



No. 15: October 1996

ACAI Newsletter

Association of Church Archivists of Ireland

Archives and Sacred Scripture in the Judaeo-Christian Tradition

The entire story of the salvific history of humankind has come down by word of mouth in story, song, poetry and in other forms of oral transmission. It has come down in the form of writing on brick, stone, papyrus, paper, and in the form of art-work. These have been preserved partly in the memory of humankind and mostly perhaps in the materials on which they were written or drawn.

How often did Moses remind the people of their rescue from Egypt and how often did the later prophets recall the Mosaic and Davidic episodes of their history? Our Lord Jesus Christ, in his first visit to the temple opened the preserved script containing the famous prophecy of Isaiah.

Ideally in one sense the best archives are the contents of an Archive building neatly filed and arranged and in the ideal environment. But Archives as the object of a building are but part of the Archive material forming the tradition of a people, tribe or country.

A recent document on Archives from the Vatican talks about the recording of the "Transitus Domini". In simple terms it talks of the effect made on our lives through the passing by of God, the Lord, His Holy Spirit in whatever way. That refers to Church Archives in particular but

surely we can understand that God has a part in all human activity.

There are preserved the Qumran Scripts and other documents back into pre-Christian history. Scripture also reminds us to refer back to the teachings of the Prophets; to the experience of Adam and Eve, to the story of Cain and Abel. How can we refer back if these stories had not been preserved?

If we forget our past we cannot understand our present. In the moral dilemmas of our life we can better come to an enlightened decision with the help of the experience of the past.

"Have you not read in the Scriptures...?" Words often used by the Lord Jesus surely pinpoint the need to be like the wise woman who takes out of her treasures new things and old.

"There is nothing new under the sun" is written somewhere in a Wisdom book. "History repeats itself" may be another way of saying it. How do we know that, if we have not got a record of it.

We are fortunate today to have been handed down tapes, videos, computerised records which can put together for us a memory of the past more vivid and yet just as real as the spoken word.

Edward J Stirling CSSp



ACHONRY DIOCESAN ARCHIVES

Like most Irish dioceses, Achonry has virtually no diocesan archives. Bishop Thomas Flynn has set out to rectify this for the future. Firstly, he commissioned me to write a history of the diocese. With the almost total absence of documentation at home, it was necessary for me to concentrate my researches in the Roman archives. Part of my remit was to have everything relating to Achonry microfilmed to be returned to the newly constructed archives in Ballaghadereen. Surprisingly, for a small diocese, the harvest was richer than I had imagined. By far the richest source, was the archives of Propaganda Fide. Here, thousands of folios were microfilmed and positive and negative copies are now housed in the diocesan archives where the bishop has installed an up-to-date microfilm reader with facility for making photocopies. As Ireland was regarded as a missionary country from the early seventeenth to the early twentieth century, its business was dealt with by the congregation of Propaganda Fide. Thus its archives contain material relative to the appointment of bishops, ecclesiastical disputes, etc. It often contains the names of Achonry priests long since forgotten in the diocese. It was possible to reconstruct at least a partial Parochial succession for the eighteenth century.

There is also some material in the Vatican Archives. Most of the correspondence between Rome and the Irish church passed through the hands of the internuncio in Brussels. His papers, known as *Nunciatura di Fiandra*, are now in the Vatican Archives and contain some valuable supplementary material. The *Fondo Missioni*, dealing with religious orders also contains some material of interest. The Irish bishops employed their own agents to act for them in Rome. In the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, they were often chosen from Irish Franciscans or Dominicans resident in their Irish houses in Rome. In the nineteenth century, they were invariably rectors of the Irish pontifical college in that city. Thus the archives of St Isidore's, San Clemente and the Irish College all have relevant material.

Having spent a number of years in Paris, I had an opportunity to sift through the Irish material in the archives in that city. After Rome, it is probably the second most important source. The vast majority of Irish priests, and particularly those of Achonry, passed through the Irish College in Paris. As

archivist, I calendared the papers in the archives there. I also researched the extensive body of material on Irish ecclesiastics, which still remains in the *Archives Nationales*. Of special interest were the notarial files which contain much information on Irish Jacobites and students. From this source I recovered the names of a number of Achonry priests. Material relevant to Achonry was noted and photocopied.

