

HIGHLIGHTS LIST

**Release of 1985 files at the
Public Record Office of Northern
Ireland**



Table of Contents

Table of Contents	2
Introduction.....	4
1985 Highlighted Files	8
Central Secretariat.....	8
Department of Commerce	15
Northern Ireland Office	16



Copyright

Most public records in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland are subject to Crown Copyright. Crown copyright information previously available for re-use under waiver conditions can now be re-used under the terms of the Open Government Licence. The Open Government Licence was introduced in 2010 as a simpler set of terms and conditions for the re-use of a wide range of information covered by Crown Copyright. For further details of information covered by the licence, please see What the Open Government Licence covers at:
<https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/information-management/re-using-public-sector-information/uk-government-licensing-framework/open-government-licence/>



Introduction

Summer release of 1985 official files – the story from the archives

For the first time files are being released this summer, under the 30/20 Year Rule. The 1986 official files will be made available in December as normal.

The annual release of selected official files continues against a background of greater public access through the Freedom of Information Act balanced against the need to protect personal information. The FOI Act (2000) created a new access to information regime and all records were reviewed in accordance with both that Act and the Data Protection Act.

Annually since 1976, official records held by PRONI which were 30 years old have been reviewed with a view to making them publicly available (“the 30 year rule). In September 2011, the Assembly accepted a Legislative Consent Motion to reduce the time limit for release from 30 years to 20 years (“the 20 year Rule”). This is underpinned by the Freedom of Information Act 2000 and the amendments made to it by the Protection of Freedoms Act 2012.

The 20 Year Rule is being phased in over 10 years, with two years worth of records being reviewed and released each year. This is the second year of the phasing-in period; which sees the records of NI Departments and the NIO with terminal dates of 1985 brought forward for release in August 2014 and the records of 1986 brought forward in December 2014.

This process involves the referral of the files to the Responsible Authority for sensitivity review. This entails a page by page examination to ensure that a record contains nothing sensitive as defined by the FOI Act and DP Act.

Records Released

836 files being deemed as suitable for release as “fully open”. A further 204 files are open but subject to blanking out of some content.

Annual release of 1985 official files

The main file series being released includes Central Secretariat and Northern Ireland Office files.

Some of the main issues covered by the 1985 release include:

- Planning for Food Control in Wartime in Northern Ireland
- Livestock Quarantine - Policy – Cattle
- Anglo-Irish Summit
- The McBride Principles
- Maze Escape / Prisons - Follow Up Inquiry On The Hennessy Report.
- Anglo Irish Visits by Ministers / Officials
- European Court of Human Rights
- Irish Language
- Sinn Fein: Policy Group on Non-Violence Declarations etc. 1985
- Anglo Irish Economic Council
- NORAIID (Irish Northern Aid Committee)
- Kinsale Gas Project
- De Lorean - Debate in the House of Commons
- Nature Conservation / Proposed Areas Of Natural Beauty / Historic Monuments
- Select Committee Enquiry into Hazardous Waste Disposal.
- Flags and Emblems Act
- Use of Irish Language/literature in NI Prisons
- Child abuse allegations, the 1984-86 Committee of Inquiry into Children's Homes and Hostels (including Kincora, Rubane, and the repercussions from the Hughes and Sheridan Reports)
- Anglo-Irish economic cooperation(including cross-border industrial and tourism initiatives
- Political developments
- Work of the NI Assembly

Records may be closed either fully or in part only. Blanking out involves the removal of a limited number of papers from the file that have been deemed as exempt from

Annual release of 1985 official files

the right to know under FOI. To facilitate the release of as much information as possible, redaction can be used to blank out sensitive data within individual documents that would otherwise prevent release. All information which is withheld in the manner outlined above, however, must be retained in accordance with the exemptions contained within the FOI Act. In the majority of cases, the reason for extended closure was the application of section 40 – the *personal information* exemption – of the FOI Act. This means that personal information is exempt from the right to know if it would breach the Data Protection principles.



