



ACAI NEWSLETTER

ASSOCIATION OF CHURCH ARCHIVISTS OF IRELAND

NO 24 MAY 2001

CONTENTS Page

A Message from the
Chairman - *D.A. Levistone
Cooney.* 1

A Request to the
Members of ACAI 2

Visit to the Chester
Beatty Library -
*Ciaran Sabhas. OCSO
Roscrea* 3

ACAI Summer Course
2000 - *Patricia Quigley
SSC.* 4

Summer Course 2001 5

Access to excess -
*Ciaran Sabhas. OCSO.
Roscrea* 6

Obituary - Canon John
Gahan.- *Seamus S. de Val.* 7

ACAI Executive/
Noticeboard 8

FROM

THE CHAIRMAN

The ACAI is not different from many other organisations in that its members are very busy people. Indeed, it is only when you become involved in the care and management of archives that you realise just how much work is entailed. As in so many other cases, we busily get on with the job. We do it: we don't very much write about it. All of which makes it difficult for an Editor who is expected to produce a regular *NEWSLETTER*, one really can't write the whole thing oneself. Thus I want to express our appreciation, and I am sure that I write for all of our members, to Mary Smyth, who for the last few years has been doing an excellent job as Editor of our *NEWSLETTER*. She has ferreted out information, coaxed contributors, and generally done a very fine job. Under her care our *NEWSLETTER* has not only been a valuable source of information, but also a production of quality.

Mary, "Thank you" sounds somewhat hackneyed, but behind the word lies a great appreciation of what you have done for us.

With this issue Dominique Horgan takes up the Editorial pen, or perhaps sits at the Editorial computer. After all we may be dealing with the documents and records of the past, but our methods are up to date. She has undertaken to do the job *ad interim*, which means that we have still to seek a regular Editor. But Dominique, thank you for your willingness to help in this way.

That our Annual Meeting has had to be postponed is in a sense unfortunate, but with the foot and mouth threat still a reality we were sure that it was the right thing to do. However, there is nothing so bad that no good can not be found in it. I do not doubt that we have all been impressed by the way in which so many people have accepted inconvenience and hardship in order to keep the disease in check. The measure of concern shown by city as well as rural people has been impressive. And if the crisis leads to a reduction in the amount of smuggling that will be another bonus.

But neither of these considerations can offer much consolation to a farmer whose entire herd or flock has been destroyed. Some of the newsreels on television have brought home to us their utter desolation, and we shall continue to hold them in our prayers for some time to come.

Blessings on you,

Dudley Levistone Cooney.



FOR YOUR DIARY

AGM 20 OCTOBER 2001

ALL HALLOWS COLLEGE.

TOPIC OF MEETING:

***FROM THE MISSIONARY
ARCHIVES.***

DETAILS TO FOLLOW.

ACAI NEWSLETTER

We are very grateful to those who have contributed to this issue of the *NEWSLETTER* and to those who regularly share their knowledge, experience and views with us. Without them the *ACAI NEWSLETTER* would cease to exist.

We appeal to all ACAI members to consider contributing to the NEWSLETTER so that it can continue its objectives of communication and support.

Articles need not be long – 100-500 words is a good guide.

The next issue is due in October 2001. Articles, letters, reports, book reviews, may be sent to Sr. Marie O'Leary, Hon. Sec. ACAI, Caritas, 15 Gilford Road, Sandymount, Dublin 4

"Historical Memory constitutes an integral part of the life of every community. The knowledge of all that which witnesses the succession of generations, their know-how and their actions, creates a sense of continuity between past and present. Therefore, if documents are known and communicated, archives can become useful instruments for an enlightening pastoral action because through memory of the facts Tradition becomes more concrete."

