



The Aisling Society  
of Sydney

*aislingsociety.org.au*

## ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2018

### THE COUNCIL OF THE AISLING SOCIETY 2018

|                     |                                |
|---------------------|--------------------------------|
| PRESIDENT           | MR PETER GRAY SC               |
| VICE PRESIDENTS     | DR MARIE LEECH                 |
|                     | MR PATRICK TANSEY              |
|                     | MRS MARY LEE                   |
| HON. SECRETARY      | DR JEFF KILDEA                 |
| HON. TREASURER      | MR PADRAIC HOBAN               |
| ARCHIVIST/LIBRARIAN | MR PETER GRAY SC               |
| PUBLICITY OFFICER   | MS ÉILIS HURST*                |
|                     | DR PAMELA O'NEILL <sup>†</sup> |
| COUNCILLORS         | PROF ANDERS AHLQVIST‡          |
|                     | MR TONY EARLS                  |
|                     | DR EDDIE JACKSON               |
|                     | PROF RÓNÁN MCDONALD            |
|                     | MRS TRUDI O'NEIL               |
|                     | MS REBECCA POWER*              |
|                     | PROF PETER KUCH <sup>†</sup>   |
|                     | MS SUSAN RYAN AO <sup>†</sup>  |

Trudi O'Neil continued her long-standing role as our Minutes Secretary, Jeff Kildea kept our website updated and Patrick Tansey continued to perform the lion's share of the work in organising our three main annual functions. These substantial additional contributions from Trudi, Jeff and Patrick are, as always, very much appreciated.

\* Until 14 September 2018.

‡ Until 23 August 2018.

† From 14 September 2018.

## MEMBERSHIP

The Society has 4 honorary life members and 98 ordinary members of whom XX paid their 2018 subscriptions. This year we welcomed 4 new members, Ellie Crookes, Muirís Ó Súilleabháin, Mary Barthelemy, Bronte Cormican-Jones, and I have received notifications of the deaths of two members, Anders Ahlqvist and Kevin O'Connor.

## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2018 Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 22 February at the Irish Consulate, Level 26, 1 Market Street, Sydney. The Annual Report for 2017, which had been prepared by the Secretary Jeff Kildea and circulated to members beforehand, was presented, as was the Treasurer's report which had been prepared by Padraic Hoban and likewise circulated. Both these reports were accepted. An election of office-bearers was held, resulting as set out above.

## ORDINARY MEETINGS

This year our ordinary monthly meetings were held in the rooms of the Consulate-General of Ireland. The support and generosity of the previous Consul-General, Jane Connolly during her term is most appreciated as is the continuing support and generosity of her successor, Owen Feeney, and the staff of the consulate. Once again we had a variety of talks at our regular monthly meetings:

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|-----------|---|
| FEBRUARY  | After the Annual General Meeting Ciara Smart gave a talk entitled 'Excused only through the Exigencies of Narrative' about Irish-Aboriginal relations in colonial Australia.  |
| APRIL     | Rod Smith spoke about his book <i>Guinness Down Under</i> , which told the story of how the grandsons of Arthur Guinness, the famous brewer of Dublin, took the family business to Australia and New Zealand.   |
| MAY       | Kathleen Gilbert gave a talk entitled 'An Irish-Australian Catholic Country Childhood' in which she described growing up in the fifties and sixties on a sheep and wheat farm on the Murray River.  |
| JUNE      | Jeff Kildea gave a talk entitled 'What price loyalty?: Australian Catholics in the First World War' in which he examined the ways in which Australian Catholics of Irish descent during the First World War reconciled their loyalties to Rome, Ireland and the British Empire.             |
| AUGUST    | Paul Lynch MP, member for Liverpool in the NSW parliament, gave an interesting talk entitled 'West Britons Down Under: Colonial Politics and Being Irish?' in which he discussed the 'Irishness' of three NSW colonial politicians: James Martin, William Bede Dalley and Patrick Jennings. |
| SEPTEMBER | John Gooley, barrister, author and lecturer, with an interest in Anglo-Irish relations gave a talk on Winston Churchill and Ireland.  |
| OCTOBER   | Professor Jonathan Wooding gave a talk entitled 'On the trail of early Irish monks in Iceland: a report on recent fieldwork' in which he discussed his research of an Irish monastic settlement in Iceland c. 800 AD.   |

## SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

### St Patrick's Day Dinner

On Friday 23 March, we gathered once more in the splendid Strangers' Dining Room in Parliament House, Macquarie Street, as the guests of Damien Tudehope MLA. There were 64 members and guests present. 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 President, Mr Peter Gray, introduced our guest speaker, Evelyn Conlon, the acclaimed Irish novelist and short-story writer. Perry McIntyre moved the vote of thanks.

