



ACAI Newsletter

Association of Church Archivists of Ireland

A NOTE FROM THE INCOMING CHAIRMAN ...

The Association of Church Archivists of Ireland is now in its 16th year. It was established as the Association of Religious Archivists in 1980 to promote the care and preservation of the archives of the Christian Churches in Ireland and the congregations and societies associated with them in order that they might be of greater administrative service to the Churches and other bodies and that they might be accessible for academic research and other cultural purposes.

In the last sixteen years the association under the able chairmanship of Sr Agnes Hughes, Rev. Leo Layden CSSp, Dom Henry O'Shea OSB and latterly Rev. Hugh Fenning OP, has sought to achieve its founding objectives through the promotion of appropriate activities, with particular emphasis on the provision of technical advice to members and the exchange of information, the provision of training opportunities, the arrangement of outings and workshops and the dissemination of information through the publication of a newsletter.

In January 1994 in his last editorial message as chairman, Fr. Leo Layden sought direction from the membership with regard to the future of our newsletter which had been published intermittently since 1981. A decision was made at AGM to issue a six monthly newsletter and although there have been some problems arising from a reluctance on the part of some members to contribute, the newsletter has continued to expand. The success of the

newsletter is due without doubt to the editorship of Mrs Mary Smyth and the involvement of our outgoing chairman, Rev. Hugh Fenning. I would like to pay tribute to their dedication and hope that the newsletter will continue to expand.

The objectives of the ACAI are set out in our constitutions. To some extent, plans for future development have to be governed by our objectives, but the association also needs to be responsive to the needs of our members. Latterly the most pressing demand from members has been for continuing education and training. Over the last six months members have participated in workshops on electronic records and microfilming and the association has organised a week long training course in the management of religious archives for the second week of July. As part of our commitment to the continued development of the ministry of religious archives I would hope that over the next two to three years, the association will be able to provide the training opportunities and technical advice sufficient to meet the needs of members and to keep abreast of developments in the changing world of archival science.

Marianne Cosgrave

CORRECTION

It was wrongly stated in our last issue that the archives of our own Association are to be deposited in the National Library. The executive decided in fact that they should be entrusted to the Dublin Diocesan Archives, where David Sheehy has kindly offered them a home.

'Authentic Knowledge'

Our recent AGM concluded with a prayer-service led by Fr. Hugh Fenning OP. Part of his inspiring *Introduction* is printed below, not only for the benefit of members unable to attend, but perhaps more especially as a reminder to those of us who participated in the service:

"... Being church archivists we turn more naturally to St. Luke the evangelist. He was not the first to write the Gospel, the good news, the story of our redemption, but he too set out 'to gather up the fragments', written and oral, and to explain the whole story of Christ to a friend he calls Theophilus, a name meaning 'one who loves God'.

Luke's prologue begins: 'The author to Theophilus. Many writers have undertaken to draw up an account of the events that have happened among us, following the traditions handed down to us by the original eyewitnesses and servants of the Gospel. And so I in my turn, your Excellency, as one who has gone over the whole course of these events in detail, have decided to write a connected narrative for you, so as to give you authentic knowledge about the matters of which you have been informed'.

We are not evangelists as St. Luke was. While he told the story of Christ and his miracles, we are concerned with the work of the Risen Christ as revealed in our own churches and communities. Our archives show forth his divine power in the hearts and actions of those who have gone before us in the sign of peace. It is our privilege and duty to preserve the written evidence of that divine work. By making that evidence known we can, like St. Luke, give to future generations 'authentic knowledge of the matters' of which they would otherwise have only a dim and fading tradition."



ACAI EXECUTIVE 1996-97

President:

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Members:

Dr. D. A. Levistone-Cooney, The Manse, Adare, Co. Limerick.

Sr. Dominique Horgan, Dominican Sisters, 38 Iona Road, Glasnevin, Dublin 9.



Outing to Cashel - Saturday, 22nd June

Summer Course for Archivists - Monday 8th to Friday, 12th July

(see your recent correspondence from Sr. Marie Bernadette O'Leary for details)

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks to all who contributed to this edition of our Association's *Newsletter*. The next issue will appear in October. Your articles, letters, reports and comments would be gratefully received - all contributions to be addressed to Mary Smyth, St. John of God Brothers, Provincial Curia, "Granada", Stillorgan, Co. Dublin.

