

## AISSLING SOCIETY OF SYDNEY

### PRESIDENT

Dr. Plunkett Sweeney,  
240 Prince's Highway,  
CARLTON. 2218.  
Phone: 529.7366.

### HON. SECRETARY

Mrs. Anne Stevens,  
27 Bay Road,  
WAVERTON. 2060.  
Phone: 929.3584.

### HON. TREASURER

Miss Maureen McLoughlin,  
18 Robinson Street,  
EASTLAKES. 2018.  
Phone: 667.4179

## ANNUAL REPORT 1975

The Annual General Meeting of the Aisling Society of Sydney was held in the Clubrooms, 150-152 Elizabeth Street, Sydney, on 26th February, 1975 at 8 p.m. The election of officers for 1975 resulted as follows:-

President:- Dr. Plunkett Sweeney

Vice President:- Mr. James Meagher (Life Vice-President)  
Miss Mary Hegarty (Life Vice-President)  
Rev. Fr. M. J. O'Sullivan  
Mr. Vincent Pike  
Mr. Brendan O'Connell

Hon. Secretary:- Mrs. Anne Stevens

*Hon Treasurer: Miss M. McLoughlin*

Council:- Mr. P. J. Daly  
Mrs. Anne Feely  
Miss Dorothy Payten  
Rev. Fr. P. O'Rourke  
Miss Carmel O'Connor  
Miss Gwen Gilligan

The Annual Report and the 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.

The twenty-first Annual St. Patrick's Day Dinner at Kei-Ron, Waverley on Monday 17th March, 1975, was a friendly and enjoyable evening with 144 members and friends honouring the Day, with our Chairman the President, Dr. Sweeney who proposed the toast of "The Day We Celebrate". The toast of "The Aisling Society" was proposed by Mr. Vincent Pike. A special part of the St. Patrick's Day Dinner was the presentation to Miss Mary Hegarty of a copy of the 9th century illuminated Masterpiece "The Book of Kells" with the gratitude and affection of all members. The Book contained an inscription reading:-

"Presented to Mary M. Hegarty on the occasion of her election as Life Vice-President of the Society and in appreciation of her loyal, devoted and unceasing efforts on its behalf over 21 years.

St. Patrick's Day, 1975".

Miss Hegarty made a gracious reply which was enthusiastically applauded by all. Musical items were given by Mr. & Mrs Tom McTaggart and Miss Anne Melia.

In April, Father Michael O'Sullivan gave a delightful and informative talk on "Irish High Crosses" illustrated with some truly beautiful coloured slides and enlivened with the humour that we enjoy so much in Father O'Sullivan's talks.

In May, an outstanding address of great Irish-Australian interest was given by Rev. Father Francis Meham, Rector of St. Michael's College, University of Sydney on "The Life and Work of John O'Brien". "John O'Brien" was, of course, the famous Irish-Australian poet and priest, Monsignor Hartigan, also an uncle of Father Meham.

The June meeting was a talk on the Kerry patriot Thomas Ashe, who fought in the Easter Uprising in 1916 and died from forcible feeding while on hunger strike in 1917. This interesting subject was dealt with with great sympathy and insight by Rev. Father Patrick O'Rourke.

The July meeting heard a talk by Professor Partick O'Farrell on "The Australian League for an Undivided Ireland 1948-1954". This surely must have been one of the most distinguished addresses the society has had in recent times. A first-class example of the research of a professional historian and an acknowledged expert in the field, Dr. O'Farrell was as always hard-hitting, controversial, stimulating and often amusing.

A beautiful and most unusual film "A Bird's Eye-View of Ireland" was shown at the August Meeting, it was filmed entirely from the air and the views of city and country, fascinating and evocative.

Mr. Paul Sheridan of the Irish Export Board spoke at our September meeting on "Industry in Ireland Today". This talk gave the complete lie to the notion that discussions on economic and business matters are of necessity dry, statistical and boring. The lecture was full of information, human interest and humour and the length of question time fully demonstrated the extent of interest engendered by the speaker.

