

Tinteán

THE AUSTRALIAN IRISH HERITAGE NETWORK

No 15, March 2011

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Gold and democracy

Professor Stuart Macintyre

Two rocks

Peter Kiernan



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Cover

Swearing allegiance to the Southern Cross, Charles Alphonse Doudiet, 1854
Ballarat Fine Art Gallery

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The Australian Irish Heritage Network

Objectives

The Australian Irish Heritage Network aims to build the social, cultural, sporting, historical and literary consciousness of Irish Australians and to explore and celebrate the development of Irish heritage and culture in Australia.

Principal Activity

As its first priority, AIHN produces the literary magazine *Tinteán* (meaning hearth in Gaelic and pronounced 'Tintawne' – the fada on the á giving the syllable the dominant stress and the 'augh' sound, as in 'taught'). The focus of the magazine is to build and explore the Australian Irish identity. The magazine welcomes material which explores the big themes of exile, diaspora and settlement. It also encourages the telling of the micro-stories that express narratives of individuals and families. There will be a continual study of the political and economic evolution of Ireland, and of the contribution which Irish-Australians have made to Australia. The intention

is to explore and celebrate the playing out of the Irish heritage in Australia – past, present and future.

Activities

As well as the magazine, AIHN plans to conduct social and educational events; disseminate news and information via the internet; offer recognition for service to literary and historical endeavours; issue cultural and political comment; and research and record our heritage.

Membership

Anyone identifying with Irish heritage is welcome to join.

AIHN Committee

President: Frances Devlin-Glass

Vice-President: Peter Kiernan

Secretary: Bob Glass

Treasurer: Patrick McNamara

Committee Members: Felicity Allen, Catherine Arthur, Liz McKenzie, Debra Vaughan

News

Brian Cowen resigned as Taoiseach

Mr. Cowen took office on 7 May 2008 at the head of a coalition government led by Fianna Fáil. He resigned as leader of Fianna Fáil on 22.1.2011. Although he intended to remain as Taoiseach until after the upcoming 2011 General Election, originally scheduled for 11 March 2011, he has now stepped down. Former Foreign Affairs Minister Micheál Martin has been chosen as his successor.

Becoming leader of Fianna Fáil when Bertie Ahern resigned, his administration coincided with the Irish financial and banking crises, much of which must be seen as part of Ahern's legacy to the nation. While he has come under considerable criticism for failing to deal with them, it has to be remembered that leaders of larger and more powerful countries are not finding it easy to sort out these crises either. Mr. Cowen's government ultimately made a formal request to the European Union and the International Monetary Fund for a financial rescue package. This was widely seen in Ireland as a capitulation and a national humiliation, particularly as the political party making the request was originally created in 1926 to oversee Ireland's independence from English government.

Cowen's leadership led to record low levels in public support for his party, his government and himself. In January 2011, support for all three was between 8% and 10%, making him the most unpopular politician in the history of Irish opinion polls. The *Irish Independent* once called Cowen 'the worst Taoiseach in the history of the State.' Antipathy to Mr Cowen no doubt arose from the austerity plans that he unveiled earlier in response to the financial crisis, involving cutting the minimum wage by 12% and taking €3 billion out of welfare spending. Under his leadership, the Irish jobless rate rose from 4% to 14%

National elections will now be brought forward to next month after the government struck a deal with the opposition parties to pass the legislation needed before the agreed IMF bailout can be received. If, as expected, Fianna Fáil loses the election, it will be the first government to fall because of the euro-zone debt crisis.

Compiled from The Australian, Wikipedia, All Headline News, 27. 1.2011

Bertie Ahern leaves politics

First elected for Fianna Fáil in 1977, on 30 December 1997 Bertie Ahern announced his decision to leave politics. His party is by now so unpopular that he probably would not have won his seat anyway had he stood. He leaves a mixed legacy including his contribution to the Irish peace process on the plus side and the extinction of the Celtic Tiger on the other.

He was a key figure in the struggle to end Europe's longest-running guerrilla war. Re-elected in June 1997, he acted with remarkable speed, brokering a renewed ceasefire by July that year. In 1998, he played a major role in the Good Friday agreement. When the Northern Ireland power-sharing executive was threatened, he stepped again and succeeded in restoring it. Northern Ireland experts agree that without Ahern's efforts the war would be continuing.

Despite these political achievements, he thought his legacy would be the Celtic Tiger, but he has now incurred much of the blame for the collapse of Ireland's economic miracle. When he left office in 2008, he was invited to address a joint session of the US Congress and a similar address to the English parliament in Westminster. He had plans to tour the world extolling the Irish approach, but hardly a day after leaving office, Irish prosperity was no more. Fianna Fáil had been in government for 22 of 24 years and a banking, business and politics cartel had developed. Ahern strongly promoted the property market bubble yet turned a blind eye to the need to regulate the banks and the developers.

Fianna Fáil support has fallen from 44% at the last election to 17% and they are facing a wipe-out in urban areas. It's more likely that the end of Fianna Fáil and of Irish prosperity will be Ahern's legacies.

Compiled from: www.irishcentral.com/story/news and www.huffingtonpost.com/niall-odowd 9.1.2011

Horses abandoned near Dublin

Ireland's financial woes have even ended the culture's traditional love of horses. Thousands of horses and ponies have been abandoned on the Dunsink tip on the edges of Dublin. These animals have been left to die of hunger and cold in the bitterest winter in living memory. Drops in income have meant that 'luxury items'

like caring for animals have been cut out.

The Dunsink horses are only a small part of the total number of abandoned animals across the country, which some sources have placed as high as 100,000. The law requiring micro-chipping of horses, like so many other laws, has only been sporadically enforced, so that now they are no longer wanted, the horses can be abandoned with impunity.

Compiled from: The New York Times, 20 December, 2010

Irish national character

An anecdote in a larger article in *The Age* on the impact of the financial crash shows that some things have stayed the same. As the reporters prepared to board a bus to the airport, a taxi driver in a van offered to match the bus price of €7 per head. Five people got on and the driver stopped along the way, hoping to fill the last seat with paying passengers. The young man shivering at the bus stop had a return ticket and declined. 'Get on the bus anyway', the driver said 'it's freezing cold out there'. *The Age* reporters told the driver to keep the change from their fares.

Compiled from The Age, 27.11.2010

European Court condemns Irish abortion laws

The European Court of Human Rights has ruled that Ireland breached the human rights of a woman with a rare form of cancer. When she became pregnant unintentionally, she was afraid it would relapse, but could not find a doctor in Ireland to make a determination about whether her life would be at risk. The European Court ruled that neither the 'medical consultation nor litigation options' relied on by the Irish government were effective or accessible procedures. The Court also asked why the existing constitutional right to abortion had not been implemented at an earlier date.

Abortion remains a criminal offence under legislation enacted in 1861, before women had the vote, A Supreme Court ruling in 1992 granted a technical constitutional right to abortion in Ireland. As a result of the 'X case', the Supreme Court established Irish women had the right to abortion if their lives were at risk as a result of pregnancy. Despite the fact that at least 4,000 Irish women go to England every year for abortion, several subse-

quent constitutional referenda intended to enact or revoke the judgement have proved inclusive.

As a signatory to the European Convention on Human Rights – now part of Irish law – the government must remedy any breaches of the convention. So far government spokesmen have been unwilling to comment on whether the Irish government would appeal the decision.

**Compiled from: Catholic News Service,
16 December, 2010**

Sinn Fein leaders knew about bank heist

Wikileaks revelations have shown that Ahern suspected the Sinn Fein leaders of knowledge of a major bank robbery. In 2004, Ahern had negotiations with Martin McGuinness and Gerry Adams to save the threatened Irish peace process and restore the power-sharing executive in Northern Ireland. The same year the IRA carried out the biggest bank robbery in its history and Ahern was convinced that the Sinn Fein leaders knew about the

future plans at the time of the negotiations. Gerry Adams has denied membership of the IRA and Martin McGuinness has admitted membership in the 1970s but not since.

The robbery was the biggest cash robbery in Britain and a group of armed men held the families of bank officials hostage, forcing them to hand over millions of pounds to terrorists at the bank. A Sinn Fein spokesman has pointed out that allegations that Sinn Fein was involved in the robbery in any way had already been disproved in court.

**Compiled from: The Age,
14 December, 2010**

Irish accents still amusing

QANTAS CEO Alan Joyce has received an apology from *The Australian* for an article mocking his accent. Columnist Imre Salusinszky, whose pronunciation of English is no doubt impeccable, lampooned Joyce's accent in an article about the CEO's explanation of ongoing investigations into the recent engine

explosion of one of QANTAS' planes. Mr. Joyce told the *Irish Echo* that he was 'appalled and very annoyed' by the article which has since been removed from *The Australian's* website. *The Australian's* editor said that it had been a mistake. Perhaps Mr Salusinszky really meant to ridicule Hungarian accents.

**Compiled from The Age,
2 December, 2010**

Sportsbet sold to Paddy Power

Irish bookmaking company Paddy Power has bought Sportsbet, owned by a Melbourne bookmaker, Pat Tripp, for \$132.6 million. Sportsbet's shareholders expect to take about \$20 million of this price in Paddy Power shares. The purchase must be approved by the Australian Foreign Investment Review Board. Paddy Power CEO Patrick Kennedy said the firm might make further acquisitions once the deal was approved because Australia, he said, "... has a population of 22 million who are nearly all sports fanatics.

Compiled from: HeraldSun, 29.12.2010

Lake School 2011 'The Best Yet...yes!'

Record numbers of music lovers – fiddlers, flautists, tin whistlers, pipers, guitarists, harpists, singers, dancers and poets to mention a few – all in all 200 students plus their families and friends, turned up to Koroit for the twelfth Lake School of Celtic Music Song and Dance and dubbed it 'the best Lake School yet!'

As well as the regular events – the Songwriters' Concert, the Blackboard Concert, the Billy Moran Memorial Session and the Paddy O'Neill Young Celtic Band Concert (this year the band was Fianna), the 2011 program included a number of new highlights – the Guitar Basics and ukelele class led by Peter Daffy, Mark O'Donnell's House Party at Kirkstall, the Big Tune and Big Song led by Maria Forde, Animations with Lucinda Clutterbuck and a revamped format for the Grand Céilídh, which for the first time ever ran to a timetable and finished at a reasonable hour.

The Grand Céilídh itself had some new features – A Welcome to Country by Lenny and Brett Clarke, a toast in Irish by Chris Mooney and splendid choral renditions of the Australian and Irish national anthems with trumpet flourishes by Bernie Hickey. Other highlights included the return to Illowa for the Tuesday night céilídh, Jeremy Meagher's James Joyce Readers' Group which performed...yes! a three minute version of Ulysses, Mary Bourke's address (The Queen's Speech) for the opening of Therese Supple's Exhibition of paintings depicting life and holidays as a child in Killarney, Seamus Foley's won with the The Hills of Lurg in the Spud

Poets Award at Crossley Hall.

Students commented on the 'great feeling throughout the week,' and the teaching sessions reached a new high coinciding with the visit from Athlone of Mick Byrne, a singer, fiddler and mandolin player who found the Lake School after an internet search, and dropped in for the week. The success of the sessions was even more of a surprise given that Session Master, Paddy Fitzgerald, was at the last minute unable to attend due to illness in his family

Fiddle player, Nicki Kramer, who has sat beside Paddy for the last few years learning his tunes, was able to step up to lead Paddy's classes and was given the Mogyum Award (a bottle of Jameson's Irish Whisky) for her efforts.

The Lake School was once again blessed with mild weather, and the success of the event was in no small part due to the 'happy campers' at the Koroit and Tower Hill Caravan Park which for the first time in its history had a 'No Vacancy' sign up at the gate. Everyone was sad to hear the news that the managers of Caravan Park, Vicki Thorpe (current Chairman of the Lake School Committee) and her partner Georg Diegmann will be leaving Koroit in June for greener pastures in Penola SA. It was announced at the Songwriters' Concert that Vicki and Georg would be inducted as Life Members of the Lake School at the launch of the thirteenth Lake School in July later this year.

**Felix Meagher
Co-ordinator of the Lake School**

Obituaries

Fr John Begley SJ, 1921-2010

Fr John Begley SJ, fondly recalled as a brilliant thinker who lived in service of others, died in Melbourne on 9 December 2010, aged 88.

After completing his schooling at Assumption College, Kilmore, John Begley joined the Jesuits at Loyola College, Watsonia, in 1939, and completed a BA degree (1st Class) and an MA degree at the University of Melbourne. He was ordained in 1952, did his Tertianship at Loyola College, Watsonia, in 1954 and took final vows in 1956.

Fr Begley was the inaugural Dean at St Thomas More University College in Perth, before obtaining a PhD at the Gregorian University. His life was spent lecturing in philosophy at numerous religious institutes, including running an online course in philosophy for the Broken Bay Diocese.

Fr Begley also worked in most of the Jesuits' apostolates, and was an important influence on the formation of priests for the Archdioceses of Melbourne and Hobart, and for country Victoria. In honour of his contribution to the education of generations of diocesan priests, he was appointed an Honorary Fellow of Catholic Theological College.

He edited the *Fortnightly Report* and *Jesuit Life* for a number of years. The last 12 years of his life were spent with the scholastics at Jesuit Theological College in Parkville. The young Jesuits admired him deeply, and appreciated his support and encouragement.

Br P C Naughtin CFC, 1917-2010

Br Patrick Chanel Naughtin, a former Provincial of St Patrick's Province of the Christian Brothers, died in Melbourne on 8 December 2010, aged 93. Br Naughtin served as a Christian Brother for 74 years.

Br Naughtin spent the first 17 years of his teaching career in Western and South Australia. He graduated MA at the University of Adelaide. Thereafter he was principal of Parade College, East Melbourne (1956-1961), and St Kevin's College, Toorak (1962-1966). For the next 18 years he was a member of St Patrick's Provincial Council, including a term as Provincial (1972-1884). Between 1956 and 1984, Br Naughtin served on the Victorian Universities and Schools

Examinations Board, the Newman College Council and the Catholic Education Commission of Victoria.

In 1993 Br Naughtin published *History and Heritage, 1893-1993: St Patrick's College, Ballarat*. Eight years later, on the 130th anniversary of Parade College's continuous service to Catholic education, his book, *The Parade Story*, was released.

Old Paradian Bill Dunne, who assisted Br Naughtin with his history research, described him as 'a tower of strength in the education world'. 'He was a lovely man, very dignified, and very dedicated to the brothers and to the founder,' Dunne said. 'He was a great principal'.

Sir Iain Noble, 1935 – 2010

Sir Iain Noble, merchant banker and passionate advocate for Scots Gaelic, was largely responsible for the revival of the language on the Isle of Skye. He founded the Gaelic college, known as Sabhal Mòr Ostaig, or the 'big eastern barn' from the building's original use.

Before the college opened in 1973, Skye Gaelic was limited to farmers. Today attracts academics and tourists and drives economic growth. Iain Noble believed that if you revived your language, you would revive your community. Sabhal Mòr Ostaig was the first Gaelic college to open since St. Columba's time, is the world's only higher education institute to teach exclusively in Gaelic and has been crucial in promoting the language. Iain Noble also lobbied for Gaelic road signs and was the first man to use a Gaelic cheque book, issued for him by the Bank of Scotland.

More controversially, he told the 2003 conference of the Scottish Countryside Alliance that he objected to English people moving into Gaelic speaking areas and driving the price of houses out of the reach of local people. He went on "I am parochial and I enjoy it. It's so much more interesting than being homogeneous with the rest of the world."

He was not native speaker of Gaelic but became fascinated by the language when he heard it spoken by gillies on his estate when he was already in his thirties. He died on 25 December on the Isle of Skye.

Compiled from: The Scotsman, 27 December, 2010

Letters

Fair play: imported or home-grown?

It was a privilege to hear the address on Eureka and democracy given by Professor Stuart Macintyre at the Eureka Commemoration Dinner at the Celtic Club in December last. It was a masterful analysis of the significance of Eureka in the growth of the democratic process in this country.

Perhaps we at *Tinteán* could advance our aims and objects, as set out by our publisher Australian Irish Heritage Network, by publishing a study of the particular part played in the stockade drama and the subsequent political, constitutional and legal events, by Irish Australians. On leaving that dinner with the inspiring words of Professor Macintyre to reflect on, I could not help recalling the Irish element involved – the ten or more native Irish who died at the stockade and after (of the total of 22 killed there), and of the leader, Peter Lalor, born in Co Laios.

In his vigorous vote of thanks to the speaker, Professor Weston Bate was rightly adulatory. But was he being provocative when he made the comment that we Australians should be thankful for the concept of fair play brought to us by the British? Did I hear him correctly? It was a proposition that would have given those members of the Celtic Club who were present, food for thought as they drove home. But congratulations to Philip Moore and his Cultural Committee for such a stimulating night.

Peter Kiernan, Malvern

Indigenous pedagogy

The review of John Bradley's *Singing Saltwater Country; Journey to the Songlines of Carpentaria* was of great interest to me.

Those involved in indigenous pedagogy and curricula would do well to research the educational philosophy of Patrick Pearse. He was an avid bi-linguist and based his curriculum on the history and traditions of pre-British/ancient Ireland. His vision could be adapted and applied to indigenous educational projects and used as a template to devise curricula based on the integration of surviving Aboriginal cultures and languages and 'mainstream' subjects.

Éilís Cearnai, Cloyne, Co Cork

History for everyone

In the mid 20th century, history and religion were consigned to oblivion. Modern society, dominated by science and technology had no further use for them. Religion survived more as a civic and moral education course than a theological/spiritual one. History was subsumed as a part of SOSE: Studies of Society and Environment – one of a group of subjects which also included Geography and Social Studies. There it languished, disdained by students, teachers and curriculum developers alike. Students reached the end of their 13 years in primary and secondary school classrooms with scant knowledge of world history or worse, the history of their own nation. Aussie kids probably picked up a modicum of historical knowledge from family conversations, customs and loyalties (such as footy teams!). This lack of awareness of past determinants of what Australia is today, was a crucial omission in the ongoing integration of new migrants who brought with them their own, very often bloody, histories. It was not considered important enough for them to acquire knowledge of, never mind a perspective on, the history of their adopted land.

However all is not lost. Religion is now celebrating a revival of interest and does not look like becoming obsolete anytime soon. There is also a burgeoning interest in history. It has been reasserted as a viable subject in education curricula, a topic of debate in the media and of increased interest at grass roots level.

Much of this new interest is the result of controversies over the interpretation of and perspectives on historical facts in the groves of academe. Publicity given the so-called ‘history wars’ in the media, has meant that the populace has been introduced to terms such as ‘the black armband view of history’, ‘culture wars’, ‘cultural genocide’, ‘stolen generations’ ‘reconciliation with and apology to indigenous people’, ‘intergenerational guilt’. The introduction of a National History Curriculum at the height of these controversies is no bad thing, even though it too is mired in controversy over content and methodology, politics and perspectives, facts and interpretations. Such lively debate reminds us that after more than two hundred years of written history we are a robust, dynamic democracy.

The most intriguing development in history has been an upsurge of interest in family histories. It has been spurred by the highly successful BBC (UK) program of ‘*Who Do You Think You Are?*’ which traces the family trees of selected British film and TV celebrities. The Australian version, tracing the ancestry of selected Australian celebrities has been just as successful, if not more so. What is most interesting about these personal and very moving histories is how many celebrities in both countries discover and celebrate their Irish ancestry – even when the ancestor is a rogue or a thief or a murderer! There were also many stories of survival: from famine, war and gross political injustices in other countries. In the SBS series there were heart-warming tales of the reunification of families separated by transportation – for whatever reason – and the establishment of families and careers in a new strange land against all odds. The resilience and determination of our forebears to improve their lives is indubitable. The successful outcome of their endeavours is evident in the success not only of their celebrity descendents but in a vibrant nation.

Multiculturalism,
however flawed,
thrives in a tolerant
and equitable community

You do not have to be a celebrity to trace your ancestry. There has been a phenomenal increase in the interest ordinary folk have in finding out where they came from. With the availability of archival information in censuses, newspaper articles (even from defunct newspapers,) government records, registers etc on the Internet – much of it free! – people are delving into what could be a murky or a heroic past. Long lost branches of families are traced; friendships are formed over a shared renegade great-great-great-grandfather or mother. It is a badge of honour in the 21st century to have had a convict ancestor whether he or she was a common criminal or a political miscreant. Even more recent felonies are considered with compassion and interest rather than the shame they would have attracted only a few generations ago. Perhaps because of the White Australia policy in Australia most fair dinkum Aussies who have been here for many generations – as opposed to post-war immigrants – will almost inevitably have some Celtic blood flowing through their veins and that includes a significant number of our indigenous population.

Australian society was never easily and naturally a homogeneous entity. Our individual histories, whether as exiles or immigrants, were in the past and even more so in the present, disparate, even conflicting. We do not share, as many European and Asian nations do, a long, common history with ample opportunities (such as wars and/or occupation and/or persecution) for developing a national identity. Nor do we share ‘The Melting Pot’ ideal of the USA with its emphasis on assimilation and merging into the American way of life. Yet in spite of many differences in culture and religion and politics, we do pull together. Multiculturalism, however flawed, thrives in a tolerant and equitable community. Out of wildly differing historical perspectives, political and religious differences, we have forged and are still forging an identifiable Australian identity.

For this identity to grow strong and include all who bring their own fraught histories to our shores, we need to know our own history. Mistakes, injustices and cruelties perpetrated on vulnerable groups in the past and present must be recognised and rectified. We also need too, to incorporate into our idea of a modern civil society, the strengths our forebears brought with them to create the dynamic democracy we live in today. Certainly we need to acknowledge what made Australia successful: wool, gold and mineral ores. While the huge influences of political and social movements in Europe and the US, and more recently in Asia, in forming an Australian worldview cannot be ignored, history was also made by how people coped with the huge challenges they faced in establishing the way of life we have inherited.

Our aim at *Tinteán* is to explore the big themes of exile, diaspora and settlement as well as telling the micro-stories that express narratives of individuals and families. The big historical events of the past enthral us and encourage a reassessment, a new perspective on closely held opinions while the stories of individuals and families fascinate and inspire us.

Elizabeth McKenzie
Editor

What's on

Bloomsday in Melbourne

Double-Bill Fundraiser

John Millington Synge:
Riders to the Sea and The Tinker's Wedding

Tragic and comic (respectively) classics of the Irish Revival, showcasing actors' skills.
Directed by Brenda Addie.