NEW LINKS THROUGH ARCHIVES

On May 21, 1891 a party of four professed Sisters and five postulants left Ireland for Western Australia. Three of the Sisters were from Presentation Convent, Sneem, Co. Kerry and among these was Sister Joseph O'Connell. Sister Joseph wrote an account to her family of the voyage on the ship Orient. The following entries in what became known as "Aunt Nell's Diary" make for a lively travelogue:

This morning we found ourselves surrounded by the Channel Fleet, three on each side. Massive vessels, beautiful to look at, one came very near us, in fact too near, we were a bit afraid lest they should mow us down. Our Captain signalled to them to draw back...

We never remain a minute in our cabins except when we must, all day on deck walking, sitting, laughing, talking, working, praying etc...

Waves rolling, sprays dashing, Orient dipping, anything but agreeable. Still it is a variety, before you know where you are you are either treated to a shower bath or put spinning against your neighbour.

As Mother Joseph O'Connell, Aunt Nell is recognised as the foundress of the Geraldton (Western Australia) Presentation Sisters. Born in Limerick in 1856 and professed in Sneem in 1884, she spent an eventful forty years in Western Australia where she died in 1932. Her diary remained with her family in Ireland for ninety years when it was donated to the Presentation Sisters and found its way to the community at Geraldton.

In 1991 the Presentation Congregation of Western Australia celebrated the centenary of its foundation in Geraldton. To mark the importance of the event the International Presentation Conference, representing Presentation Sisters worldwide, was held in Perth. It was there, as one of the delegates, that I learned of the existence of the diary of Aunt Nell, a document of major significance to the celebration. Indeed I was made especially welcome as representing South West Ireland and the foundress's convent of origin in Sneem, Co. Kerry. But in Ireland there were no celebrations and few were at all aware of the onetime existence of a

Presentation Convent in Sneem. Yet in 1878 a foundation had been established there by the Castleisland community at the request of Lady Kenmare who had built a convent for the Sisters. From the beginning there were problems. Much hardship resulted from a tiny income, a school debt and interpersonal difficulties. The little community struggled on for fourteen years before closing in 1892, one year after four of its six members, including Sister Joseph O'Connell, boarded the ship Orient on their way to establish a foundation in Geraldton. The name of Sneem lapsed from Presentation memory in Ireland but became essential to the story of the Congregation in Western Australia.

Happily, by the end of 1991, the Sneem foundation had returned to Presentation consciousness in Ireland. The catalyst was Aunt Nell's Diary which caught the imagination of our Sisters when published in a special commemorative issue of our Province journal. The archival tribute came one hundred years late for an author whose entry of June 27, 1891 reads;

...The gentlemen are most anxious we should publish our diaries. Several have promised to take copies...



Old Convent House, Sneem, Co. Kerry

By now new links have been forged between the vigorous Presentation Congregation of Western Australia and Sneem's founding convent at Castleisland. A plaque in the "Nuns' Chapel" in Sneem's Parish Church commemorates the Sisters. Little has changed in the exterior of the picturesque convent building nearby. Now a guesthouse, it is about to be renamed "Old Convent House" by its owner, Mrs. Alice O'Sullivan. An ideal holiday base for archivists!

Sheila Kelly PBVM

ARCHBISHOP MURRAY AND THE FAMINE

Our former editor, David Sheehy, gave a splendid lecture at Clonliffe on 8th November 1995 to a large and no less splendid audience personally invited by Archbishop Desmond Connell. Several members of our Association, notably Fr. Leo Layden, were among the throng. It was, for David, a command performance, to show from the Dublin diocesan archives what the Catholic Church, and particularly Archbishop Murray, had done to feed the starving during the Great Famine. The full text of his address, in five closely-printed pages, has since appeared in the December issue of *Link-Up*, the diocesan magazine.

Money first poured in (though not directly) to the archbishop in 1845 and 1846 from the English and Irish community in India. These sums were handled by the Calcutta Relief Committee, of which Archbishop Murray was a trustee. At Rome, Pope Pius IX took up a general collection in January 1847; in March he issued an encyclical letter to every Catholic diocese in the world on behalf of the famine victims in Ireland. The greatest response came from Europe, particularly from Belgium, Holland, France, Germany and Italy. Large sums thus reached Archbishop Murray, with others from Latin America, South Africa, India and Australasia. Most American dioceses sent their contributions to the archbishops of Armagh and Tuam.

Apart from distributing these sums to the most needy, the bishops as a body criticised the whole social order in Ireland and the ineffectual government policy of famine relief. They championed 'the sacred and infeasible right to life' over the subordinate rights of property. Even though the work-houses had proved a failure, even though the wasteful systems of public works had been abandoned, the government ignored the bishops' practical proposals and set its face against any further attempt to relieve distress. Sadly, this is not propaganda, but cold fact.