In November, the Aisling Society visited St. Partick's College, Manly for a tour of the building including an opportunity to browse in the library (especially in the fine collection of books of Irish interest, a goodly number bequeathed to St. Patrick's by Mr. Brian McGrath, Founder-President of the Aisling Society) and to see other treasures of Irish-Australian interest including the vestments of newly canonised St. Oliver Plunkett. The tour was conducted by Mr. Terry Duff, a seminarian, owing to the illness at that time of Father Neal Collins, member of the Aisling Society and President of St. Patrick's who had very kindly arranged the tour for us. We would like to record our sincere thanks to Father Collins, one of our most loved and valued members and hope 1976 will see him fully restored to health.

The Annual Christmas Party was held at Kei-Ron, Waverley, on 7th December, 1975. Ninety-six members and friends spending an enjoyable evening with the President, Dr. Plunkett Sweeney and Mrs Sweeney and special invited guests Mr. Eamon Ceannt, Director-General of Bord Failte Eireann and his Manager for New Business, Mr. Paddy Gleeson. Mr. Ceannt spoke on Irish Tourism and answered questions from members. Mr. & Mrs Tom McTaggart entertained us with a well-chosen and much appreciated musical programme and Miss Maureen McLoughlin ran a most successful raffle. The members with a written vote decided by 67 votes to 15 to continue the "Buffet" dinner introduced by request this year at subsequent Christmas parties, retaining the more formal dinner on St. Patrick's night.

Donations given by members of the Aisling Society towards helping a distressed Irish family newly arrived from Belfast amounted to \$75. The total raised for the family among Sydney Irish Societies was finally in excess of \$1,000.

Welcome new members this year are:-

Mrs N. Cupitt, Mrs Mary Teychenne, Miss Rosemary Nugent, Miss Bridie Ball, Miss Kathleen Nolan, Mr. Peter Abotomey, Mrs L. Dixon and Mr. Sean Kearns.

The current financial membership stands at 54. In addition to Aisling functions members have supported the annual Easter Monday Concert for Civilian Relief in Northern Ireland and the dinner held at the home of Mrs Anne Stevens in support of the Michael Collins Memorial Foundation furthering education in Ireland.

We record with great regret the deaths of two long standing and very valued members of the Aisling Society during 1975.

The recent death of Mr. James Anthony Meagher is a sad loss to our Society. He was a foundation member in 1954, on the first Council, our third President (1957-1958) and of recent years a Life Vice President. Senior partner in the law firm of Meagher and de Coek, and prominent in legal and academic circles in Sydney, James Meagher was an urbane and witty public speaker (years before his prizes at U.C.D. included the gold medal for oratory) both on formal occasions and as an after-dinner raconteur. He was for a time President of the English Association, as also of the University of Sydney Kabeiroi wining and dining society. By them and by us he was specially esteemed for his talks on James Joyce and N. B. Yeats. As a member of our society he was a reliable and helpful friend and always the best of company. We offer his wife Angela and his son and daughter our sincere sympathy.

Mrs Bea Kinsella (nee Harney) who like her old friend, Father F. X. O'Brien S.J., reached the age of 90, was years ago one of the first women court reporters in Australia. Her husband, who predeceased her by many years was a member of the well-known legal family of Kinsella. Mrs Kinsella was a feminist of the elegant and courteous style, President of St. Joan's International Alliance, and valued delegate to the National Council of Women, and a councillor of the Catholic Women's League where her special interest was the work of the Brown Nurses. She was a foundation member of Aisling and for some years on its Council. She was always a most charming, helpful and admired member and friend.

The Society also noted with sincere regret the death in Rome on 5th January, 1975, of Mrs Gerard Woods, wife of H. E. Mr. Gerard Woods, Irish Ambassador to the Holy See. Mr. & Mrs Woods had left Canberra in December, 1974 on completion of Mr. Wood's term as Ambassador to Australia, during which time they had attended Aisling functions. Mrs. Woods, formerly Miss Fionnuala Devlin was the daughter of parents prominent in the struggle for independence and the sister of the noted Irish poet and Ambassador Denis Devlin who died in 1959 also in Rome. The Society conveyed the sincere sympathy of its members to His Excellency and his family.