Friday, 4 March, 19:30, Celtic Club, Melbourne
Drinks at bar prices, and Tea and Coffee - \$25

Sunday, 6 March, 16:30, 5 Courbrant Court, Mont Albert North
Drinks and snacks: \$25

Contact: Bob Glass 9898 2900

John O'Brien Festival

The Australian Festival of Word and Song

17-20 March 2011, Narrandera, NSW

Four days of bush poetry, music, comedy acts, dance exhibitions, bush culture displays, street party and more.
Award-winning festival celebrating priest/poet Patrick Hartigan (John O'Brien), who penned such famous verses as:
Around the Boree Log, Tangmalangaloo, and Said Hanrahan

Contact: 02 6959 1766 www.johnobrien.org.au

Melbourne Theatre Company

The 2011 program is bookended by two Irish plays.

5 February – 19 March 2011

Martin McDonagh's *A Behanding in Spokane*
Despite the title, it is said to be 'scant on stage horrors'.
McDonagh, a youngish Irish playwright, has an eye for the dark and surreal, and is able to wring comedy out of it.

12 November - 30 December 2011
Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*
Geoffrey Rush as Lady Bracknell,
with Bob Hornery as both the butlers.

Contact: MTC 03 8688 0800

Tommy Tiernan

Multi Award Winning Irish Superstar Comic
Returning to Australia following his hugely successful Australian tour in 2010.

Melbourne 30, 31 March & 1 April

Ticketmaster 1300 660 013 www.ticketmaster.com.au

Canberra 2 April

Canberra Theatre 6275 2700 www.canberratheatrecentre.com.au

Hobart 4 April

Wrest Point Service Centre 1300 795 257 www.wrestpoint.com.au

Adelaide 6 April

Venuetix 8225 8888 www.venuetix.com.au

Perth 7 April

Ticketek 132 849 www.ticketek.com.au

Brisbane 10 April

QPAC 136 246 www.qpac.com.au

Sydney 12 April

Ticketek 132 849 www.ticketek.com.au

Sydney Comedy Festival 9020 6966 sydneycomedyfest.com.au

Scoil Gheimhridh Sydney 2011

The 9th Scoil Gheimhridh

10-13 June 2010, Kensington, NSW

The Scoil Gheimhridh, or winter school, brings adults together from across Australia to learn and polish up their Irish language skills.
Suitable for all levels, from complete beginners upwards. Language classes plus talks, dancing, music and singing.

Contact: Éilís Hurst 0424 718 538 eilis@internode.on.net
www.IrishLanguageSchoolSydney.org.au

National Celtic Festival 2011

10-13 June 2011, Portarlinton, Vic.

Featuring internationally acclaimed US supergroup Solas, the world's most popular Celtic folk act. Joining Solas will be singer/songwriter Eleanor McEvoy (Ireland), most famous for her smash hit 'Only a Woman's Heart'; also the brilliant fiddle of Hanneke Cassel (US) Trio, dynamite Irish/Quebec duo Sophie & Fiachra (Ireland/Canada), and the haunting sounds of Gaelic songstress Christine Primrose (Scotland).

Early Bird tickets are on sale now.

Contact: GPAC 03 5225 1200 www.nationalcelticfestival.com

For inclusion in the *What's On* column, please submit items to editorial@tintean.org.au

18th Australasian Irish Studies Conference

Australian National Museum, Canberra

30 June to 3 July 2011

An interdisciplinary conference with contributions from areas of history, migration studies, sociology, politics, literature, the arts, gender, geography, anthropology and economics.

Contact for papers: Richard Reid, National Museum, Canberra
rreid@nma.gov.au

Connolly Association Radio Program

09:30 every Saturday - 3CR [855 AM]

Irish nationalist and republican news, current affairs and comment. Charts the involvement of modern Melbourne's community in Irish politics and affairs.

Contact: Jim Cusack 0407 521 432 www.3CR.org.au

Celtic Folk Radio Program

14:00 every Monday - 3CR [855 AM]

Community Radio, Melbourne

Contact: Anne McAllister 0423 397 051 www.3CR.org.au

Melbourne Irish Community Radio Program

11:00 every Saturday and 18:00 every Sunday - 3ZZZ [92.5 FM]

Supported by the Melbourne Irish community and coordinated by Eugene O'Rourke.

Irish music, news, interviews and language

Australian Irish Welfare Bureau

Afternoon Tea & Dance

14:00-17:30 on the last Sunday of each month at the Celtic Club, Melbourne

Contact: Marion O'Hagan 03 9482 3865

Melbourne Irish Studies Seminars

An Inter-University Forum for Irish and Irish-Australian Studies

Free public seminars Tuesdays, 18:00 to 19:30
The Oratory, Newman College, Melbourne

8 March 2011, John Clancy (Bendigo)
Galicia: The Forgotten Celtic Region?

5 April 2011, Dr Lynn Brunet (Melbourne)
Cú Chulainn, Celtic Warrior Cults and Initiatory Rites in the Art of Francis Bacon

3 May 2011, Dr William Jones (University of Cardiff, Wales)
Language, Religion and Ethnic Institutions: The Welsh in Melbourne, 1851-1914

Contact (03) 8344 3924 or (03) 9479 2367
P.J.Bull@latrobe.edu.au e.malcolm@unimelb.edu.au
francesdevlinglass@gmail.com

Grand Irish exhibition for Canberra in 2011 Irish in Australia: 1788 to present

The National Museum of Australia is developing a major exhibition on the Irish in Australia over the 225 years from European settlement to the present time.

The exhibition will open at the National Museum situated on Canberra's Acton Peninsula on 17 March 2011 (St Patrick's Day) and run through to July 2011. It will later tour Australia and is expected travel to Dublin, Ireland.

The exhibition will cover the Irish presence in Australia from the day in January 1788 when a small number of Irish convicts, marines and officials walked off the transports of the First Fleet to the continuing arrival in our own time of young Irish backpackers. Through exhibits and objects, the exhibition will tell of free and assisted migration, journeys, arrivals, settlements and of the subsequent careers of settlers as farmers, industrialists, pastoralists, writers, lawyers, teachers, academics, politicians and sports people.

A project team with prominent Irish-Australian historian, Dr Richard Reid, as the senior curator has been assembled to prepare the exhibition. The team has forensically scoured all corners of the land and researched archival treasures to track down objects of interest as manifestation of Irish settlement in all its forms.

Highlights will include:

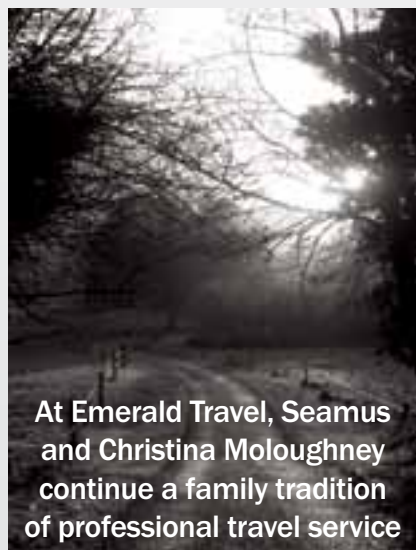
- Great objects, large and small
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Amhrán Naisúnta

In this article Bearnaí Ó Doibhlin describes how two famous Australian songs featured in a trip by a group of Aussies to the Donegal Gaeltacht last year, and again during the recent annual Daonscoil in Victoria

Thug grúpa as an Astráil cuairt ar Ghleann Cholm Cille, i nGaeltacht Dhún na nGall, i mí Lúnasa anuraidh le freastal ar chúrsaí teanga de chuid Oideas Gael. Soláthraíonn an eagraíocht iomráiteach seo, a bunaíodh beagnach tríocha bliain ó shin, cúrsaí do dhaoine fásta i rith an tsamhraidh agus d'fhreastail daoine aonair as an Astráil ar chúrsaí ann go rialta thar na blianta. Ba ea seo an chéad uair a chuaigh grúpa eagraithe as na Fritíortha chuig aon Ghaeltacht, go bhfios dom. Níl aon agó ach go ndeachaigh an taithí i gcion go mór ar na rannpháirtithe, orthu siúd a bhí sa Ghaeltacht den chéad uair ach go háirithe.

Maireann cúrsaí Oideas Gael ar feadh seachtain amháin agus ag deireadh na seachtaine cuireann na mic léinn siamsaí éagsúla ar siúl, leithéidí drámaí, amhráin, agallaimh bheirte agus araile. Chinn an grúpa Astrálach sular imigh siad go gcuirfidis seó fíor-Astrálach ar an ardán agus roghnaíodh an t-amhrán náisiúnta neamhoifigiúil, *Ag Válsáil Matilda*.

Bhí muid sa Ghaeltacht agus dá bhrí sinn cinneadh go mbeadh sé oiriúnach leagan as Gaeilge den amhrán a chanadh. Bhí leagan Gaeilge ar fáil abhus le blianta anuas, ach an té a rinne an t-aistriúchán d'fhág sé ar lár na focail fhíorAstrálacha, leithéidí 'swagman', 'billabong', 'coolibah' agus 'jumbuck'. Chinn muid go mbainfimis feidhm astu sa leagan s'againn agus, sular chan muid an t-amhrán, go dtaispeánfaimis scéal an amhráin trí mheán dráma bhig amaidigh.

D'éirigh thar barr lenár siamsa agus cuireadh taifeadadh de ar Youtube ar shuíomh idirlín Oideas Gael. Thug muid focail an amhráin don lucht féachana agus chuaigh sé i bhfeidhm go mór orm, nuair a d'fhéach mé ar an taifeadadh ar Youtube, a bhríomhaire is bhí an lucht féachana páirteach sa chanadh, cé gur Éireannaigh a bhformhór mór acu. Is léir go bhfuil an t-amhrán in eolas ag daoine go leor thar lear agus go dtuigtear an bhaint atá aige leis an Astráil.

Tharla imeacht suntasach eile i dtaca le hamhrán Astrálach le linn na seachtaine freisin. Tá trí theach tábhairne sa Ghleann agus bhíodh sé de nós ag na hAstrálaigh bualadh le chéile in Roarty's gach oíche. Bhíodh seisiúin cheoil ar siúl ann de ghnáth agus bhíodh an teach tábhairne lán

go doras. Mar a bheifí ag súil leis, bhíodh an teach tábhairne callánach le linn na seisiúin, ach oíche Déardaoin thit tost air nuair a thosaigh duine de na hAstrálaigh, Gabrielle Glaziou, arbh as Sydney di, ag canadh an amhráin, *I am Australian*.

Bhí suim faoi leith ag na daoine sa phub san amhrán, i measc na gceoltóirí ach go háirithe. Iarradh ar Gabrielle an t-amhrán a chanadh arís an oíche dár gcionn agus arís bhí tost ar an slua. D'éist daoine go cúramach léi agus, mar a dúirt duine amháin liom, is amhrán é a thugann aitheantas agus meas do na hAstrálaigh go léir: an mhuintir dhúchais, na daoránaigh, na coilínigh agus an éagsúlacht chultúrtha a bhaineann leis an Astráil reatha.

Bhuail an smaoineamh mé ansin agus ó shin i leith nach mbeadh an lucht féachana thuasluaite páirteach leath chomh bríomhar dá gcanfaimis ár n-amhrán náisiúnta oifigiúil. Agus táim cinnte nach mbeadh an tionchar céanna ag *Advance Australia Fair* ar na ceoltóirí is a bhí ag amhrán Woodley. Feictear dom gur mór an trua é nach bhfuil amhrán so-aitheanta ar nós *Ag Válsáil Matilda*, nó amhrán álainn leithéidí *I am Australian* ina amhrán náisiúnta againn.

Bhí an Daonscoil bhliantúil ar siúl in aice le Melbourne le fiordhéanaí agus cuireadh deireadh fonnmhar leis an tseachtain le ceolchoirm. Chan na daoine a bhí i nGleann Cholm Cille *Ag Válsáil Matilda* as Gaeilge mar chuid den chlar agus, mar is iondúil, bhí an lucht féachana páirteach go díograiseach ann. Agus chan muid leagan nua as Gaeilge de *I am Australian* agus arís insíodh dom "go gcuireann an t-amhrán seo tic i ngach bosca" i dtaca le scéal na hAstráile, rud nach féidir a rá faoin amhrán náisiúnta.

Tuigim go riléir nach mbeidh aon athrú ar amhrán náisiúnta na tíre seo go dtí go bhfuil ceist na poblachta réitithe – má tharlaíonn a leithéid go deo. Idir an dá linn beidh muid ag canadh *Advance Australia Fair* as Gaeilge ag gach Daonscoil, ach geallaim duit go mbeidh fuinneamh agus mothúchán sa bhreis le sonrú acu nuair a chanfaidh muid an dá amhrán Astrálacha eile thuas. Agus nuair a fhilleann muid ar Ghleann – agus níl aon amhras ach go bhfillfimid – is iad na hamhráin náisiúnta neamhoifigiúla a bheidh muid ag canadh ann.

Bearnaí Ó Doibhlin

Mise Astrálach

As ré an taibhrimh mé, na mána dearga deannaigh
An croí críonna mé, coimeádaí na lasraí.
Ar an duirling sheas mé 's longa fhir ghil ag teacht.
Le daichead míle bliain, mise an chéad Astrálach.

Sinne aontaithe ach sinne éagsúil
Is as gach cearn tháinig ag tnúth
Tá aisling bhreá againn, canaimid le chéile:
Is mé, is tú, sinne Astrálaigh

Ar long phríosúin a tháinig, faoi uallach slabhraí
Ghlan muid an talamh faoi chúradh easpa báistí.
Is feirmeoir mé ag streachailt ar thalamh carraigeach
Daoránach roimh shaoirse, 's ansin an tAstrálach.

Iníon le mianadóir mé, lorg sé saibhreas óir,
D'fhásas i mo bhean agus muid ar an mbóthar.
Páiste an Spealta Mhóir mé, chonaic mé am an-lách
As an tuath is cathaí mé, 's fíor Astrálach.

Is scéalai ón tseanam mé, agus amhránaí
Albert Namatjira, péintéir na ngumaí liatha;
Mise an marcach Clancy, Ned Kelly's a raic,
Dhamhsaigh mé Matilda, tá mé fíor Astrálach

Translated by Bearnaí Ó Doibhlin

I am Australian

I came from the dream-time, from the dusty red soil plains
I am the ancient heart, the keeper of the flame.
I stood upon the rocky shore, I watched the tall ships come.
For forty thousand years I've been the first Australian.

We are one, but we are many
And from all the lands on earth we come.
We share a dream and sing with one voice:
I am, you are, we are Australian

I came upon the prison ship, bowed down by iron chains.
I cleared the land, endured the lash and waited for the rains.
I'm a settler, I'm a farmer's wife on a dry and barren run
A convict then a free man, I became Australian.

I'm the daughter of a digger who sought the mother lode
The girl became a woman on the long and dusty road
I'm a child of the Depression, I saw the good times come
I'm a bushy, I'm a battler, I am Australian

I'm a teller of stories, I'm a singer of songs
I am Albert Namatjira, I paint the ghostly gums
I am Clancy on his horse, I'm Ned Kelly on the run
I'm the one who waltzed Matilda, I am Australian

Bruce Woodley and Dobe Newton

Australian Irish Welfare Bureau .inc

The Australian-Irish Welfare Bureau is a non-profit voluntary organisation whose aims are to assist, where possible, any person or persons in the Irish community of Victoria or any person who may be associated with the Irish community who is in distress.

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& the Begin Agains**
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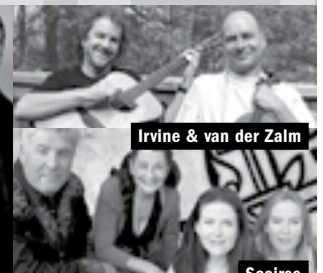


Tony McManus

Eric Bogle



Alan Kelly Band



Irvine & van der Zalm

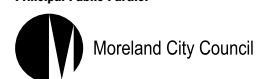
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Once in 220 years

St Patrick's Day this year marks a turning point in the history of Irish Australia. The exhibition on the Irish in Australia which is due to open in Canberra on that day is a once-in-a-lifetime event, a phenomenal array of interesting objects from six states and 220 years. Such a national survey of the Irish has never happened in England, South Africa, USA or Canada.

My prediction is that no matter what defects the show has, no matter what it costs to get to Canberra and stay the night, all those interested in Irish Australia will benefit enormously from seeing 'Not just Ned: a true history of the Irish in Australia' at the National Museum in Lawson Crescent, Acton Peninsula, Canberra, from 17 March to 31 July 2011. Details from www.nma.gov.au, or freecall 1800 026 132, or email information@nma.gov.au.

Pat Durnan of Coburg, Redfern and Watsonia

During the 1980s, when Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher ruled the Anglo-American empire, many Irish Australians, like millions of people around the world, were concerned about, and active against, the threat of nuclear war. One of the many unsung heroes of those peace movement campaigns, Patricia Durnan, died peacefully in Melbourne on 5 November last, aged 86.

Pat was born in 1924, the second of five children of James and Margaret Durnan of Coburg, Victoria. At the age of 31, Pat left her job as a key-punch operator and teacher of typing to join the Missionary Sisters of the Sacred Heart. She became Sister John, though she later reverted to her baptismal name. Pat is best known for the couple of decades she spent as a pastoral worker with the St Vincent's Catholic congregation in Redfern, in inner-city Sydney. She was a close collaborator of the late Father Ted Kennedy and was particularly involved in looking after him during his later years.

At the Requiem Mass at All Hallows, Deepdene, Vicki Walker Clark, a leading member of the Aboriginal Catholic Ministry, paid tribute to Pat for her work in solidarity with Aboriginal people. Vicki also read a tribute from the Aboriginal Medical Service in Sydney. Joan Hamilton read another from Danny



Pat Durnan: her anti-nuclear stand deserves to be remembered

Gilbert on behalf of the Redfern parish.

The Requiem Mass celebrated by Fathers Peter Malone and Brendan Reid was a fitting tribute to Pat, except on one point. Coming out of the church, I expressed our family's sympathy to her sister Marie and husband Wally. I said that I thought the MSCs had given Pat a good farewell. Wally remarked with a wry grin that they had left out any mention of her arrest for anti-nuclear activities.

On Easter Sunday 1985, Pat and a couple of others had risked seven years jail for their civil disobedience action at the joint US-Australian satellite ground station at Watsonia Barracks, Melbourne. This communications centre had a role in guiding US nuclear weapons to their targets in the Pacific and Indian Oceans. At dawn, Pat along with Barbara Clements from Adelaide and Jim Dowling of Brisbane went into the prohibited area, stained the base of the communications dish with blood and ash, then wrote the words 'Messenger of Death' on the column. They prayed together until the authorities arrived. Although they were arrested, they were bailed and, after a court case, freed.

For his 1986 album, *Signs of Hope*, Peter Kearney wrote a song to commemorate the Watsonia action and named it 'Love is Not a Crime'. As her death notice in the newspapers said, 'Pat was a woman of integrity who had a great love and respect for all people'. What's more, she did it her way. It's a pity her anti-nuclear activities were not praised, or at least mentioned, at her Requiem.

Louis de Paor on Irish poetry

During November 2010, visiting Irish poet and scholar Louis de Paor gave a series of insightful seminars at the Celtic Club in Melbourne on three of the most outstanding Irish-language poets of the twentieth century. His subjects were Máire Mhac an tSaoi, Liam S Gógan and Seán Ó Riordáin. The seminars were hosted by Cumann Gaeilge na hAstráile/ The Irish Language Association of Australia.

Louis, who is director of Irish Studies at the National University of Ireland, Galway, spent a decade in Melbourne around 1990. He has a dozen books published and his 2005 collection of poems, *Ag Greadadh Bas sa Reilig/Clapping in the Cemetery*, has been widely praised.

Rarely looking at his notes, and using language rich in imagery and flair but clear and accessible throughout, Louis gave outlines of the life stories of his three chosen authors, read selected poems in both Irish and English, and laid out a strong and stimulating argument about the contribution of each of them.

Máire Mhac an tSaoi of Dublin and Kerry, who was born in 1922 and lives now in retirement at Howth, read at Mietta's during a 1994 visit to Melbourne. Louis argued that her collection of poems about intimacy and the fleeting things of life, *Margadh na Saoire*, published in 1956, two decades before Eavan Boland's work in English, was a milestone in the Irish language and also in regard to women's writing. He pointed to Mac an tSaoi's influence on Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill and Biddu Jenkinson. Louis has recently completed the manuscript for a book on Mac an tSaoi based on a series of in-depth interviews with her about her life and her work.

The second poet in the series was Liam S Gógan (1891-1979), son of a Dublin sweets manufacturer, sometime armed revolutionary, later dictionary-researcher and Museum curator, rarely mentioned today but famous in his lifetime. Louis says that Gógan used 'a self-conscious artificial literary dialect' but adapted the traditional literary and scholarly language into dealing with contemporary urban realities at a time when many language revivalists con-

Vale Aengus Cantwell

Many Australians who have attended the Yeats Summer School in Sligo will have fond memories of Aengus, a passionate Yeatsian and a fine reader of him. He also visited Australia in the early 1990s as a guest of the Yeats Society. What follows is an edited version of an obituary penned by his niece and friends which appeared in the *Irish Times* and a eulogy delivered at his funeral by the niece, Mary Shine Thompson.



Louis de Paor gave a series of seminars at the Celtic Club

centrated on farmers and fishermen. In his 1946 'Liobharn Stáit/State Barge', Gógán expressed the disappointment of his revolutionary generation with the way the independent Irish state developed. Louis argued that Gógán's satirical take on the ship of state was one of his most successful poems.

In Louis' view, Seán Ó Riordáin (1916–1977), the third in our series, was the most significant Irish poet of the twentieth century, and perhaps since the eighteenth. Born in Cork into an English-speaking household but with his Irish-speaking grandmother next door, Ó Riordáin was, in Louis' opinion, the Irish poet of his era who was most closely in touch with European modernism. However, where continental poets might speak as if God were dead, Ó Riordáin wrote of disputes with God in vigorous poems which articulated doubt and anguished questioning. Although he accepted the last rites of the Catholic Church, Ó Riordáin used a red pen to write one last note in his diary, 'This does not mean that I am a Catholic'. Louis introduced his hearers to Ó Riordáin's poem about his duck and another about his mother's burial and much in between.

The above is meant to give a glimpse of the wealth of material Louis put before an appreciative Australian audience. Anyone looking for a place to do Irish studies would be well advised to give high priority to enrolling at the centre he runs at NUI Galway.

Val Noone

On 17 October, Aengus Cantwell, a man who was in love with long distances for much of his life, returned to his native Cromadh an tSubhachais to be buried. He died in his sleep at his home in Sligo on 15 October.

