

## Waterford hosts its first ever Citizenship Ceremony



Defence Minister Alan Shatter reviewing a Naval Guard of Honour outside City Hall prior to the Citizenship Ceremony.

Citizens from 25 different countries gathered in City Hall to receive their Irish citizenship on Friday last as part of the 1848 Tricolour Festival Celebrations.

The ceremony was hosted by the Minister for Justice, Equality and Defence, Alan Shatter and proved a momentous occasion for the latest group of 'New Irish'.

Mayor John Cummins opened the ceremony and remarked on his delight that such an event n was being held in the city.

"I am so proud that you all have decided to become Irish citizens," he said. "The diversity in Ireland has brought richness to our society. I welcome you to the community here in Waterford."

Since June 2011, over 60,000 people who have received Irish citizenship, said Minister Shatter.

Before 2011, there were no citizenship ceremonies and there was a backlog of 22,000 applications.

Now, it can just take up to six months before people can receive their Naturalisation certificate.

Minister Shatter said: "I know it was not a decision you took lightly, this is a life altering event for you all. Welcome and remember our history is your history."

Retired High Court Judge Bryan McMahon presided over the ceremony of which saw 100 people become Irish citizens. "You do not have to forget your own country or own people, or your own traditions. Bring with you your music and your stories these are not contraband in this country."

During the ceremony the 100 citizens swore a declaration of fidelity to the nation of loyalty to the State and received their certificates of Naturalisation, proudly watched by family and friends.

After the ceremony, the newly Irish citizens stood proudly to listen to their new National anthem 'Amhrán na bhFiann'.

Originally from Thailand, Nuttchanat O'Reilly said: "I am so happy to be an Irish citizen, one of the great things of being an Irish citizen is I can go on holidays with my family without the worry of having to apply for a visa."

The Adurkar Family were proud as Devendra Adurkur received his Irish citizenship. Natives of India, they have been living in Waterford for the past six years.

Said Devendra: "I'd like to thank Ireland for letting me be a part of their Irish family. My family is now going to enjoy some nice Irish food!"

Pregnant Belarus native Natalie Phelan said: "It doesn't feel real. I am so proud. After living here for 11 years and marrying my Irish husband, it is a great feeling to be Irish especially before the birth of our baby."

Another proud citizen displaying her naturalisation certificate was Ameenah Busairi who is originally from Nigeria.

"I'm too emotional and overwhelmed. I am so excited to now be able to travel around Europe with my Irish passport."

Minister Shatter concluded this special event with news that some 400 new members will be recruited into the Irish Defence Forces, along with 500 reserves.

Sarah Leahy