






## IRISH AMBASSADORS JOIN FORCES WITH *LIVERPOOL IRISH FAMINE TRAIL* FOR 165KM+ STROKESTOWN-LIVERPOOL FUNDRAISING WALK

At the height of An Gorta Mór (The Great Hunger), 1,490 men, women and children set out from Strokestown (Co. Roscommon, Ireland) bound for Canada. Guided by a landlord's land agent, the walk would see half of them perish, evicted from their original homes. This route is now  *The National Famine Way*.

177-years on 12+ individuals from  *The National Famine Way*,  *Strokestown Park and Museum* and Liverpool's *Irish Famine Trail* will embark on the 165km evictee route. Starting on 19 May, the walk will raise vital funds to support the *Liverpool Irish Festival*'s ongoing conservation, digitisation and upgrades to the  *Liverpool Irish Famine Trail*.


People who'd like to donate can do so here:  <https://www.justgiving.com/page/bronze-shoes-liverpool>

During the pilgrimage, the Liverpool group will carry a pair of bronze shoes. Cast from an original 1800s pair found at the Strokestown Estate these shoes are the symbol of *The National Famine Way*. Eight more pairs will be cast and shipped to Canada as a lasting memorial of this harrowing story. They'll be homed in Grosse Île, St John's Newfoundland, Quebec City, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Niagara, Saint John Partridge Island and Hamilton. From 19-25 May the group will be joined by the Ambassador of Ireland to Canada, Dr Eamonn McKee, representing the destination the 1,490 were hoping to reach; Canada. Half perished. All the shoes contribute to a *Global Irish Famine Way* programme, which will see bronze shoes hosted across the world, including Liverpool.

Once the 165km to Dublin is complete, the Liverpool walkers will escort the bronze shoes by ferry to Holyhead; by road to Birkenhead and by ferry to Mersey Ports. From there, they'll walk the shoes to Clarence Dock, where 1.3m Irish Famine poor were brought in to Liverpool during An Gorta Mór. The group will carry the shoes to the Irish Famine Memorial at  *St Luke's Church*, known locally as the *Bombed-Out Church*. The Clarence-Dock-to-St-Luke's walk will be repeated, with the public, on Sun 27 Oct 2024 ahead of an official Irish Famine Memorial event. Martin Fraser, Irish Ambassador to the United Kingdom, and Sarah Mangan, Irish Consul General to the North of England, will join the public walk on 27 Oct 2024, which will see the shoes taken once more from the docks to the memorial.

The shoes mark a reconnection between Ireland's famine emigrants and the *Liverpool Irish Famine Trail*. As custodian of the Trail, the Festival shares and preserves the Trail sites and their stories for future generations.

### THE ROUTE

Beginning in Strokestown (19 May) the shoes will be walked to Dublin via  *EPIC* (25 May). At *EPIC* there will be a short ceremony with Ambassador McKee. The following day, the Liverpool group will sail to Holyhead (26 May); to take the shoes by road to Seacombe (Birkenhead) and ferry to the Mersey Port (27 May). The group will walk the shoes to Clarence Dock Gates and on to *St Luke's Church* (Liverpool, 27 May). The shoes will be kept by the Festival and shown in an exhibition in October. They'll be processed to the memorial again on 27 Oct 2024. Work is ongoing to find them a permanent home. In the meantime, like their Irish Famine counterparts, they will find temporary accommodation in the region.

### WHAT THE FUNDS WILL SUPPORT

The walk's key purpose is to connect Strokestown, Liverpool and Canada. Having people from all three countries walk together is a unique event. The Liverpool participants are using the once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to raise money to maintain the legacy and history of the *Liverpool Irish Famine Trail* for future generations. Funds raised will contribute to:

- forging the bronze shoes creating a tangible heritage reference. These will connect Strokestown, Liverpool and 8+ sites in Canada via the **Global Irish Famine Way**, which is still growing its international links. This pair will eventually find a permanent home in Liverpool, just as the original migrants did
- maintaining the existing trail and its heritage, whilst exploring and researching new sites of relevance. As custodians of the Trail, the Festival team are in the process of refreshing the memorial monument and plaques, which have served as a poignant marker since 1998
- developing technology to enable visitors – local and remote – to explore and understand the importance and relevance of the Irish Famine story to our city and its communities.

Want to donate? Please visit: [🌐 https://www.justgiving.com/page/bronze-shoes-liverpool](https://www.justgiving.com/page/bronze-shoes-liverpool)

**Liverpool Irish Festival** Artistic Director and CEO, Emma Smith says:

“This walk will raise vital funds for the Trail, as well as awareness about the rich research and work being done to commemorate An Gorta Mór. Famine awareness has progressed as revisionist and post-colonial history is revealing new perspectives that warrant investigation, appreciation and advocacy. This knowledge will be shared.

“The Trail's seven plaques, memorial ground and other sites are linked by little, bar a few people's memory, despite its deep significance to Merseyside's history and heritage. It needs recognition, particularly for those tracing their genealogy and tourists (local, national and international) connecting with Liverpool's life”.

Sarah Mangan, Consul General of Ireland, notes:

“It's especially poignant to be invited to join this commemorative walk, carrying the bronze shoes representing our Irish migrant's journey. We are deeply appreciative of the Festival's work in highlighting the complex story of Irish migration to and through Liverpool, and commend the ambition to formalise links between the work happening in Liverpool with international sites, such as [🌐 Strokestown Park and Museum, The National Famine Way](#) (Ireland) and Canada. We wish the team well in raising the funds needed to further invest in saving the sites and stories of our ancestors and the impact of An Gorta Mór”.

– ENDS –

## NOTES TO EDITORS

**About the *Liverpool Irish Famine Trail*** – [🌐 http://www.liverpoolirishfaminetrail.com](http://www.liverpoolirishfaminetrail.com)

The *Liverpool Irish Famine Trail* was originally researched and built by **Liverpool's Great Hunger Commemoration Committee** in the late 1990s. The Festival has taken over custodianship of the existing sites, developed a living archive of research and is building digital technologies to share the Trail. Users can walk specific routes and access relevant information online in multiple creative ways. For example, [🌐 watch Liverpool Irish Festival's commissioned film: \*Our Home/Ár Bhaile\*](#) © Ella Dalton and Thomas Jones.

The Trail's research is led by a voluntary *History Research Group*, who are tasked with researching the Trail sites; collating information on the impact of the Irish Famine and the affects An Gorta Mór had on the region. The group's led by John Maguire, founder and Director of [🌐 ArtsGroupie CIC](#), who will do the Strokestown walk. The work is funded by [🌐 The National Lottery Heritage Fund](#).

### About *Liverpool Irish Festival*

Founded in 2003, the Festival brings Liverpool and Ireland closer together, using arts and culture. As the most diverse celebration of Irish culture in the UK, it's a ten-day festival of music and song; visual arts; performance arts; culture, history and identity sharing. Visit [🌐 liverpoolirishfestival.com](#). Follow [@LivIrishFest](#) and [#LIF2024](#) on social channels: [🌐 Instagram](#), [🌐 Facebook](#) and [🌐 Twitter](#).  
#BronzeShoeWalk #IrishAmbassadorsWalk #LiverpoolIrishFamineTrail #IrishFamine

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