**Limerick Leader 17th May 2014****Letters from Charles Stewart Parnell and Michael Davitt are among a collection of documents which has gone on display in Foynes Flying Boat Museum.**

The treasure trove of historic documents was discovered in a safe in the offices of the Shannon Foynes Port Company.

It includes 20 items, including correspondence from Davitt, Parnell, Henry Grattan, Redmond brothers John and William and MP John Deasy. They cover many topics including Major William Redmond’s account of hardships and losses while serving with the 16th (Irish) Division of the British Expeditionary Force in France during World War One.

Many of the letters were written to Una and Ida Taylor, nieces of Lord Monteagle of Mount Trenchard who is thought to have gathered the items. The families were acquaintances also of writers and artists including Thomas Carlyle, Alfred Lord Tennyson and Robert Louis Stevenson.

“All the items in the collection are intriguing because any correspondence from such pivotal figures in Irish history is of great interest,” said Margaret O’Shaughnessy, director of the Flying Boat Museum. Some of the letters relate to a historic banner depicting Parnell’s impact on Irish political life that the Ms O’Shaughnessy fears may be hidden in national archives. If so, it is something she would like to add to the collection.

“This is definitely an item of historic significance and we would love to find out where it is and have it added to the collection,” she said.

The collection also includes a mounted photograph of Parnell with a label bearing his autograph and a financial order signed by Henry Grattan.

Another correspondence is a facsimile of a ‘Portion of Mr Parnell’s Famous Manifesto to the Irish People’, in which he cautions against giving any veto to England over Irish affairs. In it he also mentions ‘the English wolves now howling for my destruction’.

Launching the collection, Minister for Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht Jimmy Deenihan said: “The Foynes Flying Boat Museum preserves our rich aviation history and carefully showcases this part of our culture in diverse and innovative ways. I am delighted that my Department was able to provide funding to the Museum to put these letters, written by significant historical figures such as Charles Stewart Parnell and Michael Davitt, on display.

“In this, the centenary year of the outbreak of World War One, it is especially poignant to see letters from John and William Redmond going on display. I am confident that this exhibition will add further to the success of the Foynes Flying Boat Museum, and I would urge members of the public to take the opportunity to visit Foynes whilst this exhibition is underway.” Shannon Foynes Port Company chief executive Pat Keating said it was “hard to believe” that this correspondence was locked away in a safe for so long.



***L-R : Michael Collins (Chairman SFPC), Patrick O’Donovan TD, Margaret O’Shaughnessy (Manager Foynes Aviation Museum), Sean Liston (Archivist), Pat Keating (CEO SFPC), Barry O’Kelly (Foynes Aviation Museum), Minister Jimmy Deenihan and Martin Geoghegan (SFPC).***