



ACAI NEWSLETTER

ASSOCIATION OF CHURCH ARCHIVISTS - IRELAND

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From the Chairman:

Dear Friends,

Our Association has reached its Silver Jubilee year
– a time for looking back.

It began as an Association of Religious Archivists, the members being the Archivists of religious congregations in the Catholic Church. About half way along the journey since it expanded to include all Church archivists who were willing to join – Catholic diocesan archivists, and archivists of the Reformed Churches.

One of the original ideas was to provide some sort of training for newly appointed archivists. Through the years our induction courses have earned such a reputation for excellence that archivists who are not working with the churches have benefited from them.

We are grateful to all those whose enthusiasm, imagination and expertise contributed to this development. We owe them more than we can say.

Above all we are grateful to God for the way in which He has blessed our efforts, and we hope that as many as possible of our members past and present will attend the Thanksgiving Mass in the Chapel of Milltown Park, Dublin on Saturday, November 12th.

But a Silver Jubilee is not just an occasion for looking back; it is also for looking forward. Through the coming years we hope that the enthusiasm, imagination and expertise of our predecessors will inspire us, and those who follow to continue to develop the effectiveness of our Association.

Floreat!

Sincerely yours in Christ,

Dudley Levinstone Cooney

TRANSFER OF WEXFORD ARCHIVES

Séamus S. de Vál

An event of interest to archivists and local historians took place in Wexford town on Thursday 4 November 2004, when the archives of St. Iberius's (C.of I.) Church, Wexford town, were removed from their home on Wexford's Main Street where there were kept for nearly four centuries, and transferred to the library of the Representative Church Body in Dublin.

Iberius is the Latinised form of the name Ibar, the saint who is reputed to be the first known Christian missionary in the Wexford area, and who died in the year 500. He founded a monastery and school on an island called Beag-Éirinn in Inbhear Sláinne (Wexford Harbour), and in spite of attacks from the Vikings, the first of which is recorded as having taken place in 819, the monastery survived until the twelfth century.

The Church of St. Iberius stands on the site of an ancient church which was also dedicated to the saint. The present church is over three hundred years old, and of course, has been renovated and altered over the centuries. It was repaired in the year 1693 at the cost of £287. The gallery was erected in 1728 to accommodate the military who were stationed in the town. Noteworthy features of the building are the late Georgian interior decoration and the mid-nineteenth century Venetian Renaissance-style façade. The church has been recently refurbished.

The archives of St. Iberius's Church date from 1610. Probably the single most interesting item in the collection is the Vestry Minute Book which covers the years 1682 – 1871, and contains a wealth of information, including a variety of records relating to Wexford town. From it we learn, for example, that in 1796 it was decided to raise £16 to improve the streets of the town. Other items are the usual records of church services: the preacher's name, attendance and the amount of the collections; and of course, the registers of births, deaths and marriages in the parish.

It is recorded that, during the Insurrection of 1798, people could not attend church services owing to the fighting on the roads. Information can be gleaned, too, about the professions and trades of the parishioners in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Sailors, ships' carpenters, soldiers, teachers, bankers, watchmakers and clockmakers figure prominently in the registers, enabling one to imagine the life and activities in the town at that period.

Some Wexford people expressed regret that the archives were being removed from their old home, but as the Assistant Director of the Representative Church Body Library, Dr. Susan Hood, said on the occasion: "We are taking them out of the locality to secure their long-term survival..... These documents have been lovingly looked after by generations of local people". The Rector of Wexford, Rev. Maria Jansson, said: "We are making the rich heritage of Wexford town available to all the people of Ireland".

Local historians will still be able to consult the registers as it is planned to have them available on microfilm in the local library, and all the documents will be accessible to researchers in the CRB Library in Dublin.

The Regional Archives of the Franciscan Missionaries of Divine Motherhood

When I was asked to establish our Regional Archives in Portiuncula Convent in Ballinasloe in 1999, I knew nothing about Archives. However, having got some idea of classification from our General Archivist, I attempted to set up a general order on the materials at hand in a small bedroom in the Convent. Later I attended the ACAI course for Archivists in All Hallows. As I began to establish a definite order on the content of our history books, I appreciated how careful the Sisters had been in recording the day-to-day events during those early days that were by no means free of troubles. It made interesting reading, more so because I continue to meet people in various parts of the world, who had been associated with that history.