In common with Irishmen everywhere the Aisling Society felt a sense of deep loss on hearing of the death on 29th August, 1975 of the former President of Ireland, Mr. Eamon De Valera, scholar, patriot, soldier, politician and elder statesman whose contribution to twentieth century Ireland needs no recounting here.

The decision that a Requiem Mass should be held for the late President originated within the Aisling Society and was held at St. Mary's Cathedral on September 9th and was concelebrated by His Eminence Cardinal Freeman. His Lordship Bishop Muldoon, His Lordship Bishop Crenin and many Irish priests including members of the Aisling Society - among them Father Michael O'Sullivan. The lessons were read by H. E. The Irish Ambassador, Mr. F. O'Riordan and the Hon. Secretary of the Aisling Society, Mrs Anne Stevens. A telegram was sent to the President of Ireland conveying the sympathy of the society to Mr. De Valera's family and the Irish people and this was graciously acknowledged.

May they all rest in peace.

Members also attended the Mass held in November at Concord to celebrate the canonisation of St. Oliver Plunkett.

Our thoughts are also with our long-term and valued member Rev. Father M. B. Crehan who retired in ill health to Ireland in 1975.

We would like to thank the I.N.A. and Gaelic Club for displaying notices of our meetings and also Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann for noting our activities in their monthly bulletins. To them all and to everyone who has helped over the past year we send thanks and best wishes. We are pleased also to thank the "Knights of the Southern Cross" for the courtesy and helpfulness they have shown us at all times.

We end by thanking all speakers who have made our meetings informative and enjoyable.

Signed on behalf of the Council,

Anne Stevens  
Hon. Secretary  
February, 1976.

THE AISLING SOCIETY OF SYDNEY  
STATEMENT OF RECEIPTS AND PAYMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st DECEMBER, 1975.

| <u>RECEIPTS</u>            | <u>Last Year</u>   | <u>This Year</u>   | <u>PAYMENTS</u>                     | <u>Last Year</u>   | <u>This Year</u>   |
|----------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| Opening Balance            | 172.07             | 143.27             | Postage & Stationery                | 83.90              | 100.20             |
| Subscriptions Received     | 305.00             | 270.00             | Printing                            | 168.86             | 251.88             |
| Subscriptions in Advance   | 10.00              | -                  | Rent of Rooms                       | 60.00              | 70.00              |
| Interest Received          | 5.57               | 4.58               | Flowers & Fruit for Sick Members    | 20.80              | 23.95              |
| Suppers                    | 22.79              | 32.88              | Suppers                             | 48.70              | 61.40              |
| Bishop's Robes             | 299.00             | -                  | Bishop's Robes                      | 314.80             | -                  |
| Donation                   | 3.00               | -                  | Secretarial Fees                    | 25.00              | 30.00              |
| Proceeds from Raffles      | -                  | 115.40             | Advertising                         | 4.00               | 25.00              |
|                            |                    |                    | Gifts to Guest Speakers             | 22.00              | 6.00               |
|                            |                    |                    | Wreath for Fr. F. X. O'Brien        | 10.70              | -                  |
| Earle Family Appeal        | -                  | 59.00              | Donation Earle Family Appeal        | -                  | 75.00              |
| St. Patrick's Night Dinner | 1,428.00           | 1,269.00           | Cost of St. Patrick's Night Dinner  | 1,395.40           | 1,192.90           |
| Easter Concert             | 85.00              | -                  | Cost of Easter Concert              | 85.00              | -                  |
| Christmas Party            | 773.00             | 870.00             | Cost of Christmas Party             | 721.00             | 880.00             |
|                            |                    |                    | Cost of Cable re: Late E. De Valera | -                  | 7.40               |
|                            |                    |                    | Closing Balance                     | <u>143.27</u>      | <u>40.40</u>       |
|                            | <u>\$ 3,103.43</u> | <u>\$ 2,764.13</u> |                                     | <u>\$ 3,103.43</u> | <u>\$ 2,764.13</u> |

HON. TREASURER: Maureen McLoughlin

AUDITOR'S REPORT: The above Statement of Receipts and Payments is in my opinion a correct statement according to the books.

SENAN J. RYAN. F.C.A.

Registered under the Public Accountants' Registration Act, 1945, as amended.