From all this material an embryonic archives has been created. It is hoped that it will attract material now in private hands, particularly from the nineteenth century. All that it contains of earlier provenance are two eighteenth-century chalices and pectoral crosses and the portrait of one late eighteenth-century bishop, Thomas O'Connor. It was presented recently to the bishop by the O'Connor family. There was a portrait of another bishop, Boetius Egan, in existence in Tuam in the last century. It is hoped to recover it as well.

Fr Liam Swords



The Emergence of the Irish Community in Argentina during the Nineteenth Century

Martin Keevers, a history postgraduate student in UCC, is looking for archival material from Irish religious bodies working in Argentina. Replies to Martin Keevers, Main Street, Ardmore, Co Waterford.



*Archives
of the Irish/Scottish Province
of the
Society of the Sacred Heart*

The Archives of the Society of the Sacred Heart, Irish/Scottish Province, are at Mount Anville, Dublin. The Archives dealing with the houses in Scotland were transferred to Aberdeen in May 1995, being the centenary of the Society in Scotland. The General Archives of the Society of the Sacred Heart are in Rome. At present two religious work full time as archivists in Mount Anville. Our big drive is to have a complete list ready for the bicentenary in 2000 of all the religious whose names appeared in the Irish/Scottish records.

The first house of the Sacred Heart in Ireland celebrated 150 years of presence in Roscrea in 1992. The Society came in 1842 to the Brigidine convent Roscrea which already had a school there since 1823. The first name in the Community Register (1842-1960) is that of Mother Elisa Croft who took over as Reverend Mother at Roscrea on 22 June 1842. Mother Teresa McMahon is entered as former Superior of the Brigidines and Sister Angela Egan as her one time assistant. Then follow the names of the other ten Brigidines who joined the Sacred Heart Society in 1842.

The House Journal of that period tells of a French nun, Louise Blond (1821-1891), who was in charge of the school at Roscrea from 1853 to 1869, when two hundred and fifty religious vocations came from the school for five or six different congregations working in all parts of the world.

The influence of other religious orders is evident in the records of education received by those who entered the Society of the Sacred Heart. At the early stages there were past pupils from Roscrea, many from Presentation Middleton and Tuam, Mercy Nenagh and Ennis, Irish Sisters of Charity and French Sisters of Charity, Loreto Kilkenny, Holy Child London, St. Louis Kiltimagh, Notre Dame London, Notre Dame de Namur. Many Irish girls went abroad to be educated as was customary at that period. We noticed the part played in the education of girls by the Visitation Sisters and Ursulines in Europe and also the houses of the Sacred Heart in Paris and elsewhere.

There was an enormous missionary thrust. The first French nuns considered Ireland a 'Foreign Mission'. The Irish customs and language were new to them. Then as vocations from all over Europe made their way to Paris, and French was the common language, the need to learn English brought them to Ireland where they spent some years preparing for the missionary expansion to Missouri, New York, South America, Asia, Australia. The number of missionaries from Ireland, counted so far, still unfinished, comes to one hundred and fifty eight. The work is ongoing!

Sr Máire Ní Shúilleabháin

PUBLICATION

The Representative Church Body Library has published as the second in its new series of Church of Ireland parish registers the *Register of the Church of St Thomas, Lisnagarvie, 1637-1646* which had been edited by Dr Raymond Refaussé, Librarian and Archivist of the Church of Ireland.

Lisnagarvey, which is the site of the present day town of Lisburn in Co Antrim, was established in the early 17th century by Sir Fulke Conway who brought settlers from his family estates in the west of England and Wales. The register of St Thomas' church, which survived the destruction of the building during the 1641 Rebellion, records these settlers and their interaction with the native Irish. The register is the third oldest in the Church of Ireland and is printed for the first time.

Register of the Church of St Thomas, Lisnagarvey, 1637-1646, ed Raymond Refaussé. Dublin: Representative Church Body Library, 1996. ISBN 0-9523000-5-2 IR/STG £4.95 (IR/STG £5.95 inc. p & p). 34 pp, inc. index of surnames.

Available from the RCB Library, Braemor Park, Churchtown, Dublin 14.

What God Has Done

One of the nice things about working in Archives is the opportunity it affords of insight into character, into the *why* of certain events and into the humanity of those with whom God chooses to work. It sometimes surprises and encourages me that God could cooperate with certain people without, apparently, asking them to be better or even different. I have chosen a few snippets from the Archives in which I am privileged to work, and venture to offer them below, just because they illustrate so well the humanity we sometimes dare to deride or condemn.