1985 files – Highlights List

A full list of the files is available

1985 Highlighted Files

Central Secretariat

- CENT/1/10/21A** 1981-1985 **Coinage – Regional Variations**
File details the numerous possibilities for the design of the regional £1 coin. File also contains papers detailing an idea suggested by the NI Tourist Board to stamp NI produced eggs with a logo (which consisted of the Shamrock, and the Red Hand of Ulster)
- CENT/3/42A** 1 August 1985 - **Miscellaneous Security Matters Vol. 2**
23 December 1985
File covers in great detail a wide variety of security issues, including Security and Home Affairs Committee paper considering the strategy to effectively counter what they termed the ‘Political Front of Terrorism’, using propaganda and media. Also, papers reflect ongoing problems resulting from police, military or prominent people ‘crossing the border on business of pleasure’, without informing the Garda.
- CENT/1/14/16A** 1985 **Sinn Fein: Policy Group on Non-Violence Declarations etc. 1985**
File examines the suggested requirements for candidates in NI elections to sign a declaration of non-violence. Proposed initially by Unionists (including most prominently Dr Paisley), and citing the example of the Spanish Government policy for dealing with Basque separatists’, the thinking behind the suggestion was to prevent Sinn Fein members from standing for election. However, the British Government was concerned from the outset that the proposal would likely be counterproductive, doing more harm than good.

CENT/3/34A	September 1984	Security & Prison Matters September 1984 File details various matters of concern regarding the security situation, including the potential closure of HMP Maze (Compound), a Loyalist hunger strike at HMP Magilligan over fears for prisoner safety, the use of plastic baton rounds in civil disturbances and the closure of cross border roads under the NI Emergency Provisions Act 1978.
CENT/3/17A	1985	Miscellaneous Security Matters File details a wide variety of general security topics (such as private security firm vetting, football hooliganism and airplane security), but notably includes brief discussion on the possible use of the Royal Prerogative of Mercy in relation to paramilitary prisoners at large following escape from custody and also refers to re-captured Maze escapers
CENT/3/41A	13 December 1984 – 31 March 1985	Miscellaneous Security Matters (13/12/84–31/03/85) File details a wide variety of general security topics, including possible use of the Royal Prerogative of Mercy in relation to paramilitary prisoners' at large following escape from custody, specifically the case of Donal Ignatius Donnelly (escaped from custody in Northern Ireland in 1960 to live in Irish Republic).

In an NIO Criminal Justice Division briefing, when discussing the timing of any possible remission of Mr Donnelly's sentence: 'I cannot help feeling that given the Northern Ireland situation, the time will never be exactly right. However, the prisons are quiescent at the moment, the Maze escape is 18 months behind us and the trial of the recaptured escapers is some months ahead. If we hold off until the late summer we may well end up deferring

action yet again rather than remit Donnell's sentences during, or immediately after, that trial...'

Also detailed in this file, the review of Sir George Baker's review of the Northern Ireland (Emergency Provisions) Act 1978, together with papers on processions and parades.

CENT/3/44A 17 December **Police Matters - 17 December 1984 - 31 January**
1984 – **1985**
31 January File details police complaints and discipline
1985 procedures, the Secretary of State's defence against
recent criticism of the Ulster Defence Regiment and
the death of Mrs McCabe by a plastic baton round the
Falls Road.

CENT/1/13/38A 1984-1985 **Political Developments – Main**
File contains revealing documents on various aspects
of the developing picture with regard to Northern
Ireland's constitution, the Anglo Irish summit and
detailed assessments of the various political players.

This includes an interesting 'After the Summit' briefing, in which officials' note: 'the effect of the period after the summit has been so to reassure the Unionists that they will be more ready to make worthwhile concessions to Nationalists. It is difficult to see how such a strategy can succeed. Unless we can get the Irish Government on side, we will not be able to persuade Nationalists to consider any sort of internal arrangement for Northern Ireland...'

CENT/3/5A 1985 **Intergovernmental Conference**
File details the first meeting of the Anglo Irish
Intergovernmental Conference, including a summary
record of a meeting in Dublin between Sir Robert

Armstrong and Dermot Nally: 'Sir Robert Armstrong, summarising reactions to the Agreement, said that they had been bad among unionists. The Unionist Parties were united and there was little sign of a voice of moderation. The reactions were so far concentrated in the constitutional arena. But irrationality could play a role and a dangerous situation could arise some time in 1986. On the one hand there was talk among some unionists of the idea of withdrawal from the union – Mr Nally agreed with this – and on the other there was the factor that the paramilitaries might become active...the main issue now was to convince moderate unionists of the value of the Agreement. It was not merely a question of convincing them that the Agreement presented no risk to them but also of showing them that it could deliver benefits for them...'

