



ACAI NEWSLETTER

ASSOCIATION OF CHURCH ARCHIVISTS OF IRELAND

No. 26 March 2002 _____

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

I started my working life in the Dublin office of a British insurance company. When I went there policy renewal notices were laboriously typed from great registers, and a few years later they were centralised at Weston-super-Mare and transferred to an automatic system. The word "computerised" was unknown in those days; we said that the renewals were mechanised.

To do the preliminary work for the mechanisation a woman was seconded from Head Office in London for a year. When she had not enough to do to fill her time, as happened quite often, she would drift about the office talking to one or other of us. From time she would loom over somebody's desk and enquire cynically, 'Are you loving your work?'

When your work was drafting frequently repetitive endorsements, or writing to innumerable clients who could not or would not understand the basic principle of insurance (the indemnity not the profit of the insured), it was not easy to love work, but it did have its rewarding moments. Most of us were quite happy with it, especially on the 25th of the month when the salary credits arrived in our bank accounts.

This memory was prompted by our visit to the Irish Jewish Museum at Walworth Road in Dublin. We were welcomed by the Curator, Raphael Siev, who beamed kindly at us from behind a quite magnificent beard, and talked about Judaism. It was quite evident that he did not merely know his subject - he loved it. He was talking about his people, and his voice resonated with pride in their achievements, and with grief at their sufferings. For that reason something of his enthusiasm communicated itself to us.

And I remembered another occasion. Some years ago the Refresher Course in my theological college, Edgehill College, Belfast, was on the subject of church history. I went because I was anxious to hear one of the speakers, Dr. David Hempton, whose work I had greatly appreciated. I came away captivated by the other speaker, Mgr. Brendan Corish, then retired from St. Patrick's, Maynooth. Again it was the same element; he not only knew his subject, he loved it. As he talked about St. Patrick one forgot that the saint had died centuries before the speaker had been born, and thought that he was describing a personal friend. In fact he was; friends do not have to be contemporaries.

Isn't that what archives are all about? There are people who will look at us with some degree of pity as we poke about in old papers, and who will say, "I'd throw away the lot. What use are they?" But it is through the old records that we can become the friends of those who have gone before, we can appreciate the tradition that has moulded us, and we can discover who we are. And at that moment the toil and the tedium are a small price to pay for the wonder of the discovery.

Happy discovering!

Sincerely,

Dudley Levistone Cooney

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A Tribute to our Pioneer Members

As archivists we are very conscious of the debt we owe to our predecessors in whatever field we may be working. Our work today is building on the foundations laid by them. For this reason, we felt it was fitting that the ACAI should make formal acknowledgement of the pioneering efforts of three of our founder members, Sr Margaret Mary Altman, DC, Sr Magdalena Frisby RSM and Fr Leo Layden CSSp, who were responsible for the formation of this Association in 1980, by awarding them honorary life membership. Accordingly, we prepared certificates of life membership and had them framed. We had hoped to present them at the AGM in April, but since that had to be postponed because of the restrictions incurred by Foot and Mouth Disease, we decided to go ahead, mindful of the fact that 'tomorrow is an uncertain day'. So on 14 May 2001 Dudley, Dominique, Marianne and Marie met the two Sisters in the Catherine McAuley Centre, Herbert Street and Dudley presented them with the certificates, expressing our gratitude to them (in the best of Dudleyan eloquence!) for their excellent work for the ACAI over the years. We then celebrated with tea and cakes, after which Dudley, Dominique and Marie went to Rathmines to present Fr Leo with his certificate. All three recipients expressed their pleasure and gratitude for the honour conferred on them and they look forward to keeping in touch with the Association through the Newsletter and, in Sr Magdalena's case, through ongoing participation in our meetings and various functions.

Marie O'Leary RSC

SUMMER COURSE

INTRODUCTION TO ARCHIVES

IN

CATHERINE MCAULEY CENTRE

23 HERBERT STREET, DUBLIN

FROM:

24TH - 28TH JUNE 2002

FEE 260 EURO.