James Warren Doyle was Bishop in Carlow between 1819 and 1835. One of his great interests was education, and in writing to Sir Henry Parnell while the Catholic Relief Bill was still before Parliament he declared the new penal clauses directed at men religious to be totally unnecessary, particularly if they were meant "to apply to religious who remain laymen, and do a world of good in teaching the poor". Then, alluding to the Patrician Brothers at Mountrath and Tullow, he added: "I have two such communities in my own Diocese, and I can assure you, sir, that these men know as much of political influence and foreign intrigue as they do of the Longitude".

At the end of one of Doyle's manuscript sermons appears the note: "I loaned this Sermon to a clergyman, who lost it. The present copy he returned to me having many omissions and additions which spoil the style, the fruit of his goodwill and ignorance".

Ah me! Only fools rush in where angels fear...

On 24th April 1884 the Ossory clergy nominated Michael J Murphy as "Dignissimus" and that same day a Sister of the Presentation Community at Mountmellick wrote to congratulate him. Inter alia (multa) she described how: "Poor Mother had just gone to bed with a very bad headache when the news arrived and since then she has done nothing but cry. To all my efforts to console her she answers with great emphasis: 'I hate Bishops'."

Two years later another Presentation Sister, this time from Baltinglass community, wrote to the same clergyman to offer sympathy on his not making the terna in Kildare & Leighlin. Having lamented the "scanty and prejudiced clergy" she wondered why nuns should not have a vote. "After all, they are more concerned with the choice than any others".

Fr C was but a relatively young curate in the year 1905, but already marked for his intellectual prowess and refined taste. At the time for clerical changes a pastor in the south of the diocese wrote to Braganza: "My Lord, Please do not send me Fr C as my curate. He'd be too clever for me".

One final piece, this time from our own Patrician Archives. When James Lynch was bishop of Kildare two Brothers sought his permission for an approach to Rome in quest of Papal Approbation. Perhaps a year later when the bishop was at Mountrath Monastery he enquired "if that brother has yet come back from Rome". The Superior was relieved to be able to summon Brother Aloysius Howlin, but the latter had no more than time to kiss the episcopal ring before he was asked: "And who gave you permission to go to Rome?" Aloysius named the Brothers who had met his Lordship and, he believed, received the necessary permission. The next question was direct and ominous. "Do you have that in writing from me?" The reply was equally simple and direct: "My Lord, it never was the custom of the Patrician Brothers to demand that their bishop put his authorisations in writing. His word they always considered sufficient".

End of story. Or so 'tis told.

Linus H Walker

Nothing would be done at all if we waited to do it so well that no one could find fault with it.

John Henry Newman

In The Mercy International Centre

The first International Conference of Mercy Archivists was held in the Centre in Baggot Street, Dublin from 22-27 April, 1996. Twenty-seven Sisters of Mercy from Ireland, Britain, Newfoundland, USA, Australia and New Zealand gathered to compare notes and to learn from each other. For those of us who work in isolation in such far-flung locations, it was stimulating to meet. We shared experiences and enjoyed each others company before being plunged into six days of intense work.

The Conference was the brain-child of Sr Mercedes McCarthy, Archivist in Baggot Street and on her devolved the organisation of the event. After a tour of the Convent, so dear to each one as the original home of the Congregation, Sr Mercedes led us through the heritage display and opened up for us the treasures of her archives. A lecture by Sr Felicitas Powers, from Baltimore USA, convinced us that accessing, arranging and describing were not the measure of our work - rather our archives should help to lead to return to the spirit of the Foundress, renewal of the organisation and revitalisation for the tasks ahead.

During the week the Sister archivists, in turn, presented a brief history of each foundation and its ministries, resulting in a beautiful oral collage of our Mercy history. Talks were given on the early Sisters in Dublin and their later history in Tullamore, Limerick and Birr or in USA, Australia or England, wherever need summoned them.

Pat McBride, a conservator from the Paper Conservation Studios gave us a useful talk on conservation illustrated by work completed, and also some still in hand, in the Mercy International Centre. Caitriona Clear explained the workings of the National Archives in Bishop Street to us and showed us through the extensive strong rooms there.