*(The Pastoral Function of the Church.
1997.)*

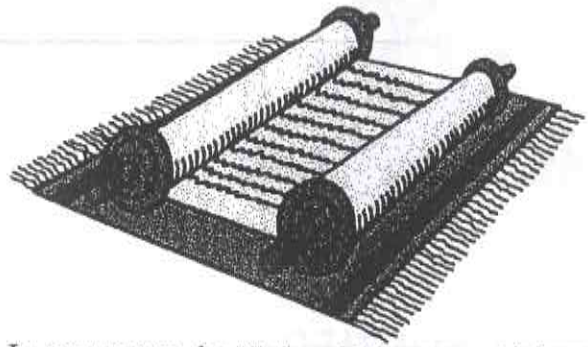
VISIT TO THE CHESTER BEATTY LIBRARY.

On the weekend Dec 2-4 2000, the *CODEX VAATICANUS*, one of the treasures of the Vatican Library, was on show in Dublin. The reason, in spite of the risks of total loss in a plane crash, that this priceless treasure was sent to Ireland for a conference of world scripture scholars was, that the Chester Beatty Library, where it was exhibited, had given loans of their even earlier *papyri* to the Vatican Library in the past.

On Saturday, 25 November 2000, a brave little band of archivists, despite the weather and the strikes, gathered at 11.00 a.m. in the new multimillion state-of-the-art library at Dublin Castle, to be conducted through this special Christian Collection by Mr Charles Horton, Senior Curator.

It was a most enlightening experience. The CBL Biblical Papyri, some of them dating back to c. CE 150, are among the greatest treasures of the Christian Church, preserving in many cases the earliest texts of the New Testament in Greek. A case in point is the text of Jn. 19:26 'Son behold your Mother.' The CBL is one of the premier sources of scholarship in the Old and New Testaments.

One of the many interesting details mentioned by our genial guide was that the Emperor Diocletian ordered the destruction of the Christian writings, as well as putting believers to death. This is one of the reasons why those sources remain so rare. Though, in the case of Tatisa's *DLATESSERON*, which is also represented in the collection, some books were destroyed by the Christians themselves when their authors were suspected of heresy.



In contrast to the National Museum, which contains many of Ireland's most precious relics such as the Chalice of Ardagh and the Chalice and Paten of Derrynaflann, as well as no less than thirteen crosiers of early Irish saints, one is immediately struck by the atmosphere in the display of the religious collections of CBL.

Only about one thousandth of the collection is on display at any one time but even that would take more than a day to see adequately. This display is of the very earliest fragments of the Bible.

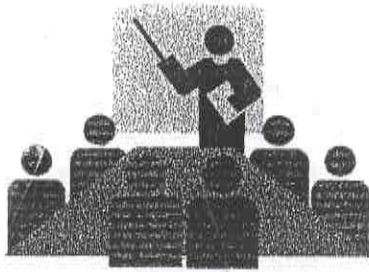
As well as the exhibits, videos are running constantly to explain them. One on the rites of marriage in the principal religions of the world leaves one in no doubt as to its extreme importance.

In addition to the Christian collection there is an Islamic collection of almost 4,000 Arabic, Persian and Turkish manuscripts, mostly of the Holy Qur'an.

There are Chinese and Japanese collections of albums, scrolls, textiles and decorative objects including those of early Jesuit missionaries.

Armenian and European manuscripts and books, some beautifully bound, from Medieval, renaissance and Modern times complete a most extraordinary museum of the arts of many cultures.

Fr Ciaran Sabhas, OCSO, Roscrea.



ACAI SUMMER COURSE 2000

In July 2000 I had the privilege of attending the Introductory Archives Course organised by the Association of Church Archivists. The Course lasted five days and was held at All Hallows College, Dublin.

During the past year I have been assisting our Archivist, St Rita Dooney, and I was grateful when she suggested that I take this Course. The Course gave me the opportunity of hearing objectively the 'sacredness' of our archives and the care with which they are to be safeguarded. Sentimentality for the past or pride in our particular congregations history may have its own influences, but for archives to be given 'their rightful place' much diligence and steadfastness is needed. The knowledge and experience shared at this Introductory Course certainly emphasised the importance of archives and what is essential if they are to be preserved.