### Mid-Year Luncheon

The mid-year luncheon was held on Saturday 21 July, at the Grand Dining Room of the former St Patrick's Seminary at Manly (now the International College of Management). It was attended by 59 members and their guests. Our guest speaker, Susan Ryan AO, a former federal Minister for Education and Aisling member, spoke about the massive cultural changes in education, especially in schools, that we have seen over this generation, particularly the changes following the disappearance of the Irish teaching orders. John O'Meally moved the vote of thanks.

### Christmas Party

This was as usual a very enjoyable and convivial evening held on Wednesday 28 November at Sancta Sophia College, Sydney University and attended by 54 members and friends. Our guest speaker, Professor Ruairí Ó hUiginn, Director of the School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, gave a talk entitled "Poets and Princes" about the very powerful poetic class in the courts of the Irish kings who by composing poems of praise or satire could win the king's favour or bring about his downfall. Pamela O'Neill moved the vote of thanks.

## AISLING SOCIETY MILESTONES IN 2018

- Two very sad milestones this year were the deaths of two well-loved active members of the society, Anders Ahlqvist, who died suddenly on 23 August while on holiday in his native Finland, and Kevin O'Connor, who died on 30 September after an illness that had afflicted him earlier in the year.
- We also lost two long-time members Marie Tansey (Patrick's mother, aged 102) and Colleen Corcoran.
- Ronan McDonald took up his appointment to the Gerry Higgins Chair of Irish Studies at the University of Melbourne in January.
- The Society was a sponsor of the 23<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Irish Studies Association of Australia and New Zealand in November.
- Former Aisling member Tom Power was posthumously awarded the Irish President's Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad in November
- The Society was a sponsor of a *festschrift* in honour of Neil McLeod, Professor of Law at Murdoch University, whose research interests include early medieval Irish law. The *festschrift* launched in December was edited by Aisling members Anders Ahlqvist and Pamela O'Neill while various members contributed chapters.
- Professor Peter Kuch retired as Eamon Cleary Chair of Irish Studies, University of Otago in December after 12 years in the position.

## EVENTS IN 2018 IN WHICH AISLING MEMBERS PARTICIPATED

- Ronan McDonald gave a public lecture in April to an audience of 400 people at the Faculty of Arts, University of Melbourne. The lecture entitled “No Petty People’ - The making of literary Ireland” was part of the Dean’s Lecture Series.
- Jeff Kildea gave the annual Cardinal Knox memorial lecture at the Catholic Leadership Centre, Melbourne in May.
- Susan Ryan spoke at the August meeting of the Australian Catholic Historical Society on parliament and social justice.
- Ronan McDonald addressed the Irish Chamber of Commerce in August.
- The 19<sup>th</sup> annual commemoration gathering at the Great Irish Famine Memorial, Hyde Park Barracks was held in August. The guest speaker was Paul Lynch MP who that same month spoke to the society. The committee chair is Perry McIntyre.
- Jeff Kildea gave a paper at a seminar in Dún Laoghaire in October to commemorate the centenary of the sinking of RMS *Leinster* and participated in a *History Ireland* hedge school on the event.
- Pamela O’Neill gave a paper on statistical analysis of early Irish law to the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies Tionól in November
- Various members attended and gave papers at the 23<sup>rd</sup> Conference of the Irish Studies Association of Australia and New Zealand in November which was convened by Aisling member Prof Jonathan Wooding.

## AISLING SOCIETY PRIZES

Prizes of \$150 were again offered to students from the University of Sydney, Macquarie University, Western Sydney University, the University of Wollongong and the Australian Catholic University. Samuel Wicks of Macquarie University received an Aisling prize for his essay entitled “The trouble with the Troubles: how have the competing ideologies of unionism and nationalism affected historical interpretation of the Irish Troubles?”

## CONCLUSION

My thanks to the members of the Aisling Society for the honour they have given me by entrusting me with the Secretary’s role. Thanks also to: Peter Gray as President, Padraic Hoban as Treasurer, Trudi O’Neil as Minutes Secretary, Patrick Tansey as our functions organiser and Éilis Hurst and Pamela O’Neill for publicising our meetings and events. Thanks also to Trudi O’Neill and Graham Hoban for preparing the suppers and to Greg Hurst for recording our meetings and to all the Council members for the help and support which I have received during the year. I again record the Society’s sincere gratitude to the previous Consul-General of Ireland, Jane Connolly and her successor Owen Feeney for their interest in and support of our activities and for continuing so generously to host our meetings in the Consulate’s rooms at 1 Market Street, Sydney. We look forward to another enjoyable and successful year in 2019.

**Jeff Kildea**  
**HON SECRETARY**  
January 2019