The Conference was not all work and no play. Our free time was spent exploring the local area, visiting Catherine McAuley's Dublin, or browsing in the heritage room and vault. One afternoon we had a drive through Phoenix Park where over-seas Sisters marvelled at its extent, its monuments and gardens and the 15th century Ashtown Caste. We visited the

American Ambassador's Residence where the Sisters from the USA felt quite at home. Then we had afternoon tea at Arus an Uachtarain. There the observant noted that the mantelpiece and grates in the dining room were given in 1822 to Archbishop Murray of Dublin by his flock for his residence at 44 Mountjoy Square. On the sale of that building in 1923 they were presented to Tim Healy, first Governor General of the Irish Free State. Finally we spent a day in Glendalough devoted to Celtic Spirituality under the tutelage of Father Michael Sweetman.

In all it was a good week. We went back to our archives energised for the future.

Sr Magdalena Frisby RSM



Catherine McAuley's House of Mercy, Baggot Street
Sketch by Maura Barga RSM

Cottage Controversy

Marianne Cosgrave would appreciate Archivists and Librarians being on the lookout for the original 1832 edition of the above title by Catherine McAuley .

*Doroega port n-eiseirgi
Ard Macha mo chell*

The Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library and Archive

The late Cardinal Ó Fiaich is widely recognised as an outstanding Irish language scholar and historian, with particular interest and expertise in Irish-European links.

Following his untimely death in May 1990, there was a strongly expressed desire throughout the Archdiocese of Armagh and indeed widely across Ireland that Tomás Ó Fiaich's name and life's work be permanently commemorated in a suitable manner.

In his will Cardinal Ó Fiaich bequeathed to the committee of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society which he founded in 1953 - Cumann Seanchais Ard Mhacha - all his rights and interests in his published works. Under the aegis of this Society plans have been prepared to build a library and archive bearing his name on a site in Armagh near St Patrick's Cathedral.

The richness of the archives of the Catholic Church in Ireland and the need to preserve and update them and to make them more accessible to interested scholars is recognised. The Armagh Archdiocesan Archive is of critical importance in this area and it is fitting that an essential part of the memorial to Cardinal Ó Fiaich should be a proper Archive in Armagh. The late Cardinal's historical and Irish language library, together with other collections, will form the nucleus of a specialised Library. A charitable Trust has been established to hold the Library and Archive and all books, papers and documents for promoting study and research:

- in Irish history, especially ecclesiastical history
- in Irish culture, especially the Irish language, and Irish games
- in Irish-European links.

Building plans have been prepared by Paul Mongan, architect, of P & B Gregory, architects, Belfast. The estimated building cost, including all fees, is £900,000. Over £300,000 has been raised through voluntary donations and an archdiocesan collection. Funding is being sought from state cultural sources. Obviously it will require a lot of support to put the venture on a sound long-term footing and contributions to The Cardinal Tomás Ó Fiaich Memorial Library & Archive Trust will be greatly welcomed by Archbishop Seán Brady at Ara Coeli, Armagh.

Fr Patrick Campbell PP



Cashel - Password to the Past

On 22 June twenty nine archivists converged on Cashel. Fr Edward Stirling CSSp had meticulously planned our itinerary. We began by climbing the 20 foot rock - a grey, semi-terraced outcrop sitting atop a 4 acre platform of the same carboniferous limestone. Strategically placed, with an independent water supply from an artesian well, it was an astute decision by the Munster kings to rule from here.

Tom Woods limned for us its story as the political capital of Munster until the 12th century (when the site was handed over to the Church) and then its ecclesiastical history until the 18th when Penal darkness snuffed out its light.

A cluster of buildings crown the rock - a 12th century round tower and Romanesque chapel, a 13th century cathedral, a 15th century castle and...a refurbished Hall of the Vicars Choral.

In the Museum we saw St Patrick's Cross - the only one of its kind in existence: in the centre Christ hangs on the Cross; on either side stands a thief - the three figures sculpted from the same block. It stands on what was once a pre-Christian altar. We saw a bronze bell of the kind used in round towers: as it was tongueless it had to be beaten with a stone to summon a gathering or warn of danger. We saw a gold chalice. Dropped into the artesian well in 1647 (and rediscovered 1874), its concealment was imperative in face of the threat of Cromwell and his Roundheads who killed 900 people on the rock. Outside we examined a gargoyle over the door - used apparently for drainage.

Due to the avalanche of visitors entering the castle we were steered towards the Hall of the Vicars Choral. Built in 1420 for the nine members of the cathedral choir - all paid laymen - it was roofed with Irish oak, doweled in contemporary style, whitewashed inside to

make it both germ-free and bright, with narrow doors - for defence. Over the limestone fireplace in the main room hung the Seal of the Office of the Singers. A quick look at the Coronation Stone outside - where Brian Boru was crowned in 977 - and then into the castle, once a five storied structure but now showing the double impact of Cromwell's cannon and the 1648 assault.

