



**The Aisling Society
of Sydney**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1996

THE COUNCIL OF THE AISLING SOCIETY 1996

**PRESIDENT
LIFE VICE-PRESIDENTS**

VICE PRESIDENTS

**HON. SECRETARY
HON. TREASURER
ARCHIVIST/LIBRARIAN
PUBLICITY OFFICER
COUNCILLORS**

HON. AUDITOR

**MS EVE ROSS
FR PATRICK O'ROURKE
MR VINCENT PIKE
MR JOHN RYAN
MR PHILIP LEE
MRS MARY LEE
MR PETER GRAY
MISS MAUREEN McLOUGHLIN
MR PETER GRAY
Vacant
MRS ANNE STEVENS
MR DAVID VAUGHAN
MRS AILSA HOBAN
MRS KATH STEWART
MRS MARIE LEECH
SR MOIRA O'SULLIVAN
MR BRENDAN O'CONNELL**

Marie Leech took over the invaluable work which Eve Ross had for some years carried out in an unofficial capacity as Minutes Secretary, which is very much appreciated.

MEMBERSHIP

The Society has 82 financial members and 4 honorary life members. Six University prize winners were honorary members in 1996. New members welcomed in 1996 were Sr Victoire Pearce and Mary Hennessy.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1996 Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 28 February.

The Annual Report for 1995 was presented by Mr Peter Gray, having been circulated to members beforehand. Miss Maureen McLoughlin tabled the Treasurer's report which

disclosed that our financial situation continues to be healthy. The retiring President, Mr John Ryan, 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, *"The Nine Glens of Antrim"*.
- APRIL **Michael Flannery** spoke on *An Australian Social Worker's Experience With the Travelling people of Ireland*. This interesting Talk by a real enthusiast, illustrated with video footage and photographs, provoked a lively and interactive question time.
- MAY **Rev Fr Ted Kennedy** entitled his Talk *Some Clerical Stuff I Know About Australia*. He gave us a collection of vignettes of the religious life in this country, particularly as lived by the Irish or Irish-derived. It was a privilege to have Fr Kennedy among us.
- JUNE 1995 Aisling Society Prize-winner for Macquarie University, **Gregory Keith** presented an impressively researched Talk entitled *Nationalism and the Irish-Australian Ballad*.
- AUGUST Aisling Councillor **Sr Moira O'Sullivan** spoke most engagingly on *Early Sisters of Charity in Australia*. Members thereby had the opportunity to enjoy some of the material from Sr Moira's recently published book: *"A Cause of Trouble" - Irish Nuns and English Clerics*.
- SEPTEMBER Our distinguished member, **Dr Colm Kiernan**, recently retired Professor of History at the University of Wollongong, presented a first class Talk, learned, iconoclastic and stimulating, entitled *Peter Lalor and Rebellion*. Dr Kiernan's latest book, which deals with Peter Lalor, is to be published shortly.
- OCTOBER Belfast-born **Gearoid O'Neill** spoke on *The Genesis of the Troubles in Northern Ireland*. He gave us a very personal and obviously sincere perspective on this vexed topic.
- NOVEMBER In a break with tradition, our Christmas Party featured not only the usual seasonal get-together and supper, but also a fully-fledged, carefully prepared and most interesting Talk, by **Br Barney Garvan**, entitled *"Give to the Poor in Handfuls": the Life of Edmund Rice, Founder of the Christian Brothers*. Br Garvan had recently returned from Rome where he was present for the Beatification of Edmund Rice.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

