



**The Aisling Society
of Sydney**

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 1997

THE COUNCIL OF THE AISLING SOCIETY 1997

**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
DR MARIE LEECH
MRS ANNE STEVENS
MR DAVID VAUGHAN
MRS AILSA HOBAN
MRS KATH STEWART
SR MOIRA O'SULLIVAN
MR BRENDAN O'CONNELL
MR BRENDAN O'CONNELL**

Marie Leech also continued her invaluable work in an unofficial capacity as Minutes Secretary, which is very much appreciated.

MEMBERSHIP

The Society has 83 financial members and 5 honorary life members. 4 University prize winners were honorary members in 1997. New members welcomed in 1997 were Anne Henderson, Gerard Henderson, Tom Power, Sarah Tansey, Marie Tansey, Greg Stewart and Marion and Pat Costello.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 1997 Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 26 February.

The Annual Report for 1996, which had been prepared by Mr Peter Gray and circulated to members beforehand, was presented. Miss Maureen McLoughlin tabled the Treasurer's report which disclosed that our financial situation continues to be healthy. The President, 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 So Close to Australia"*.
- APRIL** Our life Vice President, **Vincent Pike**, gave us a wonderful evening with his talk entitled *An Enigma: Irishmen or Englishmen? Patriot or Traitor? Martyr or Crackpot? A tragic life which ended in 1922*. Vincent spoke without notes for an entrancing hour on the life and times of Erskine Childers, to a very large, knowledgeable and affectionate audience. It was a classic Aisling Society occasion.
- MAY** **Anne Henderson** spoke warmly and movingly about *Mary McKillop's Sisters*, the subject of her recently published book of the same name. Sister Moira O'Sullivan proposed a vote of thanks feelingly and with her usual brio.
- JUNE** Long time friend of the Aisling Society, **Clare Dunne**, presented a delightful Talk on a multi-faceted man entitled: *Between the Worlds: Michael O'Suilleabhain - composer, musician, ethnomusicologist*.
- AUGUST** **Lisa Featherstone**, winner of the Aisling Society prize at Macquarie University for 1996, gave us a well-researched and timely Talk on the subject of her winning essay, *The Great Famine: its Impact on Irish society in the Thirty Years which Followed*.
- SEPTEMBER** Our member, **Fr Tony Doherty**, took us away from our usual meeting place to the beautiful and intriguing ambience of the crypt in St Mary's Cathedral - a most apt setting for Fr Doherty's stimulating Talk on *St Columbkille, Donegal and 19th Century Irish Immigration*.
- OCTOBER** Distinguished Australian, Ms Pat O'Shane, gave a memorable Talk on *Irishness and Aboriginality in Australia*.

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

ST PATRICK'S DAY DINNER: This was another in a long line of marvellous St Patrick's Day celebrations, held again at the Renaissance Hotel. 115 members and their guests attended. The President, Eve Ross, welcomed the guests who included Irish Ambassador Richard O'Brien, our Life Member, Professor Patrick O'Farrell and his wife Deirdre, and Mr Steve Carey, Head of the Irish Welfare Bureau, and Mrs Brenda Carey. 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. Ambassador O'Brien was our speaker for the evening, taking for his topic the relationship between Ireland and modern Europe. A splendid vote of thanks was proposed by John Ryan.

MID YEAR LUNCHEON: The luncheon was held once more in the Brennan Room at St John's College, Sydney University and was attended by 94 members and friends. Mr Pat Bourne, Charge d'Affaires at the Embassy of Ireland and Mrs Sonali Bourne, were the guests of honour. Grace was said by Father Tony Doherty. The third annual Joan Ward

Memorial Address was delivered by David Malouf, the distinguished Australian novelist and winner of the Inaugural IMPAC Dublin Literary Award. Provocative, stimulating and entertaining, David spoke about the profound effect which Irishness has had on his life and on the development of modern Australia. Dr Peter Kuch stylishly proposed the vote of thanks.

CHRISTMAS PARTY:

This year's party was a huge success, again held at the NSW Leagues Club and attended by 45 members and friends. David Vaughan and Philip Lee set the ball rolling with "*Tales and Yarns of Christmas in Ireland and Australia*", prompting various contributions, some planned, some unexpected, all welcome, from the floor. Fr O'Sullivan's rendition of every verse of *Waltzing Matilda*, in Irish, was one of many show-stoppers. 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 1997

- At the Mid-year Luncheon at St John's College, the award of Life Membership was conferred upon Maureen McLoughlin. It is a rare honour in our Society, and no one is more deserving of it. The announcement was naturally and memorably greeted by a standing ovation.
- Eve Ross presented the 1997 Aisling Society Prize for Macquarie University to Lisa Featherstone at the University's Prize Giving Ceremony.
- Our member, Peter Moore has begun work on one of our most eagerly anticipated projects, an oral history of the Society.
- Marie Leech obtained her Doctorate in Social Policy from the University of Sydney and is now working at Uniya, the Jesuit Social Justice Centre.
- Our member, and one of our earliest University prize winners, Dr Malcolm Campbell, published *The Kingdom of the Ryans: The Irish in south west New South Wales 1816-1890* (UNSW Press). A copy is now in our library.
- Our Life Vice President, Fr Patrick O'Rourke, celebrated not only his 85th birthday but the 60th anniversary of his ordination. A number of members were present at a celebration mass in August, at his former parish, Our Lady Help of Christians, Epping.
- 1997, especially its latter part, brought devastating news for a number of our members. Our Immediate Past President, John Ryan and his wife Margaret, suffered the tragedy of the death of their eldest son Patrick in a road accident. INA President Denis O'Flynn's daughter, Claire, was also killed in similar terrible circumstances. Therese Gaskin, daughter of David Corcoran and his wife Colleen, died tragically. The eight month old son of Kingsley Aikins, the very popular Irish Trade Representative to Australia of some years ago, was a victim of cot death. Finally, our long time member, Larry Gorman, died. May the souls of those departed rest in peace, and may God bring comfort and peace to their loved ones who remain.