Aengus (Geddy), born 10 May, 1930, was one of nine children of David and May Cantwell. He grew up Croom, County Limerick, studied at University College Dublin and Teresianum College in Rome, and was ordained a priest of the Discalced Carmelite community. For a time, he served in the Philippines – in Iloilo and with Cardinal Santos in Manila – a formative experience of his life. He left the Carmelite order in the 1970s and married Julia Moyles, then proprietor of the Imperial Hotel in Sligo. The hotel served for years as the social hub of the Yeats Society, of which Aengus was president for three years. He lectured at St Angela's College in Sligo, only fully retiring in 2006, at the age of 76.

Those, then, are the facts of his life. All who knew him will remember him rather by his singular approach to that life – to love, friendship, fellowship and learning. The values imbibed from his parents he carried with him to the grave: a love of place, people and culture, an unfailing generosity of spirit, an exquisite courtesy. He also carried on the family tradition of teaching – formally in schools in Castlemartyr, Loughrea and Sligo, and later, informally, when he helped students to write their dissertations, prepare for their Leaving Certificates or pass repeat examinations.

In his later years, Aengus treasured the gift of serenity. He led many out of the gloom, buoying up battered souls with his respect and care. His desire to understand and to empathise was a reflection of his philosophical nature. He never lost the questing impulse, or his awe in the face of the ineffable, and he drew on the



Aengus Cantwell at the grave of Yeats in Drumcliff Churchyard. Genevieve Rogers

wisdom of the ages – the Bible, Aristotle, Virgil and Dante, the writings of Teresa of Avila and St John of the Cross. He savoured each day as it came, and asked little of it. Yet he would have none of your going 'gently into the dark night'. He *would* have his pipe – or preferably his cigar – and smoke it; he would have his cake and eat it – and, for preference, in the best possible surroundings.

His was a goodness peppered with mischief. He loved to play the rascal. In Sligo General Hospital, when asked where he lived by a consultant he thought less than polite, Aengus answered by way of Yeats: 'I live in a bee-loud glade.' Aengus saw the mythic in the everyday, but it was the genuine connection with another human being that mattered. He endeared himself to the Filipina nurses, speaking to them in their own language.

He was a man of paradoxes. Nothing gave him greater happiness than simple human kindness. Yet, he appreciated fine surroundings. On a cold December night in 2009, he used his earnings from a talk he had given to treat four old friends to dinner at L'Ecrivain, where he spoke French with the hostess, Italian and Portuguese with the wait staff, and Irish, Latin, Greek and English with his dinner companions. Scholarship, languages, flights of erudition were always accompanied by delight. He was never far from lapsing into an impish fit of laughter.

It was his beloved Yeats who said, 'my glory was I had such friends'. Aengus often echoed the sentiment, and he leaves behind many old friends from Sligo and Croom, and further afield in Australia.

His final resting place is in his beloved Maigne valley. *Máigh na gcaor, na gcaobh, na gcrúach...* Aengus's was a life to be celebrated for its magnanimity, integrity and sheer delight in being. May he rest in peace. *Sólás na bhFlaitheas síoraí dó.*

Joe Cox, M.M., Mary Shine Thompson

Record-breaking famine rock commemoration

Sunday 21 November 2010

On 6 December 1998, the Famine Rock at Williamstown was unveiled by the Ambassador for Ireland, His Excellency Richard O'Brien, before nearly 1000 people. This year's annual gathering, the twelfth Commemoration, was easily the biggest and best. Attracting a crowd of more than 150, it is now established as a permanent feature of our Australian-Irish cultural activities.

Great credit must go to the original Irish Famine Commemoration Committee Melbourne, created and headed by Val Noone and Mary Doyle, and for their foresight and energy applied to this project. For the astonishing success of this twelfth commemoration we can look no further than to Debra Vaughan who sought to establish and re-ignite connections. In rustling up the numbers, they were supplemented to great effect by the database of the descendants of the orphan girls generously supplied by Perry McIntyre of Sydney. Over the intervening years, the dedication, persistence and musicianship of piper Leo Kelly kept the commemoration concept alive and functioning. Our deep appreciation and thanks go to all those vital contributors.

But to the day – a perfect Melbourne early summer day with a light southerly and, over a sparkling Hobson's Bay, the city in the background. Peter Kiernan pronounced the *Welcome to Country* on behalf of the Bunurong and Woiwurong people, part of the Yalukit Willam language group and welcomed the Hobson's Bay representative, Councillor John Hogg. He then launched the programme which included the following contributors:

Val Noone, the Chair of the original Commemoration Committee, explained the history and establishment of the Rock and its deep symbolic significance in Australia, reflecting many such memorials in Ireland and the ancient attachment to the land by our Indigenous people. A beautiful range of many floral tributes were then placed at the foot of the Rock.

Debra Vaughan gave a report on her organisational work and told of her grateful feelings as an orphan's descendant. Extensive research expanded our known pool of Irish lasses. She read a poem by Williamstown school teacher and local wit, James Wallace, which was published in the *Port Phillip Gazette* of 5 June 1849, written only three weeks after the arrival of her great great grandmother's ship, the *Pemberton*, carrying girls from many workhouses, including those of the Royal Hibernian Military School.

Leo Kelly, Uilleann piper, who has never missed these annual events following the unveiling, played a haunting and reflective piece (*Róisín Dubh/The Little Dark Rose*) in his inimitable style. He explained the significant role played by the musicians in early days in Ireland.

Louis de Paor, visiting from the National University of Ireland, Galway, gave an address on the impact of the Irish culture and language on a young Australia. He read, in Irish, his own poem, *Comhcheilg na Síle, or Conspiracy of Eyes*.

Janet Kelly sang, unaccompanied, *The Bard of Armagh*, in her light soprano voice which was ideally suited to the atmosphere.

Mary Kenneally spoke on the impact of dispossession of peoples and read a poem, *The House that Jack Didn't Build*, by her cousin and poet Brendan Kennelly. It analyses the anger of the victims and the arrogance of the intruders. She also read an original document evidencing the impact and trauma involved in dispossession.

Sean Kenan and Phil Cleary played two fiddle duets, Sean explaining the origins of those pieces: Terry Teahan's *Barn Dance* and the reel, *The Youngest Daughter*.

Val and Debra then acknowledged the attendance on the day of some forty or more descendants of orphan girls who arrived at this spot in the six ships from 1848 to 1850. Rather than call them up as a group, Val conceived a solution – invite each individual representative to address the crowd, sharing the antecedents' name and ship, with a short comment. This was highly successful and moving.

One descendant's journey had drawn to our cherished Rock a close group of seven cousins, including their venerable matriarch. There were representatives of all the Melbourne ships, *Lady Kennaway*, *Pemberton*, *New Liverpool*, *Diadem*, *Derwent* and *Eliza Caroline*, as well as some from the girls who first disembarked at Adelaide and Sydney. The vindication of ceremonial acknowledgement and pride in each family history was most evident.

Debra made a presentation to each of the contributing artists and speakers. Each received a copy of the 2001 publication *The Yalukit Willam: The First People of the City of Hobson's Bay*. To close a memorable event, Kathleen Kiernan, tin whistle and Aindrias de Staic, fiddle, played a traditional slip jig, *The Butterfly*.

Most then adjourned to *Sirens* in Williamstown for coffee and cakes. So ended another, but best ever, second last Sunday in November. Standby for this year!

Peter Kiernan





Left: Leo Kelly

Above: Aindrias de Staic of Galway, Debra Vaughan and Kathleen Kiernan

Below: Louis de Paor of Galway

All photos by Sean Kenan



The economics of despair

Great concern has been expressed in the Irish press about the possible impacts of the financial crash and the property collapse on the suicide rate there. There is no doubt that the financial situation has caused great despair for many. Added to this, the ruthless pursuit of unemployed and even bankrupt people for debt has meant that a 24 hour helpline is now receiving 2,500 to 3,000 calls per month. Many of these people fear that their homes will be repossessed and have reported that the debt collection agents told them that their money problems are all their own fault because they were greedy during the good times. People caught up in this harassment are afraid even to say that they are in a lot of financial trouble and so are unable to seek help.

These observations would seem to make a compelling case for unemployment and financial distress as the main drivers of suicide rates, but there are other factors to consider. Irish suicide rates are still low compared to other European countries, indeed on a world scale they are ranked 50 – well behind Australia at rank 44, but the concern is that this situation might soon change. There is certainly evidence that the risk of suicide among unemployed people is much higher than among those in employment, retired people and home-makers, but is unemployment the only factor? While people may contemplate suicide for some time, committing the act itself is almost always impulsive. Any factor which increases impulsiveness will contribute to suicide and the usual one is alcohol. Brendan and Dermot Walsh of University College Dublin have analysed Irish suicide rates from 1968 to 2009 and concluded that factors other than unemployment, including alcohol consumption, play an important role in suicide rates, especially amongst men.

Their first challenge was defining suicide at all. While some deaths are clearly intentional, there is another category where the facts are less clear-cut called ‘deaths undetermined’, generally believed to contain a high proportion of suicides. So many Irish deaths fell into this category at various times in the twentieth century that Irish suicide rates may be artificially low in some years. Male suicide rates were consistently higher than female rates by a factor of about 4 to 1; this is a typical finding across many countries and the reasons for it are unknown. The marked gender difference in frequency of suicide and other lifestyle factors mean that data must be considered separately for men and women.

Once suicide rates were plotted against unemployment rates, it was clear that changes in levels of unemployment in Ireland

did not match closely with changes in suicide rates. The male suicide rate actually peaked in the early years of the ‘Celtic Tiger’ (2000) and fell only slowly although unemployment was at an historic low. When the recession began in 2007, male suicide rates rose once more. Simple visual inspection suggested that unemployment might explain some of the fluctuations in suicide, but that some other factor was required.

When male suicide rates were plotted against alcohol consumption per head, there was a very close match, particularly amongst the 25-34 year age group, which currently has the highest rate of suicide. Alcohol consumption in Ireland has risen steadily from the late 1960s to peak in 2001 and has then declined in every year since then. The decline in alcohol consumption was accompanied by a decline in male suicide rates.

Subsequent mathematical modelling of the data for men and women separately showed that unemployment is not a significant influence on the female suicide rate and alcohol consumption is only important among women aged 15 – 34. Suicide among women aged 35 and over could not be well explained by the Walsh’s model. By contrast, the long term contribution of alcohol consumption to the male suicide rate has been much greater than the unemployment rate. Increased alcohol consumption between the late 1980s and 2000 more than doubled the suicide rate among Irish men aged 15 – 34.

These analyses showed that it was the *combination* of rising unemployment and increasing alcohol consumption that led to the increased male suicide rates in the 1970s and again in the 1990s. The return to a rising trend in suicide since 2007 is due to a surge in unemployment, but the continued decline in alcohol consumption has dampened the increase in suicide rates. The Walsh brothers described their data as showing a ‘tug of war’ between rising unemployment rates and falling alcohol consumption with an outcome of a relatively modest increase in male suicide rates.

In conclusion, they commented that suicide amongst large groups of the population (women over 35 as well as older men) could not be explained by their model. The impact of recent changes to family structure may contribute to suicide among women, but these issues need further study. Nevertheless, while unemployment is an important contributor, alcohol consumption is even more important in explaining changes in suicide rates among younger men.

Felicity Allen



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Will the Piper be paid?

Irish Economy

Readers would know that in September, Ireland repaid its €55 billion of bank bonds debt by borrowings from the European Central Bank (ECB). Known as the 'banking bailout', this step was represented to the public as both essential and as the only solution. In fact, not only was it not the only solution, from the taxpayers' viewpoint it was the worst that could have been chosen.

Like Australia, the Irish government stepped in to guarantee the debts of its major banks when the financial crisis first struck and Irish banks began staggering under the weight of loans to developers who suddenly found that they could not pay them back. Under the terms of the agreement, the government could have terminated this guarantee on the grounds that all of the major banks had withheld important information about their level of indebtedness and their solvency. Once the guarantee had been ended, the government could then have passed a new law to turn the outstanding bank debt into shares in those banks. This would have ended the banking crisis *at the expense of the bondholders*. This idea is hardly revolutionary or unknown. In the form of the 'Bank Resolution Regime', it has already been implemented in England.

What are the pros and cons of the two approaches? The positive aspect of a resolution regime is that it offers the possibility of sharing the costs of cleaning up the mess with the bondholders, instead of passing it on directly to the taxpayers. Unfortunately, it does not repay German and French banks immediately. Accepting a 'bank bailout' from the ECB refunds the other banks, but it means that the Irish government has accepted an open-ended commitment to meet bank losses that exceeds Ireland's fiscal capacity.

Few people are aware that a key condition of the ECB rescue is that the Irish government must use €17.5 billion of its own cash and pension reserves to shore up its economy. In addition the loan will incur an interest rate of 5.8% which is widely seen as too high for Ireland to repay. Fintan O'Toole, a well-known author, described the bailout as '...the longest ransom note in history: do what we

tell you and you may, in time, get your country back.' The interest rate has supposedly been set high to discourage other countries from applying for a bailout. While labour union activists protested in the streets of Dublin, shares in the major Irish banks rose.

Whether Ireland can turn its economy around, even with the strict austerity measures already imposed, remains to be seen.

Calculating the cost of the bank bailout to the Irish taxpayer is not easy for a number of reasons, but a reasonable estimate would be €70 billion. A bill of this size completely dwarfs the spending cuts that have already been made at considerable human cost. Relative to the tax revenues, a bill this size means that all of the tax collected from Ireland for the next three years would be needed to repay the losses incurred by Anglo bank alone. Ireland is insolvent.

When companies become insolvent, they generally declare bankruptcy and go out of business. When countries become insolvent, this is known as 'sovereign default', they can no longer issue bonds, conduct normal transactions with other countries and central banking agencies step in and impose financial regimes. The Irish government has anticipated insolvency and built up a cash reserve sufficient to fund the country until the New Year. The ECB has funded the Irish banks in order to avert the kind of disruption that happened to Greece. The emergency funding is a temporary measure only. Whatever else happens the Irish banking system will soon be under the direct control of the ECB as a result of the banking bailout. If the ECB demands that they write no more new mortgages, house prices will collapse.

What no one has considered is what will happen next. What happens when the foreign creditor who cannot be

repaid is the ECB – the bank which has now stepped in to rescue the Irish state? The banking crisis started with large loans to about 50 developers. The next stage inevitably involves mortgages lent to hundreds of thousands of ordinary Irish families. Already one in eight mortgages, or 100,000 families, are behind on payments.

So far banks have been relying on social stigma to ensure that people will continue to pay their instalments despite high unemployment and pay cuts and this has been working. Mortgage holders have done their utmost to meet their payments; some have borrowed from parents and some have let other bills lapse rather than fall behind. If borrowers develop the view that the banks cynically persuaded them into mortgages which they must have known would be unaffordable, they may wonder why borrowers should play by the rules when the banks have not. This approach has now become common in America, where it is known as 'strategic default'. People realise that they can live in their houses for several years before the bank gets around to evicting them and that they can then rent another house for less than the interest rates on their mortgages. Aha, but what about being sued for debt by the bank? As the old saying has it: 'you can't get blood from a stone'. There is no point suing someone who has no assets.

Whether Ireland can turn its economy around, even with the strict austerity measures already imposed, remains to be seen. Unemployment levels, at 13.9% is the 3rd highest in the Euro zone and one of the highest recorded. The national minimum wage, for those lucky enough to be in work, has been reduced. Nevertheless, the export sector is improving. Exports have risen by 18.5% from the same month a year ago, while imports have remained unchanged. Some economists now dare to hope the Ireland is pricing herself back into the market, becoming more competitive and so may ultimately repay her debts.

Felicity Allen

Compiled from: The Irish Times, Associated Press *and* Irish Independent.



And they said it wouldn't last

Photo: jpmawet via flickr

Imagine you are a high profile recording star based in London and are planning what may be your final career tour. You need a decent sized rehearsal space, ahead of your first gig, preferably somewhere not in the direct sights of the UK press but ideally in an English speaking region and of course not too far from home in case you need to nip back for some urgent business. 'How about somewhere picturesque that's out of season?' pipes up the new junior in the manager's office. Everyone looks at each other in one of those *it was so obvious* moments. Done deal!

So it was that the good citizens of Killarney woke up last September to find Cliff Richard and the Shadows had suddenly landed in their midst. A civic reception was organised by the local dignitaries and by all accounts the lads had a great time. They didn't need to use their free bus passes once during the whole trip. See goo.gl/CSHrt for the video of a very revealing interview that was broadcast on GMTV at the time.

Cliff has had a long and distinguished career in Britain and elsewhere. He was packaged initially (back in 1958, no less) as the 'UK Elvis' at a time when that was exactly what the UK record business needed. He soon managed to forge his own identity and was in a strong enough position to stay ahead of the game when the earth shifted in 1963. Interestingly, our own Daniel O'Donnell has been marketed as a kind of 'Irish Cliff Richard' and there's even Paul Child in Wales who was billed last year as the 'Welsh Daniel O'Donnell'. We should probably call it a day before we get a 'Scottish Paul Child' but one never knows with these things.

Back to Cliff. The man himself is refreshingly honest about his retirement plans. His recent autobiography covers aspects of his personal life that up to now have been the object of speculation, but that in no way diminishes the huge volume of recorded output and the success he has

earned. His main markets have always been UK, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand but he has a sizeable following in most commonwealth countries and in mainland Europe. Famously he failed to crack the USA, although Canada has been good, notably in the early eighties.

The internet is choc-a-bloc with Cliff tribute pages so anyone tracking down obscure albums and singles has plenty to choose from. The length of his career and the worldwide range of his sales, with certain albums made only for specific markets, sometimes make it difficult to find something that you 'know exists or may have heard about long ago'. So the best plan is to look at more than one source. Cliff's official website lists 149 singles, 44 EPs, 87 albums and 11 compilations. There is a full track listing given for all the albums, except one, and cover artwork is also shown so you'll be able to recognise something at a glance.

The Wikipedia entry for Cliff's discography however, takes a more businesslike view of things. No track listings or artwork but we do get the official sales figures and certifications along with the chart placings in the main markets. The overall totals here are different: they show 154 singles, 46 EPs, 88 albums and 15 compilations. For good measure the albums are also categorised into seven groups as either studio, live, video, foreign, soundtrack, stage, or gospel. That said, some entries on Cliff's official website (eg for limited editions) are not shown on Wikipedia and vice versa so you need both to get the whole picture, or perhaps close to it because even with all that detail there are still one or two omissions. I have a cassette album here, dating from 1983, that was an official Australian release but is not mentioned on either list for some strange reason.

Anyone looking to (re)acquaint themselves with Cliff's work will be

glad of the sales figures because these show that two albums which outsold all the others. *Private Collection (1988)* went quadruple platinum in the UK and *From a Distance: The Event (1990)* scored a double platinum. The *Singles Collection (2002)*, a hefty 6-CD set with every single released up to that point is also recommended for music historians. For something a bit different look out for *On The Continent (1997)* a 4-CD set with Cliff singing in German, French, Spanish and a couple of other languages. The sales figures also reveal that before 1976 he was seen by the record buying public as mainly a singles artist, albeit a hugely popular one, but then he had a breakthrough with *I'm Nearly Famous*, and collected a gold disc. Since then nearly all of his studio and compilation albums have been certified along with *Songs From Heathcliff*, the 1995 stage show.

These days established artists can have a lot of fun with duets and quite often expand their fan base into the bargain. You may have heard Cliff singing *Danny Boy* with Helmut Lotti and wondered where it is actually available or if it was maybe just a one-off for a TV show or concert. Look for *Two's Company, The Duets (2006)* which, besides Helmut, also has him singing alongside Barry Gibb, Anne Murray, Phil Everly and many others including even a young chap from Donegal. Now who on earth could that possibly be?

Meanwhile back in Killarney things slowly returned to normal. The lakes have regained their number one spot in the charts and the Gleneagle Hotel and its adjacent event centre are now back to hosting local talent. But perhaps not quite....they say a certain taxi still cruises around playing *The Shadows Greatest Hits* on cassette the whole day and the driver himself may very well treat you to a few bars of *Congratulations*.

Stuart Traill

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L to R: Alex Atwood (Minister for Social Development), Fr Des Wilson, Mrs Elizabeth Logue (founder of Doors of Hope, now the Conway Mill Trust) and Martin McGuinness (Deputy First Minister). *Photo from Conway Mill Trust*

A new life for a Belfast mill

On a recent trip to Belfast, Bernie Brophy was encouraged by developments in the Conway Mill revitalisation project.

On 25 November 2010, the refurbished Conway Mill on the Falls Road, West Belfast, was officially opened. Built in 1842, the Falls Fax Spinning Co Ltd was one of the longest working linen manufacturing mills in West Belfast when it closed in 1976.

In 1982-3, the Mill, which is a very large five-storey complex, was leased to a group of community activists for the purpose of stimulating, promoting and supporting community economic development. One of the founder members of the Conway Mill Committee was Fr Des Wilson. The Mill was in a derelict state and had been vandalised. Volunteers commenced the long and arduous task of cleaning up the building. One floor was given over for the provision of adult education. Other floors were prepared for use by local businesses and community groups.

In 1999, the Conway Mill Preservation Trust Ltd was set up. Its aim was the preservation, protection and restoration of the Conway Mill complex for the benefit of the inhabitants of Belfast, and West Belfast in particular, and involved a major refurbishment of the Mill. Sinn Fein supported the project from the outset and over £5,000,000 was provided by the Northern Ireland Government towards the funding of the project. In addition, funds were

provided by various sources including the International Fund for Ireland which contributed £1,000,000. The project is due to be completed in January 2011. It has preserved the heritage of one of the most significant architectural landmarks in West Belfast. It has created 30,000 square feet of rental space. It has provided employment for a large number of people with the expectation that numerous further jobs will be created as the building is put to extensive use.

Jim Neeson is Chairperson of the Conway Mill Preservation Trust. He is well known to many people in Australia. He has accompanied Sinn Fein visitors, including Gerry Adams, on speaking tours to Australia over a number of years. At the official opening of the refurbished Mill, Jim gave a warm welcome to the guests, including the Deputy First Minister, Martin McGuinness, the Minister for Social Development, Alex Attwood, and the local Sinn Fein MP for the area, Gerry Adams. Jim said: 'The refurbishment of Conway Mill is an important milestone, not just in its long history but also for the community in West Belfast. These much needed updated facilities offer attractive opportunities for new and existing businesses both locally and throughout the wider Belfast area. The tenants who now occupy Conway Mill represent the diversity of social enterprise, community business and creative industries, which have sustained Conway Mill

throughout the past 30 years.'

