

Secretary Hillary Clinton to Host President Clinton at Queen's Conference

Former President of the United States, President Bill Clinton, and the Chancellor of Queen's University Belfast, Secretary Hillary R. Clinton, are among the first global leaders to be

Friday Agreement anniversary. Speaking ahead of the event, Former U.S. Secretary of State and Queen's University Chancellor Hillary Clinton, said: "Northern Ireland and Queen's University



announced as participants in an international conference to mark the 25th Anniversary of the Belfast/Good Friday Agreement at Queen's University.

President Clinton played a critical role in negotiations leading up to the signing of the Agreement on April 10 1998, and has maintained a steady friendship in the region as it has served as a model for peace.

The University's Chancellor Secretary Clinton will host the 3-day conference, which aims to reflect upon how the Agreement was achieved in 1998 while also looking forward with a renewed commitment to resolving outstanding issues.

Global, political and civic leaders, past and present, are due to gather at Queen's from 17-19 April marking the Belfast / Good

are both close to Bill's and my heart. It's fitting that such a unique event will take place at Queen's. The University makes a significant impact on the world through its outstanding research and innovation.

Professor Ian Greer, President and Vice-Chancellor of Queen's University, said: "We are delighted that our Chancellor Secretary Clinton, alongside President Clinton and a host of esteemed world figures will be joining this event to share their experiences and expertise in peace-building. President Clinton played a crucial role in securing the Agreement in 1998 while working with local parties to establish the institutions outlined in the three B/GFA strands.

"Secretary Clinton continued that work to secure progress

in Northern Ireland through dialogue and working with local leaders and community groups to promote reconciliation. It is fitting that both of them will play a central role in the conference.

"With global leaders in attendance at our conference in April, the world's eyes will be on Northern Ireland. This is an opportunity to show how far we've come as a society since

1998. Northern Ireland is now a place of peace with lots to offer as a great place to live, work and invest. It is now also a leading destination for students worldwide to come and study."

President Biden Expected to Attend Queen's Conference

US President Joe Biden will visit Northern Ireland for the 25th anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement, as well as the Republic of Ireland. In her book, *My Ireland*, Margaret O'Connor talks about Joe's ancestral home, Ballina, or Béal an Átha an Atha in Irish, meaning the mouth of the ford, as befitting the setting on the River Moy near Killala Bay. While the river is known for salmon fishing, the town has gained fame as home to Ireland's first female President, Mary Robinson, and as the ancestral roots of Joe Biden.

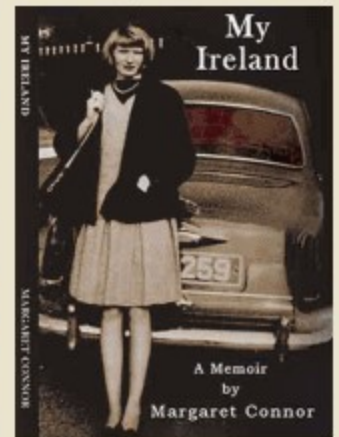
Their legacies live on which, together with the treasures of a local historian, Jackie Clarke, reveal some of the town's highlights from the ancient Bronze Age cist, known as the 'Dolmen of the Four Maols', to the present.

Early settlers in the area can be traced from the 14th century Augustinian Friary founded there. The following century saw two Franciscan Abbeys, Rosserk and Moyne, established in the vicinity, whose extensive ruins are preserved. Ballina was founded as a garrison town in the 18th century by Lord Tyrawley, an Irish officer in the British Army.

The town incorporated the pre-

dated Belleek estate with its Neo-Gothic castle, built for Sir Arthur Knox-Gore, Lord Lieutenant of County Sligo, which stands today as a modern hotel.

On the opposite side of the Moy River is Saint Muredach's Cathedral. Built from local stone in the townland of Sligo before the 1898 revision of county boundaries, the Victorian Gothic



church serves the Catholic Diocese of Killala. Along the streets of Ballina are a number of listed Victorian and Georgian structures of which the former Provincial Bank building is renowned. It was designed by the Victorian architect, Thomas Manly Deane, who also designed the National Museum in Dublin, among others.

During the same era, the Ice House was built as a residence around a fish preservation ice shop. It now operates as a first-class hotel. These refurbished properties are among the mix of older three-to-four story edifices, many in need of repair.

Ballina is one of the largest towns in Mayo, with a current population of about 10,000 and it has remained a major centre of commerce through the ages.

My memories of Ballina are numerous, from my childhood years attending church services to my teenage years working in the town. The sights and sounds linger on, Ardnaree, an Irish word meaning hill of the king whose battle was fought during the Tudor conquest of Ireland in the 16th century, 3 Humbert's Monument honouring the French landing at Killala in support of the 1798 Irish Rebellion against the British Crown that ultimately failed, and the two stone-arched bridges straddling the Moy that pre-date the Great Hunger of the mid-1800s.

Ballina's, old market square now features a memorial to Joe Biden, 46th President of the United States, in reference to his ancestral roots. (*My Ireland* available on Amazon.)