



**The Aisling Society
of Sydney**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2012

THE COUNCIL OF THE AISLING SOCIETY 2012

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VICE PRESIDENTS**

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HON. TREASURER
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MRS TRUDI O'NEIL
MR TONY EARLS
MR JOHN RYAN
PROF ANDERS AHLQVIST
MR BRENDAN O'CONNELL**

HON. AUDITOR

In 2012 the Council also unanimously decided to co-opt Professor Ronan McDonald as an additional Councillor, Ronan having graciously agreed to accept the position.

In addition, Trudi O'Neil kindly continued to perform the invaluable role of Minutes Secretary, and past President Patrick Tansey generously took on the lion's share of the work in relation to organising our three main annual functions, with the assistance of course of Maureen McLoughlin. These contributions from Trudi and Patrick are very much appreciated.

MEMBERSHIP

The Society has 73 financial members and 4 honorary life members. This year there were also two honorary members, being the 2011 winners of the Aisling Society Prize at the Universities of Sydney and NSW, and we welcomed one new member, namely Orla Saul.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2012 Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 22 February. The Annual Report for 2011, which had been prepared by Peter Gray and circulated to members beforehand, was presented, as was the Treasurer's report which had been prepared by Maureen McLoughlin and likewise circulated. Both these reports were accepted.

An Election of Office-Bearers was held, resulting as set out above. Maureen McLoughlin stepped down as Treasurer after serving in that role for some 39 years. Maureen's magnificent contribution to the Society has been incalculable, and we are delighted that she has continued as a councillor.

ORDINARY MEETINGS

Our ordinary monthly meetings were held once more in the rooms of the Consulate-General of Ireland, for whose support and generosity we are again most grateful. Again we had the advantage of the genuine interest of the Consul-General, Caitriona Ingoldsby, and of the Vice-Consul, Siobhan Kelly Antonucci.

- FEBRUARY** The February Ordinary Meeting followed on the Annual General Meeting, and featured an entertaining Talk by well-known weather guru **Mike Bailey** under the title "*Weathering Life*".
- APRIL** Irish-born actress turned writer **Rosamund Burton**, spoke to us most engagingly on "*Walking St Declan's Way*", the subject of her recent book, '*Castles, Follies and Four-Leaf Clovers*', about the ancient pilgrims' path from Ardmore on the coast of Waterford to Cashel in Tipperary.
- MAY** We welcomed Dr **Liam Weeks**, lecturer in politics at the Department of Government, University College Cork, who illuminated some of the similarities and differences in the Irish and Australian electoral systems, in his Talk entitled "*De minimis non curat praetor: voting system design in Ireland and Australia*".
- JUNE** Dr **Desmond O'Malley**, a Joyce scholar who lectures on Irish language and literature at Sydney University, shed a fascinating light on the intrinsic Irishness of much of the English spoken and used by Joyce's characters in "*The secret language of James Joyce*".
- AUGUST** The first performance of Handel's "Messiah" took place in Dublin on 13 April 1742. Why Dublin? What was Handel doing there? In "*Handel in Dublin 1741-2*", Professor **Barra Boydell**, retired Professor of Music History at the National University of Ireland Maynooth and joint editor of the Encyclopedia of Music in Ireland, teased out some of the answers to such questions.
- SEPTEMBER** **Steve Carey**, Chairman of the NSW GAA, entitled his Talk "*The GAA: a national heritage*". Steve discussed the origins and development of the GAA, as well as its enormous and ongoing impact on Irish life both at home and abroad.
- OCTOBER** Author and broadcaster **Claire Dunne** explored the Irish harp as the central icon of a nation's story in "*Irish harps in time – mythic, cultural, historic*". She illustrated the story beautifully by playing, on her own harp, some of the well-loved pieces associated with the instrument.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

ST PATRICK'S DAY DINNER:

On Friday 23 March, we again enjoyed the splendid Strangers Dining Room in Parliament House in Macquarie Street, this year as the guests of the new Attorney-General of NSW, the Hon Greg Smith SC. 91 members and their guests attended. Our President, Dr Jeff Kildea, welcomed the guests, and introduced our speaker. The national anthems of Ireland and

Australia were sung, to accompaniment by Arlene Tansey, and the message from the President of Ireland was read.

After dinner, our speaker for the evening was our host, **Greg Smith SC**. Greg began with a rousing rendition of "*Hail Glorious St Patrick*", which instantly had the gathering in the palm of his hand, where we remained for the rest of his hilarious and extremely crowd-pleasing speech, which featured several more songs and a good deal of audience participation. The vote of thanks was proposed by Peter Gray.