In his address, Martin McGuinness said: 'The project is based on the notion of self help and about empowering people to define their own future, to take charge of their economy, their education and their identity. All people, given the opportunity and support, will prosper.' The final speaker was Father Des Wilson who officially launched the new facility. Father Des said: 'I have always thought of the revitalisation of Conway Mill as a symbol of the revitalisation of West Belfast and therefore of the whole city.'

I was shown over the whole of the Mill in September 2010 and I was impressed by the project, the history and the dedication of the people involved. Jim Neeson stressed to me that the Trust is non-profit taking and income received by the Trust is spent on the operation of the Trust. He also pointed out that finding suitable tenants – be they local or from overseas – is essential to the development of the enterprise. A tour of the Conway Mill is a must if you are in Belfast. An interesting website to visit for a virtual tour is the Conway Mill Preservation site at www.conwaymilltrust.org.

Whilst the peace process still has some way to go in Northern Ireland, there are a number of good things happening on the ground. This is one of them.

Bernie Brophy, a foundation member of AIHN, is a Melbourne lawyer with an abiding interest in the pursuit of justice in Northern Ireland

St Patrick's Eve in Melbourne

Remarks and Reminiscences

An extract from an article by Edmund Finn published in *The Advocate*, March 20, 1880. Born in 1819 in Tipperary, Finn, who went to school in Ireland with John O'Shanassy, later a Premier of Victoria, arrived in Melbourne in 1841. He became a journalist and, writing under the pseudonym 'Garryowen', published a series of newspaper articles on Melbourne's beginnings. His book *The Chronicles of Early Melbourne 1835 to 1853* was published in two volumes in 1888.

'St. Patrick's Eve' formed a special feature in those old celebrations – for about half past 11 p.m. a Band commenced to parade the few streets of the then Melbourne, playing such tunes as *Garryowen*, *The Sprig of Shillelagh*, *Gallant Tipperary*, *Patrick's Day*, *The Girl I left Behind Me*, *We Won't go Home till Morning*, and other choice selections. An immense crowd accompanied, and the instrumental performance was drowned every few minutes by salvoes of cheering that might be heard miles away. This vocal exercise produced such a dryness of the larynx that innumerable 'whistles had to be wetted' at every public-house on the line of march; and the result was that before the 'beating of the boundaries' was half concluded, a large infusion of Heathenism was mixed up with the revelry, for Bacchus had as many worshippers as Patrick. There were no 'broken heads or flaming houses' and the carnival was one of good humour and cordiality.

The 'Procession' always halted at a few particular places to pay the compliment of a serenade, such as St. Francis's Presbytery; Judge a'Beckett's, in Collins Street East, for he was a general favourite; Mr O'Shanassy's, in Collins street; and *The Herald* office in Little Collins street. *The Herald* was then the semi-official organ of the Irishmen; for though its proprietor (Mr Cavanagh) was neither loved nor trusted, Mr Finn was a regular fixture on that paper, and his 'boss' permitted him to do as much as he liked in 'cracking up' the Irish Saint and all his belongings. And it paid Cavanagh to give such a *carte blanche*.

The early part of the next day was, as a matter of course, a season of tribulation – the passing through that very unpleasant ordeal known as 'Suffering a recovery'; and the Irish homeopathic specific of 'some of the hairs of the dog that bit you' was resorted to. Singular to say, notwithstanding this 'preliminary cantering' to the drinking line, the St Patrick's Festivals, as a rule, were the most harmo-

nious and orderly of the national reunions occurring in Melbourne. This I say advisedly, because – incredible as it may seem – as a matter of fact, for twenty years I was present at every public convivial gathering that came off in the city.

In 1840 the first public dinner in honour of St. Patrick's day took place in Melbourne, but it was of a somewhat exclusive coterie, and some little snob-

'The annual
demonstrations now
to be witnessed
cannot be excelled
anywhere out
of America'

bery was displayed. In 1843 the first St Patrick's procession, with drums beating and colours flying, paraded the streets; and 'Big John (O'Shanassy),'

The man who led the van
Of the Irish Volunteers,
arrayed in green scarf and rosettes, marched in front like an animated round tower. The processionists were similarly decorated, and marshalled by two of the staunchest Irishmen in the colony – one a curious-looking, cross-faced but kindly old fellow named Hughy Cain, who, by a strange incongruity, shared all the affection he was possessed of between St. Patrick and the Freemasons, of which craft he was P.N.G., or something like it; and the other was a Pat Kennedy – ever only too ready or willing to be a pat-riot; to drink with you, or knock you down, according to his humour; but he preferred the former.

A halt was called at the then unpretending-looking church of St Francis and the processionists crowding the edifice, Fr. Geoghegan preached one of those sermons of his, which (*sui generis*) would move even a 'Turk, Jew, or an Atheist'. The procession returned as it came; and

in the evening there was an Irish Ball at the Royal Exchange Hotel – kept by an Irishman of the very non-Hibernicised name of Campbell.

The annual procession was kept up for a few years, until an Orange row in 1846 led to the passing of the Party Processions Act, still in force; and though there were strong doubts whether it applied to the Irish processions mentioned, they were discontinued or rather suspended, for peace sake, but in later years they were resumed on a much more extensive scale, and the annual demonstrations now to be witnessed cannot be excelled anywhere out of America.

In 1846 a very successful St. Patrick's dinner came off at an hotel, the Builders' Arms, in Little Collins street east, where Henry Moor – Melbourne's most popular Mayor – was a guest. It was presided over by Mr. O'Shanassy, who made the best speech, in proposing the health of the Queen, I have ever heard. The toast is generally knocked off in a few commonplace, fulsome phrases (a very bad compliment, by the way); but upon this occasion the chairman, by mere massive eloquence, and most appropriate illustrations, gathered from historical research, lifted it out of the beaten track, and made it virtually the toast of the evening.

On March 17th, 1846, the same place witnessed a more numerous gathering. The hotel was built in at some distance from the street alignment; and to provide sufficient elbow-room for the feeding lions, Mr. Tim Lane, the host, had put together a semi-weatherboard, semi-canvas cross between a tent and stockade, which was dignified with the name of pavilion. Here about 500 Melburnians, mostly Irish – but well sprinkled with other nationalities – congregated, and the utmost enjoyment and enthusiasm prevailed. O'Shanassy presided; the poet-laureate recited an ode, and trotted out a couple of his show-scholars, well primed for the occasion; and Saxon 'Johnny Fawkner' became so captivated by the

charms of the green, or the 'creature', that he actually toasted the company to a song. Some capital speeches were made specially by the chairman, Dr Greeves, Messrs Edward Curr, Finn, O'Farrell, and Hayes; but Father Geoghegan distanced them all. As a preacher he has never been beaten here; and as a post-prandial orator it was not easy to find his equal.

For a couple of years celebrations were held at Smith's Old Queen's Theatre, corner of Queen and Little Bourke streets, for 'John Thomas' took kindly to the Irish (for his better half was one of them).

It should be remarked that in those times balls and suppers were much in vogue for the annual 'hoopla' of patriotic exhilaration; and though now and then the Irish used to bow gallantly to the wishes of Nora Creina or Molly Bawn, English, Scotch and Welsh fandangoes in this way were out of the question. In 1850 and 1851 there were a couple of rattling *reunions* of this kind in St Patrick's Hall; but this building being rented by the Government as a One-horse Parliament House, the Irish submitted to a voluntary eviction, and had to seek other quarters, which they did with varying fortune; but St. Patrick's day was never allowed to pass away 'undrank, unhonoured and unsung'.

In his later years Edmund Finn became a clerk of the Legislative Council of



St Patrick's Day in Melbourne, from *Illustrated Australian News* 1881

the parliament of Victoria, a position arranged for him by his friend from schooldays, Sir John O'Shanassy, whom Finn described in his Advocate article:

In those old times the then plain J. O'Shanassy was the great bulwark of the Irish – a kind of Ajax and Ulysses rolled into one, equally ready to defend them with his strong right

arm, as to counsel them with words of wisdom. No person could have rendered more valuable services to the Irish cause than he did, and his name should be treasured with a gratitude green and unfading as the shamrock itself.

Garryowen
(submitted by Patrick Morgan)

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Gold, democracy and Eureka

Address by Professor Stuart Macintyre to Annual Eureka Dinner, Celtic Club, 3 December 2010

‘Why do you all but ignore the discovery of gold and its many consequences? You know perfectly well what it meant to us materially, how enormously it assisted in peopling and developing the interior, but have not realised perhaps the extent to which it revolutionised our early politics.’

The writer was Alfred Deakin, responding to an essay on Australia written in 1912 by Lionel Curtis, an ardent English imperialist. Lionel Curtis came to Australia in 1910 as part of a tour of the British Dominions with the object of creating branches of an organisation dedicated to allowing them a greater say in the working of the British Empire, strengthening the machinery for consultation and upholding shared ideals. This organisation was given the romantic title of the Round Table.

Seeking advice to how to form branches of the Round Table in Australia, Curtis consulted at Melbourne’s Parliament House with the ailing Alfred Deakin, who had just lost office and would shortly retire from politics. The Englishman was somewhat taken aback by the vehemence of the Australian statesman’s criticism of the Colonial Office, and Deakin did not join the Round Table, but many of his followers did. Deakin kept in touch with Curtis. Hence his letter correcting the Englishman’s misunderstanding of Australian history. Curtis’ essay placed great weight on the wool industry, at that time the great export commodity, and Deakin admitted its economic significance, but it was gold, he insisted, that shaped the society. He wrote: ‘It gave us a large proportion of the best of our population, men with a far wider and more advanced liberalism’ than before 1850, and ‘it revolutionised our politics’. More generally, he added, these ‘bold, enterprising, active, inventive, effervescent gold settlers’ effected ‘the total transformation of the character of our people’.

The lasting effects of gold are apparent to any Victorian with eyes to see. The parliament on Spring Street and various other public buildings erected

in Melbourne during the 1850s and 1860s are on a grander scale than their counterparts in other capital cities; so too the main streets of Ballarat, Bendigo and Castlemaine display the bounty of the past. The white population of Australia doubled in the decade following the gold rush, and half lived in Victoria. Here, immediately, was a store of wealth for investment and many consumers with high levels of disposable income. As the alluvial fields declined, some diggers went onto the land and others built up manufacturing and service industries. As their children reached school age, Victoria pioneered a system of public education, secular, free and compulsory. As they came to adulthood, married and set up their own households, the con-

The lasting effects of gold are apparent to anyone with eyes to see

struction industry simulated a new spurt of growth in Marvellous Melbourne.

The pastoral industry created great wealth but it was concentrated in a few hands. While the wool kings held vast runs, their labour needs were modest, especially after fencing wire made it possible to dispense with shepherds. A retinue of servants maintained the grand houses, but the itinerant shearers were provided with primitive conditions and worked under oppressive regulations.

It was different on the goldfields. Here thousands of men and women congregated, working alluvial deposits on small claims, in rural settings that were quickly dotted with canvas and then transformed into urban centres with houses and shops. Government provision lagged behind social need, and the residents created many of their own institutions. They formed congregations and built churches; created mechanics’ institutes, libraries and sporting clubs; established building and insurance societies.

Out of this came the Australian Natives Association, the great force for federation in the 1890s, and some of Australia’s most influential unions. William Guthrie Spence arrived in 1853 at Creswick from the Orkneys with his parents at the age of seven. In the following year he reputedly witnessed the Eureka stockade. Spence would lead the Creswick Miners’ Union into the Amalgamated Miners Association and then become the founding president of the Shearers Union.

Think also of Robert Lindsay, the Creswick doctor, whose sons Norman, Lionel and Lindsay, and their friends Edward, William and Ambrose Dyson, sons of a Ballarat mining engineer, blazed an artistic trail through Melbourne and Sydney. Or Walter Richardson, the respected Ballarat obstetrician and spiritualist, whose daughter was our first great novelist. Or, again, of Henry Lawson, whose childhood was spent on the diggings of New South Wales. One of his earliest poems is *The Roaring Days*.

Oh who would paint a goldfield,
And paint the picture right.
As we have often seen it
In early morning’s light;
The yellow heaps of mullock
With spots of red and white,
The scattered quartz that glistened
Like diamonds in the light.

...
O they were lionhearted
Who gave our country birth:
O they were of the stoutest sons
From all the land on earth.

Historians have pondered that claim of ‘the stoutest sons’ — and also the daughters. The tide of immigration made for a remarkably diverse population: like Lawson’s father, Niels Larsen, many came from Europe and North America. In contrast to the earlier schemes that transported convicts or assisted paupers, these immigrants paid their own way; they had some savings, they were young, and they had comparatively high levels of education. Geoffrey Serle pointed out that the 1861 Victorian census showed just 11 per cent of men and 22 per cent of women could neither read nor write — less than half the proportions in Britain.

For reasons that might not have been properly explored, the goldfield centres remained incubators of talent

that enriched Australian life for several generations. As Lawson's poem attests, many diggers followed the golden trail to fields in New South Wales, Queensland and later Western Australia, while others crossed the Tasman to the South Island of New Zealand. Wherever they went, the same restless, enterprising energy was apparent, the same forms of association and democratic impulses.

Part of the goldfields tradition was the monster meeting at Eureka demanding redress from grievances, the oath, the Stockade, the deaths, arrests and acquittals. The Southern Cross flag flown in Ballarat in 1854 became a symbol of collective action in defence of liberty or pursuit of industrial and political change; it was flown by striking seamen in 1878, and at Barcaldine during the shearers' strike in 1891 and later on the Kalgoorlie-Boulder field when the miners demanded adequate political representation, and again during the campaign to defeat conscription in 1916-1917. Eureka, its symbolism and meaning, has been claimed by many, its causes and consequences repeatedly argued over by historians. This is testament to its enduring power. It is often claimed as the seedbed of Australian democracy, but that particular claim has been criticised as historically inaccurate, ignoring the prior agitation for democratic self-government centred in Sydney and the preparations already made by the British government for representative and responsible government in New South Wales, South Australia, Tasmania and Victoria.

There is by no means a general awareness of what happened at the Stockade and the circumstances surrounding it. We might say that Eureka has strong brand identification, but knowledge and understanding are far from secure. Even when it is commemorated, the history of Eureka is often weak. I have also encountered parochialism in my work for the Australian Curriculum and Assessment Authority that is preparing a new national history curriculum. I repeatedly hear objections that the gold rush of the 1850s and the events of Eureka are not relevant to students in Queensland and Western Australia, that they are local in their significance and that for too long Victorian and New South Wales historians have

foisted a south-eastern Australian story on the rest of the country. This was an objection that Alfred Deakin anticipated in his letter to Lionel Curtis. Gold placed its permanent stamp, he said, 'upon all the colonies though in South Australia only indirectly'. He meant that all the colonies had their rushes, their own infusions of a particular kind of people with distinctive values and aspirations, and that the traditions formed on the Victorian diggings were carried to the new ones.

Gold worked its transformation first and most momentously here in Victoria and it has a special place in our history. Geoffrey Serle, that fine Victorian historian did much to revive interest in Eureka. His book *The Golden Age* is dedicated 'In memory of four of my great-grandparents

Gold was transformative and Eureka the most signal demonstration of that

and my four grandparents who migrated from England to Victoria between 1853 and 1860'. My own ancestry cannot compete with his.

In the larger sense indicated by Alfred Deakin, gold was transformative and Eureka the most signal demonstration of that transformation. The burning of Bentley's hotel is a crucial turning point in the chain of events that ended with the storming of the Eureka Stockade. The hotel, on the Eureka lead of the diggings, was a substantial affair, with stables, a billiard room and bowling alley, and accommodation for eighty guests. Its proprietor was James Bentley, a former convict with very good connections. One of these was John D'Ewes, the police magistrate, so that the trading hours at Bentley's hotel were lax, and for this reason two young Scots, James Scobie and Peter Martin, rapped on the door when making their way back from a convivial reunion in Ballarat shortly after midnight on 7 October 1854 for further refresh-

ments. Scobie's persistence when turned away and the breaking of a window led to an assault on him with a shovel by another crony of Bentley, a former chief constable who had lined his pockets at Castlemaine.

The protest meeting on a hot spring day on 17 October attracted a large crowd and quickly turned violent. Bentley fled to the official camp, while Robert Rede glowered, and the timber structure of the hotel was lit and soon burned to the ground. The arrest of Andrew McIntyre (no relation!) and another man was followed by Rede imposing a huge bail, and brought further mass meetings, leading to the formation of the Ballarat Reform League in November. A magistrate's inquiry conducted by D'Ewes and the Goldfield Commissioner, Robert Rede, and his Assistant (who dissented) hastened to exonerate Bentley.

It was in the League that the discontent against maladministration and corruption was channelled into political demands. The Ballarat Reform League's demands included the claim that every citizen had an inalienable right to a voice in making the laws he [their language] is called on to obey. Furthermore, the League proclaimed, if the people of Victoria were not represented in the parliament then they had 'the right to resist, and if necessary to remove the irresponsible power which so tyrannises over them'.

The prominence in the League of diggers from England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland who had been active Chartists found expression in demands for manhood suffrage and payment of members of parliament, two points in the Charter.

Chartism took its name from the People's Charter of 1838, a popular movement to make the government properly representative and accountable. The Charter specified six particular reforms:

- Manhood suffrage
- Secret ballot (so that electors would be protected from intimidation)
- Removal of property qualifications for members of parliament, and
- Payment of members (so that rich and poor would have equal rights to participate in government)
- Electorates equal in population (to prevent the favouring of particular interests), and



The Eureka Stockade: an over-painted photographic print, from the painted canvas by Izett Watson and Thaddeus Welch, which was exhibited as a painted cyclorama in the 'Battle of Waterloo' Cyclorama building, Fitzroy, ca. 1891 *State Library of Victoria*

- Annual parliaments (so that members of parliament would be answerable to the electors).

The Charter itself originally took the form of a mass petition to be presented to the House of Commons, but when that was done in 1839 and again in 1842 (when the Charter had more than three million signatures) it was summarily rejected. As a result the Chartist movement turned to direct action, with strikes and uprisings, arrests, convictions and transportation to Australia. A third petition was prepared in 1848, and if the par-

liament did not accept it, there was a plan to proceed regardless with the election of separate national assembly, but that too was rejected, and repressive laws banned assemblies and agitation.

Chartism was not the only radical influence operating on the goldfields. There were Germans, Italians and others who had participated in the European uprisings of 1848 that briefly replaced monarchies and autocratic forms of government with republican democracies. There were also American diggers, with their own republican convictions. Their

presence caused particular alarm among the colonial authorities, especially Sir Charles Hotham, the new governor, who saw the unrest as a conspiracy to overturn authority and deprive Britain of its wealthy colony. Hotham summarily rejected a deputation of miners' leaders and sent additional troops to Ballarat.

Another mass meeting at the end of November heard from the leaders of the deputation, and by now the Southern Cross was flying from the platform. A motion was passed to burn the hated miners' licences, and on the following



day Commissioner Rede rashly ordered a licence hunt. He and his police met with hoots, abuse and a volley of stones. Rede read the Riot Act, fired a volley over the heads of the crowd and retired with half a dozen prisoners. Once more a protest meeting gathered and Peter Lalor mounted the stump to proclaim Liberty and all for volunteers to defend it. Those who did knelt, their right hands raised to the flag, repeated after Lalor:

‘We swear by the Southern Cross to stand truly by each other, to fight to defend our rights and liberties.’

They did so at a roughly improvised barricade. It occupied the space of about four suburban housing blocks, and inside was a couple of stores, Peter Lalor’s hut, several tents and a smithy (used to beat iron into pikeheads). The stockade was a rough defence of stumps, boulders, some carts, and timber slabs used in sinking a shaft, to form a rampart a bit over a metre high. The men inside had perhaps 80 or so muskets and pistols, with a small amount of powder and shot; the rest had pikes. Such a barricade could not be defended when it was overrun in

the early morning of 3 December. Three hundred fully equipped soldiers and police quickly overcame the resistance of the men, many of them sleeping. The slaughter did not end with the capture of the flag but spilled over into the nearby camps. The ringleaders were rounded up and taken down to Melbourne for trial on charges of treason. Army reinforcements were rushed to Victoria, the goldfield was placed under martial law.

Some called it a rising, some a rebellion, some a massacre.

Lalor’s subsequent statement empha-

sised the legitimate grievances, the malpractice of law, and what he called the ‘trampling on the constitution’. Hotham, on the other hand, told the Colonial Office in London how

‘..the French Red Republican, the German political metaphysician, the American Lone Star Member, and the British Chartist here meet not to dig gold but to agitate, to overturn the Government and seize the Land.’

That view was not shared by the colonists. On the 6th of December a protest meeting in Melbourne showed the general sympathy for the diggers; juries in Melbourne refused to convict the defendants.

A Royal Commission had been established three weeks earlier to investigate the goldfields. Following Eureka, the Commission made scathing criticisms of the goldfield administration and recommended a comprehensive overhaul. The monthly licence fee was replaced by a low-cost miner’s right (£one per annum), the goldfield commissioners by accountable wardens and elected courts of mines. D’Ewes was sacked by a board of inquiry into the Bentley verdict, along with another policeman who took hush money from sly groggers. Bentley was retried and given three years for manslaughter. Rede was removed, given other government jobs and died in Toorak in 1904. Lalor, on the other hand, emerged from hiding after the acquittal of the Eureka defendants, and was elected in 1855 to represent Ballarat in the Victorian Legislative Council.

What about the long-term effects of the Eureka Stockade? When the tragic events occurred, a new constitution for self-government in Victoria was about to come into operation. Following Victoria’s separation from NSW in 1850, the secretary of state for the colonies in London in 1852 invited the Legislative Councils of four Australian colonies, NSW, Vic, SA and Tas to frame constitutions for responsible government. These Legislative Councils were one-third appointed, two-thirds elected on a restricted franchise. They had legislative powers, but not control over the administration. Responsible government, on the other hand, was a system in which the executive — the ministers who controlled the administra-

tion — were drawn from the legislature and responsible to it for their actions, the same principle that applies to today. The draft constitution for Victoria was sent to England in March 1854 and enacted in 1855.

The Victorian constitution was modelled on the British one. The governor would represent the Crown (though he would be appointed by and answerable to the Colonial Office in London), while there would be two houses of parliament, the lower one (the Legislative Assembly) mimicking the House of Commons with a broad franchise, and the exclusive upper one (the Legislative Council) conceived as a local equivalent to the House of Lords, to act as a brake on rash measures.