The warm welcome extended to us by Rev. Dudley Levistone Cooney set the scene for the five days. Each morning the threads woven by Kerry Holland of NUI Dublin gave us a wonderful foundation on which to create, plan or develop our archives. As the week moved on, many questions began to surface. Kerry answered them with ease. The surfacing of these questions was helpful for all as many of us had similar queries. Kerry's companion, Seamus

Helferty, who journeyed with us for three days, complemented Kerry's input by enlightening us about the handling and preservation of documents and Research Services. We also found our visit to the Archives Department of NUI Dublin very informative and we appreciated and enjoyed the hospitality provided by Kerry, Seamus and companions.

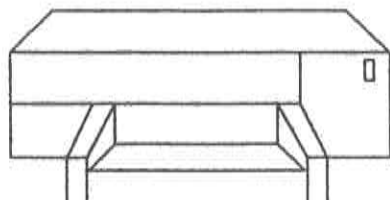
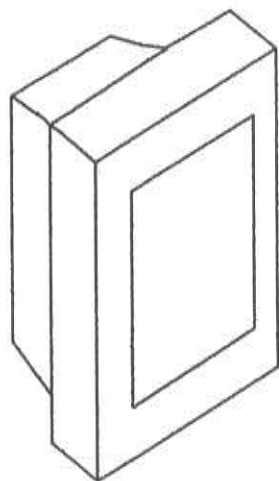
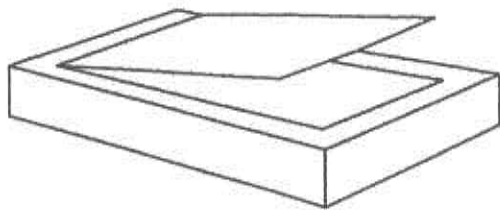
With this foundation from Kerry and Seamus we were able to appreciate the wide range of services and information made available to us by the various other speakers and to make the necessary applications. We were enlightened about identifying and preserving films, photographs, maps, plans and drawings. We also received valuable information on sources of information, e.g. libraries, the links between archives and the Historian and the whole question of access and the responsibilities and rights of Archivists. We also enjoyed a visit to the Dublin Diocesan Archives where we viewed a display of archival material and were entertained by David Sheehy.

All of the speakers were most helpful in providing literature and information for the future. We were also invited to visit the various institutions and where necessary check out if a difficulty, query or new situation arose. This was particularly helpful as many of us were still in the beginning stages and the security of having persons to turn to for advice and information was very encouraging. There was a real sense of helpfulness and willingness to share information.

There was also the unique experience of being with a group where everyone appreciated the value of archives. The shortage of time, space, support, etc., were experiences many of us could resonate with and so during the break-times we had the opportunity of listening to each other and supporting each other in our enthusiasm for the responsibility that is ours to treasure our sacred history.

Finally, I would like to express my deep appreciation for the amount of research, planning and administration on the part of the organising committee which made this Course possible.

Patricia Quigley. SSC.



2001

**SUMMER COURSE IN THE
MANAGEMENT OF
ARCHIVES**

2 – 6 JULY 2001

**TO BE HELD AT THE
CATHERINE MCAULEY
CENTRE
HERBERT STREET,
DUBLIN 2**

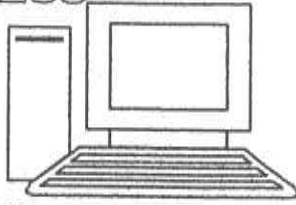
COST £200

**NON-REFUNDABLE
DEPOSIT £50**

***APPLY TO
MARIANNE COSGRAVE
CATHERINE MCAULEY
CENTRE
HERBERT STREET
DUBLIN 2***

PHONE: 01 638 7500

ACCESS -- TO EXCESS



Anyone would say the ACAI goes to excess when it runs two events on *Access* with only four days between them. It makes a bit more sense to read that one was about *access to archives* themselves which was held in the Catherine McAuley Centre, 23 Herbert Street, Dublin 2 while the other was about the computer programme *Access* run in the Knockanrawley Multi-media Centre in Tipperary Town.

