NI, attitudes towards policing, etc.

DCR/1/170 Statistics: search damage – Includes numbers of house searches and some details on damage.

DCR/2/9 Garnerville Community Association – contains references to UDA clubs and how young people were being driven into such organisations.

DCR/1/153 Winding up: Department of Community Relations – provides some insight into community relations on the ground and relations between the Army and local communities.

DCR/1/141 Standing Advisory Commission on Human Rights – appointment of members, and minutes of meetings.

DCR/1/114 Review of Structures – includes comments by prominent academic on government policy towards community relations during the past 5 years and the future of community relations in Northern Ireland.

DCR/1/151 Resettlement of Detainees and Special Category Prisoners – Includes the results of a survey of internees, and minutes of meetings on the future rehabilitation on internees .

DCR/2/11 Glen Road Community House Association – contains details of Army support for the Community Hall in Andersonstown.

DCR/2/22 Clarawood Youth Club – includes concerns about intimidation, paramilitary activity in the estate, minutes of meetings with Community Association representatives.

DCR/2/31 Bogside Community Association General – includes minutes of meetings between NIO ministers and representatives of the Bogside Community Association, papers regarding elections to the Association, background papers, etc.

DCR/1/2 Secretary's Miscellaneous Confidential Correspondence – includes a note of a meeting between Gerry Fitt, NIO and the Chief Constable of the RUC regarding intimidation in Rathcoole and alleged local police ineffectiveness.

DCR/1/79 Minority Representation on Public Bodies – notes of meeting with Catholic clergy and official attempts to improve minority representation amongst government appointments.

Department of Commerce

COM/58/3/15 Non-payment of Gas and Electric Accounts – includes statistics of the amounts owed from the civil disobedience campaign and details of the counter measures implemented.

COM/63/1/622-624 Shipbuilding Industry (NI) Order 1975 – contains papers documenting the economic problems of Harland & Wolff and details of government intervention and assistance.

COM/63/1648 NI Finance Corporation – Board meetings, 1 April 1971-31 March 1975 (minutes and matters arising) – comprised senior civil servants and company directors regarding the Northern Ireland economic situation, investment, etc.

COM/62/1/1413 Discussions between the Minister and the representatives of political parties – includes minutes of meetings with a Vanguard (VUP) delegation including David Trimble, David Burnside and Glen Barr, concerning the economic situation in Northern Ireland.

Department of Environment

ENV/11/11 Spruce Up Campaign – include papers on publicity activity during the 1975 IRA ceasefire.

ENV/4/1/1/1/7S/21 1767-1975 Title deeds tracing ownership of land in Swift Street, east Belfast, from Mrs Frances Pottinger in 1767 onwards

Department of Housing, Local Government and Planning

HLGP/4/2 Northern Ireland Housing Executive Meetings with Ministry and Executive – including papers on the provision of housing for Roman Catholics during the Emergency situation, abandoning plans of integrated estates, etc.

HLGP/4/1 Evidence submitted to the Northern Ireland Housing Executive's Review Committee on the Housing Allocation Scheme – including papers from political parties, MPs, housing management, members of the public, health boards, and also includes minutes of meetings held by the Review Committee.

Department of Education

ED/13/2362 Review of Adult Education in Northern Ireland – includes minutes of a meeting regarding educational requirements for the Maze Prison; Basil McIvor's policy statement concerning Continuing Education in Northern Ireland and the proposed establishment of a Council for Continuing Education.

ED/13/2/325 Gaelic Speaking School – documents official policies and attitudes towards Irish language schools.

Department of Health and Social Services

HSS/11/49/1 Tyrone Crystal Ltd, Dungannon, Co. Tyrone – contains details on the establishment of the factory, staffing, training, crystal patterns, expansion, quality of glassware, etc.

HSS/13/27/11 Meat – Importation from the Republic of Ireland – contains papers documenting official concerns about the potential smuggling of turkeys across the border in December 1974.

Department of Manpower Services

DMS/2/7 West Belfast: West Belfast interest and industrial interests – includes minutes of meetings comprising government officials, employers and community representatives, concerning the proposed development of the Bog Meadows, Poleglass, etc.