Throughout 1847, Archbishop Murray shared the donations he received with his

fellow-bishops, entrusting the remainder to the General Central Relief Committee whose secretary, Thomas Synnott, he trusted and found efficient. The Committee, an interdenominational body, received seventy thousand pounds in 1847, and Synnott knew exactly who most needed help. By 1848, Synnott's funds came from Archbishop Murray alone, and it is particularly from this year that letters from grateful and desperate parish priests survive in the Dublin diocesan archives. Between fever and famine, 1849 proved an even harder year than those just past, with little or no relief available for those 'living mainly on nettles and watercress and other herbs sprinkled with a little meal'.

Congratulations, David, on a fine task excellently done. There are in the diocesan archives 'over a hundred letters from bishops, priests and nuns acknowledging the receipt of relief moneys or pleading for such moneys to be sent'. Some of them came from Ballintubber near Clifden, from Belmullet, Claregalway and Ballyhaunis. If they would merit publication, it would be wonderful to have them in book form, introduced by the lecture itself.

Hugh Fenning OP

ULTRA VIOLET LAMPS

An ultra violet (UV) lamp is an indispensable aid to reading faded script.

CLE Design Ltd of London, who specialise in conservation lighting and equipment, produce a variety of lamps ranging from small portable hand torches to large repository models, with prices beginning at under £50. Some of their larger models are fitted with magnifiers but they will, on request, fit magnifying glasses to portable models.

They will post goods to any part of Ireland and are extremely helpful on the telephone.

Anyone wishing to see a portable model with a magnifier may do so in the Representative Church Body Library.

A copy of their catalogue may be had from CLE Design Ltd, 69-71 Haydons Road, Wimbledon, London SW19 1HQ (Telephone 0181 540 55772; fax 0181 543 4055)

Raymond Refaüssé



AN OPEN LETTER TO THE SAINTS AND SCHOLARS IN THE PROVINCES OF ERIN

(A response to an item in *Catholic Archives* 1995)

Sisters and Brothers - You will all have heard the proverb "Is glas iad na cnoic i bhfad uainn", or (as the farmer said before the introduction of "set-aside"): "The other man's grass is greener". Both versions came to mind recently when I read the following:

"In addition to the Generalate Archives, each Province has an organised archive relating to its own area of activity. As our Provincialate is new and purpose-built due provision was made in the planning, so that its top floor provides six rooms for this sole purpose...."

Words taken, brothers and sisters from a description by Austin Chadwick FSC in *Catholic Archives* 1995 of the care taken by the English De La Salle Province of its munimenta. Whatever may be true of our Patrician Provinces the position at HQ is much more modest. Our General Archives are collected into a ground-floor compartment, 14' x 9'. De La Salle Provinces have each "an organised archive", but ours is better described in the shuddering words of Job as "a place where no order but everlasting horror have a settled abode". Yet I remember that while it is essential to see the situation as it actually is, it is even more important to accept it as it is. To say: "Thank you, God, that my brother prospers. When you bless him you bless me." I have also to believe that no "status" becomes sacrosanct merely by virtue of being also "quo".

Because of this belief I have been trying to catalogue our holdings - the last such attempt was made about 1970. Only odd moments can be given to the work, but with such as I all times are odd. Bound volumes existing in manuscript, old accounts, council books, annals, school records, have been listed and the contents summarised after a fashion.

There is as yet no index by which one might find a particular entry, not a guide to the mass of single documents "lying amid the dust of the mounded years". Retrieval is one problem, conservation another, storage a third, and demands for access threaten to make a fourth. Yet the Lord has said: "And the truth will make you free".

A few items of non-Patrician relevance have been given to other repositories. The National Library of Ireland, University Colleges, and the Library of the Department of Education have benefitted in small ways. Today there is a sense of the value of records, and some awareness of the need for cooperation between archivists, of mutual dependence, of dependence on the informed scholar and even on the "casual" researcher. The Association of Church Archivists has done much good in many ways. "A brother helped by his brother is like a strong city". (Prov 18:19 in the Douay Version preserved in our cupboard). The closing of houses and schools has created the problem of redundant records, and I'm not sure if any Congregation has developed a policy for the preservation of same. Neither ARBI (Association of Religious Brothers of Ireland) nor CORI (Conference of Religious of Ireland) seems to have averted to the question. In fact, the Education Committee of the latter body told me that there was "no problem, since the Department of Education has all the records". The Celtic religious foundations might have similarly consoled themselves in face of the Viking terror.