St. Patrick's Cathedral - a Gothic structure with a rose window in the north transept and three lancet windows behind the high altar, it has stupendous walls: all are double width because passages ran within them leading from one building to another - an astute precaution in case of attack!

The adjacent Round Tower and Cloigtheach (bell-house!) is 92 feet high. Built of 126 diminishing rings of unmortared stone, crowned by a conical stone roof, its entrance was by a door 12 feet above the ground, reached by a ladder which was hauled up after the last entrant. On each of the five floors was a narrow window - all set at different angles to ensure a perfect lookout.

Cormac's Chapel is a gem. Built by Cormac Mac Carthaigh, king and bishop between 1127 and 1132, of brown sandstone quarried 12 miles away, its room is barrel-vaulted on the inside and pointed on the outside. The croft, i.e. the space between the vault and the roof was both schoolroom and book store! Outside are twin towers leading to the croft. Inside is the sarcophagus of Cormac with its interlocking snakes - a symbol of eternity. A marvel of architectural creativity.

I've overstepped my 500 words and so am not to linger in Bru Boru - lodestone for students of Irish music, dance, theatre, storytelling and Celtic studies...nor in the Folk Village where decades peeled away...nor in the Bolton Library where manuscript treasures date back to 1160...nor even in Rockwell College with its stirring motto *Inter Mutanda Constantia*, steadfastness amid flux!

I can only say to our leader, Fr Ed Stirling, mile, mile buiochas.

Sr M Baptist Meany PBVM



Society of American Archivists

The 60th annual meeting of the Society of American Archivists was held in San Diego, California from August 25-September 1. The meeting extended over seven days and included 89 conference sessions as well as pre-conference workshops, meetings of special groups and institutional sections and visits to local archives and museums. Inspired by San Diego's diverse population and the predictions of the demographic shifts of the 21st century, the programme committee put together a group of sessions that explored the implications of such diversity in documenting U.S. history and culture. There were sessions devoted to the continued development of technology and its impact on the archival profession as well as sessions that examined the more traditional topics of education and professional development, description and preservation.

Of particular interest to the religious archivist was a session devoted to the archives of women's religious communities. A historian from Syracuse University explained how, in spite of gaps in the archival record and difficulties of access, she was able to address issues of class, ethnicity and power in 19th century American orders of women religious. Sr Blathin Sullivan CSJ and Br Denis Sennett, Friars of Atonement, examined the challenges of documenting religious orders, identified future potential users of these collections and discussed their value and the issues that arise in providing access.

There was also a session devoted to the archivists of religious collections whose theme was the importance of histories of religious congregations and their impact beyond individual congregations. Sr Grace Bennett, Sisters of Providence, examined the implications and impact of congregational histories on the archivists and the archives. Sr Dolores Liptak RSM addressed the importance of congregational history in relation to national history. Sr Ellen Leddy, Sisters of Providence, discussed the importance of congregational history to the community. All emphasised the value of religious archives and that the loss of such treasures should be mourned at congregational, community and national level.

The 1997 meeting of the Society of American Archivists will be held in Chicago from September 1-7

Marianne Cosgrave

ACAI Summer Course 1996

In response to numerous appeals, the ACAI organised another short course for members this summer. It was held in the Mercy International Centre, Baggot Street, Dublin from 8-12 July. Nineteen members attended and all found it a very helpful and worthwhile experience.

The course was organised by our indefatigable Chairperson, Marianne Cosgrave, who made sure we got the very best of speakers on relevant topics. Our guest speaker from England, Robin Gard, Chairman of the Catholic Archives Society, set the ball rolling with an excellent talk on *The Importance of Religious Archives*. He gave us a synopsis of the Vatican document on that topic which is to be circulated to members of the hierarchy and religious superiors, and furnished us with a hand-out containing several quotations from the document.

We were really fortunate in getting input from Kerry Holland and Seamus Helferty, both from the Archives of UCD, who spoke on the *Management of Archives* and the *Conservation of Archives* respectively. Both speakers were thoroughly practical in their approach and clear in their delivery, and gave us most useful hand-outs. On the afternoon of 10 July we visited the Archives of UCD and our visit was followed by a reception where we enjoyed VIP treatment!