After Eureka, the momentum for democracy was insistent

This was less than a democracy. A voter for the Assembly had to be an adult male resident in the colony who owned or occupied property, or else held an annual miner’s licence. A member of the Assembly had to own substantial property (£2000 at a time when a labourer earned a couple of hundred pounds a year). Voters for the Council had to be males owning property worth £1000, and members males owning £5000 worth of property. The Council members, furthermore, were elected for a ten-year term, and they could block any legislative measure passed by the Assembly. This was the system of government devised before Eureka by a group of men fearful of the unsettling effects of gold and determined to protect the colony from democratic excess.

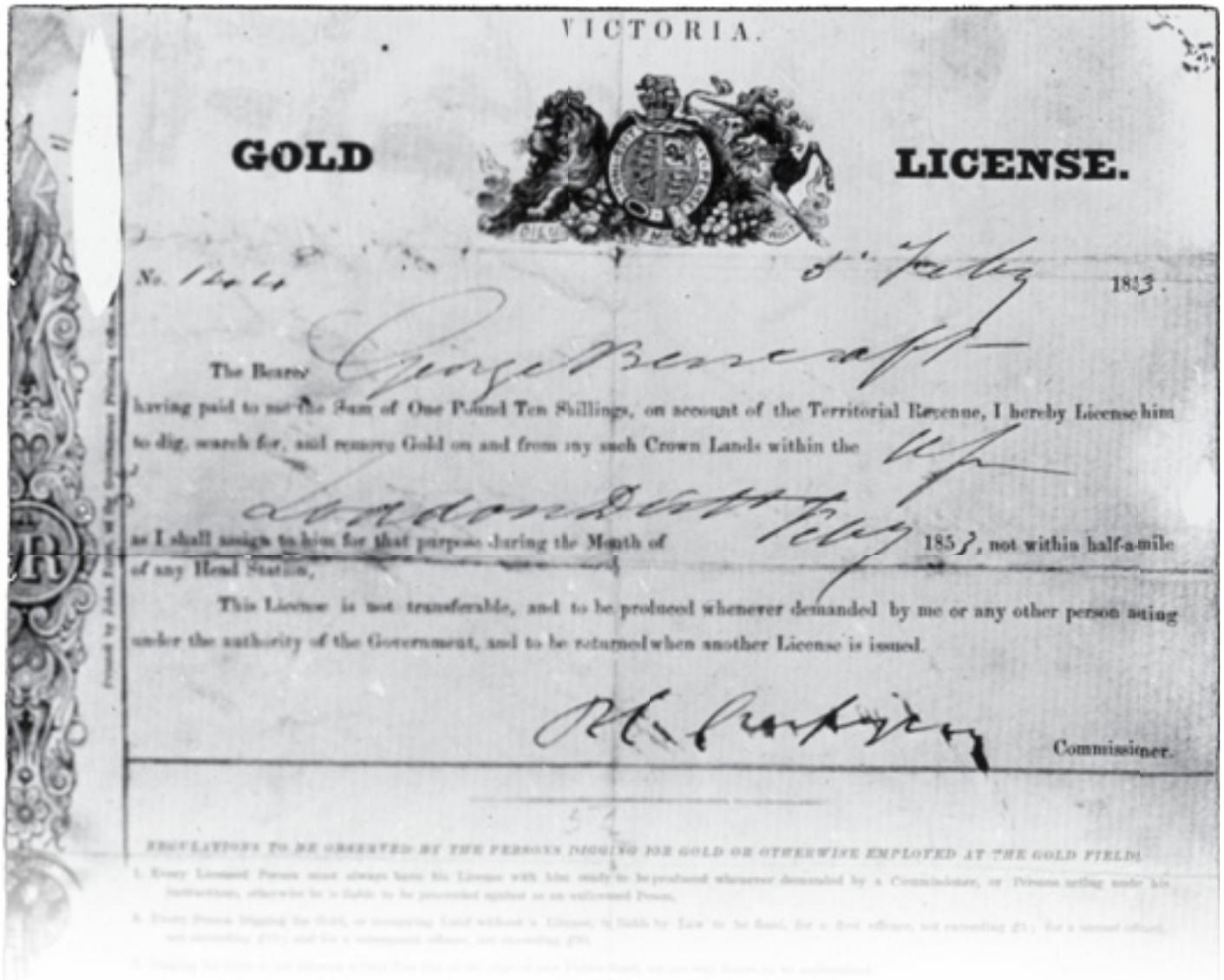
Yet after Eureka the momentum for democracy was insistent. The very first parliament abolished property qualifications for members of the Legislative Assembly and introduced manhood

suffrage (though it also allowed plural voting, so that a man could vote in every electorate where he held property). The initial provision for Assembly elections every five years was reduced to three. (I’m not sure that implementing the original Chartist demand for annual elections would be greeted today with jubilation.). The maldistribution of electorates in the original Assembly (the thirteen squatting seats averaged 250 voters each, while the eleven goldfields seats averaged 1850 voters) was reduced in 1858. In 1856 the secret ballot was introduced to Victoria, the first jurisdiction to do so and influential beyond Australia (in America the practice became known as the Australian ballot). Victoria would also lead the way in payment of members of parliament.

All of these measures were resisted by the wealthy landowners of the Legislative Council, who forced compromises (such as the electoral distribution) and obtained concessions (such as plural voting). All of them were impelled by popular campaigns, drawing on the methods and values nurtured on the goldfields. As at Ballarat, the popular movement was mistrustful of privilege and abuse of authority, insistent on popular rights and quick to assert them. Just as the diggers gathered at Bakery Hill to conduct mass meetings, so the reform movement at Melbourne drew large numbers to the Eastern Market, in Bourke Street, where speakers would air grievances and propose resolutions for concerted action.

In winter 1858, when the Legislative Council rejected an Assembly bill for electoral redistribution, a huge crowd gathered — estimates went as high as 20,000 — and then marched up Bourke St to Parliament House with banners proclaiming ‘When Justice is Denied, Allegiance Ceases To Be a Duty’ and singing the *Marseillaise*, *Mourir pour la Patrie*, *Yankee Doodle* and *Rule Britannia*. Onto the new building on Spring Street they nailed a board, ‘To let, the upper portion of this house’, before returning to the Eastern market with three cheers for liberty, equality and fraternity.

The demands for democracy joined political, economic and social goals. The British Chartists pursued parliamentary reform in the belief that the government had robbed the people of their birthright.



Miner's Gold License from February 1853 State Library of Victoria

The wealthy not only monopolised political power, they used it to enclose the commons and reduce smallholders to agricultural labourers; similarly, they favoured industrialists at the expense of craftsmen, and banned trade unions to deprive wage-earners of protection. So in Victoria there was a clear relationship between the political privileges of the squatters and their appropriation of the land of agricultural settlers. On the goldfields, where food was dear, there was a demand for small blocks of land to enable diggers to build a home, grow fruit and vegetables, run livestock for the table, raise a family, win a living when the gold was exhausted.

The campaign to unlock the land, take the vast sheep runs back into public ownership so that they could be thrown open for selection and settlement at an affordable price, was the great popular cause. It was expressed in the words of Charles Thatcher, the goldfield minstrel:

Upset squatterdom domination,

Give every poor man a home,
Encourage our great population,
And like wanders no more we'll roam.
Give, in mercy, a free scope to labour,
Uphold honest bold industry,
Then no-one will envy his neighbour,
But contented and happy we'll be.

By 1857 the campaign led to the formation of the Land Convention, its delegates elected at mass meetings across the colony, who met at a hotel opposite Parliament House set up to resemble a legislative chamber. Its banner was a flash of lightning inscribed *vox populi*, running through a Southern Cross. That campaign again foundered on the veto power of the Legislative Council, allowing only partially successful land laws.

Similar impulses can be seen in the 1856 Eight Hour Day movement, another Victorian first, which again involved meetings, resolution and marches to affirm the rights of labour.

I noted earlier that colonial self-government was in train before the events

in Ballarat on this day 116 years ago, so that it is not possible to claim that Eureka won it. Yet the chain of events that followed Eureka, the democratisation of the system of government, and the extension of popular demands to remake social conditions, break the land monopoly and protect labour from exploitation — all of these developments followed the Eureka stockade. All of them involved the men and women of the goldfields, and they drew on the repertoire of direct democracy that had been used there.

It is for this reason that we celebrate the Eureka Stockade. Men died there in defence of their liberties, but they were vindicated. They helped set in train a democratic movement whose effects are as lasting as the buildings of the gold era.

Professor Stuart Macintyre

Former Ernest Scott Professor of History and Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Melbourne University. Prominent historian, serving on the National History Curriculum Committee.

Reflections on an Irish clan meeting

Irish folk singer Ray Scanlon makes two significant statements in the opening of his song 'James Fintan Lalor' that give importance to the annual O Leathlobhair Clan meeting. Scanlon's song opens:

'James Fintan Lalor, a cornerstone for the rights of Irishmen and to this day is carried on by the noble Lalor Clan.'

With my wife Nain and son Daniel, I participated in the recent O Leathlobhair Clan (Lalor, Lawler, Lawlor) meeting in Abbyelex, County Laois. To quote Ray Scanlon's song again it certainly was a wonderful 'invitation to the Lalor ball; it is where you'll meet friends old and new.' It was a time to celebrate a great clan that traces its history back more than a thousand years. It was a significant event because the clan story was re-told in verse, song and visitation to places made honourable by members of this clan.

For me the highlight of the central event of the meeting, the Clan Banquet, was the reading of the famous Henry Lawson poem 'Eureka' by Nain. The powerful words written, and the passion given to those words in the reading, silenced the room. At its conclusion there was applause, then the host of the night commented 'It was as though I was at the stockade myself'. The great Australian wrote this poem as a tribute to Peter Lalor.

On that night, two great honours were given to me. Firstly, I was nominated for the position of the O Leathlobhair Clan Chieftain. It was a close election. While it would have been a great honour to bring the title of Clan Chieftain back to Australia, I was glad that Eamon Lalor from Garryhill, Carlow, was successfully elected because he will be able to carry out this important role better than myself. The second honour was to be asked to present the 'Furrier Daughter from Dublin' that records the humble yet remarkable life in Australia of a wonderful woman, Eileen Mary Lalor, my grandmother. It was a very moving time for me to present this story on Irish soil, the country she loved so much.

Ray Scanlon is correct when he wrote 'the noble Lalor clan'. When we stood in the ruins of the great fortress 'The Rock of Dunamais' that overlooks the county capital, Port Laois, it was not difficult to imagine the many times the O'Lalors along with the other Septs of Laois, defended the 'rights of Irishmen' against

the armies of an invading foreign power, particularly the Cromwellian forces.

In Port Laois, we saw the newly erected monument to James Fintan Lalor standing in front of the town hall. It is an impressive piece of sculpture but like Oscar Wilde's statue of the Happy Prince, it beckons us to be as relevant today as the subject was in his time.

In Dublin, in the sprawling 120 acre Glasnevin Cemetery, where many Irish heroes lie, is the simple grave of James Fintan Lalor and engraved in stone is one of his famous lines: 'We owe no obedience to laws enacted by another country without our concern'. Like the Lalors of old he could not tolerate the injustices practised against his people and recognised that those tyrannical times called for radical responses. He was prepared to honour that responsibility as did Peter Lalor at Eureka; his father Patrick and other brother, Richard who took the fight for Irish independence to the floor of the British House of Commons.

We walked the tourist route of Grafton St, with its glamorous gift stores and exclusive coffee shops. We stopped at number 62. The years have seen dramatic transformation of this street and the whole Temple Bar area. It was more than a century since my two grandmothers, Nano and Eileen Joyce, walked away from 62 Grafton St for the last time to board ship for Australia. I do not know the exact reason for their departure however one suspects it was the poverty and wretchedness of what was called Dark Dublin that forced them out. So many Lalors in Australia say 'thank God' that these sisters left Grafton St for the land of the Southern Cross, particularly Eileen Mary, who became such a profound clan leader in Australia.

'A noble clan' takes on its deepest meaning when sitting in the wilderness of the Doolough Pass in County Mayo. Here, in the silence of this place, one experiences the causes that led so many Irish to risk everything in their pursuit of justice and radical reform. In the Spring of 1849 crowds of starving people descended on Louisburgh begging for food. It was refused because the officials, authorised to determine who was in need and who was not, were 10 miles away in Delphi dining on the best veal and fine wine. So 600 famine victims walked to

Delphi to plead for relief, struggling through the rugged Doolough Pass in snow and with rivers in flood. Those who made it met the officials who denied them any assistance claiming there was no food or shelter available. And so this wretched flock attempted to retrace its steps through the pass.

Contemporary poet, John Tunney, captures the horrific moments when he says:

'And while cattle and grain were exported to Spain and food lay piled in store
In Mayo South all round about the people they perished in scores.'

And again Tunney says:

'Like harvest sheaves of autumn leaves they fell dying upon the road
As dark drew in the snow it drew in and the night it was bitter cold
Going along the cliff the wind it was stiff driving on the blinding sleet
Hundreds were swept into Doolough's depths a horror beyond belief
Next day relieving officers had a terrible sight in store
There were bodies strewn along the route littering Doolough shore'

You cannot leave the Doolough Pass without taking something with you because a small stone cross memorial in honour of the famine victims reminds us of the shame that this injustice still continues.

The O Leathlobhair Clan meeting concluded for Nain, Daniel and me at the Lalor ancestral lands at Tenakill, near Port Laois. This is where Peter Lalor was born. The property is now owned by Richard and Millie Lalor Fitzpatrick and their son Kevin. They are direct descendants of Richard Lalor, the brother of Peter and James Fintan.

We stood in the gloomy dusk of an Irish summer's evening with the ruins of the Tenakill home, with its honour plates attached from both the Irish and Australian governments, beside us. It was a moment of quietness as we all attempted to fashion the words of farewell. It was Kevin who spoke giving the occasion solemnity.

'We are standing on the very spot where your great great grand-father, Peter Lalor, said the final goodbyes to his family, before walking down this path on his way to Australia, never to return.' James Fintan made his final farewells



At Tenakill, (from left to right) Peter Lalor Philp, Millie Lalor Fitzpatrick, Daniel Lalor Philp and Kevin Lalor Fitzpatrick. The Lalor Fitzpatricks own the ancestral property Tenakill.



Peter Lalor Philp and his son Daniel at the newly erected monument of James Fintan Lalor in Port Laois.

on this spot too before embarking on his dangerous mission which would result in a prison term and premature death.

So we face the concerning second statement in Ray Scanlon's song: 'James Fintan Lalor, a cornerstone for the rights of Irishmen *and to this day is carried on by the noble Lalor Clan*'. Today, are we a noble clan? I hope we are. In Ireland, times are tough, people are migrating as they did during the great famine and measures are being introduced that might cripple the most vulnerable in that society. In Australia too there is still an unacceptable divide between rich and poor. It is a shallow ritual to honour our clan's people of the past if we are not prepared to respond to the signs of today.

Peter Lalor Philp is a freelance writer and the great great grandson of Peter Lalor.

Fintan: a short story

His name was Fintan and I knew him at university together almost 50 years ago. We were fellow-residents of a hostel in Ely Place attached to University College Dublin (UCD), still operating in nearby Earlsfort Terrace. In those days it had a lot of country lads whose parents thought they were studying Ag or Vet, when they were really devoting most of their energy to organising inter-faculty dances.

Fintan had gone to boarding school in the midlands, a place with a reputation for producing punishing, though only mildly successful, hurling teams. He was one of a number of Old Boys of that school who ran most things at UCD. 'The Machine' they were called and, like many of his fellow members, he attended lectures infrequently.

I remember once during elections for the Students' Union – a novelty in those days, the elections I mean, not the Union – there were whispers that he had organised multiple voting on behalf of particular candidates. It was said that this was cover for a large sum of money, temporarily borrowed from social funds and invested with a bookmaker in some complicated quinnella at the Curragh. His candidates and his horses duly won, and Fintan turned up the following week in a second-hand Mini with a permanent rattle in it. The rattle was caused by a beer bottle which was forever rolling around the uncarpeted floor and seemed to have never been removed.

In those days, you could take as long as you liked to get your degree. Fintan was a student when I started and was still trying to pass First Year Latin when I left four years later. Some time earlier he decided to transfer from Vet to study literature. At one stage, I gave him a few lessons in Latin, but it was a complete disaster. Like the spoilt politician he was, Fintan regarded all facts as open to discussion and insisted on arguing the toss on everything.

'It's accusative plural, Fintan. *Dominos*.'
'Ah, no. It has to be *Dominis*. I saw it in a bouke.'

Did I mention that he was from Cavan, whence the quaint pronunciation?

Latin is pretty rigid in its grammar; there is usually only one way of putting things and it's not open to discussion – unlike Economics or Education, where you can propound any crackpot theory you like so long as there is someone foolish enough to listen to you. With Latin, it is either right or wrong, and in Fintan's case, it was usually wrong.

Anyway, I gave up trying to teach him. By way of payment, he tried to interest me in what I thought was a hare-brained scheme to import Japanese motor cars – those were the days when Made in Japan was only seen on the back of cheap toys.

In time, UCD tightened up its rules, and the various societies began to be reformed. Proper financial books were required and, some years later, they were. By then, Fintan's idea of smiling and blustering and offering you a drink did not work as well. Besides, other schools, run by the Christian Brothers in the northside of Dublin, began sending their students to UCD, and they were not about to let a crowd of culchies run the show.

So things passed Fintan by and I don't think he ever got a degree. He went back to his home town to run the family pub and slowly lost a small fortune on the horses. In time, he found a woman to marry him and they had four children in quick succession. They were all quite brilliant at school and could easily have given their father lessons in Latin grammar if he was still interested, which he wasn't, being involved instead in devising a sure fire way to win money by backing outsiders at Leopardstown.

In Dublin last year, I ran into Fintan again. He wasn't exactly on the skids, but admitted to being down on his luck. The previous year he finally had a huge win on the horses and, in a fit of luck induced bravado, he told his wife to go to hell when she nagged him about his errant lifestyle. When the smoke cleared, she had taken him for everything he owned and he was living in a one-room flat off a lane in Sandymount.

We met in a local pub and he tried to persuade me to finance his latest scheme. His enthusiasm was childlike, and it took all my mathematical training to convince myself of the futility of blowing my superannuation on long shots over hurdles in an Irish winter. I tried to convince him too but he had lost none of the certainty he had when we argued about the accusative case years ago.

The other day I heard from a mutual friend that Fintan had died. 'He had a big funeral, considering,' was how my friend put it, rather uncharitably I thought. I wonder if anyone from Ely Place turned up.

Frank O'Shea is a retired mathematics teacher. He writes regularly for The Canberra Times, The Irish Echo and Eureka Street.



Skellig Michael: because it's there

George Leigh-Mallory was asked in 1924 why he wanted to climb Everest. 'Because it's there,' was his famous reply. Since first viewing pictures of the Skellig Rocks as a youth, I have yearned to set foot there and climb.

A phone call to skipper Dermot J Walsh of Port Magee on the Iveragh Peninsula secured a ferry ride for my eldest son, Ben and myself, out to the rocks twelve kilometres off-shore. It was in August 2010 and Kerry was sun-drenched all that month, so an early-morning drive from the Beara Peninsula around the Ring of Kerry to an Irish breakfast at Port Magee was a great start to a memorable day. There was a light breeze and a long easy swell and the first sight of the Little Skellig was breathtaking. Further off-shore rose the larger Skellig Michael on which we eventually landed. A group of thirty or so from several ferries gathered to be instructed by a Ranger on the drill of climbing the rock. The strongest emphasis possible was made as to safety; not surprisingly, as two lives had already been lost that year. Skellig Michael is some 700 feet high, and there are over

700 flag-stone steps to be climbed. The earliest recorded landing was in 490 AD but Coptic hermits in the pervading style of the desert fathers and some followers took up residence over ensuing centuries and much later, monks and monastic orders became established.

The early easygoing zig-zagging around rocks and rocky ridges was deceptive as we gained height surprisingly quickly. After ten minutes or so I had to rest and then again several times. Ben could have run up the flagged steps so I was a little chastened. But we made it to the top and there were the four stone beehive huts on the summit, a small section of grassed land, stone walls and a tiny chapel. The meticulous corbelling of all the stone structures was amazing. Built from the earliest days of occupation in 600 AD, they had survived the Viking destructions from 900 AD and later reconstructions in the Middle Ages. One could only wonder at the skills and the logistics involved. On looking round, what little breath I had left was taken away – it was magic, awe-inspiring and unforgettable. In the distant north, the mainland Iveragh Peninsula, close by

below us Little Skellig, snow-capped – No! It was a mass of sixty-thousand white Gannets out of North Africa sitting on their white guano and in the air thousands more were circling and dive-bombing for fish. An archeologist gave our group an expert lesson on the history and life of the Rock. Over the season, those guides have two weeks on, staying at the foot of the Rock and one week off – that means a lot of climbing. But then, they are young and fit.

Completely satisfied and inspired, the descent was on. I proceeded so confidently and was so pleased with my achievement in reaching the top that the first fifty or so steps on fairly level ground was a cake-walk but then I looked up. There was no step ahead, just the Atlantic Ocean and blue sky. The drop ahead was precipitous and I looked down, placing my feet carefully. I glanced to the immediate left and again just ocean and smashing waves and sharp rocks at the bottom. I began to lose my balance and my confidence wavered and I had an attack of vertigo. I had been warned but it was frightening. I told Ben that I had lost my sense of bal-



Left: Dermot J. Walsh standing off Little Skellig *Peter B Kiernan*

Above: The author chatting with four Kerrywomen *Benedict Kiernan*

Below: The descent *Thomas Dimson via flickr*

ance and could knock him and we would both go down but he said ‘No way, I’m stronger and bigger than you, don’t worry’. Ben took on the role of Ginger Rogers, dancing going backwards, but alas not in high heels. Without him, I could well have been writing this still at the top of Skellig Michael in one of the beehives. I made it down, not daring to look beyond the next step immediately ahead. I negotiated the last fifty steps sitting on my behind grasping at rock edges and shrubs and staggered towards the landing ledge. Ben came up and said, ‘Dad, I told the Ranger that you were 87 and what a great job you had done and he said “marvellous but last week we had an 96 year old man who went up and down in record time – he was an Austrian Alpine Guide”’.

Captain Dermot J. Walsh brought his red vessel alongside and we boarded. I sat down with Ben, to enjoy the sea journey. I was flattened both physically and mentally but deep inside, very proud. I had grasped my dream and it will never go away.