Assistance from without is yet more vitally necessary for the recording of events, and at least in my own experience, is even more rare. Part of my brief is to record "happenings of interest and importance in the history of the Congregation". Were it not that the Superior General provides access to a limited amount of what crosses his desk, and that Australian and Irish Provincials issue regular Newsletters I fear that central Patrician records might be described as "the short and simple annals of the poor". It is amazing that in so many communities, schools, Provinces nothing continues to happen with such unfailing regularity. It has ever been so. Thank God. As I said before. And your memorialist will ever pray, - hopefully.

Linus H Walker

WORKSHOP ON MANAGEMENT OF ELECTRONIC RECORDS

I was at a workshop organised by the National Archives/Society of Archivists, Irish Region in the Geological Survey Office, Beggar's Bush on the Management of Electronic Records recently and it was one of the most impressive I have attended.

Firstly because of the technology used. Text, and illustrations could be projected from the lecturer's laptop computer to the screen, cutting out the use of paper or transparencies. One got the impression that the writing is on the wall now for writing on paper especially since the development of electronic mail and the internet with which data can be transferred from one computer screen to another anywhere in the world.

It was impressive too because it was given to archivists who are accused of "merely sticking with the past", by a young lecturer, Anne J Gilliland-Swetland from the University of California, who in spite of her name and her American accent is a farmer's daughter from Co. Derry and is very much in touch with her roots. She is certainly 'at the cutting edge' and held our interest from 9.30 a.m. to 5.30 p.m. for two days without a let up while she covered the whole field of Information Technology in relation to archives.

Her good news is that space will no longer be a problem as millions of items of data can be compressed onto disks which only take up a tiny fraction of the space required by paper.



On the other hand data on disks is ephemeral and newer technology is constantly improving so data has to be periodically 'migrated' to new media but in

spite of that it seems very few still advocate printing out the data on paper.

Another problem arising from the new technology and the necessity for freedom of information is that it is increasingly difficult to protect confidentiality.

Ciaran O Sabhaois OCSO

FOR THE RECORD

On 31st January last, no less than twenty members (including two from Cork and one from Canada!), braved the elements for our outing to Dún Mhuire, the Franciscan archive and library at Killiney, Co. Dublin. The librarian Fr. Ignatius Fennessy made us all feel at home in true Franciscan style before showing us some of his many treasures. Simply to see an original volume of the *Annals of the Four Masters* made the whole trip worth while. But we also saw the *Martyrology of Tallaght*, the *Liber Hymnorum* and the *Saltair Chaimín*, three famous manuscripts of the 11th and 12th centuries. On being asked why there were blemishes on a page of vellum, one of the group ventured the suggestion that they had been caused by sea-spray blowing into the Franciscan friary at Donegal. One cannot be too careful!

Hugh Fenning OP

CATHOLIC ARCHIVES

Fr. Stewart Foster, editor of Catholic Archives, who is anxious to have Irish contributions for that journal, has moved to a new address: Our Lady of Lourdes Catholic Church, 51 Cambridge Park, Wanstead, London E11 2PR.



ACAI VISITS THE FRIENDS HISTORICAL LIBRARY

The October ACAI Newsletter announced a planned visit to the Archives of the Society of Friends, including the well-known Friends Historical Library, in Swanbrook House on 9th November 1995. Thirteen ACAI members availed of this special opportunity and we were warmly welcomed by the Curator, Ms. Mary Shackleton, and her staff.

Mary told us how the Quakers, established in England by George Fox, came to Ireland in 1656 to escape persecution, but found it no better here. She thoughtfully pointed out that they were not persecuted by the Catholic Church. In fact the Quakers were among the most generous helpers of the poor when the famine hit Ireland in the 19th century, and Rob Goodbody has recently written a comprehensive account of this in "*A Suitable Channel: Quaker Relief in the Great Famine*".

The Library has well over a thousand volumes, mostly connected with Irish Quakerism. The manuscript section has some three thousand letters, and there are maps, wills and marriage certificates, as well as interesting diaries such as that of Mary Leadbeater, on display. We were fascinated by the genealogies such as Jacobs, the biscuit

firm, and Bewleys, as famous for their charity as for their coffee. Clarkes, known for their shoes, and Cadburys and Rowntrees the chocolate-makers are Quaker families.

Ms. Pamela Bradley is indexing legal documents, one of which is a lease signed by William Penn as Governor of Pennsylvania, conveying 10,000 acres in Pennsylvania to Joseph Pike in 1698. Penn became a Quaker while he was living in Ireland before going to America. We also admired the Minutes of the Monthly Meetings dating from 1645 and the Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths from the 1650's. We saw the 'Great Book of Tithes', also called the Book of Sufferings because the Friends kept a list of all their goods that had been confiscated by the authorities, hoping in vain to get them back. The Archives contain a large collection of valuable photographs. Indeed it is a treasure trove.