There must have been up to seventy in attendance at the conference in Herbert Street, the computer course catered for seven.

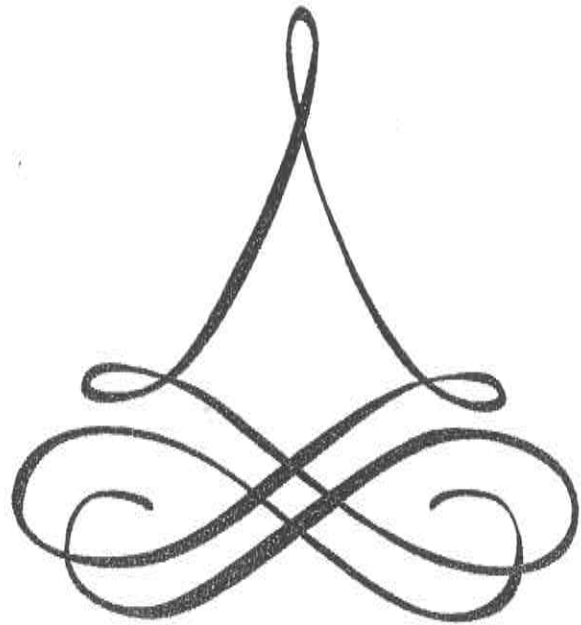
It was well worth attending the one in Dublin if only to hear Imelda Keogh on the human perspective of practical access to sensitive records. Catriona Crowe spoke on the National Archives Act and Freedom of Information Act while Paul McDonald dealt with the Legal perspectives, Ray Refausse and David Sheehy on the effect on Church archives. The programme was humourously chaired by the Rev. Dudley Levistone Cooney, the Chairman of the Association of Church Archivist of Ireland.

An added bonus was the meal in the Catherine McAuley Centre around the corner, in Baggot Street. There one is welcomed even before entering by a life sized bronze of Catherine McAuley on the threshold. The centre of the Centre is the exquisite little oratory that contains her tomb. The well appointed museum and archive contains, in 27 large volumes, the names of all the Sisters of Mercy. It is like a preview of the archives of Heaven though the Book of Life likely has them on a Zip Drive.

Tipperary Town, on the other hand, is not very accessible even from the county itself as is to be expected from the song, but even having found the impressive Computer Training Centre one is much more impressed by the skill and enthusiasm of tutor Mary Cunningham who literally kept going non-stop for almost six ours and even was ready for more.

Marianne Cosgrave and Fr Edward Stirling have earned our gratitude for enduring the hassle involved in the organising of the course. The ACAI does go to excess in catering for its members.

Fr Ciaran Sabbas. OCSO Roscrea.



OBITUARY

DEATH OF CANON JOHN GAHAN

It is with the greatest regret that I have to record the death of a close friend and colleague, Very Rev. John V. Canon Gahan, former parish priest of Gorey, Co Wexford, and a member of the Association of Church Archivists of Ireland. In fact, it was he who introduced me to the Association, and we travelled together on the outing in 1998 to visit the 1798 Bicentenary Exhibition in the Ulster Museum, Belfast, and again last year, on 1 April, to the Wesleyan archives in Belfast.

Canon Gahan had just finished his 'magnum opus', a biographical dictionary of the Catholic priests of the diocese of Ferns, a work on which he had been engaged for over twenty years, collecting material from every available source – newspapers, letters, records in the bishop's house etc. He did this, not with any idea of publication, but simply as a hobby and in the hope that his researches would prove useful to future local historians in the diocese of Ferns and the county of Wexford. A weekly visit to the National Library in Dublin and other libraries was part of his routine over all that period, and his summer holidays consisted mainly of a week or two spent in the newspaper library of the British Museum.

