



The Aisling Society
of Sydney

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1995

THE COUNCIL OF THE AISLING SOCIETY 1995

PRESIDENT
LIFE VICE-PRESIDENTS

VICE PRESIDENTS

HON. SECRETARY

HON. TREASURER
ARCHIVIST/LIBRARIAN
PUBLICITY OFFICER
COUNCILLORS

MR JOHN RYAN
FR PATRICK O'ROURKE
MR VINCENT PIKE
MR PHILIP LEE
MRS ANNE STEVENS
MRS MARY LEE
MRS MARY DYNAN
(until April 1995)
MR PETER GRAY
(from April 1995)
MISS MAUREEN McLOUGHLIN
MR PETER GRAY
Vacant
MRS EVE ROSS
MR DAVID VAUGHAN
MRS TRUDI O'NEIL
MR PETER MOORE
MRS KATH STEWART
MRS MARIE LEECH
SR MOIRA O'SULLIVAN
(from June 1995)
MR BRENDAN O'CONNELL

HON. AUDITOR

Mrs Eve Ross continued to act in an unofficial capacity as Minutes Secretary, which is very much appreciated.

MEMBERSHIP

The Society has 98 financial members and 4 honorary life members. Six University prize winners were honorary members in 1995. New members welcomed in 1995 were Mrs Patricia Jupp, Mr Thomas Dalton, Dr Jack Best, Dr Peter Kuch, Mr Peter Alexander, Mr Patrick Tansey and Mr Desmond Ryan.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1995 Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 22 February.

The Annual Report for 1994 was presented by Mrs Mary Dynan, who was commended by the President for its excellent presentation, especially the addition of the list of members. Miss Maureen McLoughlin tabled the Treasurer's report which disclosed that our financial situation continues to be healthy. Ms Eve Ross thanked Maureen for her continued hard work. Both these reports were ACCEPTED.

An Election of Office-Bearers was held, resulting as set out above.

ORDINARY MEETINGS

- FEBRUARY** The February Ordinary Meeting followed on the Annual General Meeting and consisted of general business and correspondence, followed by the showing of a video, *Ireland, Isle of Memory*.
- APRIL** Dr Ann Maree Whitaker spoke on *Veterans of the Irish Civil War in Australia*. This interesting Talk dealt in general with what information is available on IRA veterans who emigrated to Australia, and in particular reviewed the extraordinary career of Cyril Carroll who is the sole known survivor of those veterans.
- MAY** Ann Cunningham presented an impressively researched Talk entitled *Henry Norbert Birt's Sins of Omission: A re-appraisal of his use of Polding's Letters 1861-1869*. This was a scholarly analysis, agreeably leavened with humour, of the way in which Birt edited if not censored his selection of Polding's correspondence so as to present him in a light which may not have reflected a true picture of the man or his time.
- JUNE** Jan Currie-Henderson gave a most charming and lively Talk entitled *The Origins and Continuation of Irish Dancing throughout the World*. A very well known and respected teacher of Irish dancing herself, Jan Currie-Henderson brought an intriguing but little-documented subject into clear focus.
- AUGUST** Aisling Vice-President Mrs Anne Stevens presented a beautifully crafted Talk on *The Donovans of Sydney: Piety and Philanthropy, 1833-1929*. Anne concentrated on the careers of Jeremiah Donovan, who arrived in Australia with his wife, Mary Ann, in 1833, and two of their thirteen children, John and Thomas. All three gave prodigious amounts to various charities and played successively important parts in the building of St Mary's Cathedral, among other things donating no less than four of the Cathedral's beautiful stained glass windows. This was a very distinguished paper, well worthy of the wider audience which it will surely achieve when published in due course as part of a larger work which Anne has in preparation.
- During this meeting the President, Mr John Ryan, presented to Mr Alan Tasker, representing the State Library of NSW, the Society's original archival records of its first 40 years. The records will be held on deposit by the Library, and will thus be kept safe and readily available to both members and future researchers. A listing of the material deposited, and copies of all the originals, have been retained by the Society's Archivist, Mr Peter Gray.

