

AI SLING SOCIETY OF SYDNEY

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ANNUAL REPORT 1974.

The Annual General Meeting of the Aisling Society of Sydney was held in the I.N.A. Cultural Centre, 64 Devonshire St, Sydney (in an annex of the Gaelic Club Lounge), on Wednesday 20th February, 1974, at 8 p.m.

The election of officers for 1974 resulted as follows:

President: Dr Plunkett Sweeney

Vice-Presidents: Rev. F. X. O'Brien, S.J. (Life Vice-President)
Mr. James A. Meagher (Life Vice-President)
Rev. Michael J. O'Sullivan
Mr. Vincent Pike
Mr. Brendan O'Connell

Hon. Secretary: Miss Mary M. Hegarty

Hon. Treasurer: Miss Maureen McLoughlin

Assist. Secretary: Mrs Anne Stevens

Council: Rev. Patrick O'Rourke P.P.
Mrs Ann Feely
Miss Carmel O'Connor
Miss Gwen Gilligan
Miss Dorothy Payten

The Annual Report and Hon. Treasurer's Statement were taken as read, all present having copies, and adopted. At the end of the formal meeting two Irish films were shown.

Our twentieth St. Patrick's Day Dinner, at Kei-Ron, Waverley, on Sunday 17th March, 1974, was the largest and most successful we have enjoyed. 172 members and friends honoured the day, our Chairman the President, Dr Plunkett Sweeney. Our guests were newly elevated Bishop David Cremin, D.D., Professor and Mrs. Patrick O'Farrell and Mr. James Deegan, President of the Irish Australian Society, Dublin. The toast "The Day We Celebrate" was proposed by Bishop Cremin, and "The Aisling Society" by Professor O'Farrell. On our behalf Rev. Michael O'Sullivan presented the new bishop with a set of vestments and a cheque. Tom McTaggart took charge of a delightful musical program.

In April Mrs Anne Stevens gave us a talk on "Michael Collins, his life, death and lasting influence" a beautiful piece of research and lucid exposition. Rev. Dean Neil Collins spoke in May on "Northern Ireland, as I have seen it", a vivid and moving account of his recent stay there allied to an outline of events and personalities since 1969.

"The West Coast of Ireland and the Spanish Armada" was the subject of Rev. Michael J. O'Sullivan's illustrated talk in June. Fr. O'Sullivan had many striking pictures of the stark cliffs and hidden bays where so many of the ill-fated armada met their doom, also a store of such detailed information of men and numbers that four hundred years ago was as yesterday. Sean Gilroy with the help of his "Travellers" and other friends gave us a musical evening in July of great variety of voice, instrument and dance.

Rev. Patrick O'Rourke, P.P., in August gave a sympathetic, well-researched and vivid account of the poet James Clarence Mangan. He was ably assisted by two young friends from the Genesian Theatre who read some of the poems. At our September meeting Mrs May Gilbert spoke on Michael Gilbert, "the Wicklow Chieftain", and his life in Ireland and New South Wales. She is herself a great, great granddaughter of Michael and Mary Dwyer, and has been able to trace over a hundred of their descendants and her kin.

A film showing took place in October, the films being "Return to Kerry", "Shannon - portrait of a River", and "Meet me at the Pillar", a lively and knowledgeable picture of Dublin's fair city.

90 members and friends enjoyed the Christmas Party at Kei-Ron on 1st December, 1974, a genial gathering that ended with community singing of all the old songs. For providing the roneoed songs, and also for putting together earlier in the year for us a small booklet of Irish poems we thank the kindness and the expertise (fashion word) of Mrs Mary O'Connell.

Mrs Anne Stevens has the warm thanks of all members for her most efficient and happy undertaking of secretarial duties during the illness of the Hon. Secretary.

Welcome new members this year, are: Miss Elizabeth Cape, Mr. Peter J. Daly and Mrs Kevin Fay.

In addition to attending Aisling functions, our members were glad to take part in the Tommy Makem concert at Easter for Northern Ireland Civilian Relief, and Mrs Anne Stevens' dinner party in June in support of the Michael Collins Memorial Foundation.

We record with regret the deaths of four members, Rev. F. X. O'Brien, S.J. was President of Aisling (1963-1964), and Life Vice-President since then. He was a man of great distinction throughout a very long life, his intellect and scholarship being as admired as his kindness and gentleness were loved. Mrs Julia McGrath was the widow of Mr. Brian J. McGrath, founder and first President of the Aisling (1955-1956). She liked to keep up the connexion with us and was a most welcome figure at our social functions.

Monsignor Bernard Hudson, parish priest of Maroubra, was a long-time member of our Society, though his many activities made him an infrequent attender. But he liked to support any Australian group who valued their Irish heritage, and we valued his support. Miss Aileen Breen was a lady of very gentle manners, a discriminating reader with love and knowledge of Irish literature. She had many friends. Rest in Peace.

This year, owing to the launching of the Gaelic Clubm the Irish National Association has not been able to continue renting us a meetingroom, as they have done since our Society was formed. We would like to thank the INA for past kindness, and wish both the INA and the Gaelic Club every success in future. We are pleased to have secured a new venue at the Knights of the Southern Cross, 150-152 Elizabeth St.

We end by thanking all speakers and artists who have made our meeting instructive and enjoyable.

Signed on behalf of the Council,

MARY M. HEGARTY. Hon. Secretary., February, 1975.