EVENTS DURING THE YEAR IN WHICH MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY PARTICIPATED

- Professor Oliver MacDonagh delivered the 1997 Mary Durack Memorial Lecture to the Australian Irish Heritage Association of Western Australia. His topic was *O'Connell and Parnell and the Irish Constitutional Tradition*.
- Bloomsday. This year's celebration featured a dramatisation of the *Requiem for Paddy Dignam* at Christ Church St Laurence, highlighted by some glorious music from the St Laurence Choir and David Rumsey on the organ in the beautiful Edmund Blacket building. There followed a *Funeral Procession* to the Mortuary Building at Central Station, where John Derum and others read from the works of early Sydney writers, and finally "The Last Supper", a Ulyssean combination of cold meat and porter. One for the memory banks.

- A large contingent of Aisling Society members attended the gala reception and dinner held at the University of New South Wales by the Great Famine Commemoration Committee, raising funds for the proposed sculpture of the Orphan Girl to be erected near Hyde Park Barracks. Our member, Mr Tom Power, is Chairman of the Commemoration Committee, and the dinner was a tremendous success, with guests of honour Paul Keating and Ambassador Richard O'Brien.
- A number of members took advantage of the opportunity to attend a Yeats gathering at the Bellevue Hotel in Paddington in April, under the auspices of the W.B. Yeats Society of Sydney, whose driving force of course is our own Mary O'Connell.
- St Patrick's Day Parade: In 1997, Pat Curran and sundry Curran family members of all ages decorated, drove and populated the 'Aisling Car' in the Parade. The Society again 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 Annual Dinner of the Celtic Studies Foundation was held at Parliament House, Sydney, in November, with many Aisling members present.
- Dr Peter Kuch was the convenor of a splendid symposium, *"Irelands in the Asia-Pacific"*, held at the Australian Graduate School of Management within the University of New South Wales from 4-8 January 1998. Several Aisling members were among those who participated and enjoyed the contributions of the impressive array of speakers whom Peter had assembled from around the world.

AISLING SOCIETY PRIZES

In 1997, 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
University of New South Wales	Ms Penelope Durham and Mr Timothy McCauley.
University of Sydney	Mr John Barnier.

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 1998.



Peter Gray
HON SECRETARY

THE AISLING SOCIETY OF SYDNEY

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31st December 1997

	1997 \$	1996 \$
<u>ACCUMULATED FUND:</u>		
Balance of Fund - End of Year	10,591.64	10,333.74
<u>REPRESENTED BY:</u>		
<u>CURRENT ASSETS</u>		
Cash at Bank	1,199.14	916.24
Interest Bearing Deposits	9,000.00	9,000.00
	10,199.14	9,916.24
<u>FIXED ASSETS</u>		
Filing Cabinet - at cost	305.00	305.00
Library - at cost	137.50	137.50
	442.50	442.50
TOTAL ASSETS	10,641.64	10,358.74
<u>LESS LIABILITIES</u>		
Subscriptions in advance	50.00	25.00
TOTAL LIABILITIES	50.00	25.00
<u>NET ASSETS</u>	10,591.64	10,333.74

TREASURER'S STATEMENT

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

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

Ms. Maureen McLoughlin

AUDITOR'S REPORT:

The above balance sheet and the accompanying Income and Expenditure account for the year ended 31st December 1997 are in my opinion correct statements according to the books.

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

B P O'Connell

THE AISLING SOCIETY OF SYDNEY

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE STATEMENT
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31st December 1997

	1997 \$	1996 \$
<u>INCOME</u>		
Subscriptions Received	2,075.00	2,050.00
St. Patrick's night dinner	7,910.00	6,720.00
Mid Year Dinner	5,005.00	2,222.50
Christmas Party	1,125.00	1,120.00
Suppers	336.00	363.00
Interest Received	310.52	694.48
Sale of Aisling Cards	-	15.00
Theatre Party	-	3,362.00
	16,761.52	16,546.98
<u>LESS EXPENDITURE</u>		
Aisling Prize - University N.S.W.	300.00	150.00
Aisling Prize - Macquarie University	150.00	-
Aisling Prize - Sydney University	150.00	150.00
Bank Charges	36.77	78.23
Cost - St. Patrick's night dinner	7,463.04	6,353.50
Cost of Mid Year Dinner	4,542.50	2,131.00
Cost of Christmas Party	1,076.45	1,207.40
Donations	550.00	750.00
Entertainment distinguished guests	-	55.00
Flowers	45.00	199.50
Gifts for Guest Speakers	377.86	282.60
In Memoriam	60.00	105.00
Miscellaneous Expenses	71.95	179.30
Postage & Telephone	619.90	602.90
Printing & Stationery	460.15	814.73
Suppers	600.00	700.00
Theatre Party costs	-	3,454.00
	16,503.62	17,213.16
<u>SURPLUS (DEFICIENCY) FOR THE YEAR</u>	257.90	(666.18)
Surplus - Beginning of Year	10,333.74	10,999.92
<u>SURPLUS AVAILABLE as at 31st</u> <u>December 1997</u>	10,591.64	10,333.74