To end our outing, we were treated to a lovely cup of tea in the large kitchen downstairs, where we chatted to the devoted staff who joined us. It was truly a visit to remember, not only for the wonderful things we had seen, but also for the friendliness of our gracious hostesses, who lived up to their name, The Society of Friends.

Cora Richardson HRS

Francis O'Hearn of Waterford (d. 1801)

Aedamar Hofmann, Phd student at the Catholic University of Louvain is looking for information and archival material relating to Francis O'Hearn (Hearne/Hern), born 1753 Lismore, Co. Waterford, died October 22, 1801 Waterford, resident of Louvain 1764-1797/98, last president of the Irish Pastoral College, Louvain 1793-1795, Professor of Rhetoric, University of Louvain 1781-1797, Parish priest of St. Patrick's Church, Waterford 1799-1801. Also his family including his brother, Thomas O'Hearn, student Louvain 1759-1765, Vicar General diocese of Waterford late 1790's. Replies to Aedamar Hofmann, Memlingdreff 58, B 3090 Overisje, Belgium.

FROM A ROMAN DIARY

On 13th October 1995 a group of archivists - including six from Ireland - set out to visit the main archives of Rome. The trip was sparked by the Catholic Archives Society. I kept a diary of the events (21 pages in all) and from this I have chosen to share with you part of my account of our visit to the **Historic Archive of Pro Gentium Evangelizatione** formerly known as Propaganda Fide.

Founded in 1622 by Gregory XV the Congregation (one of the nine in the Curia) deals with the affairs of the Church in mission territories. Its ambit is global. At the moment there are 981 mission areas under its care. In all, the archive holds between 15,000 and 18,000 volumes, some exceptionally bulky... on 'miles' of steel shelving.

Some of the material on display in glass cases was fascinating: a letter from the faithful of Peking written on red silk, dated August 25, 1847; a letter of Newman to the Secretary of Propaganda Fide, Monsignor Alesandro Barnabo, dated June 29, 1853; a letter written by Oliver Plunkett from Newgate Prison June 22, 1681 to his brother Michael in which he speaks of his terror in face of torture, the failure of the witnesses from Ireland to arrive in time for his trial, his concern for his family and his brother prelates. But, in spite of his anguish he pardons the false witnesses, considering it a glorious thing that he should die because of his episcopal character.

We looked at a letter of Cardinal Wiseman, March 12, 1851, in which he proposed Newman as Bishop of Nottingham. Its daunting reference read: SOCG Vol. 937 f.956. In a glass case was the strangest letter imaginable. It was written on two strips of white cloth - so that it could be hidden inside the garments of the bearer who smuggled it into Peking on December 12, 1811. It was written by the Christians of Korea to the bishop of Peking.

And the strangest book! It looked like a fan with the coloured interstices missing. In fact it was the spiritual sermons and life history of St. Francis Xavier written in Tamil on palm leaves. It dates from the first half of the eighteenth century.

A kaleidoscope of history here. Inside this building time and distance become insignificant. The past vibrates with life.

As we left I looked again at the first volume held up for our view - a massive handwritten roll call of all the bishops who had in response to Christ's mandate, 'Euntes docete omnes gentes', literally done that. Yes. To the ends of the earth!

Sr M Baptist Meany PBVM



ARCHIVIUM HIBERNICUM

The most recent number of this journal (vol.49, 1995) continues the late Mary Purcell's calendar of the Hamilton papers in Dublin diocesan archives for the year 1839: a large number of letters on every topic from all over the country. There is also a re-print of an article buried long ago in a Roman publication: Hugh Fenning's calendar of the *Fondo Missioni* at the Vatican. This describes 218 documents of Irish interest (largely between 1740 and 1789) which found their mysterious way to the Vatican from the Congregation de Propaganda Fide. The rest of the volume is made up of four articles, two of which concern the cult of St. Patrick and Archbishop Troy of Dublin (d. 1823). Raymond Refaussé, our vice-chairman, contributes an excellent account of 'The Representative Church Body Library and the records of the Church of Ireland'. Mgr. Corish's description of 'The Maynooth College Archive', which rounds off the volume, is re-printed with kind permission as a supplement to this present number of our *Newsletter*.