60 EURO NON REFUNDABLE
DEPOSIT

BOOKINGS TO BE CONFIRMED BY

3RD MAY.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
CONTACT:

*Marianne Cosgrave
Catherine McAuley Centre
23 Herbert St Dublin 2
Tel: 01 6387521*



DUNNE, Fr James W, CSSp. 1939-2001

It is sad to have to report the death on 9 December 2001 of Fr Jimmy Dunne CSSp. At the Association's AGM in October last he was one of three speakers on the theme 'From the Missionary Archives'. As Provincial Archivist for the Irish Holy Ghost Congregation (Spiritans), he spoke of the history of the Irish Spiritan Congregation. His own experiences in West Africa brought life and immediacy to his presentation on this occasion.

Fr Jimmy Dunne was born in 1939 in Dalkey, Co Dublin and attended secondary school in CBS Monkstown. He joined the novitiate for the Holy Ghost Congregation (Spiritans) making his First Profession in 1957 and was ordained in 1967. His first appointment was to Sierra Leone where he worked at Gerihun and Moyamba before opening Njala University Secondary School. He was Assistant Novice Master in Kilshane from 1975-77 and then returned to the West Coast of Africa where he worked in Sierra Leone and Liberia. During this time he completed his Doctoral Dissertation entitled "Creoles and Catholics in Freetown, 1864-1896", being the history of the Catholic Mission to the Creoles of Freetown, West Africa. In 1992 he was appointed Director of the West Africa Foundation at Ejisu, Ghana and later Rector of the Spiritan Institute of

Philosophy in Ghana. He was a central and very special figure in the life of West African students for the priesthood for whom he was an inspiring mentor.

In August 2000 he was appointed to the position of Provincial Archivist for the Spiritan Congregation in Ireland. Suffering from a heart condition, Fr Jimmy Dunne died on 9 Dec 2001 in Blackrock College. At his removal from Blackrock College to his home parish of Dalkey the ACAI was represented by Sr. Marie O'Leary and Sr. Dominique Horgan.

Caroline Mullan
Blackrock College



Book Reviews

"It commenced with two....." the story of Mary Anne Doyle, first companion of Catherine McAuley, by Bonaventure Brennan R.S.M.

The title of the book was the reply given by Catherine McAuley when questioned on the origins of the Sisters of Mercy. It is a phrase with which I was quite familiar but while I have read practically every book on Catherine, Mary Anne was for me just someone in the background. She was Catherine's trusted companion who went as superior to Kingstown, now Dun Laoghaire, and Tullamore, the first foundation outside Dublin. Then I lost track of her. I am delighted that this situation has been remedied by Bonaventure Brennan who has produced a well researched, wide ranging and readable volume on the genial Mary Anne.

Born in St. Andrew's St. in Dublin in 1801, Bonaventure situates Mary Anne in the heart of her family where she explores the characteristics which made the Doyles unique. Among them, her brother John was an artist and under the pseudonym JB was renowned for his political sketches. His son, Dick, was for some years a regular contributor to the magazine. Punch, the cover of which he designed in January 1844. In the next generation we meet the famous Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, creator of Sherlock Holmes. The traits that emerge from this talented family are reserve, gentleness, kindness and respect for people, all hall-marks of Mary Anne's own character.

In four chapters her life is recounted as she joins Catherine in Baggot St. and moves on to Kingstown, Tullamore, Derry and Omagh, finally returning to Derry where she spent her final years. Introducing each section is the historical background of the locality which gives us an insight into the prevailing poverty and deprivation, the focus of the Mercy ministry.

In Derry we come across the now familiar story of the tension between both sections of the community concerning parades. Because of this hostility all commemorations were banned in 1838. The Convent in Derry was the first to be founded in Northern Ireland since the Reformation and was situated within the walls, flanked on either side by Unionist newspaper offices where the printing machines worked on noisily throughout the night. The obvious grandeur of the building was in stark contrast to the scarcity of funds and essentials.

Not alone was Mary Anne responsible for the administration of convent and schools, she was also entrusted with the formation of the novices, while in 1838 she conducted the Summer

retreat in Tullamore. She devoted herself as well to the care of cholera and famine victims, visited the Jail in Tullamore and prepared condemned convicts for death, composing special prayers for those sad occasions. When we consider that Mary Anne's preference was to remain in the background the question arises - where did she get the strength to accomplish so much?