Peter Kiernan

Armchair mountaineer, retired

Tinteán March 2011



From Camas to Bullengarook

The O'Donnells of Limerick and colonial Victoria

Patrick Naughtin recalls aspects of the settling of the O'Donnell family in colonial Victoria, as recorded by Dr Nicholas O'Donnell, the pre-eminent Gaelic scholar and the leading figure in Irish affairs in Melbourne in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

The emigration experience of the O'Donnell brothers of Camas, near Bruff in County Limerick, may not have differed substantially from that of many thousands of others who emigrated from Ireland to the burgeoning colony of Victoria during the great wave of migration that occurred in the 1850s and 1860s. However, the experience of the O'Donnell family was to be different from most other Irish migrants in one important respect – it was to be well documented a century ago by an Australian-born descendant from the memories of the emigrants themselves and the family members they left behind in County Limerick.

That scribe was Dr Nicholas O'Donnell, born in Victoria in 1862 to migrants Michael O'Donnell of Camas and Johanna Barry of nearby Liskennett. In October 1908, Nicholas O'Donnell began to document the ancestral Irish links of his transplanted parents' generation in colonial Victoria. He was remarkably thorough in this endeavour, even engaging private investigators in Ireland, and his labours succeeded in producing a handwritten manuscript of a few hundred pages that details the extended families, both in Ireland and Victoria, of his grandparents, all four of whom hailed from within a dozen miles of the town of Bruff.

Despite never setting foot upon the land of his ancestry, Dr Nicholas O'Donnell developed a passionate interest in Ireland during his upbringing in the very Irish rural areas of Bullengarook and Gisborne, north of Melbourne where his parents first settled, and later in the strongly Irish suburb of West Melbourne where he conducted a busy medical practice for most of his life. By the time he commenced writing his family history in 1908, O'Donnell had no peer as the leading figure in Irish affairs in Australia. In addition to being widely regarded as Australia's foremost Gaelic scholar, he was president of the Gaelic League, which he had founded,

and Melbourne's Celtic Club and, despite his relatively youthful 46 years, he was already in his 20th year as president of either the United Irish League of Victoria or its predecessor, the Irish National League.

The same concerns that drove Nicholas O'Donnell's remarkable public involvement in Irish culture and politics, also inspired him to record comprehensively his personal family history. He was particularly conscious of the immense cultural loss associated with emigration. In his words, his parents' generation had 'witnessed and

What promised to be a large and prolific family in County Limerick almost disappeared altogether

participated in the breaking of countless generations in Ireland and the transplantation of the seed beyond the seas'. He lamented the loss of history, and the collective sense of self it represented for the emigrant as 'genealogies and pedigrees were broken up and lost'. He could see that, by the beginning of the 20th century, this loss was now occurring ever more rapidly and stressed the urgency of recording the migrants' old world connections 'while the children still live and remember'.

The O'Donnells had been tenant farmers at Camas for untold generations until the decades after the Great Famine saw most family members emigrate. Nicholas's grandfather, another Nicholas O'Donnell who married Johanna Spillane of Knockainy, saw all three of his brothers emigrate to America where little was heard of

them again. This same grandfather was also to see three of his five sons emigrate during the 1850s and early 1860s to Victoria, a voyage that could take up to three months and, as all understood, invariably meant permanent, irreversible exile from Ireland. Michael O'Donnell, Nicholas's father, was the eldest son and the first to emigrate, arriving in Melbourne at 20 years in 1854 at the height of the gold rushes. James O'Donnell, the second son, emigrated in 1859 followed by the third son, another Nicholas, in 1864. Before sailing, James married Honorah Naughtin from a neighbouring tenant farm. Honorah was a sister of the writer's great grandfather and namesake.

The loss of family members to emigration was even more striking on Nicholas O'Donnell's mother's side, the Barrys of Liskennett. For Johanna's parents, George and Honorah Barry, only one out of eight children remained in Ireland with all the others migrating to Victoria. Honorah was one of the Blake family from nearby Dollas, a family which was also severely depleted by emigration. In Nicholas O'Donnell's words, 'what promised to be a large and prolific family in County Limerick almost disappeared altogether. America and Australia swallowed up most of the descendants'.

In late 1854, Honorah and George Barry farewelled a large group of their children and other young family members who were leaving for Victoria. The group included 19-year-old Johanna, her 14-year-old sister Bridget, her brother David, and some cousins, including Pat Barry who would later marry Bridget. As Nicholas O'Donnell wrote, 'the migrating group could not have been lonely after bidding farewell to the shores of Ireland'. The same, however, could hardly have been said of Johanna's parents left behind. Her mother Honorah was to die within a year.

The lure for all these young immigrants to Victoria was the opportunity of economic betterment, and for many

the prospects of gold and land, but initially in their new lives they were not to escape the more servile forms of employment. Michael O'Donnell arrived like so many young Irishmen without a skilled trade and with the common Irish Catholic occupation of 'labourer' scrawled against his name on the passenger list. Michael found work as a warder, an occupation not highly rated, at Pentridge, the Melbourne prison, and remained there for the first few years.

David and Pat Barry, after an unsuccessful stint at the gold diggings also worked at the prison with Michael O'Donnell and it was through them that Michael met Johanna Barry. Johanna, whose education had been neglected – as her son Nicholas wrote, 'an Irish farmer's daughter had little chance of mental cultivation in 1846-48' – initially undertook domestic services at a hotel in Kilmore, an Irish rural stronghold north of Melbourne, before being 'at service' in the restaurant at Parliament House in Melbourne. Bridget Barry, too, worked as a domestic servant for several years. These young immigrants were typical of the recently arrived Irish who were to be over-represented in those occupations that ranked lowest on the socio-economic scale. Though opportunities were much more plentiful than at home in Ireland, they were made well aware that, lacking education and capital, they could hardly hope to aspire to the colony's privileged classes.

However, the opportunity to own land, no matter if only a smallholding, was seen as the key to some status and prosperity in the Australian colonies. Dispossession of their land at the hands of English landlords many generations before had kept most of the O'Donnells struggling as tenant farmers since Nicholas's great great grandfather, his earliest known ancestor and thought to be named Nicholas also, had been a tenant in the 18th century on Lord Sandwich's estate.

Johanna's family, the Barrys at Liskennett, seem generally to have been better off than the O'Donnells, having reputedly been 'landed gentry' in seventeenth century Cork before the general confiscations. However, while Johanna's father, George Barry, was a 'fairly comfortable farmer' he, too, was well aware he was only a tenant. A simple story illustrates this relationship. According to family tradition, George Barry once declined a gift of a piano, no longer useable, 'fearing that the landlord might regard the ownership of a piano as evidence of undue prosperity on the part of a tenant and so injure his chance of getting a fair and favourable renewal of his lease'.

The attraction of land ownership was therefore very real for so many Irish migrants, particularly those from rural backgrounds, and Michael O'Donnell and Johanna Barry were no exception. Soon after their marriage in September 1858, Michael and Johanna left Melbourne to take up a smallholding, purchased in partnership with Pat Barry, in the rural locality of Bullengarook, near the town of Gisborne. Arriving from Melbourne with just a bullock team, tents and provisions, those first years spent establishing a slab hut home and clearing their smallholding, must have been a great struggle, even for a young couple accustomed to hardship in rural Ireland. However, they had the support of a large extended family, particularly on the Barry side, and the strong Irish community at Bullengarook, which included other settlers from Camas including the Fitzgeralds. The many links of this community with Camas were, in fact, commented on much later by the local newspaper, the *Gisborne Gazette*.

The support of the close-knit community and extended family was never more important than following the tragic death of Michael O'Donnell in 1865 in a riding accident leaving Johanna with three small sons, the eldest David being only five years old. Just a few months after her husband's death, Johanna also



Nicholas O'Donnell ca 1890

buried the youngest of her three sons. Two years later in 1867, she left the farm and Nicholas, though only five years old, recalled a particularly hard, unhappy time: 'I remember the evening we left, getting a whacking from my mother. She was in tears and I presume not too amiable in temperament when she recollected the fairy edifice of happiness she built for herself when she went on that land nine years before and how it had crumbled in ruins about her with the death of my father'.

Johanna O'Donnell's stoic spirit and resourcefulness, however, saw her survive by entering partnerships with her sister Ellen and Michael's brother, Nicholas O'Donnell. Nicholas and Ellen had married in 1866, possibly at Johanna's instigation. The news of a second O'Donnell-Barry wedding in Victoria had been greeted with rejoicing at home in Ireland where the two families had become 'warmly attached' and regularly visited each other.

After another failed farming venture, Johanna O'Donnell, with her sons David and Nicholas, moved to West Melbourne to join her sister Ellen and brother-in-law Nicholas in a hotel partnership. There is little doubt that hotel life and the constant presence of Irish characters, often recently arrived, stirred the interests of the young Nicholas in Ireland. His mother's sister Bridget, who had married her second cousin Pat Barry,



O'Donnell Hotel West Melbourne ca 1880

also operated a Gisborne hotel, which became a 'second home' for Nicholas during his childhood and youth. With the influence of the hotels, his large extended Irish family and schooling in Irish strongholds of Gisborne and North Melbourne, it is perhaps not surprising that Nicholas is said to have spoken with a slight Irish accent throughout his life.

By the time of her death in 1901, Johanna O'Donnell had seen her two sons, both of whom were of a towering physical stature, achieve a public prominence in Melbourne in their very different fields. Despite humble beginnings in a slab hut at Bullengarook, both earned entries in the *Australian Dictionary of Biography*: David as a leading and colourful Melbourne police detective; and Nicholas for his work as an Irish nationalist leader and Gaelic scholar. Nicholas O'Donnell, however, never achieved his life-long ambition of visiting his beloved Ireland. Chosen in 1914 to represent Victoria at the planned first sitting of a Home Rule Parliament at College Green in Dublin, the events

of the First World War and failing health ended any prospect of visiting Ireland. He died in January 1920 at the comparatively young age of 57, conducting his medical practice almost until the end.

While Nicholas O'Donnell, himself, never visited Ireland, dozens of his letters to Irish nationalist leaders such as John Dillon, John Redmond, Michael Davitt and others are to be found in Dublin in the archives of Trinity College and the National Library. It is fitting therefore that in 2008, exactly 100 years after he commenced writing his family history, a copy of this document was also given to the National Library of Ireland. Nicholas's grandson, the late Australian author Niall Brennan, had presented a copy to the National Library of Australia several years before. Just as appropriately, at the suggestion of a Victorian descendant, Bill O'Donnell of Budgereee, who first brought Nicholas O'Donnell's family history manuscript and marvellous photograph albums to the writer's attention, a copy of the family history was also lodged with Joan

and Noel Dempsey at Camas for use by the Loch Gur Historical Society. Joan and Noel have located the O'Donnell ancestral home nearby in North Camas and, though no O'Donnell descendants now live in the district, Dr Nicholas O'Donnell would approve that this rich resource for local historians has finally found its way 'home' to Camas.

Patrick Naughtin is completing a PhD at the University of Melbourne on Irish nationalism in colonial Victoria and writing a biography of Dr Nicholas O'Donnell.

Author's Footnote: I would like to pay special tribute to Bill O'Donnell, mentioned above, who passed away on 4 April 2010. Shortly before his death, Bill decided to give the remarkable O'Donnell photograph albums to the State Library of Victoria, where they are now accessible to all. Nicholas O'Donnell was an accomplished early photographer with an eye for history and an item on his photographs will hopefully appear in a forthcoming Tinteán

From Burgundy to Australia

The Cistercian story

Cistercian monks emerged on the monastic scene at Cîteaux in Burgundy in 1098. The original community was known simply as the New Monastery. The founders came from the nearby Benedictine Abbey of Molesme. They implemented a number of reforming measures, but aimed only to establish another monastic community living these ideals according to the sixth century Rule of St Benedict.

The first fifteen years were unremarkable. Then there was an explosion of interest right across Europe. 'Cistercian' became the monastic flavour of at least the next half century. A huge number of communities sprang into existence in a short time. Structures embodying the original inspiration were created and the Cistercian Order took a prominent place on the monastic map. The first three Abbots of Cîteaux – Robert of Molesme, Alberic, and Stephen Harding – are celebrated today as the founders of the Order. St Bernard of Clairvaux was the super-star of the Order and Church in the twelfth century.

Mellifont, founded in 1142 by St Bernard at the urging of his friend Malachy, Archbishop of Armagh, signalled the arrival of the Cistercians in Ireland. Thirty six Irish Cistercian Abbeys, including St Mary's in Dublin, Holy Cross, Cashel, and Graiguenamanagh were suppressed during Henry VIII's reign.

Mt Melleray Abbey in Co. Waterford was the first Cistercian re-settlement in Ireland. It was the happy outcome of yet another French revolution (1830) when 64 monks of Melleray Abbey in Normandy, mainly Irish, first imprisoned in Nantes, then expelled from France, settled near Cappoquin in 1832. Some went on to found Mt St Bernard Abbey in Leicestershire, England, in 1835.

During the nineteenth century a number of stray Cistercian monks came to Australia, and there was one abortive foundation. Fr Jeremiah O'Flynn, always a bit of a loose canon, landed in Sydney in 1817, the first free Catholic priest in the country. He exercised an elusive and forbidden ministry for six months before the law caught up with him. Governor Macquarie deported him as

an illegal immigrant, but he had at least drawn attention to the need of Australian Catholics for priests.

Robert Willson, the first bishop of Hobart, recruited four monks of Mt St Bernard, Leicestershire: Norbert and Odilo Woolfrey, Xavier Johnson, and Luke Levermore. He brought them to Van Diemen's Land in 1846. The intention was to found a Cistercian monastery and minister to the Aborigines. Nothing came of either project, the urgent needs of the island Catholic population taking

The intention was to found a Cistercian monastery and minister to the Aborigines

precedence. Luke Levermore eventually returned to England. The other three moved on in later years to ministries in South Australia and the Hawkesbury Valley of New South Wales. There were plans to revive the monastic project in the Hawkesbury, but these were thwarted by death amongst their number.

Then in 1890 a foundation was made at Beagle Bay in the Kimberley principally from the Abbey of Sept Fons in France. Bishop Gibney of Perth had appealed for Cistercian (Trappist) monks who would establish a mission to protect the Aborigines against the murder and rape that were rampant in the wild north-west of his diocese. As things worked out, however, the tensions between the aims of monastery and mission contributed to the Cistercian withdrawal ten years later and the fruitful take-over of the mission by the Pallottine Fathers. One fine Australian, Cornelius Daly, born in 1858 to Irish parents at Dunnolly, Victoria, had joined the Beagle Bay community and persevered as a monk until his death in France in 1934. After the withdrawal of the monks from Australia in 1900, he was

first a member of the Latroun community in the Holy Land, and subsequently, as a result of the First World War, relocated for the last time to Sept Fons, France.

Both New Zealand and Australia received Cistercian foundations from Ireland in 1954. Mt Melleray provided the personnel for Southern Star Abbey, Kopua, in the Hawke's Bay area of the North Island of New Zealand. Mt Melleray's daughter-house, Mt St Joseph Abbey, founded in 1878 at Roscrea, Co. Tipperary, sent a contingent which settled Tarrawarra Abbey in the Yarra Valley. The initiative had come from Cardinal Gilroy who had requested a Cistercian monastery for Sydney. Fr Eugene Boylan, monk of Roscrea and author of spiritual best-sellers (*This Tremendous Lover* and *Difficulties in Mental Prayer*), spent more than a year searching for a suitable site in the countryside around Sydney. When this proved unsuccessful. Archbishop Mannix extended an invitation to consider Melbourne, and in a short time Dom Camillus Claffey, Abbot of Roscrea, had fallen in love with the Tarrawarra property. The rest is history! A community arrived at the end of October 1954 with Fr Cronan Sherry as the first Superior. By 1958 it had been raised to Abbey status and Kevin O'Farrell was elected as its first Abbot. He guided the community through the next thirty years, until his retirement in the Australian Bi-Centennial Year, 1958. David Tomlins was then elected as the first Australian Abbot.

Cistercian monasticism is a contemplative form of life within the Catholic Church. The monks seek to live the Gospel with an emphasis on prayer and community. They support themselves by their work. At Tarrawarra the community operates a beef farm and a Eucharistic Breads Distribution Business. Hospitality has always been a part of the Cistercian-Benedictine tradition. Tarrawarra welcomes many guests each year. Their website, www.cistercian.org.au, is worth a visit, as also is the Abbey if you venture into the Valley to the wineries or the Healesville Wildlife Sanctuary.

Dom David Tomlins OCSO
Abbott of Tarrawarra Abbey

In praise of silence: from Terenure to Tarrawarra

My father's three brothers, Billy, Paul and Tony, were Cistercian monks at a monastery near Roscrea, in Tipperary. The Cistercians were a silent order. They gave away all their possessions to live a contemplative life of work and prayer. Morning, noon and all through the night they prayed for our wayward souls. When I was young, I thought my father's brothers were praying just for the family, and, in particular, me. We, my parents and three brothers, used to visit the monastery the way other families visited holiday resorts. Although the cold stone and high church tower of Mount St. Joseph, founded in 1878, looked like it came out of a Brontë novel it was an adventurous place for a city child with its forest and rivers.

My father, Kevin, worked for J & C McLoughlin's making church furniture – tabernacles, chalices, baptismal fonts, altar rails, anything in brass, bronze, silver or gold. Like his brothers, Paul and Tony, he had great hands and a deep faith. He was a man who liked to visit churches, graveyards and attended Mass every day of his life. He said the rosary or went to Benediction the way people now go to movies or watch DVDs. It was a natural part of his and my mother's life. We, their four sons, were raised in this light. So when we went to stay at the monastery we were always up for the first Mass, and probably there for the last sitting, too.

The monks rarely spoke. When they opened their mouths to sing Plain Chant 'praising God's blessings', they seemed to sing for hours. As a child I disliked the strange Latin sounds they made. Why couldn't they sing something good, one of my father's favourites like *Roddy McCorley, Are Ye Right There Michael, Come Back Paddy Reilly* or the song he loved to sing to us, Percy French's extraordinary tune *Abdul Abulbul Amir*. I squirmed on the hard wooden pew. My poor father's blessed patience must have been tested. We sat high up in the church, a sacred place for men and boys. Women had to stay behind a wooden screen. I envied my mother her escape from this Latin praying and chanting. Now, that life is gone and I would give

anything to hear my father 's brothers sing their Plain Chant.

It was my father's brother Paul, known in the monastery as Brother Gabriel who, in 1955, volunteered to leave Ireland and help set up a sister monastery at Tarrawarra, about forty miles outside Melbourne. The monks chose an old 900 acre farm built by David Syme (the proprietor of the *Melbourne Age*) in 1900, on the banks of the Yarra river. *Yarra* is the aboriginal word for flow. This land, with its rolling hills and tall eucalyptus trees, was once the traditional land of the Wurundjeri people.

Paul was a simple man who liked to work with his hands. He looked after the cattle, the hay and the tractors; he baked bread, kept the pipes from rattling, and built whatever needed to be built, made or mended. His brother Billy (Father Emanuel) was an intellectual. He loved nothing more than a good maths problem. When he visited us in Dublin, he always read *The Observer* (in those days a quality English newspaper). I never asked my father what he made of Billy's reading choice. My father would have been on Paul's side. Billy built up the Roscrea monastery library, and taught Latin, Maths and Irish at the monastery's boarding school and became in time the headmaster. My uncle taught many well known Irish businessmen, politicians, sportsman and academics and several poets including one of the finest, Eamon Grennan. The first time I met Eamon he asked if I knew my uncle's nickname. I didn't. So he told me, *Rubberneck*. Apparently, in class, he could twist his head round quick as a flash and catch a boy who was up to no good. Billy and Paul were polar opposites. Billy, with his books, his ideas and his superior attitude, tested Paul's faith. He had been speaking to his father about the tension between them when the Abbot looked for volunteers to go to Australia.

In 2002, I visited the monastery in Roscrea with my father. His brothers were all gone, but we met a friend of Paul's, Brother Larry who told me of the night the Abbot held the meeting that led to Paul's, and the other monks' depart-

ture. The Abbot began, 'We are looking for volunteers to go and set up a sister monastery in A...'. The Abbot barely had the A of Australia out of his mouth when Paul's hand shot up and he declared (breaking the silence) 'I'll go!' Paul didn't know whether he was volunteering to go to Arabia, Alaska or Alabama, he just wanted to go. Australia it was, and it suited him well. He arrived in Melbourne aboard the S S Orion in August 1955. He loved the clear blue sky and the bit of warmth on his face; even if his whole world had turned upside down, he was happy there.

Paul died in April 1985. His bones now rest in Australia's warm earth.

When I was leaving Brother Larry that day in 2002, he said, 'Paul only ever sang one song. Do you know what it was?'

'Yes,' I said, '*South of the Border Down Mexico Way*.'

'That's right!' Brother Larry said, 'that's right!'

He also told me a story about the first time he met my grandmother. He said this old woman arrived and took over the running of the monastery day room, demanding tea. Larry saw Paul coming and warned him, 'Don't go in, there's a mad woman inside.'

'That's right,' said Paul, 'But it's OK. That's my mother.'

I suppose having three sons in the monastery, she felt like she owned the place.

I met Paul twice in my life. The first time we met I was a few weeks old, the second time when I was twenty-five. In 1980, Paul returned to Ireland for his one and only visit home.

'It is great to finally meet you,' I said 'Sure, didn't we meet before,' a smiling Paul said. Then he told me a story.

'We met at his farewell party at the house in Terenure. Getting late, the party was in full swing and nobody wanted to leave. Being only a baby, you were asleep in your mother's arms. So it was decided to clear the clothes out of a drawer, and put you to sleep there.'

I remember asking Paul if they had closed the drawer? Surely that would



Brother Gabriel (centre) and fellow monks at Tarrawarra Abbey, Yarra Glen tending their flock

explain a whole heap about my life. He only smiled and lit up another cigarette

My family lore is full of Paul's Tarrawarra stories. He drove the sheep to the market in Melbourne, in a duck-egg blue Second World War truck. It had no indicators, just a wooden white hand that you pulled up when you were turning right. N.D.A was written on each of the truck's doors. When farmers asked Paul what the initials stood for? He would declare, 'No dames allowed'.

In 2003, I visited the Tarrawarra monastery. The Abbot, (or the man I took to be the Abbot), brought me to see Paul's simple grave. I have a photograph of us standing in the silence. Then he took me on a tour of the monastery. Though Paul had been dead for eighteen years, it was as if he had died the week before. The old truck with N D A on the side was parked in a shed. His habit, with his name above it, was still hanging in the side room off the church. It was almost as if he would arrive at any moment, put it on, and go into the church to sing plain chant. In the corner of a field, rusting quietly back into the earth, was a cage Paul had made to carry the sheep to market. In another shed were Paul's bench, his tools and a sign that read: 'You don't have to be mad to work here, but it helps.' In the middle of this shed was a stanchion with lots of letters and numbers, chalked hieroglyphs.