Hugh Fenning OP

MICROFILMING

Melvyn Draycott of Nottingham County Council conducted a workshop on microfilming archives on 2nd March last. About twenty of our members attended this half-day session at Marsh's Library beside St. Patrick's cathedral. The workshop comprised a practical demonstration, a video explaining the whole process, and an 'open forum' to explain and discuss such difficulties as arose for those taking part.

The advantages of microfilming are fairly obvious. It provides a compact copy of the originals which one may store separately as a form of complete insurance against accidental loss. In the case of much-used originals, students may be given microfilm to read in order to spare the original text. Besides, microfilms of particularly valuable or interesting material may be deposited in other archives. In choosing a commercial firm to do the actual work, one must bear in mind the need for confidentiality.

Our thanks to the distinguished lecturer, Mr. Draycott, who has already microfilmed much of the Nottingham diocesan archives, to Sr. Baptist Meany for suggesting both the speaker and the topic, and to Marianne Cosgrave for organising the whole event.

Hugh Fenning OP

LIBRARY ARTICLES NOW IN BOOKLET FORM

To mark, in part, the 25th anniversary of the opening of the Representative Church Body Library in Churchtown the Library and Archives Committee of the Representative Church Body commissioned a short series of articles which were published in the Gazette last year.

Geraldine Willis, formerly the Librarian of the R.C.B., wrote on the foundation of the Library in 52 St. Stephen's Green and its

subsequent move to Churchtown, and the Provost of Tuam, the Very Rev. Dr. Robert MacCarthy, contributed his inimitable reminiscences of library life in the 1960s. Dr. Kenneth Milne, Historiographer of the Church of Ireland; the Principal of the Theological College, the Rev. Professor John Bartlett; and the theologian, Anne Thurston all reflected on the value of the Library from their particular perspectives. The series was concluded with a piece on the Library today by the current Librarian and Archivist, Dr. Raymond Refaüssé. These articles, together with a preface by the Chairman of the Library and Archives Committee, J. F. Rankin, and an introduction by the Librarian and Archivist, have been published in booklet form by the R.C.B. Library.

A Library on the Move edited by Raymond Refaüssé is available from the R.C.B. Library, Braemor Park, Churchtown, Dublin 14 at £2.00 + £0.50 for postage and packing.

Raymond Refaüssé

CLOSING DOWN?

Convents and even churches, sad to say, are being closed all over the country. One cannot help that. But it seems that a large part of our religious heritage is being lost in the process. As archivists, we can impress on religious superiors the need to preserve the papers of houses on the point of closure; we can seek out important documents left in the hands of local solicitors; we can insist on a full photographic record (internal and external) of premises being put up for sale. With respect to libraries, vestments, chalices, statues and church furniture, there is not much the archivist can do, unless to preserve the library-catalogue or make an inventory of altar-plate. One is really surprised to learn that religious sisters can sometimes be quite unaware of even the commercial value of what they are selling off. One remedy is to seek expert and disinterested advice before parting with anything. Only last year, on visiting a temple of Isis in Co. Wicklow, I was greeted at the door by the disconsolate statues of some Dominican saints. God help us all!

Hugh Fenning OP



REVIEWS

THE FRANCISCANS OF KILLINEY

Dún Mhuire, the house of Celtic and Franciscan studies at Killiney, is unique. No other group of any denomination has ever attempted, in the field of religious history, what they have so successfully done for fifty years past. A small religious community of highly qualified friars have devoted themselves there to the study of ancient Gaelic texts, in close collaboration with the School of Celtic Studies, and to the history both of the Franciscans and of the Catholic church in Ireland. Their annual journal, *Collectanea Hibernica*, a storehouse of historical material, represents only part of their achievement.

Not surprisingly, the library and archive at Killiney, within their specific remit, surpass anything of the kind in Ireland. On 5th December last, the Franciscans marked their golden jubilee by publishing a most useful book: Benignus Millett and Anthony Lynch (eds.) *Dún Mhuire, Killiney, 1945-95: Léann agus Seanchas*, (Lilliput Press, 1995), pp. 238 (£25 hbk, £15 pbk). Part of the volume is devoted to reprints of valuable articles written long ago by Frs. Canice Mooney, Pádraig O Súilleabháin, Cathaldus Giblín, Fearghal Mac Raghnaill, Benignus Millett and Anselm Faulkner. Brian O Cúiv contributes an overview of Franciscan writings in Irish while Pádraig de Brún describes the sixty-two Gaelic manuscripts now preserved at Dún Mhuire. Anthony Lynch, one of the two editors, has put everyone in his debt by compiling a bibliography of works published (often in the most obscure places) by the Franciscans of Killiney since 1945, and also of the writings of two other Franciscan historians - Brendan Jennings and Felim O Briain - who foreshadowed the establishment at Killiney. Fr. Patrick Conlan presents his own bibliography, impressive not only for its length but for the fact that, unlike his older confrères, he has written on Irish Franciscan activities later than 1850 and in the strangest corners of the world.