The answer is to be found in Appendix 11 and 111 where we are presented with a collection of her prayers and retreat notes, all from the originals in the Derry Archives. Her spirituality could be summed up in a little note in Mary Anne's own handwriting - I am dead and my life is hidden with Christ in God. My God and my all.

This is a book of international interest which should take its place in every Mercy library beside the many on her friend and companion, Catherine. The author has dedicated herself to the research and compilation of Mary Anne's story and has uncovered for us a wealth of original material. Regrettably, the book has neither Copyright nor ISBN.

Sr. Pius O'Brien

Servant of the Poor
Mary Aikenhead (1787-1858)

Donal F. Blake, CFC

Religious Sisters of Charity, Dublin
2001 102 pp. Pbk

In Harold's Cross, Dublin, adjoining the hospice of Our Lady's Mount, the Sisters of Charity have opened the Mary Aikenhead Heritage Centre. A fine modern building adjoins the original 18th century house which the Order bought from the Society of

Friends (Quakers) in 1845, and the two complement each other in telling the story of Mary Aikenhead and the Order which she founded.

In the new building the visitor is welcomed to a small lounge where the walls are adorned with the smiling portraits of forty or fifty sisters of the Order, immediately establishing a sense of happiness. Climbing the stairs the visitor then finds a series of twelve small models set at comfortable viewing level, which light up in turn as the commentator tells the story of Mary Aikenhead's life and the development of the Sisters of Charity through those years. The small figures are superbly made, and the faces so well treated that one may notice the ageing of the Foundress from panel to panel. For the benefit of those who cannot stand for any length of time, some light but sturdy folding stools are provided. From these panels one moves into the upper part of the old house to visit a very small collection of souvenirs, and the rooms in which Mary Aikenhead spent the closing years of her life and in which she died.

Descending the stairs again, the visitor comes into a large apartment filled with a number of curved screens covered with photographs and text briefly introducing the many aspects of the life of the Order at present. Pressing the button on any one of the seven or eight panels on each screen activates a video on the central cctv screen which, in about three minutes, tells something of that particular work. Nearby is the small, simply furnished and beautiful oratory for prayer and reflection. Before leaving, the visitor is shown another video in a small theatre. This brings together the purpose of the Centre.

This small book has been produced to partner the Centre at least in so far as the life of Mary Aikenhead and the early years of the Order are concerned. It has been designed and printed as thoughtfully and as elegantly. Donal Blake, a Christian Brother, tells the story simply and perceptively - its failures and mistakes as well as its successes; and a remarkable story it is. From the vision of one young woman in the early years of the 19th century has grown an Order working throughout the world, involved in education, nursing, prison visiting and a variety of other activities. Behind all of it lay the determination of Mary Aikenhead to give to the poor what the rich could buy for themselves. As the motto of the Order expresses it, 'Caritas Christi urget nos', the love of Christ urges us on.

DLC

THE METHODISTS in IRELAND,
Dudley Levistone Cooney. Columba
Press 2001

ISBN 1856073351. DP 280. Price
£12.99

A salutary tale - the courage and commitment of the man! But this account of John Wesley and the Methodists in Ireland is far wider than the life of the founder - his origins in England, his background and achievements are dealt with in the first four chapters. These are inspirational, the key to understanding the remaining twelve which are an overview of Methodism in Ireland. This is an interesting and not well-enough known tale of achievement of a relatively small missionary initiative by a group among the population of Ireland. His method depended on the "catholic Christian faith expressed in the

Nicene Creed" accepting the principal teaching of the Protestant reformers. Wesley inherited the three Angelic sources of authority, "scripture, tradition and reason". Wesley's contribution to these was to add experience, i.e. he wished to make Christianity relevant to the lived lives of those he shepherded.

