

NI records office unlocks key security documents on peace agreement talks

By Andrew Madden

FROM Good Friday Agreement negotiations to parades and security — the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) has lifted the lid on previously unreleased files giving us a glimpse into our history.

Each year, PRONI releases previously declassified government files under its 20-year rule and makes them available to the public.

This year's files have now been made public online, providing an insight into some of the key events from 1997 to 1998.

In collaboration with the Ulster University, almost 500 documents from this period have now been added to the CAIN (Conflict Archive on the Internet) website.

The papers include those on political negotiations leading up to the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in April 1998 and efforts that followed to establish



History:
Tony Blair and Bertie Ahern sign the Good Friday Agreement

the institutions laid out in the historic peace accord.

Files relating to other political and security matters — including around contentious parades — have also been released.

David Huddleston, acting director of PRONI, said: "It is important that public records are made easily available to help increase understanding of our recent past by showing the details and thinking behind political developments.

"The work with CAIN has en-

hanced access to key documents by making them viewable online from anywhere in the world.

"The PRONI on CAIN resource now amounts to a significant volume of archive material dating from the 1960s to 1998 and I welcome the ongoing collaboration with Ulster University to make this possible."

Dr Brenda Lynn is the deputy director of CAIN and a politics lecturer at Ulster University.

She added: "The addition of this new material brings the total number of PRONI documents on CAIN to just over 4,000.

"The information itself is easily available and free of charge and will be undoubtedly of great interest to students, researchers, teachers and lecturers or to anyone looking for information on the recent political and social history of Northern Ireland."

There are more than 4,081 PRONI records on CAIN, amounting to over 17,000 pages.