Perhaps the most original and valuable

contribution comes from the present librarian, Fr. Ignatius Fennessy, who kindly gave some of our members a guided tour of the library on 31st January last. In sixty pages he gives an elaborate description, with an index, of the 166 manuscript volumes known in Killiney as 'the B Manuscripts'. These books vary so much in date, language and subject that there must be something there for every taste. Very likely, the volume as a whole will prove an indispensable working tool for students of Ireland's religious past.

Hugh Fenning OP

CATHERINE MCAULEY AND THE TRADITION OF MERCY

Mary L. Sullivan
Four Courts Press, Dublin, 420 pages,
£24.95, hard back.

Sr. Mary Sullivan's book will be welcomed as a contribution to the history of religious congregations in Ireland in the 19th century. This is a study of the genesis, development and expansion of one congregation as seen through the life, thought and work of Catherine McAuley and her early Sisters of Mercy. The author's eight years of research enables her to trace and critically evaluate the evolution of the Rule and Constitutions of the congregation through five stages of its composition. The book will interest those who will find in the character and activities of Catherine McAuley encouragement to face similar handicaps, difficulties and disappointments in their efforts to live the Faith.

A collection of primary documents concerning Catherine McAuley which had been tucked away in Mercy archives in Ireland, London and Brisbane are here brought into the public domain to our great benefit. Half of the book consists of biographical material written by seven Sisters who lived with Catherine in the period from the opening of the House of Mercy in Baggot Street, Dublin in 1827 until her death in 1841. Sixteen pages of a chronology of Catherine's life 1778-1841 leads into the main work. Finally it gives us "the most important of Catherine McAuley's writings" - the original Rule and Constitution of the Sisters of Mercy. The formation of the Rule

is traced, with penetrating consideration of the revisions of Catherine's original manuscript. An appendix sketches the life of Father Redmond O'Hanlon, O.D.C., the gentle Carmelite who guided Catherine through all the ups and downs of the foundation, growth and expansion of the congregation, and also in countless unobtrusive ways, over fourteen years counselled her in difficulties and eased her burdens.

Four memoirs and three collections of letters, written between 1841 and 1860 describe the life and death of Catherine McAuley as seen by Sisters close to her. Each one venerated her as a saint and loved her as a mother, and they wrote for Sisters equally devoted to her. Obviously the writers cannot be considered impartial though Sister Clare Augustine Moore's Memoir does attempt to be objective. Each gives her own picture of the Catherine she knew. Particularly moving, because so real, are five letters of Sister Vincent Whitty, written at the time to an absent Sister, describing the last illness and death of Catherine. Sister Vincent, aged twenty-two, was just professed and was "head cook" and "one of the principal sitters up", and her letters, (now in Brisbane), though hastily written, under stress, give us a vivid description of these last days. Since the same life story is being told by each Sister, inevitably, there is some repetition but that is offset by the differences in interpretation, character and style of each one, and also by the lucid articles by Sr. Mary Sullivan interspersed through them.

To gather all this material together, to place it in its contemporary setting and to give profiles of the seven authors was the mighty task of Sister Mary Sullivan. Her scholarly research is clear in her evaluation of her material, especially so in her analysis of the manuscript of the Rule and of the changes made in it. The extent and depth of her work is shown in her appraisal of the lives and spheres of action of the writers of the memoirs and letters she studies. Her genuine personal devotion to Catherine McAuley comes through in the inspiring Epilogue with which she finishes the book. Sr. Mary Sullivan, a member of the community in Rochester New York, has put each of us, Sisters of Mercy, in her debt by producing this excellent work.

This collection of primary source material on Catherine McAuley is elegantly published

by the Four Courts Press, Dublin. It will be a valuable addition to the libraries, not only of convents, but of historians, theologians and the general reader.