'What do you think they are?' the Abbot asked.

'I have no idea.' I said.

'Well,' the Abbot said, 'we are near an airfield here and some young pilots

loved to buzz the monastery. When Paul heard them coming he would run out and get their tail or wing numbers as the disappeared into the blue. He'd write the number on this pole in chalk, then ring the airfield and complain in his Dublin accent about AF-234 'buzzing the blessed air.'

I heard many stories of Paul that day, from how the monastery was nearly burnt down while he was welding a burst pipe to how and why he ended up buried back to front. The story that stays with me is this. Every morning at dawn it was Paul's job to start the generator that pumped water from the Yarra up to the monastery farm house. On this particular morning, the monks eating breakfast looked out and saw a naked Paul, staggering up the hill from the river. They thought Paul had been set upon by thugs until he explained what had really happened. The pump's old engine was fired into life with a starting handle. Paul had been turning the handle when it kicked back like an airplane propeller which caught his robe and flung him like a rag doll. He managed somehow to slip out of the robe and stagger back up to the monastery. At that point in his story, the Abbot went off and brought back the crucifix that hung around Paul's neck that morning. The cross was bent like a boomerang. When Paul's wounds were tended and he'd been put to bed, the monks had a meeting.

'About getting a new pump?' I enquired.

'No,' the abbot said, 'about Paul ending up naked. We discussed whether we

should start wearing trousers.'

'And did you?' I asked.

He smiled and lifted his robes to reveal a pair of neatly pressed trousers.

Some of the monks who had travelled from Tipperary to Tarrawarra with Paul in 1955 told me that it was Paul's sense of humour, his yarns and anecdotes that made him the best of company. What, I wondered, had happened to their vow of silence. One monk said that whenever he went with Paul to Melbourne, or wherever, he loved to hear Paul tell of their travels and adventures on their return. The journeys were reborn, made new, in his telling of a tale. My own father was a great story teller too, often laughing out loud at his own stories. They all agreed that Uncle Paul, Brother Gabriel to them, had a great way with words. They were blessed to have him there, down through the years. Then, of course, someone asked if I knew his favourite song?

'No,' I said, just to hear him say it out loud. And he did.

'It was *South of the Border Down Mexico Way*. He could sing it happy, or sing it sad. It all depended on how the truck was running or the sheep were hanging on.'

Paul was always very close to my father, which made him close to me. In truth, with my books and my poems, I am probably more akin to the academic Billy.

And what of my uncle Tony? Well, he left the monastery and married my Auntie Jessie. Tony Curtis and Jessie James, you can imagine the stories. Tony went to work with my father in J & C McLoughlins. He is a lovely man with a big heart (now by-passed!). He's the last of the brothers. He too is a great story teller, a great talker. How were the Curtis family ever in a silent monastery? I heard from Tony that my father was thinking of joining them in the monastery, but he met my mother and she changed his mind. On the cover of my next book 'Folk' there will be a photograph of my parents standing in front of the monastery in 1948. They are dressed for weather, sun or rain, blessings and sorrows, for the road to come.

Tony Curtis

Poet and nephew.

1948
ROSCREA



The poet's parents at Roscrea Abbey, Co Tipperary in 1948

Poetry

Folk

Such a warm little word,
full of greens and browns,
like something woven,
a thread into the past;
something to hold onto
in the dark. If I say
the word quietly to myself
I think of a photograph
I found in my father's
bible after he died:

The end of prayer.
Roscrea, 1948. Sunday
morning after early mass,
my folks stand ready for the road.
The motorbike between them
like a man in a yard
holding open a sack;
throw in the breeze, the ditches,
the lanes that weave
through the widening fields.

It is the end of November.
The feast of St James of the Marches.
Winter is in the air.
They are dressed for weather.
So close,
my mother wears
my father's heavy raincoat.
He wears goggles and gloves
as if with the right words—
'So long, God Bless! '—

the motorbike will lift
off into the clouds
like a magic carpet.
'Hold on!' I hear him
say to my mother,
as the road, the fields,
the houses fade away.
And she did, tightly,
with both arms,
for the rest of their lives.

In Praise of Grass

My father's three brothers
were Cistercian monks
at a monastery in the hills.
We used to spend weekends there:
my mother and father
cleansing their souls
while I played in the fields.

My father's three brothers prayed
harder than anyone I knew,
for me and the repose of the souls.
I shivered when they sang plainchant
praising God's blessings,
their voices softer than girls'.
I see them still,
lined up like soldiers
against the dark —
the light dying,
the air colder than the cross.

I liked the bells that rang
all through the night.
I liked that everyone was up
and out with the light.
But what I liked best
was to watch the monks work.
When they cut the hay
or went to gather in the cattle,
they were like little bits of autumn
moving through the fields —
brown leaves blown by the wind.

God knows I was never any good
at prayer, and yet,
when a cloud passes along a hillside
or I look over an iron gate
into an empty field
I can still hear their voices
praising the grass, the snowdrop,
the leaf, the small miracle of rain.

Tony Curtis was born in Dublin and studied literature at Essex University & Trinity College, Dublin. His new collections are: *Folk (for older folk)* and *An Elephant Called Rex: an A to Z of Poems for Children (for younger folk)*. Seven previous collections include *The Well in the Rain: New & Selected Poems (Arc Publications 2006)* and *Days Like These (Brooding Heron Press, Washington State, 2007 with Theo Dorgan & Paula Meehan)*. A winner of the Irish National Poetry Prize and

the 2003 Varuna Fellowship to Australia, he is a member of Aosdána, the Irish Academy of the arts. He has read at schools, colleges and festivals all over Ireland, England, Wales, Scotland and America. On his fifth Australian tour in February 2011, he will read at the Irish Embassy in Kuala Lumpur and then at the Universities of Western Australia (17&18/2/2011, a symposium for Australian poet Dennis Haskell) and Melbourne (Irish Studies Seminars 1/3/2011).

Transportation: racy and relevant history

Tony Moore, *Death or Liberty: Rebels and radicals transported to Australia, 1788-1868*
Millers Point, Murdoch Books Australia, 2010, 432 pp

Tony Moore has undertaken a stupendous task in covering not only all the political prisoners transported to Australia, but in providing a detailed account of their actions at home, a comprehensive background to their domestic environment, their activity as convicts, and the subsequent achievements of those who left Australia by escape or as a result of pardons. He writes no academic treatise but a work to remind modern Australians of their diminishing radicalism. There is no reluctance to link the 19th to the 21st century. References are made to wars on terror, rendition, Guantánamo Bay, market economics, indigenous land rights, George Bush and gulags. Moore's style is racy with current idiom.

While academic purists may cavil at facile anachronisms, it is important to show how many of our modern assumptions were known and contested in the past. Moore makes a strong case for using radical, idealistic 19th century convicts to spur our complacent present. His story is fast moving and generally readable. Its coverage of Scottish radicals, Chartists, Canadian rebels and Irish from the Risings of 1798, 1803, 1848 and 1867, is breathtaking. Discussion of the causation of protests leading to transportation is as plausible as the portrayal of political exiles in Australia.

Death or Liberty shows the radical and repressive linkages between constituent parts of the British Empire and the United States. Moore, for example, does not merely discuss the Canadian and American rebels transported in the 1830s but provides a full analysis of the insurgencies in Upper and Lower Canada. He resists the temptation to portray Sir George Arthur, governor of convict Van Diemen's Land and Upper Canada after the insurrections, as an authoritarian stereotype, citing studies in his favour. Such even-handedness balances the intrusion of present-day issues. The persistent raids from the USA on Canada in this period, which sent both Americans and Canadians to Van Diemen's Land and Norfolk Island, are depicted as American 'manifest destiny' imperialism as much as repressed radicalism. Occasionally the citation of differing sources leaves issues in the air. Some quoted writers portray convict assignment as slavery,

while others see it as an opportunity for progress. As for the separate system, Moore implies that Port Arthur's model prison was the prototype when in fact it followed the English Pentonville.

The Irish sections cover a considerable part of the book. Work on this scale must rely on secondary sources. Moore can cite only a fraction of the available evidence. He emphasises basic sources which are well referenced. Here challenges will arise. Although the grand narratives of Tom Keneally, Sean McConville and Robert Hughes, plus the more detailed works of George Rudé, Blanche Touhill, Cassandra Pybus and Hamish Maxwell-Stewart, provide good background, they need supplementation by relevant articles and monographs, admittedly difficult in a work of this scope.

For example, the historiography of the great Irish Famine of the 1840s, source of many Australian convicts, is complex with historians of the calibre of Joel Mokyr, Cormac Ó Gráda, Peter Gray, and Christine Kinealy moving beyond Woodham-Smith, still a useful introduction. Some citation of these writers is required.

Each reader will have specialist demands and will inevitably complain of small errors which spoil a work of reference. Jonathan Swift was not a Whig MP; neither Thomas nor Wolfe Tone were brought up as Presbyterians; Patrick O'Donohoe was not present at Widow McCormack's Cottage at Ballygarry in 1848; Thomas Meagher did not attend Trinity College, Dublin. Indeed it is far-fetched to see Trinity College, Dublin, a strongly Protestant institution, as a nationalist powerhouse at this period, despite the presence of several Young Irelanders, led by Thomas Davis. It is a pity that Moore did not cite the eminent Australian historian John Molony's biography of Thomas Davis. A heading relevant to chapter five emerges incongruously in the conclusion.

More important than small errors are several areas where Moore's argument could be sustained by other uncited material. Young Irelander Patrick O'Donohoe is in many ways the classical convict economic radical. Several articles and at least one thesis demonstrate that O'Donohoe's *Irish Exile*, mentioned but

not discussed by *Death or Liberty*, put forward a remarkably radical philosophy, anticipating aspects of the future Labor Movement. Another significant Young Irelander, whose writings have recently been published, is William Paul Dowling. Particularly relevant to Moore's thesis, Dowling was transported as a Young Irelander while liaising with the Chartists in London. Rarely associated with the seven celebrated Young Ireland leaders, Dowling was the only Young Irelander to stay in Tasmania as a noted portrait painter, photographer and pillar of the Catholic Church.

Moore rightly emphasises social protesters as well as well-heeled political prisoners. Deserving of inclusion is Ribbonman Richard Jones who rejected forced attendance at Protestant services, insisting on Catholic clergy at Port Arthur and elsewhere. Through Rudé, Moore mentions William Cuffay and other lesser-known politicals during the Young Ireland period. A detailed monograph by Brendan Kiely shows the Young Ireland leaders were aware of seven transported insurgents from Cappelquin in 1849. Young Irelanders rejected discrimination between leaders and followers, while Moore demonstrates the system's reluctance to force manual labour on upper class convicts. John Williams in his unmentioned but important study of all 14,000 Irish convicts transported to Van Diemen's Land shows a link between Cappelquin and Young Ireland. The stereotype of Smith O'Brien as dull and withdrawn is effectively challenged by Moore's demonstration that O'Brien converted exile into nationalist propaganda.

Death or Liberty is always interesting. The organisation is reminiscent of the old teacher training adage: first tell them what you are going to say, then say it, and finally tell them what you said. Repetition is often helpful, but, especially in the Canadian section, sometimes confusing when chronological sequence is lost. I look forward to a second edition, when, with some rejigging, the book will take its place as a most significant Australian history.

Richard Davis

*Emeritus Professor in History,
University of Tasmania.*

Forthright medic of old Dublin

Risteárd Mulcahy: *Memoirs of a Medical Maverick*

Dublin, Liberties Press, 2010, ISBN: 978-1-907593-02-4; RRP: €20

The son of General Richard Mulcahy, Risteárd's long life as a cardiologist has given him opportunities to observe social changes, both good and bad. Many charming aspects of his childhood life in Dublin have now been lost forever. His mother contributed a great deal to the busy household of six children by making clothes, managing a large fruit and vegetable garden, and rearing ducks, hens and cows, and this in central Dublin. By contrast, in 1995 country people refused to grow their own vegetables to improve their health, preferring to buy them from the supermarket. While Risteárd sympathises with his mother's struggles to balance the budget and describes them movingly, he seems not to perceive that his father's indifference to money, noble in some respects, put a very heavy burden on his mother. The lost world of freedom and security where children cycled everywhere without the need of adult supervision is vividly evoked.

Risteárd is very open about the difficulties that could arise in sexual matters in 1950s Ireland; his shyness made it difficult for him to embark on a sex life at all. He talks about the gradual breakdown of his marriage and his heart rending decision to leave it. In addition to the emotional distress of marriage breakdown, in those days, the views of the Church also had to be considered. Risteárd feared that he would not be welcome to return to his post in the hospital run by the Irish Sisters of Charity. To his surprise, even in 1974, he was welcomed back and when he married again in a registry office after the successful divorce referendum in 1995, the sisters held a quiet reception for them in the convent. Certainly a positive change in Irish society, summed up by the head of the community who said 'Isn't it nice that we are getting a bit more sensible?' (p.28).

Risteárd qualified as a doctor in 1945. This was a time when home delivery of babies by medical students was normal practice among families living in the slums surrounding the hospital, something the author acknowledges as unthinkable today. Typical of his outlook on health matters though, he points out that one of the safeguards for mother and child included 'The fact that childbirth was a natural process was a further protection, provided we did not interfere in the natural course of affairs.' (p.38). After studying in London and entering the Royal College of Physicians, Risteárd returned to St. Vincent's Hospital, Dublin in 1950. Here he encountered once more the appalling living conditions of the very poor:

My most abiding memories of the dispensary at St. Vincent's in the forties and fifties were ... the poverty and destitution of the people, the many patients with visible deformities, and the widespread lack of hygiene. A pervading and sickly body odour was the rule, [...] and it was evident that many people at that time rarely washed themselves. [...] it was necessary in some patients to examine their legs for circulatory changes. I saw foul-smelling feet which must never have been washed, where the toes adhered together by the filth of ages, and where the socks [...] were rotting on limbs. (p.90)

People living like this fell prey to infectious conditions of the heart, such as rheumatic fever, but as their standard of living improved, the effects of heavy cigarette smoking also appeared.

During the 1950s and 60s, the medical profession on both sides of the Irish Sea were in denial about the impact of cigarette

smoking on the heart and quite dismayed at the epidemic of degenerative heart disease. At that time, it was common to hear the view that heart disease could not be prevented, only treated, and some of the treatments such as 'wrapping people in cotton wool' did more harm than good. Like most doctors at that time, Risteárd himself smoked. He describes doctors smoking during their ward rounds, when it was '...the ward sister's privilege to carry the ashtray.' (p. 179). Even more amazing were the two surgeons who smoked *during* operations with the assistance of the theatre sister who would hold the cigarette for them in a pair of forceps, allowing the ash to fall where it would. Risteárd describes this as a time when sudden unexpected death among middle aged people was both accepted and common, usually ascribed at first to 'acute indigestion' but then discovered to be a heart attack. Now that smoking has become relatively rare, life expectancy has improved to the point where his golf club recently had to abolish the 'honorary' category of non-paying members who had played there for 40 or more years. There were so many of them that the club could no longer afford it.

Apart from publicly opposing the cigarette-smoking habit, which led colleagues to report him to the Irish Medical Association for self-advertisement (!), Risteárd was also unusual in being an early advocate of physical exercise as a preventive and as a treatment for heart disease. Discouraging activity amongst heart patients was considered a much more reasonable approach until the 1980s. He continues to question current accepted 'wisdom' by querying the alleged 'need' for prophylactic drugs such as aspirin and statins (a treatment for high blood cholesterol levels). Risteárd snorts:

It is hardly realistic that healthy people should be put on such routine drugs when adhering to simple lifestyle habits would clearly lead to every prospect of good health and longevity. Yet tens of thousands of people in Ireland, particularly among the elderly, are now taking these drugs permanently and have become dependent psychologically as well as physically upon doctors. (p.162)

Certainly his own lifestyle appears compatible with healthy longevity, given that he is dispensing this advice at the age of 88. He also queries the need for annual reviews and medical check-ups, which in his view do little more than '...maintain the patient on a permanent medical treadmill.' (p. 165). Risteárd does not flinch from suggesting that the main driver of a lot of these tests, preventive drugs and check-ups is, quite simply, medicine for profit. Linking individual lifestyles with planetary problems, he suggests that if most people ate the sort of diet that they need to maintain normal cholesterol levels, far fewer animals would be needed for human consumption, so that the level of methane emissions would be reduced.

While most of the book is well written and interesting, there is a tendency to meander somewhat, especially toward the end where several small sections could have been cut without much loss. This is a very readable account of the ways in social change affects disease patterns in a society.

Felicity Allen

As well as being Deputy Editor of Tinteán, Felicity is a psychologist with an interest in health and epidemiology.

A light in the Irish dark ages

Muireann Ní Bhrolchain: *An Introduction to Early Irish Literature*
Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2009
ISBN 978-1-84682-176-9 hbk; RRP: €45

In *An Introduction to Early Irish Literature*, medievalist Dr Muireann Ní Bhrolchain shares her command of Irish history, and includes a guide to what has been written on the subject by other scholars, with a specific focus on the Old and Middle Irish periods, 600–1200. This examination of Ireland's rich written heritage will appeal to readers seeking a single condensed resource on Irish stories.

The merging of the best of Old Irish and Early Christian spiritual traditions, often fondly referred to as Celtic Christianity, goes back to the 6th century. The Lament of Colm Cille (597) shows that the Irish language and tradition was being interpreted and used in a Christian context. International politics led to the demise of Irish native institutions when Henry II introduced Church politics along with major diocesan restructuring and reforms to Ireland in the 12th century. Until that time, oral traditions continued in native institutions, alongside Irish secular studies in Church schools.

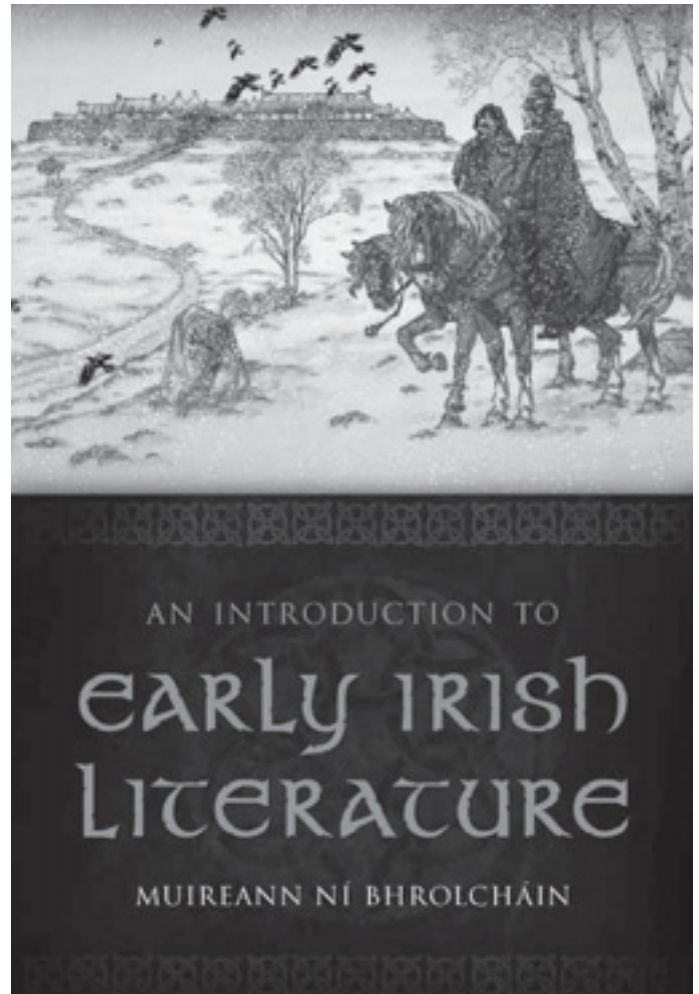
Sagas and poetry, 'the substance of literature', the main focus of this book, typically contain both prose and poetry, and combinations of both. From ancient times, information on saga literature was passed down orally, through story, song, poetry and prose, until they were transcribed during the rise of the Bardic schools, when scholars of the oral tradition, in Irish history, law, and poetry, began to embrace Latin. Later generations of clerically educated authors continued to celebrate their 'pagan' (i.e., pre-Christian) oral tradition, even while holding high ecclesiastical offices and teaching positions at church schools.

While a break is found in the written record during the 13th century, poetry continued to flourish, probably due to the poets' training remaining independent of the church, as an educational system administered by the poets themselves.

The scope of this work is dazzling, as the following short digest of the topics studied reveals:

- Stories and storytelling; Druids, Poets and Bards; the arrival of Christianity; Oral Tradition, Ogham and Written Literature;
- The location and nature of the Otherworld; Voyages especially the Brendan Voyage; Vision Tales;
- Kings and Sovereignty Goddesses; Madness in Early Irish Literature;
- The Hero and his typical trajectory; and
- Poets and poetry and the prosimetrum.

Ní Bhrolchain continually reminds us about the tight control over the manuscripts exercised by monks. 'Only learned classes of Fili (poets) and monks needed to learn to read and write.' She argues that from the 8th century, poets were set apart from the oral 'bards' by their literacy. Old Irish texts became the official authority on matters of grammar, versification, genealogy and history, and were modeled on the Latin curriculum of the church schools. Up until the 13th century, most native scholars, whether poet, expert in Irish traditional history (*senchae*), or judge of Brehon Law, have been identified as clerics or Christian teachers, possibly with a vested interest in documenting contemporary history of Christianity at the expense of 'pagan' elements in Irish culture. However, from the late 10th to the 12th centuries,



the annals also record the works of court poets, some of whose verses in praise of Irish kings still survive.

Although the writers of the tradition were Christianised, Ní Bhrolchain contends that they were nonetheless steeped in traditional Gaelic world-view of the Otherworld. I would speculate that we have an excellent historical clue to the basis for this world-view in the Early Christian British argument over Free Will versus Original Sin: St Augustine and his followers condemned the famous British monk Pelagius (354-420) for rejecting the doctrine of Original Sin, and accused him of reviving the 'Natural Philosophy of the Druids' which is, essentially, that, when the will is free, there is no sin, and that we have the power to exercise choice in any moment. Pelagius wrote about 'The ability. The will. The act.' He believed in the pristine nature of humanity and that Adam's fall had no impact on the created order. Suffice it to say, Pelagius was declared a heretic, and thrice excommunicated by the Church. Many writers since have returned to these 'Pelagian' arguments.