ST PATRICK'S DAY DINNER: This was again a splendid occasion, held as has become customary at the Renaissance Hotel which has proved an excellent venue. 99 members and their guests attended. The President, Eve Ross, welcomed the guests who included our Life Member Professor Patrick O'Farrell and his wife Deirdre, and also, happily able to join us from Brisbane, our immediate past Secretary Mary Dynan and Professor Muredach Dynan. The National Anthems of Ireland and Australia were sung to accompaniment by Stephanie Walker, Grace was said by Father Tony Doherty and an excellent meal was enjoyed by all. The speaker for the evening was **Gerard Henderson**, well-known political and social commentator and analyst, who spoke on *"Daniel Mannix, an early multi-culturalist"*. This

was, as might be expected, a trenchant, challenging and entertaining address. Peter Gray 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 44 members and friends. Grace was said by Father Michael O'Sullivan. **Gerard Windsor**, Aisling member, writer and literary commentator, then delivered the second annual Joan Ward Memorial Address, in which, taking as his point of departure "*Father Healy of Little Bray*", he gave us a beautifully crafted talk into which he wove, among much else, some affectionate and admiring recollections of the Joan Ward we all loved. The vote of thanks for an address of the highest quality was proposed by Philip Lee.

CHRISTMAS PARTY:

This was a very enjoyable evening held at the NSW Leagues Club and attended by 58 members and friends. As already mentioned, this year's party had the added attraction of Br Barney Garvan's colourfully illustrated and lively Talk on Edmund Rice. We were as usual well looked after by the catering staff of the Club and by Maureen McLoughlin's annual production of a beautiful Christmas cake. The President, Eve Ross, made a short speech in which she expressed special thanks to Maureen McLoughlin for her organisation of the party.

AISLING SOCIETY MILESTONES IN 1996

- Long time member and Life Vice President, Mr Vincent Pike, made a most generous donation of some thirty volumes to the Aisling Society's library.
- Professor Oliver MacDonagh's latest splendid book, *The Sharing of the Green: A Modern Irish History for Australians*, was launched by Richard O'Brien, the Irish Ambassador.
- Gerard Windsor also received critical acclaim on the publication of his latest book, *Heaven Where the Bachelors Sit*.
- Fr Michael O'Sullivan was appointed to the position of Dean of the Eastern Region in the Archdiocese of Sydney.
- Sadly, we must record the deaths of a number of our longest standing members, all of them much admired and greatly missed: May Finucane, Lilian Pike, Ray Goodwin and Louie Develin. God rest their souls in peace.

EVENTS DURING THE YEAR IN WHICH MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY PARTICIPATED

- St Patrick's Day Parade: In 1996, Pat Costello of the Kerryman's Association lent his utility to be the 'Aisling Car' in the Parade. Our Treasurer, Maureen McLoughlin, organised the decoration of the car, which was driven by Gary Stewart, husband of our Councillor Kath Stewart. In 1996 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.
- The Great Famine Commemoration Concert was a major touring production, backed by the Irish Government, and there was (thanks to some energetic organisation by Maureen McLoughlin) a very large contingent of Aisling members on hand for the performance at the State Theatre in March.
- Bloomsday. Many members were present at the all-day readings at the Powerhouse, in which Philip Lee played a prominent part, and also at a Symposium and at the dramatic presentation of Eamon Morrissey's *Joycemen*. The Aisling Society donated \$200 to the Joyce Foundation towards these celebrations.
- John Ryan, Eve Ross and Peter Gray met Bernard Loughlin, Director of the Tyrone Guthrie Centre at Annaghmakerrig, Co. Monaghan, over dinner during Bernard's visit to Australia in February, and established contact with that interesting and worthwhile body.

- Mr Dick Spring TD, Ireland's Deputy Prime Minister (Tánaiste) and Minister for Foreign Affairs, visited Australia in July, and many Aisling members were present at a State reception for him at the Wentworth Hotel.
- John Ryan represented the Society at the announcement of the short list for the International IMPAC Dublin Literary Award, ultimately won by David Malouf.
- The Celtic Studies Foundation annual public lecture was delivered by our member Dr Aideen Cremin, Director of the Foundation.
- Among the speakers at the Famine Conference at Macquarie University in September were our distinguished members Professors Patrick O'Farrell and Oliver MacDonagh as well as one of our early Aisling prize winners, Greg Burns.
- The Annual Dinner of the Celtic Studies Foundation was held at Parliament House, Sydney in November, with many Aisling members present.
- Tom and Gabrielle Dalton accepted an invitation to be the Society's representatives at a reception given by the University of New South Wales for donors of University prizes.