Sr M Magdalena Frisby RSM

THE PRESENTATION SISTERS OF KILKENNY

Maureen Hegarty, past president of Kilkenny Archaeological Society, has written an excellent book entitled *Isabella and Catherine: and the Presentation Sisters of Kilkenny*, (Kilkenny, 1995), pp 278. The ladies of the title were Isabella McLoughlin and Catherine Meighan, both natives of Kilkenny, who became Presentation Sisters at Cork and founded a convent in Kilkenny in 1800. The book is unusual in that this story of almost two centuries of devoted service, while written with affectionate enthusiasm, is based on the most thorough research. The conventual records before 1840 are scanty enough, but plentiful thereafter. These the author has fleshed out from the files of three Kilkenny newspapers, as also from the published comments of Victorian travellers, school inspectors and bishops. The many photographs are perfectly clear, while in the case of group-photographs every individual is identified. All told, an excellent book for students of the religious life, for historians of education, and for anyone interested in the story of Kilkenny.

What does not appear from the title, though fully explained in the book, is the extent to which the seed sown at Kilkenny in 1800 became such a mighty and fruitful tree. The Sisters made four foundations by 1818: at Carlow, Galway, Thurles and Wexford. Then, between 1825 and 1830, they established three convents within the diocese of Ossory itself: at Callan, Castlecomer and Mooncoin. One of their members, Sr. Teresa Comerford (d. 1880), went with a group of nuns from Middleton to found a convent in San Francisco. There were later foundations at Kilmacow (1898) and at Durrrow, Co. Laois (1913), followed in 1960 by a mission to the Philippines. Between 1972 and 1981 other Sisters still settled in Yorkshire, in San Diego (California) and in Kilmoganny near Kilkenny itself. Since 1986 there have been

even more recent developments within the city. These are here described by the tireless author, as are also all the various foundations listed above. The Presentation Sisters of Kilkenny, having been blessed in so many ways down the years, have been blessed indeed in their historian.

Hugh Fenning OP

PÁDRAIC Ó CONAIRE - SCÉAL A BHEATHA

Sr. Evelyn Kenny

Published by Cló Iar - Chonnachta,
Indeabhan, Conamara, £15.

(Sr. Evelyn is an active member of ACAI)

This 500 page authoritative biography of Pádraic O Conaire by Sr. Evelyn Kenny of the Convent of Mercy, Newry, is a 'must' for Irish scholars and for all those interested in Irish culture.

In the course of this most interesting book, Sr. Evelyn dispels many of the myths surrounding Pádraic O Conaire, one of Ireland's foremost writers in the Irish language and, arguably, one of the most influential writers in the native tongue. She gives a very comprehensive treatment of O Conaire's life, education, literary theories and the vast wealth of Irish literature left by him. The reader gets an in-depth study of O Conaire the Irishman, the socialist, the teacher, the nationalist, the romantic and the writer. At the same time one gets an informed, well-researched picture of Ireland at the turn of the century - its political and economic life, the plight of the poor and unemployed, the terrible working conditions of those who managed to get employment, the status of the Irish language and its fight for survival and the particular difficulties faced by Irish writers. Like Pearse, O Conaire understood the importance of the language as a symbol of national identity and individuality and, as Sr. Evelyn points out, O Conaire connected the state of the language with the economic status of its users.

Sr. Evelyn also gives an informed, in-depth analysis of O Conaire's vast literary output, bringing to light many of his less well known essays. She has succeeded in highlighting the

tremendous contribution O Conaire made to the Irish Revival and his impact on all aspects of Irish writing, such as introducing and developing literary theories, implementing the literary techniques practised by renowned European writers and influencing most of the major writers of Irish who succeeded him.

This well-researched, informative biography is written in an easy, pleasant style and is acknowledged by serious students of Irish literature as a milestone in the study of literary history because, as one eminent critic puts it "this is one of the most thorough and knowledgeable biographies available about an Irish author".

Geraldine McDermott

PARSON, PRIEST AND MASTER

This is the apt title of Paul Connell's study of National Education in Co. Meath between 1824 and 1841, the first of the 'Maynooth Studies in Local History' edited by Raymond Gillespie. The launching of the national school system in 1831 was preceded in 1824 by detailed parliamentary enquiries into schools of all kinds already in existence. The author has used, not only these early reports, but also the later 'applications for aid', registers of correspondence and inspectors' reports. The result is an excellent survey of all primary schools in Co. Meath before 1841, irrespective of their religious affiliation. Several maps and graphs illustrate different aspects of the subject while also showing the basis for some of the writer's conclusions. The Established Church, curiously enough, showed itself hostile to national schools in Co. Meath because it feared a loss of influence. This too is fully documented here. The author very usefully notes earlier studies on the national schools of Connaught, Donegal, Cavan, Cork, Kilkenny, Louth and Carlow.

The book (Irish Academic Press, 1995, paperback, pp 61) may be obtained at the bookshop in Maynooth or from the author at St. Finian's College, Mullingar.

Hugh Fenning OP