

Supporting Otago: Eamon Cleary and Irish Studies



Eamon Cleary left school in Ireland at age 11 to work as a farmhand. He forged his way in business, and came to live in New Zealand in 1996, where he found his land of opportunity. Within ten years, he had invested substantially in both commercial properties and agricultural land here, particularly in Central Otago and Waikato.

Eamon was known by many to be full of Irish pride and a generous spirit, especially when it came to providing opportunities for young people.

He established the University of Otago's Eamon Cleary Chair in Irish Studies in 2006, which in turn created Otago's Centre for Irish Studies.

The University of Otago's Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies

The University of Otago's Centre for Irish and Scottish Studies is the only Centre in Australasia to offer a programme in Irish Studies. It is also the only Irish and Scottish Studies Centre in the Southern Hemisphere. There are also Centres in Aberdeen, Scotland, and Dublin, Ireland.

Papers in the Irish Studies programme include:

- Controversial Classics ENGL103
- Modernism: Joyce ENGL240/340
- Irish Scots Gothic ENGL241
- C20th Irish literature in English ENGL250
- Irish and Scottish Migrations in the C19th and C20th HIST328
- Performing Ireland THEA255

- Irish and Australian Film: Contested Identities MFCO350
- Writing the Nation ENGL408

Sadly, Eamon Cleary passed away in 2012 after a six-month battle with cancer. Eamon's legacy to the University of Otago is greatly appreciated. His generosity and foresight have created a very special field of learning and expertise - enhancing knowledge and enjoyment of literature, history, politics, theatre and film by studying the significant contributions that the Irish have made to all of these fields.

Eamon's legacy will also continue to enhance understanding of both Ireland and New Zealand, surely two of the best countries in the world.

The Cleary family continue to generously support the Eamon Cleary Chair in Irish Studies. Their substantial ongoing commitment will continue to fund undergraduate and postgraduate scholarships.

2016 - An exciting year for Irish Studies

The 2016 Programme Launch was recently held at the University, to thank the Cleary family for their continued support for Irish Studies.

As announced by Professor Peter Kuch, the present holder of the Eamon Cleary Chair, this generous funding will enable Irish Studies to offer postgraduate and undergraduate scholarships, essay prizes, visiting speakers, and funding for research and conference travel.

1916 Easter Rising Centenary

Because of the Cleary family's support, in March 2016, Professor Dermot Keogh will visit Otago for the 1916 centenary for a two day conference held in conjunction with Toitu.

Reframing Ireland

Professors Chris Fox and Declan Kiberd from the Keough-Naughton Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Notre Dame will visit with Re-Framing Ireland, a multimedia programme on the Easter Rising of 1916 (including a new documentary narrated by Liam Neeson).

Irish Studies Film

Additionally, Kevin and Emer Rockett, Professors of Irish Film at Trinity College, Dublin, will visit Otago to work with the Irish Studies film course, MFCO350 and deliver public lectures. There will also be a schools programme for Otago and Southland.

An international conference

News will be released upon confirmation of details.

The support of the Cleary family enables all of this. Their support of Irish Studies enhances cross cultural knowledge, while creating invaluable experiences and opportunities within the Irish Studies programme for researchers, students and the public.

The University thanks Eamon Cleary and his family for their support, which is truly transformative. Their generosity has created a unique centre of learning at the University of Otago.

[Read more about Eamon Cleary in this *Irish Times* feature article](#)



Above: The late Eamon Cleary visits the University on the day former Irish President Mary MacAleese is awarded an honorary Doctorate. Pictured left to right are former Vice-Chancellor Professor Sir David Skegg, the late Eamon Cleary, former Irish President Mary MacAleese, former Chancellor Lindsay Brown, and Professor Peter Kuch.