SEPTEMBER **Dr Peter Kuch**, of the School of English at the University of New South Wales, presented another first class Talk, learned yet graceful, entitled *Anglo Irish Literature*. Dr Kuch opened a beguiling window into the world of Irish poets and poetry from 1900 to 1940, focusing particularly on Yeats, Joyce, Synge, O'Faolain and Colum. As Dr Kuch, happily, has now joined the Society, members may look forward with relish to more such treats in the coming years.

OCTOBER Our distinguished member, **Professor Oliver MacDonagh**, Professor of History at the Institute of Advanced Research, Australian Catholic University spoke on *Anthony Trollope and Ireland*. As one has come to expect from Professor MacDonagh, this was also a Talk of the highest quality, rigorous in its scholarship yet never flagging in interest and life.

During the supper served after Professor MacDonagh's talk, members were delighted to discover that the new Irish Ambassador, Richard O'Brien, had slipped in unannounced, and so we were able to meet him and to welcome him to Australia and to the Society.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

ST PATRICK'S DAY DINNER: This was indeed a special occasion, when the Society celebrated its fortieth anniversary. The Renaissance Hotel again provided a splendid venue, and there was a very large attendance of 156 members and guests, including 63 visiting officers of the Garda Siochana and their spouses. The President, John Ryan, welcomed the guests who included the Irish Ambassador, Martin Burke, Brendan Howlin TD, Irish Minister for the Environment and Brendan O'Donohoe, First Secretary of the Department of the Environment in Dublin. The National Anthems of Ireland and Australia were sung to accompaniment by Stephanie Walker, Grace was said by Father Terry Goodall, Minister Howlin made a deft and entertaining speech and an excellent meal was enjoyed by all. The speaker for the evening was Mr Peter Gray, a Past President of the Society, who reflected on the nature of the Society, its history, purpose and some of its most influential and best loved characters. Professor Muredach Dynan proposed the Vote of Thanks.

MID YEAR LUNCHEON: The luncheon was again held in the Brennan Room at St John's College, Sydney University and was attended by 68 members and friends. Grace was said by Father Michael O'Sullivan. During the meal the President, John Ryan, presented Life Vice President, Vincent Pike, with the complete works of Yeats in recognition of Vincent's recent award of a Papal Knighthood. Justice Roddy Meagher of the NSW Court of Appeal then delivered the Inaugural Joan Ward Memorial Address, in which he presented a characteristically forthright view of the stultifying effects on Irish literature of "clerical bigotry and nationalist chauvinism". The vote of thanks for a stimulating address was most stylishly proposed by Eve Ross.

CHRISTMAS PARTY: This was a very enjoyable evening held on our "home ground" at the NSW Leagues Club and attended by 51 members and friends. Roleen Vaughan, Philip Lee and Father Michael O'Sullivan entertained us with reminiscences of Christmas in the Ireland of their childhoods. A number of other members and guests added to the festivities with some vignettes of their own on similar themes. We were well looked after by the catering staff of the Club and by Maureen McLoughlin's annual production of a beautiful Christmas cake. The President, John Ryan, made a presentation to Paul Yu, the Club's Dining Room Executive and to Jacqui who looks after the Society's suppers each month. He expressed special thanks to Maureen McLoughlin for her organisation of the party, and to Maureen, Mary Dynan, Peter Gray and the late Joan Ward for their assistance to him during his term as President, which sadly now comes to a close.