Eminent Irish historian Dr Ní Bhrolchain has shone a bright light on a dark period of Irish history. This chronicle of Irish history makes a fine addition to the resurgence of interest in the unique spirit and character of 'Irishness', which is continuing to grow, even while the country has lost its sovereignty, once again.

Mairéid Sullivan

Mairéid is a writer, filmmaker, composer and songwriter, and a singer of traditional Irish songs.

Into the Void with Beckett

Joseph Kosuth: '(Waiting for—) Texts for Nothing' Samuel Beckett, in play
Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, Southbank

I was intrigued to see a recent exhibition of conceptual art at ACCA, the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art, the monumental red iron building alongside the Malthouse on Southbank in Melbourne. I have not before experienced conceptual art, and this exhibition really intrigued me, as all four installations featured language, but they demanded an interaction in ways that were new to me. Not just reading, but physically experiencing what the work might mean, and reflecting on it.

There were four installations, two of which left me bemused and confused (one was a set of dictionary definitions of *nothing*, in serif script, but not so very different that they got beyond being repetitive. Oddly, the mathematical definition of zero was not part of the deal. The other was, I think, an erasure of something from Freud).

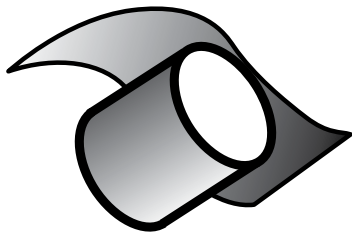
The other two featured Irish writers: Beckett and Joyce. The Joyce was a simple rendering in neon lights at different heights (the reason for that I could not fathom) of

the locations of each of the eighteen chapters in *Ulysses*. If I could have worked out what the height issue was about, I might have been more satisfied with this installation. It would have made a lot more sense in its original context in Dublin in 2004, at the Re-Joyce festival celebrating 100 years since the date on which *Ulysses* is set, and I gather there the lights were on a ceiling, so perhaps height issues were not germane to the installation. If you did not know Joyce, you would have left none the wiser. As it was, it was fun to realise what the single, simple game was that the artist, the much celebrated Austrian conceptual art and installation exponent, Joseph Kosuth, was engaged in.

The Beckett installation, however, was brilliant and a very fine example of the experiential nature of such a conceptual art installation. One entered a very large hall that was unlit and had rubber on walls and floors (at the artist's request) to deaden sound. It was a void, lit only dimly by blacked out neons featuring the words of

Beckett, from *Waiting for Godot* and a text about his own writing, 'Texts for Nothing' (which may have prompted the definitions of *nothing*). In order to read the Beckett texts, you had to crane your neck and move through the space. I was there with a partly-blind friend, who held my arm, and I read it out loud to her (fortunately we had the space to ourselves). That proved to be an extra benefit. The black paint applied to the neons necessitated movement through the space, and finding the angle from which it could be read. It seemed to be about journeying through a void, making meaning where there was none, or little, and certainly not of a definitive kind, and finding one's own angle from which the reading could be done. Beckett was already enacting two ways of making meaning, and there were we and the artist collaborating to make more. It was moving, and a bit panic-inducing. I was glad there was an exit and that we had not been cast entirely into the void.

Frances Devlin-Glass



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A bravura performance

Theatre: *The Beckett Trilogy*, Gare St Lazare Players Ireland
Text compiled by Judy Hegarty Lovett & Conor Lovett
Performed by Conor Lovett, directed by Judy Hegarty Lovett

A bravura performance, impeccable courageous direction, and simple yet very effective lighting – I can't imagine how Beckett's complex prose trilogy could be better brought to the stage. A bare space, minimal costume changes, no props or embellishments of any kind. Just the words, beautifully delivered with a lightness that belied the hellishly hard work of months of preparation. No actorly flamboyance, simply an authentic representation of three of Beckett's 'uncertain monologues', uttered here by his prose protagonists *Molloy*, *Malone*, *the Unnameable* and their various alter egos – real, imagined or fabricated.

Beckett produced the trilogy during his most creative period (1946-1950) when he realised that hitherto he had written traditionally, ie describing a realistic simulacrum of the external world. He now focused on the inner world with its darkness, ignorance and uncertainty. While his earlier characters pretended to knowledge, those before us here are riddled with uncertainty and confusion. He also felt that the only progression possible for the modern artist was in depth, rejecting the rich polysemy of language of his earliest work, in favour of increasingly sparse expression, and defying grammatical order in the process.

While all this seems ill-matched to a night of entertaining theatre, Lovett and Hegarty Lovett show – seemingly without effort – that the opposite is true. On the contrary, how can we not embrace yet another down-and-out Beckettian creature, at the end of his tether, who frequently loses his train of thought, telling us rather eloquently about wrapping himself up against the cold in no less than the *Times Literary Supplement* while meticulously calculating the frequency of his farts? Counting and numbers are a leitmotiv in the trilogy, as elsewhere in Beckett, and used to great comic effect throughout. Lovett beautifully portrays the minimalist communications between Molloy and his mother, represented only by respective knocks numbering one to four, confusing both mother and son, and at times, it seems, the actor too. But no, never the actor. Lovett is in full control of the uncertainties and lapses. Minimalist gestures, a turn of the head, stepping out of the light, pointing to the wrong leg being the injured one, lengthy pauses and silences, all carefully rehearsed and executed. Never to be confused with an actor's lapse of memory, even though the text memorised fills three hours!

What to choose when the original text is several hundred pages long? Impenetrable to some, what's more. What we saw showed not simply the writers' profound knowledge of Beckett, but in equal measure their love of the work. This was a visceral representation of the essence of each novel, not an intellectual interpretation for our benefit. Beckett had an aversion to his words being analysed. He simply explained that the words meant what they said. This is exactly what happened here. We were presented with three narrator/protagonists, telling their (or our) story. What makes the characters and the performance mes-

merising is Beckett's use of voice, expertly realised by Lovett's creative response.

Beckett's characters are compelled to speak, often against their will, just as he, as an artist, felt compelled to write. The narrator from *The Unnameable* clearly articulates this compulsion: 'This voice that speaks...It issues from me, it fills me, it clamours against my walls, it is not mine, I can't stop it, I can't prevent it, from tearing me, racking me, assailing me. It is not mine, I have none, I have no voice and must speak, that is all I know.'

Lovett is a virtuoso at showing how effortlessly Beckett's characters move from the sublime to the ridiculous, sometimes appearing as disengaged, emotionally detached subjects, commenting quite rationally on their own miserable state as if they were not part of it. To add to the complexity, Lovett draws in the audience, sharing a chuckle or rhetorical question with us. Never, however, detracting from the magic of Beckett's beautifully poetic language or damaging the characters' dignity. He moves imperceptibly from the prattling Molloy, recounting the hilarious killing and burial of an aged dog to the uncertain existentialist musings and pseudo-sombre contemplations of death expressed elsewhere. Thankfully Beckett imbues even death with humour. 'Not hot, nor cold but tepid. I'll die tepid.'

Lovett's timing is impeccable, never missing a beat to capitalise on Beckett's mischievous comic sense. 'The Aegean in me, longing for heat and light...Him...I killed.' Perfectly delivered to bring the house down. Who would have thought that three hours of relentless monologue could have an audience fully engaged to the very last minute?

Lovett's delightful Irish accent helps bring it to life, and critics have often commented on the Irishness of the trilogy, even though it was first written in French. The three volumes were not, as often believed, completed in direct succession, but interrupted after *Malone Dies* by *Waiting for Godot*, *Texts for Nothing* and the very amusing *Three Dialogues with Georges Duthuit*. Beckett said he wrote *Godot* as a diversion from 'the awful prose' or 'the miseries' as he called his brilliant novels, claiming that it 'saved his sanity'. It was produced in an intensive burst between October 1948 and January 1949, before he completed the trilogy with *The Unnameable* in 1950.

While *Godot* went on to become Beckett's most recognisable work on an international stage, the trilogy remains largely unknown, ironically so because Beckett was first and foremost a poet and novelist, who came to the theatre relatively late. We owe a very special debt to this company for bringing it to large audiences around the world, doubtless inspiring many to read it. **Dr Uschi Felix** recently resigned from her academic post at Monash University to return to full-time acting. She has lectured on Beckett, directed Beckett, and played all of his female characters, most recently those in *Not I* and *Rockaby* in the much praised Beckett's Shorts at *La Mama*.

This was a visceral representation of the essence of each novel, not an intellectual interpretation for our benefit

A whistleblower's account

Richard O'Rawe, *Afterlives: the hunger strike and the secret offer that changed Irish history*, The Lilliput Press

The awful months of 1981 in Northern Ireland when ten young men died of starvation were unforgettable. Many people asked how Mrs Thatcher could be so obdurate in her approach as the men died one after the other in support of their demand for the return of conditions which had been extended to them earlier. Publicly, of course, she famously refused to negotiate, but few people were fooled by a public stance like that and indeed, negotiations were being carried out behind the scenes. At the time, and even now, few people knew the detail of offers and counter-offers as they flew back and forth, not even it appears the IRA Army Council and certainly not the INLA.

Then, as now, governments love a conspiracy, a secret that they can hug to their chests and refuse to share with those whose vital interests are involved and those who are paying for those decisions in blood, in money, or both. Going along with the government's obsession with secrecy ultimately proved to have terrible consequences for those involved in the hunger strike, but there are still questions about who was most adversely affected. Was it the hunger strikers themselves – not all of whom needed to die? Or was it those involved in coordinating the action whose reputations and actions are now being called into discredit, or both?

Richard O'Rawe first came to notice as the Public Relations Officer for the H block hunger strikers when the second fast was begun in March 1981. In that capacity he issued statements on behalf of the IRA and INLA prisoners on the fast and became a close confidante of the IRA prison officer commanding – Brendan (Bic) McFarlane. It might be thought then, that he would be well placed to know the exact content of the offers made to the dying men by the British government. It was this very belief that underlay the decision to write his earlier book *Blanketmen: An Untold Story of the H-Block Hunger Strike*. In this book, O'Rawe made the highly controversial claim that the hunger strike could have been brought to an end when only five of the men had died and the fifth – Joe McDonnell – was desperately ill. According to him, Bic McFarlane was told the details of the latest offer by Danny Morrison. On Bic's return to the prison wing he had discussed it with O'Rawe and the two had decided to accept

it. This decision was overturned by Gerry Adams himself – who was going between the prisoners and IRA Army Council – on the grounds that 'more was needed'.

There is no doubt at all that Adams took that decision, but the question remains as to why he did it. His public explanations are greatly at odds with the views of several commentators on recent Ulster history including Monsignor Denis Faul. O'Rawe's full thesis on why Adams made that decision – which effectively sentenced six men to death – is spelled out in *Blanketmen*. The present book is concerned with O'Rawe's experiences of life as a 'whistleblower'. He vividly describes the processes of exclusion, vilification and ridicule and their impacts on self-esteem and the simple enjoyments of life. At one point it was physically dangerous for O'Rawe to enter his local pub and he could not go shopping without people either hassling him, or worse, longstanding friends passing him by with silent glares. More than that he gives an idea of the impact of a well-oiled publicity machine operated by highly experienced politicians.

The way O'Rawe has been treated by the Sinn Féin leadership since his book appeared has been justified on various grounds. He has been accused of distressing the families of the dead hunger strikers, he has been accused of being a foil for British interests in Ulster and 'trying to do down people like Gerry Adams and the republican leadership.' (p.30). O'Rawe himself, although greatly distressed, even astonished, by the reaction and finding the glare of publicity hard to handle, has stuck by his claims, refused to retract and them repeated them persistently. Given the well known negative effects of becoming a whistleblower, his determination and continued mental balance is very striking.

No one amongst his critics seems to have stopped and asked themselves – why would a man like O'Rawe, a Republican for decades – act as he has done without very good reason? If we accept that he believes he has a good reason, would it not be wise to check what it was before condemning him? O'Rawe himself has repeatedly called for an independent enquiry into the truth or otherwise of his claims and perhaps this would still be the best course – at least for those who would like to know the truth.

Felicity Allen

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Catharsis

Seamus Heaney: *Human Chain*, Faber, London, 2010

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Early in this book Seamus Heaney describes ‘The Conway Stewart’, a newly purchased fountain pen: ‘The nib uncapped, / treating it to its first deep snorkel / In a newly opened ink-bottle.’ Heaney may live in the age of the email and the text message, but his interest in writing implements goes back to the start, when he compared his pen to a spade that digs deep. He is avid for pencils, paper, the traditional means of getting a poem on the record. Importantly, this poem is reprised later in the collection when he uses the voice of Colum Cille, the great saint of Iona:

My hand is cramped from penwork.
My quill has a tapered point.
Its bird-mouth issues a blue-dark
Beetle-sparkle of ink.

Wisdom keeps welling in streams
From my fine-drawn sallow hand:
Riverrun on the vellum
Of ink from green-skinned holly.

My small runny pen keeps going
Through books, through thick and thin,
To enrich the scholars’ holdings –
Penwork that cramps my hand.

The first verse evokes the illuminated world of medieval Ireland, the second signs in on the Joycean project of continuity in Irish writing (riverrun is the giveaway opening word of *Finnegans Wake*), while the third verse finds the poet already toying with the prospect of his future readership. Has Heaney put enough conundrums in his work to have the scholars working for centuries?

Placed together, these two smaller poems in the book remind us of one of Heaney’s favourite interests, which is also one of his favourite techniques, joining together the new world with the old world. The learning of ancient Ireland and the classical world is used to explain and dramatise the learning experience of Heaney himself in his own short time on Earth. Undoubtedly the standout example in this accomplished metier here is a poem called ‘Route 110’, where a trip on the bus from Smithfield Market, second-hand copy of Virgil in hand, parallels or re-enacts Aeneid VI itself, a trip into the Underworld.

In finding words to describe Seamus Heaney’s poetry I come up with seemingly, humane, rational, revelatory, steady, traditional, sane, grounded. Somewhere in his voluminous interview book ‘Stepping Stones’ (2008) Heaney early ‘wanted pressure and density, wasn’t susceptible to freewheeling rhythm and full-frontal statement,’ and it is his dedication to ‘pressure and density’ in poetry that marks all of his work. Compression is at work in the title poem, four short verses to describe lifting the load:

With a grip on two sack corners,
Two packed wads of grain I’d worked to lugs
To give me purchase, ready for the heave

This serves both to identify with others he has seen doing the same and to remind himself of his, and our, mortality:

That quick unburdening, backbreak’s truest payback,
A letting go which will not come again.

Or it will, once. And for all.

The human chain is not only the line of people moving the sacks, it is any line of people moving the essentials for living. The human chain is the process of doing things together, often without a word (or poem) spoken. But as the last verse just testified, the human chain is also the backbone, the links of the spinal column that make possible all of this work, the straightened chain that makes us all human.

The quality of Heaney's success is measured in how he can say all of these things without aphorism or footnote, in the matter-of-fact relay of a simple observation, the diction seemingly inevitable, the words plain as day. John Banville remarks that 'in these marvellous poems Heaney displays all that sweetness and ease of gesture, that colloquial accommodation, that are the unmissable traits of his art.'

Another standard towards which Heaney strives is forcible-ness, 'what sets the seal of inevitability on much of the best writing.' It is 'the attitude that makes you feel the lines have been decreed, that there has been no fussy picking and choosing of words but instead a surge of utterance.' His ordered cadences and pedalling of tones come at us familiarly in this latest collection. Mortality is the drive behind a pair of riddles titled 'Uncoupled'. The poet asks:

Who is this coming to the ash-pit
Walking tall, as if in a procession,
Bearing in front of her a slender pan

No question-mark is attached to this question, as if the actual answer is not nearly as important as the wonder of wondering who this person is, in and of herself. Likewise in Part II:

Who is this, not much higher than the cattle,
Working his way towards me through the pen,
His ashplant in one hand.

The book puts in a new perspective his large corpus of personal memory poetry, the staking out of a value system learnt in childhood and put to the test by extreme circumstance. Memory poems fill Heaney's space, have done from the start, normally less autobiographical excursions than attempts at moments of presence, of meaning drawn back from chaos through the existence of others, family, friends, even strangers and as in this case, his parents. At the end of the poem his father is called away by voices

So that his eyes leave mine and I know
The pain of loss before I know the term.

Even the use of the little word 'term' discloses Heaney's mastery. 'Term' in the sense of the 'the meaning of the word', but also the term of his father's life, and his own life. At times, the brilliant and meticulous measure of his lines sound like the last word in Johnsonian impeccability.

Like Les Murray, the most well-known living poet in Australia, Heaney writes a largely rural poetry that is bought by a largely city readership. Both employ versions of pastoral as the basic lay of the land for exploring other ideas and emotions. Heaney is not antipathetic to the urban, unlike Murray who makes a show of his antagonism toward city life and city dwellers, but at times I wonder if part of the attraction of these poets is how they satisfy

Seamus Heaney Human Chain

Poetry



the romantic desire for a nostalgia world they rarely experienced, or don't know at all. Heaney's poetry often depicts a safer Ireland of childhood and youth, pre-bookish, pre-academic, and significantly, pre-Troubles. In an interview in *The Irish Times* Heaney even points to a state of being that brought this poetry about. 'I think that post-1994, post the cessation of violence, the cessations, something changed in me, something changed in everybody. Things were restored to a more equable condition. Actually, I realised how deprived we had been really for 25 years,' and later he continues, '... in the 1970s and 1980s, the inner being of anybody conscious and answerable on the island was cornered in a different way than now. The spirit is in a different posture, and now it's opener, it's less battened down, less huddled.'

One other theme that Heaney readers are more conscious of with each passing year is summarised in the words of Colum Cille:

Derry I cherish ever.
It is calm, it is clear.
Crowds of white angels on their rounds
At every corner.

These are the words of self-imposed exile, of someone looking back at a world that is all his, but cannot be anymore. Heaney's residence in the Republic now takes up a fair proportion of his life and with it a body of work seeking meaning in a place, the North, upon which he may meditate at length. Whether in the icon of his childhood or the still unresolved later traumas of the conflicts in that place, Seamus Heaney produces a poetry prepared to enable catharsis.

Philip Harvey

Philip Harvey is poetry editor of Eureka Street, 2010 winner of the Jageurs Literary Prize.

Craic from Ballydrum

John Edward Henry (1904-1986) was a native of Ballydrum, Swinford, County Mayo.

He emigrated to the USA in his mid – twenties and spent a number of years in Chicago before returning to Mayo in 1931. When he came back, he married his childhood sweetheart, Margaret Salmon and took over the running of his family farm in Ballydrum.

He also worked with Mayo County Council as a supervisor on road and bridge construction for a number of years. The nature of his work meant that he was often absent from home from Monday morning to Friday night for weeks on end. It was during those periods of enforced absence from home and family, that he gathered much of the stories and anecdotes that would later form the basis of his folktale collection.

He used to invite older members of the community to chat with him about the customs and habits of their own times and those of previous generations, which he felt were in danger of being discarded in the name of progress. Very few others of his time felt the same desire to record and preserve for posterity the folk heritage of previous generation that was in danger of being lost forever but this did not deter him in the slightest.

John Henry or ‘Sean’ as he was also known left a collection of stories about everything from ‘Barnala Wood’ to ‘Bellmen’. Whether it’s an account of the ‘Big Wind’ or a Connaught person’s take on ‘Ninety-Eight’, the true storyteller is evident.

When Sean was a young lad a certain ‘knight-of-the-road, who was better dressed and seemed to be on a slightly higher mental plain than the average tramp, used visit the area.

He was known as ‘the Toff’ and when he told a story young Henry hung on every word and would, decades later, commit it to paper

‘In my great grandfather’s time, said The Toff, ‘there were little few glass windows to be found except in the Big Houses, and churches and with some well off people here and there. Among the poorer people, there were various excuses for windows. In some houses, long, narrow openings in the walls served for windows. It was narrower on the inside than the outside

and a board was fitted on the outside at night or in bad weather. In some cases, a mare’s placenta or a sheepskin with all the wool and fat removed was stretched across the ‘window.’ These allowed a dull light to get through but were far from being as satisfactory as glass. A good many dwellings then were only ‘bohauns’ or mud huts; they had no light except what came in over the half door.

I’m trying to
let out the dark,’
my great grandfather
is said to
have replied.

‘My great grandfather was known locally as Mairtín Bradach. (Mischievous Martin) He went to Sligo on one occasion and brought back a pane of glass. He was so careful of the glass that he carried it all the way home on his back in a sack that was well-padded with rags and paper. He never once sat down on his journey of 22 miles. With the help of a local handyman, he fitted the glass to a wooden frame and installed it with the proud boast that it was the first glass window ever to come to the village of Cruck.’ The Toff went on to add that his great grandfather had a well-known habit of turning things around when he spoke. So, when a neighbour who came across him while fitting the window, asked him what he was doing, he received an unexpected answer.

‘I’m trying to let out the dark,’ my great grandfather is said to have replied.

‘Letting out the dark, as Mairtín Bradach said,’ became a popular saying in the locality afterwards.

When the window had been fitted, some of the neighbours felt it that a celebration known as a ball was called for. Accordingly, a small money collection was held and Mairtín donated the food and the music, he being a player on the fife or wooden flute. During the ball, Mairtín saw

a neighbour to whom he had not spoken to for some years, peeping in through the new window. There were two lighted candles, one on each side of the window, and he had no trouble recognising the ‘gobadán’ (curlew) as this man was known locally. He had a very long nose, which earned him his title. After making up his mind, Mairtín moved quietly to the back door and picked up the hardest sod of turf he could find. Moving stealthily, he waited until he got beside the window. He waited until the gobadán had his long nose right up to the window. Then he let fly catching his opponent full on the nose and of course breaking the window in the process.

Sean amassed a considerable pile of wire bound notebooks and jotters as he went about his labour of love and in later years he used those notes to write his folktales. A number of those stories were published in book form by the Mercier Press (Cork) in the late seventies under the title of ‘*Tales from the West of Ireland*.’ This book was re-issued in 2000 and both editions were quickly sold out.

He contributed to a number of periodicals and magazines and for many years he wrote articles on contemporary Irish social and economic affairs for an American travel company’s newsletter.

‘Mayo Folktales’ is a collection of his stories that have been published in digital form by his son, Eamonn. There is a total of 54 articles in this collection and it had been arranged in two volumes for distribution purposes.

Both volumes are available on CD-ROM as well as in PDF format for direct downloading from the site; www.mayotales.com

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Mattie Lennon



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