MID-YEAR LUNCHEON

58 members and their guests attended the luncheon, which was held on Sunday 22 July, once again at the Sydney Rowing Club on the banks of the Parramatta River at Abbotsford. Dr **Val Noone**, author of *Hidden Ireland in Victoria*, fellow of the History School at the University of Melbourne, and founding editor of *Táin*, the magazine of the Australian Irish network, delivered the 18th *Joan Ward Memorial Address*. Perry McIntyre moved the vote of thanks.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

This year's party was held on Wednesday 28 November at Sancta Sophia College at Sydney University. The party was as usual a very enjoyable and convivial evening, and was attended by 55 members and friends.

AISLING SOCIETY MILESTONES IN 2012

- The Aisling website - aislingsociety.org.au - was launched, thanks in large part to the hard work of Tony Earls, assisted by Peter Gray and Jeff Kildea. The site contains a wealth of information about the Society, including something of its history, lists of Talks and publications, a calendar of events (which Jeff Kildea is keeping updated), and several useful links to other sites such as the Irish Embassy and Consulate, and the Irish-related Departments at both Sydney University and UNSW.
- Claire Dunne's latest book, *Carl Jung: Wounded Healer of the Soul*, was published in May.
- During the year Anne Stevens very kindly made all the necessary arrangements to have the audiotapes of the interviews conducted for the oral history of the Society, a project dating back to 2000, transformed into digital form. We hope that before long these will be available on our website.

EVENTS DURING THE YEAR IN WHICH MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY PARTICIPATED

- Patrick Tansey co-ordinated the organisation of the traditional "Aisling car", and phalanx of supporting decorators and walkers, for our participation in the annual St Patrick's Day Parade in March.
- The Society again made donations to the St Patrick's Day Mass Committee and to the St Patrick's Day Parade Committee.
- Vice-president Mary Lee represented the Society at a ceremony held by the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at UNSW in March, when our prizes in both English and History were awarded to Brooke Boland
- Our immediate past president Patrick Tansey represented the Society at a ceremony held by the School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry at Sydney University in May, when our prize was awarded to Patrick Wilson
- Bloomsday celebrations were centred this year on the Bondi Pavilion, masterminded by our member Ronan McDonald and enjoyed by many of our members
- On 26 July, Consul-General Caitriona Ingoldsby kindly hosted a reception for "members of the legal profession with Irish connections in Sydney". Tony Baine, Tony Earls, Jeff Kildea and Peter Gray were among the Aisling members who enjoyed the occasion

- In October, one of the regular UNSW Global Irish Studies Talks took the form of a seminar chaired by our member Tony Earls, under the title *'Irish Lawyers in colonial Australia - 'significant yet indefinable'?*
- Professor Cormac Ó Gráda of University College Dublin delivered the second annual Patrick O'Farrell Memorial Lecture at the John Hume Institute for Global Irish Studies at UNSW on 5 November: *'Because she never let them in': Irish immigration a century ago and today*. Numerous Aisling members were present, both for the lecture itself (in honour of our distinguished former life member) and at the reception for Irish Studies supporters beforehand graciously hosted by the Chancellor, David Gonski AC and the Dean, Professor James Donald.

AISLING SOCIETY PRIZES

In 2012, Prizes of \$150 were again offered to students from the University of New South Wales, the University of Sydney, the University of Wollongong, Macquarie University, the University of Western Sydney and the Australian Catholic University. Prizewinners announced in 2012 were:

University of Sydney
UNSW (2 prizes)

Patrick Wilson
Brooke Boland

In the case of UNSW, the university has changed its arrangements for prizes and awards as from 2013. Our prizes will no longer fit within the guidelines under the new arrangements. The Society is giving consideration to how best to continue its long association with UNSW in this regard for future years.

CONCLUSION

My thanks again to the members of the Aisling Society for the honour they give me by entrusting me with the Secretary's role. Thanks also to Jeff Kildea as President, Padraic Hoban, Trudi O'Neil and Patrick Tansey in particular, and all the Council members generally, for the help and support which I have received during the year. I again record also the Society's sincere thanks to the Consulate-General of Ireland, especially Caitriona Ingoldsby and Siobhan Kelly Antonucci, for their interest in and support of our activities and for continuing so generously to host our meetings in their rooms at 1 Market Street. I look forward to another enjoyable and successful year in 2013.



Peter Gray
HON SECRETARY

December 2012