AISLING SOCIETY MILESTONES IN 1995

- The Society celebrated, with enthusiasm and optimism, the fortieth anniversary of its founding.
- Our long time member and Life Vice President, Mr Vincent Pike, was awarded the high honour of a Papal Knighthood.
- Sister Moira O'Sullivan became Dr Moira O'Sullivan, following the award to her of a Doctorate in Philosophy for her research on the history of the Sisters of Charity in Australia.
- Mary and Muredach Dynan moved to Brisbane, following Muredach's posting to the Australian Catholic University campus there - thus depriving us, we hope temporarily, of the ready availability of two of our most active members and, in Mary's case, of our sterling Secretary.
- The Society's records spanning its first forty years have been gathered together, collated and catalogued. This work was begun by the late Joan Ward and carried on by Peter Gray. The original archival records, comprising annual reports, minute books, manuscripts and the like have been deposited with the State Library of NSW (as noted elsewhere in this report). Listings have also been made of all the audiotapes held, dating back to 1974, of many of the Talks given to the Society, and of the various books and journals which we hold. These listings are also available from Peter Gray as the Society's archivist.
- Shirley McGlynn published a monograph entitled *A Family on the Shannon*.
- Trudi O'Neil organised the printing of a new Aisling brochure.
- Ethna McCauley returned to Ireland to live, taking with her our best wishes and thanks for her gracious participation in the Society's affairs over the years.
- Sir Gerard Brennan, who was our speaker at the 1989 St Patrick's Day Dinner, was appointed Chief Justice of the High Court of Australia.
- Ambassador Martin Burke was farewelled from Australia after a successful stay here. He has been succeeded by Richard O'Brien.
- Our member Gerard Windsor was honoured with a Senior Writer's Fellowship in the Premier's Literary Awards.
- Seamus Heaney, whom many members had had the privilege of meeting and hearing when he visited Australia late in 1994, was awarded the 1995 Nobel Prize for Literature.
- Father Edmund Campion, who has given a number of talks to the Society and is a staunch friend, was appointed Chair of the Literature Board of the Australia Council.
- Sadly, one of our oldest and most faithful members, Josie Finn died, as did Dorothy Arneil, widow of our much loved member, Stan Arneil. And in January 1996 there was more sadness with the deaths of Averil Walder's husband Bill, of Duncan MacLeod and of Mary Angel's daughter Cathy Boyd-Boland. God rest their souls in peace.

EVENTS DURING THE YEAR IN WHICH MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY PARTICIPATED

- St Patrick's Day Parade: In 1995, as on previous occasions, Mr Pat Costello, President of the Kerry-men's Association, very kindly lent his utility to be the 'Aisling Car' in the Parade. It was driven by Mr James Costello. Our Treasurer, Maureen McLoughlin, organised the decoration of the car. In 1995 the Aisling Society donated \$150 to the Parade Committee, and also gave \$100 to the Irish Week Committee, on which Mrs Kath Stewart was the Aisling Society representative, and a further \$100 to "The Irish Heritage" radio programme.
- Bloomsday. Many members were present at the all-day readings at the State Library, in which two of our members, Gerard Windsor and Philip Lee, played prominent parts, and also at a breakfast at Tattersalls Club and the one-off dramatic presentation of *Bold Harriet*. The Aisling Society donated \$200 to the Joyce Foundation towards these celebrations.

- The Celtic Studies Foundation annual public lecture was delivered by our member Professor Oliver MacDonagh, whose topic was *O'Connell and Parnell: Two Giants of Irish 19th Century Politics*.
- The Annual Dinner of the Celtic Studies Foundation was held at Parliament House, Sydney in November, with many Aisling members present.
- The INA gave a farewell dinner for Ambassador Martin Burke and Mrs Burke at Parliament House, Sydney on 5 July. Two tables of Aisling members were arranged by Maureen McLoughlin.
- John Ryan and Maureen McLoughlin were the Society's representatives at a reception given by the University of New South Wales for donors of University prizes.
- The INA's 80th Anniversary Dinner was held on 2 December and there was a good Aisling representation.

AISLING SOCIETY PRIZES

In 1995, prizes of \$150 were 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. Prize winners whose names have been announced at the time of writing are:

Macquarie University	Mr Gregory Keith, for a mini-thesis submitted as part of an MA degree entitled <i>The Transportation of the Ballad: An examination of the role of Irish and Irish-Australian ballads as a source and indicator of nationalism in Ireland and Australia 1780-1825</i> .
University of New South Wales	Ms Karina Carter, for a thesis entitled <i>The Historiography of the 1916 Rising</i> , and also Ms Helen Cousens
University of Sydney	Ms Kerene Garvan, for an essay entitled <i>Irish Voyage Literature</i> (1993 winner) Ms Pamela Kottaras, for an essay entitled <i>Insular Christianity</i> (1994 winner) (These two awards were notified to us only in late 1995.)