Ken Hannigan, Senior Archivist of the National Archives of Ireland, gave an interesting talk on *Archives and the Computer*, which he illustrated with the help of an overhead projector. John Gilmartin of the Dublin Institute of Technology, gave an illustrated talk on *Ecclesiastical Art and Artefacts*, with particular reference to religious houses in Ireland. Fr Leo Layden CSSp, Provincial Archivist of the Holy Ghost Fathers, presented us with *Practical Considerations for the Religious Archivist*, giving us the benefit of his long experience in the field, and again gave us some very useful hand-outs. Patrick McBride of the Paper Conservation Studio, who had been responsible for the setting up of the Heritage Room of Mercy International, gave a talk on the *History of Paper Manufacture* and offered some helpful advice on conservation.

In addition to our visit to UCD Archives we had two other 'field trips' - a tour of the Mercy International Heritage Centre, conducted by Sr Mercedes

McCarthy, and a visit to the Dublin Diocesan Archives in Clonliffe, where David Sheehy was our expert guide and gracious host. Here too we enjoyed kind hospitality.

It was good to see how, in the course of the five days, the nineteen individuals, many of whom had never known each other before, became a coherent group. Probably one of the main factors contributing to this was the fact that at the start of each day we had a shared liturgy. Fr Edward Stirling CSSp, of Rockwell College, celebrated Mass for us and various participants took care of the readings, singing and homilies. Our thanks to all - but especially to Marianne who 'master-minded' the whole course and made sure that it became a reality. Thanks too to Sr Mercedes and the community and staff of Mercy International, who worked so hard to provide for our material needs. It was a great week! Here's to the next time D.V.

Sr Marie Bernadette O'Leary RSC



Conservation

Conservation Resources, Units 1, 2 & 4 Pony Road, Horspath Industrial Estate, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2RD stock a wide range of preservation aids for the collector, conservator and custodian of historical artefacts. Their conservation book titles include:

Preservation of Library & Archival Material: A Manual. New England Document Conservation Centre. £9.00.

The Care of Books. 1988 by Jane Greenfield. £16.00.

The Care of Photographs. 1987 by Siegfried Rempel. £16.00.

Care & Identification of 19th Century Photographic Prints. 1985 by W A Young, T A Benson & George Eaton. £28.00.

Conservation of Photographs. 1885 by George Eaton. £28.00.

A-Z Guide to Cleaning, Conserving & Repairing Antiques. 1995. £14.95.

The Museum Environment. 1995 by Garry Thompson. £25.00

Visit to the Chancellery Office - Rome

(A group of European Spiritan Provincial Archivists met in Rome in June of this year. This is a short report of one morning's activities.)

We arrived at this extra-territorial Vatican building in down-town Rome in time for a nine o'clock appointment and were received immediately. The building is undergoing repair and having the grime of the centuries washed off it under a scheme financed by an Italian bank. The Palazzo is immense and the grandeur of the room into which we were ushered for our meeting was truly magnificent. Here the very charming Dr Christina Carlo-Stella came forward to greet us. She is the English speaking and very competent Assistant to Archbishop Francisco Marchisano who now emerged from his own office and bade us be seated around a huge table in the centre of the room. No Board of Directors could be more lavishly accommodated.

Dr Carlo-Stella opened the proceedings with a few introductory words. Exchanges were conducted in English as most of us could speak or, at least, understand that language. The Archbishop lapsed easily into French when that was required. Between them His Grace and his Assistant spoke for over an hour. Discussing among ourselves at a later stage we all remarked on the genuine warmth of our welcome. We were, it seems, the first group of religious Archivists ever to have asked for such an interview and it was, obviously, very much appreciated.

The German Archivist said later that this was not at all the kind of meeting she had envisaged. She had expected to be told how to do things and what not to do. But, there were no, what we might call directives, no technical input. We were given a sketchy outline of the activities of this Pontifical Commission and of the vast extent of its interests.

The big concern of both speakers is at present the production of a Commission Document on Archives which is to appear, hopefully this autumn (1996). A Draft copy is already in circulation and the Archbishop was fulsome in his praise of the present President of CAS, Robin Gard, who had gone through the document methodically and suggested certain amendments and improvements to the English text.

There was a short question and answer session. I took the opportunity to inform our hosts of the existence of the Association of Church Archivists of Ireland. I would, if I might, brief them further on the matter but not on this occasion. The Archbishop invited me warmly to do so. They were both very interested in hearing more and ACAI would be very welcome at the Palace should its members come to Rome.