It is salutary also for the reviewer, a non-Methodist, who has to admit to ignorance with regard to certain elements that make up the religious ethos of Methodism. For any such as this reviewer the impression is left that this should be required reading and a mighty help to ecumenism. Certainly its well-known devotion to the Bible is not a new discovery; but it was a pleasant surprise to read of how important to them, from the beginning, was the service of Communion when Methodism was finding its feet within the Anglican Church of eighteenth century England and when the difficulties of allowing members to attend Holy Communion was solved by providing that one Sunday in four Communion Service took place in St Patrick's Cathedral in Dublin. (As an aside, and as part of the reviewer's task, I note some lack in the index; it could be more complete; I was unable to check this from the index which contains only proper names, and certain movements; I could not even find St Stephen's Green although it housed the first Methodist educational boarding school in Dublin - nos. 78 and 79. So it behoves me to read this interesting book again! And take more precise notes).

Wesley, born in 1703, was ordained to the priesthood in 1728. The beginning of the Industrial

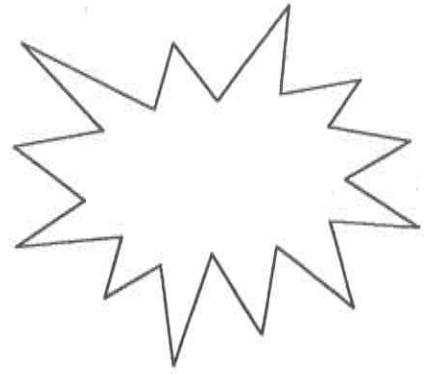
Revolution in the eighteenth century was the impetus that gave him to think and thus field preaching began. He had extraordinary success speaking to about 3,000 out-of-doors, a portrait surely of a people hungry for the spiritual and the word of God. Wesley's gift and mission sprang from his Christian mission, and more than with others, it was the dynamism of the Gospels that propelled him to share his vision and nourishment, especially with the "hungry sheep" for this was the beginning of the industrial age where the rising population had been left by the wayside. Education of a basic elementary nature was denied to them but supplied to the affluent by private tutors.

Is it a book for the ordinary reader? Certainly for a member of the Methodist church it is an extremely affirming and satisfactory book. For the non-Methodist it is a source book, extremely full of information, not only about Methodist matters but also a mine for any who would get a further flavour of the 19th and 20th century in Ireland and England, with its emerging struggling masses, masses mainly overlooked, except for the value of their votes for the establishment. The positives of Methodism: the rise in numbers attending services and becoming regular communicants - the "Methodist experience was not only a preaching revival but also a sacramental revival". Also the courtesy of the church and its organisers to have arranged Methodist meetings at times different from the normal Church services so that any who wished could attend both. One was struck by the care of souls taken by Methodism; definitely no poaching and no proselytising.

Wesley's dilemma: he had not visualised the impossibility of continuing as a separate strand within (or beside) the established church. Deeply committed to the Church of England, a regular communicant, initially he never foresaw himself as ordaining priests or preachers. Nor had he visualised finding his church outside the Anglican Communion. He was a driven man, carrying the message of Christianity to those who because of their lowly working-class or peasant class, were supposed to have no need of the certainties of Christianity with its life-giving supports and intimacies with God. He had an interesting and full life; we think of his Methodists in America in and after the 1776's - a society in a vast continent already vibrant with religious groups of Puritans, Mormons, Catholics and Protestants. The new group of Methodists had a wide field.

The Rev. Levistone Cooney deserves the thanks of any Irish, at home or abroad. It is an extremely detailed and readable text and succeeds in warming the heart towards the Wesleys, John and his inspirational brother, Charles.

AnnDominica Fitzgerald, O.P.



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 2002. Articles, letters, reports, book reviews, may be sent to Sr. Marie O'Leary, Hon. Sec. ACAI, Caritas, 15 Gilford Road, Sandymount, Dublin 4

NOTICEBOARD



Catholic Directories Appeal

The Sisters of Mercy are trying to build a collection of Irish Catholic Directories for the congregational archives. If any member of the ACAI has spare or redundant copies of the following directories to donate or sell, please contact *Marianne Cosgrave* at: *Mercy Congregational Archives, 23 Herbert Street, Dublin 2. Tel. 01 6387521. email mercyarc@indigo.ie.*

Pre 1862		
1866	1897	1913
1870	1898	1914
1871	1899	1932
1872	1904	1976
1874	1907	1980
1876	1908	1981
1886	1909	1983
1890	1911	1996
1893	1912	1998

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