CONCLUSION

I would like to thank the members of the Aisling Society for the honour they have given me by allowing me to serve as Secretary. Mary Hegarty and Joan Ward, especially, and my immediate predecessor Mary Dynan, have set high standards to be followed, but I will certainly do my best. I wish to thank also John Ryan as President, Mary Dynan, Maureen McLoughlin and Eve Ross in particular, and all the Council members generally for the help and support which I have received since stepping into Mary's shoes upon her departure to Brisbane. I record also the Society's sincere thanks to the NSW Leagues Club for giving us, again, the free use of its conference floor for our meetings. Our fortieth anniversary year was an outstandingly successful one: let us ensure that our Society continues to flourish as we move confidently towards the 21st Century.

Peter Gray
HON SECRETARY

THE AISLING SOCIETY OF SYDNEY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st December 1995

Last Year \$		This Year \$
	<u>INCOME</u>	
2450.00	Subscriptions Received	2420.00
5220.00	St. Patrick's night dinner	10920.00
2970.00	Mid Year Dinner	2880.00
1525.00	Christmas Party	1020.00
1050.00	Donations & bequests Received	30.00
312.00	Suppers	313.55
411.56	Interest Received	705.87
10.00	Sale of Aisling Cards	-
<u>13948.56</u>		<u>18289.42</u>
	<u>LESS EXPENDITURE</u>	
150.00	Aisling Prize - University N.S.W.	150.00
150.00	Aisling Prize - Macquarie University	150.00
-	Aisling Prize - Sydney University	300.00
150.00	Aisling Prize - Catholic University	-
34.72	Bank Charges	52.98
5086.25	Cost - St. Patrick's night dinner	9866.80
2892.50	Cost of Mid Year Dinner	2916.50
1344.80	Cost of Christmas Party	941.75
450.00	Donations	550.00
60.00	Entertainment distinguished guests	120.00
58.00	Flowers	30.00
275.00	Gifts for Guest Speakers	457.90
250.00	Honoraria	-
101.15	In Memoriam	20.00
109.95	Miscellaneous Expenses	327.45
583.05	Postage & Telephone	638.05
638.80	Printing & Stationery	702.04
525.00	Suppers	600.00
<u>12859.22</u>		<u>17823.47</u>
	<u>SURPLUS (DEFICIENCY) FOR THE</u>	
1089.34	<u>YEAR</u>	465.95
9444.63	Surplus - Beginning of Year	10533.97
<u>10533.97</u>	<u>SURPLUS AVAILABLE as at 31st</u> <u>December 1995</u>	<u>10999.92</u>

THE AISLING SOCIETY OF SYDNEY

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31st December 1995

<u>Last Year</u> \$		<u>This Year</u> \$
10533.97	<u>ACCUMULATED FUND:</u> Balance of Fund - End of Year	10999.92
	<u>REPRESENTED BY:</u>	
	<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>	
616.47	Cash at Bank	1082.42
9000.00	Interest Bearing Deposits	9000.00
500.00	Deposit - Hotel	500.00
10116.47		10582.42
	<u>FIXED ASSETS</u>	
305.00	Filing Cabinet - at cost	305.00
137.50	Library - at cost	137.50
442.50		442.50
10558.97	TOTAL ASSETS	11024.92
	<u>LESS LIABILITIES</u>	
25.00	Subscriptions in advance	25.00
25.00	TOTAL LIABILITIES	25.00
10533.97	NET ASSETS	10999.92

TREASURER'S STATEMENT

The accompanying Income and Expenditure Account and Balance Sheet are true and correct.

Maureen McLoughlin F.N.I.A.
Honorary Treasurer

AUDITORS' REPORT:

The above balance sheet and the accompanying Income and Expenditure account for the year ended 31st December 1995 are in my opinion correct statements according to the books.

Brendan P. O'Connell F.C.A.
CHARTERED ACCOUNTANT

B P O'Connell