CENT/3/37A October 1985 - **Anglo-Irish Papers (22 October 1985–5 November 1985)**
November 1985

File contains detailed discussion papers, press transcripts, correspondence and briefing papers surrounding the AI Agreement, including the predicted reactions in Autumn 1985 to the Agreement: 'the risk of immediate violence from the IRA now looks rather less likely, though INLA remains unpredictable and Loyalist paramilitary action could provoke retaliation... On the Unionist side there will be a great deal of rhetoric and probably large scale street protests; there could be withdrawal from local government and possibly even from European or Westminster Parliamentary seats to force a referendum...we must try to ensure that moderate Unionist opinion is detached from Loyalist extremists – hence the importance of the precise wording of the Agreement...'

A major element of the discussions focused on cross border security concerns, such as the cooperation between security forces in Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland and several papers touching on the imminent release of the Stalker Report looking into undercover RUC counter terrorist operations (the so called 'Shoot to Kill' incidents of the early 1980s)

CENT/3/33A October 1983 - **Maze Escape / Hennessey**
April 1984 File details the actions resulting from the Hennessey recommendations following the 1983 Maze breakout, including response to the ‘wild allegations’ that included the assertion that the Maze prison front gates had been left wide open by officers. This was rejected by UK Government officials in their response: ‘the main gate of the prison was NOT open. It was opened by prisoners after they had over-powered prison staff in a bloody battle in which one prison officer lost his life and others were injured...’

CENT/3/39A 1 May 1985 - 30 **Political Development Group (1 May 1985–30 June**
June 1985 **1985)**
File contains detailed assessments and briefings on the political situation in the run up to the Anglo Irish Agreement, including the consideration given to partial or rolling devolution (where less controversial matters might be devolved and controversial matters would be reserved by Secretary of State).

Following District Council election results in May 1985, the Government concluded that: ‘Sinn Fein’s success has been exaggerated, but the party’s impact on district councils has probably not...Dr Fitzgerald and Mr Hume will claim that votes won by Sinn Fein are clear proof of nationalist alienation and the best possible argument in favour of radical new solutions. Dr Paisley and Mr Molyneaux will use the results to emphasise the impracticality of power sharing and the need for firm measures to protect the Union...’

CENT/3/31A 1985 **Disinvestment – The McBride Principles**
File details the examination of fair employment in Northern Ireland, and discrimination in employment, set against the MacBride Principles of non discrimination (note: CENT file title misspelling)

'McBride'). The principles which had been drawn up as a code of ethical conduct for US companies working in partnership with, or within Northern Ireland, and addressed such things as flags and emblems in the workplace, religious discrimination against minority communities, etc.. This consequently drew UK Government opposition to the recommended implementation of these principles, when set against the existing NI Fair Employment legislation.

CENT/3/32A

1982-1985

Visits to USA

File covers various political and business delegations and visits to the USA, and includes a fascinating confidential NI Government briefing by Ken Bloomfield on the Airlie House conference in Virginia, USA, January 1985:

'Distance from NI itself encourages at least a less strident tone, and late at night relaxation can (and was) facilitated by liberal hospitality of the liquid kind...3 days exposure to Peter Robinson amply demonstrated what a forceful articulate and crafty politician he is...the intellectual credibility of the arguments of Bob McCartney may simply have been an illustration of how far he is from his party's current centre of gravity...John Hume is normally in his element in the United States, where he is widely regarded as occupying a position somewhere between Charles Stewart Parnell and Mother Teresa. On this occasion, he gave a chilling impression of political bankruptcy, rather like a man who has lost a fortune by backing a particular number consistently at the roulette table and continues to stare at that number even though he no longer has a stake to play. The unionists put him under very skilful and sustained pressure to engage in talk about arrangements for internal government, even to the extent of throwing out the lifeline of willingness to recognise some kind of relevant interest on the part of the Irish Republic...'

CENT/3/35A	October 1984 - September 1984	Security & Prison Matters 1st October 1984 – 30 November 1984. File details various matters of concern regarding the security situation, including the exercise of the Royal Prerogative of Mercy for those at large from custody, attempts by prisoner to suborn a prison officer at HMP Maze, and the US Government ‘clamping down harder on NORAIID...’
CENT/3/36A	September 1985 - October 1985	Anglo-Irish Papers (Holding File). File contains detailed discussion papers, speeches, correspondence and briefing papers on the AI Agreement, including the setting up of the new Committee and the fear of potential attempts by extreme elements in both communities to attack, disrupt and split the group.