AISLING SOCIETY PRIZES

In 1996, 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

Ms Lisa Featherstone for an essay dealing with the topic: "*To contemporaries ... the Famine signalled the total collapse of their society*" (F.S. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine* p.15.) *How True? Assess the impact of the Great Famine on Irish Society in the thirty years which followed.*" Ms Featherstone's examiners commented that her work was a virtuoso research performance.

University of New South Wales

Ms Kate Gleeson

University of Sydney

Mr Benjamin Dornan.

CONCLUSION

I would again like to thank the members of the Aisling Society for the honour they have given me by allowing me to serve as Secretary. I wish to thank also Eve Ross as President, Maureen McLoughlin, John Ryan and Marie Leech in particular, and all the Council members generally for the help and support which I have received during the year. 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. I look forward to another enjoyable and successful year in 1997 — a year in which we should make special efforts to expand our membership base.



Peter Gray
HON SECRETARY

THE AISLING SOCIETY OF SYDNEY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st December 1996

<u>Last Year</u> \$		<u>This Year</u> \$
	<u>INCOME</u>	
2420.00	Subscriptions Received	2050.00
10920.00	St. Patrick's night dinner	6720.00
2880.00	Mid Year Dinner	2222.50
1020.00	Christmas Party	1120.00
30.00	Donations & bequests Received	-
313.55	Suppers	363.00
705.87	Interest Received	694.48
-	Sale of Aisling Cards	15.00
-	Theatre Party	3362.00
<u>18289.42</u>		<u>16546.98</u>
	<u>LESS EXPENDITURE</u>	
150.00	Aisling Prize - University N.S.W.	150.00
150.00	Aisling Prize - Macquarie University	-
300.00	Aisling Prize - Sydney University	150.00
52.98	Bank Charges	78.23
9866.80	Cost - St. Patrick's night dinner	6353.50
2916.50	Cost of Mid Year Dinner	2131.00
941.75	Cost of Christmas Party	1207.40
550.00	Donations	750.00
120.00	Entertainment distinguished guests	55.00
30.00	Flowers	199.50
457.90	Gifts for Guest Speakers	282.60
20.00	In Memoriam	105.00
327.45	Miscellaneous Expenses	179.30
638.05	Postage & Telephone	602.90
702.04	Printing & Stationery	814.73
600.00	Suppers	700.00
-	Theatre Party costs	3454.00
<u>17823.47</u>		<u>17213.16</u>
	<u>SURPLUS (DEFICIENCY) FOR THE</u> <u>YEAR</u>	
465.95		(666.18)
10533.97	Surplus - Beginning of Year	10999.92
<u>10999.92</u>	<u>SURPLUS AVAILABLE as at 31st</u> <u>December 1996</u>	<u>10333.74</u>

THE AISLING SOCIETY OF SYDNEY

BALANCE SHEET AS AT 31st December 1996

Last Year \$		This Year \$
10999.92	<u>ACCUMULATED FUND:</u> Balance of Fund - End of Year	10333.74
	REPRESENTED BY:	
	<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>	
1082.42	Cash at Bank	916.24
9000.00	Interest Bearing Deposits	9000.00
500.00	Deposit - Hotel	-
10582.42		9916.24
	<u>FIXED ASSETS</u>	
305.00	Filing Cabinet - at cost	305.00
137.50	Library - at cost	137.50
442.50		442.50
11024.92	TOTAL ASSETS	10358.74
	<u>LESS LIABILITIES</u>	
25.00	Subscriptions in advance	25.00
25.00	TOTAL LIABILITIES	25.00
10999.92	<u>NET ASSETS</u>	10333.74

TREASURER'S STATEMENT

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

Maureen McLoughlin F.N.I.A.

Honorary Treasurer

Maureen McLoughlin

AUDITORS' REPORT:

The above balance sheet and the accompanying Income and Expenditure account for the year ended 31st December 1996 are in my opinion correct statements according to the books.

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

BPO'Connell