However, a few years ago, when a working party was set up to consider how the fourteenth century of the diocese of Ferns could be marked, one of the suggestions made was that Canon Gahan should be asked to prepare his work for publication. (See ACAI Newsletter, No 21, October 1999) He agreed, but as a result had to intensify his efforts, revising, correcting, adding and subtracting, comparing and collating, until, at last, he was reasonably satisfied with the result. He had just corrected the final proofs shortly before

Christmas, and, on Monday, 18 December, went to Dublin to despatch them by courier to the printers. Having done so, he was in Busarus, waiting for his bus to bring him home, when he collapsed and died a short time afterwards.

John Gahan was born in the parish of Ferns, Co Wexford, in 1929, having completed his secondary education in the Christian Brothers' School, Enniscorthy, and St Peter's College, Wexford, he went to St Patrick's College, Maynooth, where he graduated with the B.D. and B.A. degrees, and was ordained to the priesthood in 1956. After ordination he spent a further year studying for the H.Dip. in Ed., during which he did *locum* for one of the Classics professors in Maynooth. One of his students during this time was none other than John Hume. In 1957 Fr Gahan was appointed to the teaching staff of St Peter's College where his main subject, at first, was Classics, but he saw the need for a course in Agricultural Science and undertook the task of teaching this subject as well, assembling a library which a Department of Agriculture inspector declared to be one of the best library of books on Agricultural Science he had seen. Fr Gahan compiled his own textbook for use in his classes. He became Dean of Studies in 1971 and was appointed President in 1977. Four years later he went as parish priest to Gorey and was made a member of the Diocesan Chapter in 1983. He retired from parish work in 1999 and devoted all his energy to the completion of his book on the priests of the diocese. He planned a second volume on the churches of the diocese, for which he had collected a large amount of material, but, sadly, this will have to be completed by others.

However, Canon Gahan's *The Secular Priests of the diocese of Ferns*, which we hope will have been launched before this issue of the Newsletter appears, will be his lasting monument. *Ar dheis De go raibh a anam.*

Seamas S. de Val.

ACAI EXECUTIVE:

Chairman:

Rev Dr D A Levistone Cooney.
1 Claremont Court,
Ailt an Oir,
Upper Glenageary Road,
DunLaoghaire,
Co Dublin.
Tel/Fax 01-280 7141

Vice Chair:

Sister Dominique Horgan. Op.
St Mary's
47 Mount Merrion Avenue,
Blackrock,
Co Dublin.
Tel/086 873 0968. Fax 4055682

Secretary:

Sister Marie O'Leary.
'Caritas'
15 Gilford Road,
Sandymount,
Dublin 4.
Tel: 01-2697833

Treasurer:

Marianne Cosgrave,
Catherine McAuley Centre,
32 Herbert Street,
Dublin 2.
01-6387500.

Penny Woods.

Russell Library,
St Patrick's College,
Maynooth
Co Kildare.

Mary Smyth.

St John of God Brothers,
'Granada',
Stillorgan,
Co Dublin.

NOTICEBOARD

We have received an e-mail from Abbot Geoffrey Scott of Douai with a request for help with some research he is currently engaged in.

...I am busy collecting the correspondence of the London Catholic printer/publisher, James Peter Coghlan, who was active between 1770 and 1800. He had many contacts, Episcopal and otherwise, in Ireland. Some of his letters survive in Irish Catholic archives, but there may be more waiting to be discovered. Would it therefore be possible to alert Irish church archivists to this project and ask them to look for Coghlan material in their repositories.....

Abbot Geoffrey's e-mail is; Gscott2006@aol.com

Anyone out there who can help??



“.....a search was made in the archives deposited in the treasuries.....and a scroll was found.....”

Ezra 6:1-2. (NJB)