There followed a tour of the quarters of the Palace occupied by the Commission and I was able to take some photos. There was history attached to every room we visited. Detail would take us away from the purpose of our meeting which was to locate ourselves as a group of Spiritan archivists in the mission of the Church.

When we were on our way out we were each presented with two documents of the Pontifical Commission relevant to our work - one dated 15th October 1992 and the other 10th April 1994.

Leo Layden CSSp



*Archives
are the Footprints
of God
in the World*

Pope Paul VI



CAS Conference

All Saints Pastoral Centre, London Colney, Herts was the venue for the 1996 conference of Catholic Archives Society held 28-30 May 96.

The opening talk was given by one of the six Irish participants, Marianne Cosgrave. Her topic was *Archival Databasing - Advantages and Pitfalls*. For database illiterates, her paper was daunting but the pundits relished it, and afterwards launched a barrage of questions which Marianne fielded expertly. After tea, David Sheehy, Dublin diocesan archivist, reviewed - with the aid of slides - some of the highlights of the trip to Rome last October. Only then did we learn that David had to curtail his honeymoon in order to be on that Rome trip!

Wednesday opened with a talk from Dr Kate Thompson, Hertfordshire County archivist. Kate is also Chairman of the Society of Archivists which, incidentally, will celebrate its 50th anniversary in 1997. Kate spoke on *Archives and Archivists*. Most enjoyable!

Conservation - Nuts and Bolts was the topic addressed by Bill Topping, Senior Curator at Lambeth Palace Library. Bill's opening gambit was arresting: "Any form of passing on a message is an archive...from tin plate to clay tablets, from charts and maps to ciphers on stone...". His delightful talk was punctuated with caveats:

- the cheap way is, in the ultimate, the dearest way out;
- the choice of conservation material is vital ...boxes etc. must be durable, colour fast and acid free;
- the biggest danger to documents is people...finger marks create a job for another archivist;
- boredom leads to mistakes, e.g. in numbering;
- you need variation in your work. Break the job up. Do a small amount well each time;
- bleaching is more harmful than leaving a stain;
- remember paper prior to 1800 is made from pure cellulose/rags and is easier to deal with than its modern counterpart.

Bill ended an enthralling session with a crisp demonstration of how to make a millboard slip case. How I wished I could invest in a creasing machine! It

costs a few hundred pounds...but how snugly those documents fitted in cases made to measure.

For the afternoon tour there was a choice of Herts Record Office or St. Edmund's College, Ware. I chose the latter, a 300 year old college which, in 1793, became home to the students and staff of the English College at Douai who had been imprisoned during the turmoil of the French Revolution and ultimately found refuge here. The magnificent Pugin chapel dates from 1853. All the exquisite detail of Pugin's work is lovingly preserved. Unusual in a Pugin chapel the rood screen is made not of wood but of stone.

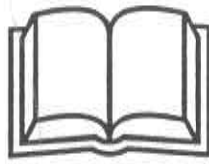
In the Museum we looked at the Douai Diaries which describe, among other things, the martyrdom of Douai priests in 1642; an altar which, for concealment, looked like a cupboard; a piece of wood from the mulberry tree in the garden of St Thomas More; a silver reliquary containing part of the hairshirt worn by St Thomas a Beckett; a biretta of St Charles Borromeo and...a medal commemorating the election of Daniel O'Connell as a member of Parliament for County Clare in 1848!

Fr David Lannon, Anselm Nye and Sr Mary Campion gave a stimulating after-tea input on *Archives and Education*. Sr Mary in dealing with Archives and the National Curriculum said that "a museum is a vehicle for transmitting values" and quoted John Paul II: "If, when I was archbishop of Cracow, I did any good it was because I began with cultural heritage!" She counselled setting the flame of enquiry alight in our young people - which can't be done unless we have well-kept and accessible archives.

Sr M Baptist Meany PBVM

*My desk is my mission area.
I try to treat papers as souls*

Pope Paul VI to two archivists
of the Vatican Archives



REVIEWS

Journal of the Irish Society of Archives. Spring 1996

The most recent issue of *Irish Archives* contains contributions that are of interest to archivists, researchers and to those interested in the preservation of archives generally. Using the archives of the Department of the Taoiseach held in the National Archives, Dr Deirdre McMahon, lecturer in history, University of Limerick, has chronicled the events surrounding the return of Sir Roger Casement's remains to Ireland in February 1965 for reinternment in Glasnevin Cemetery in Dublin, explaining how the enduring controversy over Casement's *Black Diaries* helped frustrate attempts by the Irish government to repatriate Casement until the 1960s.