In a memo (to be forwarded to Cabinet Office and Foreign and Commonwealth Office London), concerning the draft of the UK Prime Minister’s speech, it was suggested that ‘the only point on it which struck me forcibly at a first reading was to wonder whether it was wise for the Prime Minister to make so much of the principle of self determination. It could rebound from Scottish and Welsh nationalists for example. I would be inclined, at least, to omit the rhetoric about it being a principle “that neither I nor any government led by me will forsake”!’...



Department of Commerce

COM/10/37A

1982-1983

De Lorean Motor Cars Ltd

File details the ongoing Public Accounts Committee inquiry into the De Lorean affair, including a revealing list of six 'main requirements' recommended by the Committee that need to be met in managing future public investments in 'high risk projects.' These six criteria were clear indicators of the costly mistakes made during the De Lorean investment:

- 'Avoid rush decisions
- Assess the man as well as the project
- Take the risks into account when evaluating the project and planning funding needs
- Seek investments where a phased commitment is possible
- Cancel the project immediately if agreed performance targets are not met unless there remain committed champions of the project in Whitehall
- Agree monitoring arrangements in advance...'



Northern Ireland Office

NIO/25/3/24A 1984-1985 **Maze Prison Security.**
File details security concerns at HMP Maze (but also refers to the situation at other prisons, specifically HMP Armagh) and contains detailed intelligence assessments on the organisation of paramilitary organisations in the prison, including the alleged defection of PIRA prisoners from Compound 11 (and the wider debate about the repercussions from the Special Category Status protests and how prisoners were allocated to specific areas / categories)

NIO/31/18A 1985 **Belfast – West**
File reveals discussion and planning behind the threatened closure and ownership of the Whiterock Leisure Centre. Officials had voiced fears that a lack of clear leadership on the status of the centre might result in a ‘sequence of events which ends in the Centre being taken over and operated by an unauthorised body, probably under the influence, overt or covert, of Sinn Fein...’

One secure fax sent to Whitehall states: ‘there is still a risk of the Council acting precipitately to close the Centre...’ and ‘...to suggest to the Secretary of State that he intervene with Dr Paisley and Mr Molyneaux and urge them to read the riot act to their councillors...it is not unknown for the DUP leadership themselves to engage in electioneering stunts and if Mr Robinson sees party advantage in precipitating a row over Whiterock he might himself take up the cudgels against us.’

NIO/12/403A 1984-1985 **Prisons – Hunger Strikers – E.C.H.R. – Applications by 5 Ex-Hunger Striking Prisoners at HM Prison Magilligan**
File contains very detailed papers on the various aspects of the European Convention on Human

Rights cases taken to the Commission on Human Rights by Loyalist political prisoners on hunger strike at HMP Magilligan. Their cases centred on the alleged breaches of Article 2, 3, 5 and 14 of the ECHR (including specifically the alleged threat to life as a result of integration with Republican prisoners and the associated Prison Service / NIO duty of care to prisoners)

- | | | |
|--------------------|-----------|--|
| NIO/12/404A | 1984-1985 | Prisons - Hennessy Report Follow Up Enquiry On The Hennessy Report
File details the actions resulting from Sir James Hennessey's recommendations following the 1983 Maze breakout. This includes correspondence between NIO and the Prison Governors Association and the Prison Officers Association with regard to disciplinary action and accusations of negligence or wrong doing against serving officers. |
| NIO/12/516A | 1983-1985 | Prisons: Inquiry. Sir James Hennesseys Inquiry into the Maze Escape 25 September 1983
File details the actions resulting from the Hennessey recommendations following the 1983 Maze breakout, including the concern that heightened physical security protocols might breach the Geneva Convention |
| NIO/12/393A | 1985 | Irish Language – H.M. Prisons
Files contains papers on the debate surrounding the availability of Irish language material (such as library books, bibles, educational literature, etc.) to Republican prisoners, and the wider use of Irish |

language by prisoners in the course of their visits and private correspondence. In one example, the Prison Service (and NIO) respond to accusations of discrimination (against Irish language speakers), indicating that they confiscated a number of Irish bibles from prisoners, because the bibles contained prisoners signatures and thus led to the concern that such a signed bible might be used as 'propaganda and fund raising potential, in that 'autographed bibles would be highly prized in certain circles, such as NORAID...' Also, more realistically, the report cited 'security implications, in that a prison officer's name and address could be slipped in with the names of prisoners and the bible passed out of the prison...'

In other papers, various other associated issues were raised, such as the wearing of emblems, changing of prisoner names to Irish and the provision of Gaelic Football pitch.