Rena Lohan of the National Archives outlines the sources available in the NAI for researching the transportation of Irish convicts to Australia, giving an account of the relevant archival collections with respect to their composition and arrangement, their method of use and to the type of information they are likely to contain.

Jan Power who was employed by the Governors of St Patrick's Hospital as a consultant archivist during 1995, describes the archival material held by the hospital and provides an account of mounting an exhibition to commemorate the 250th anniversary of the hospital.

Mark Conrad, Visiting Fulbright Scholar, Archives Department, University College Dublin and Archivist, Centre for Electronic Records, National Archives and Records Administration, Washington DC, discusses archival responsibility in the electronic age and argues that archivists will have to take an active role in the creation and design of electronic records if their ultimate preservation as archives is to be assured.

Tina Byrne, consultant archivist, addresses the challenges and opportunities that face the self-employed archivist and warns that the profession will have to adapt to a changing work environment if they are to survive as a distinct profession.

Marianne Cosgrave

Women of Ireland

(A biographic Dictionary. Kit and Cyril ÓCéirín. Tir Eolas. Newtownlynch, Kinvara, Co. Galway. 1996. £9.95)

This dictionary of Irishwomen's biography, launched by Nuala Ní Dhomhnaill in the National Library recently, is a welcome first edition of a comprehensive biographical dictionary of the activities and contributions of women in Irish history.

This book, the authors tell us, was inspired by the words of President Mary Robinson to *mná na hÉireann* both in her inaugural address and subsequent addresses to women throughout the country. It is a beginning to writing women back into our Irish culture and history and has tremendous potential for further development. The book includes biographies of women of earliest times to the recent past. Extremely useful appendices enhance the volume. Appendix One classifies the entries according to occupations, pursuits, concerns and interests; Appendix Two is a glossary, notes and abbreviations. A select bibliography rounds off the volume, a timely contribution to the women's story, well known and little known women, in the overall story of the Irish psyche.

Women of Ireland is an attractive volume, easily accessible to the general reader, and of particular interest to those involved in women's studies.

Dominique Horgan OP



Religious Houses Group
established under the aegis of
Professor R. V. Comerford,
Department of Modern History, St.
Patrick's College, Maynooth

Voluntary Advice on Heritage Aspects of Religious
Houses Facing Closure

Pending the establishment of a more permanent group the experts named below are available to provide the members of any religious house facing closure with independent advice on the disposition of archives, libraries, furnishings, religious and artistic objects and on the photographing and recording of architectural features. It is feared that for want of this kind of advice serious losses to the cultural heritage represented by religious houses has been sustained, and that many items of considerable potential monetary value have either been destroyed or sold at knock-down prices to dealers.

Mr John Gilmartin, M.A., 44 Arranmore, Pembroke Road, Dublin 4. Tel 01-6689974. *An art historian with particular expertise in convent chapels.*

Ms Marianne Cosgrave, B.A., Dip. Arch., St. Anne's Convent of Mercy, Booterstown Avenue, Blackrock, Co Dublin. Tel 01-2783674. *A professional archivist with special expertise in the area of religious archives.*

Mr Jeremy Williams, B. Arch., 3 Chaworth Terrace, Dublin 8. Tel 01-4541412. *An architectural historian with a special interest in ecclesiastical buildings.*

Fr Seamus Enright C.SS.R, Marianella, 75 Orwell Road, Rathgar, Dublin 6. Tel 01-4922688. *An historian of religious life and spirituality with a special interest in convent libraries.*

Fr Paul Connell, M.A., St. Finian's College, Mullingar. Tel 044-48313. *A local historian with a special interest in ecclesiastical and educational history.*



For Your Diary

ACAI is pleased to announce that a visit to the Manuscript Room of the National Library and the Genealogical Office, Kildare Street, Dublin 2 has been organised for Saturday, 23rd November 1996 at 10.30 a.m.

Members wishing to participate should meet at the National Library at 10.25 a.m.



ACAI plans to organise a Workshop on Oral History and Oral Archives. This will include the methodology of oral history interviews and technical information on recording equipment and the preservation of audio tapes. A date has not been finalised, but it is hoped to have the workshop in early February 1997. Details will be sent out later.



ACAI Annual General Meeting will be held on Saturday, 19th April 1997.



ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Sincere thanks to all who contributed to this edition of our Association's Newsletter. The next issue will appear in May 1997. 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.