Two of our Sisters had come to Ireland from England in 1942 to try and set up a Nursing Home in some part of Ireland, as there were a large number of Irish Sisters entering the Congregation. The Sister had to get special permits to travel at the time, because it was at the height of the Second World War and a time of intensive bombing of England. Initially the Sisters sought an interview with Archbishop McQuaid, informing him that they hoped to set up the Nursing Home with midwifery as the speciality. Archbishop McQuaid refused permission because:

"It would be a shock to our conscience and that of the Irish people to see nuns doing midwifery".

Eventually Bishop Dignan of Clonfert, accepted the Sisters in Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, where a small Nursing Home was established in two adjacent houses in the town. By April 1945 a new Hospital of 36 beds had been built and opened on land given by Bishop Dignan. There had been problems for the Sisters from the outset, and these seemed to multiply as the hospital increased in size and diversify its services. In those early days there were problems with the doctors, the clergy and the IMA, which resulted in a visitation from Mgr. Hugh O'Flaherty (The Pimpernel of the Vatican); and there were even more problems with the Health Board following the government's policies to rationalise the health services 1968 – 1978.

From the beginning Dr. Eamonn de Valera had been a friend and adviser to the Sisters, particularly during the IMA dispute and the problems resulting from the government's Regionalisation policy. Another staunch friend was Sean McBride, who was tireless in his efforts to resolve the many problems that arose over the years, even when his work took him to Geneva. Finally he became the Chairperson of the Portiuncula Hospital Trust for research and development. As his health deteriorated he requested that our Sisters would help in nursing him at home. This was his last wish and in January 1988 two Sisters went up to Dublin to be with him in his final days. I quote from our history book:

"Sean McBride was always to us a friend and a gentleman who died as simply as he had lived"

This was the end of an era for us and soon there would be talk of transferring ownership of the hospital, but by then we had communities in other parts of Ireland. Portiuncula, *"The Little Portion"* and cradle of the Franciscan order in Assisi was the Cradle of the FMDM congregation in Ireland. When I took over responsibility for the Archives in 1999, negotiations were well under way for the transfer of ownership of Portiuncula to the Western Health Board and plans were being drawn up for a new

convent for the Sisters. That complex has now been completed and we have a new 'working archive' there. It has become a place where the retired Sisters will call in when I am there and browse over old photograph albums, help to put names on unfamiliar faces, share stories and enquire into my progress. Mind you, there is not much progress once the stories start, but it does bring life to that room which otherwise would house some shelves containing many rows of brown boxes.

Marie Coyle fmdm

Genealogy and Heritage

A festival of Heritage and Genealogy was held in Sligo last September and a like one was held in Oranmore Lodge Hotel, Galway in March this year. There were wonderful lectures in both venues. A University lecturer said of the Galway one: "*I've never been at a Conference so intimate and enjoyable, whilst at the same time being thoroughly interesting and professional*" Much of the content of both conferences could be very pertinent to our Association, and so we make bold to quote some excerpts from the opening address of Bishop Christopher Jones at the Sligo festival.

"Instinctively we feel that the more we know about our ancestors the more we know about ourselves and conversely if we forget our ancestors and let their stories die we will have betrayed them. There is an old Irish belief that those who have died are all around us. They still care for us and still love us – and of course we still love them. It is a measure of our love and care that we search out their names and tell their stories to each other. Our love is shown by the way we pray for them and rely on their prayers.

I genuinely believe that it is most important to foster a love of our heritage and history among our young people. This is so important when mass communications and a globalised economy threaten our collective memory of who we are. In a real sense we are all emigrants now. Even those of us living in Ireland have to consciously choose to hold on to our Irish identity, culture, spirituality, memory. Such commitment to our heritage does not preclude an opening up to new cultures and people. Celebrating our heritage and our ancestors who gave it to us prevents us from becoming part of a rather banal, homogenised and ultimately boring mono-culture that is the same in Seattle, Seoul, Santiago or Sligo.

We need to be aware of our duty to our descendants – to build on the heritage we have received and hand it on, enhanced, renewed and invigorated.

Since my ordination as Bishop I have had the privilege of being invited to the celebrations of many Irish communities abroad. I always try to attend because I carry in my heart a healthy respect and love for so many who had to leave our parishes in the 1950's and 1960's, and who worked so hard abroad to earn a living with dignity. Therefore it gives me all the more pleasure to welcome this unique festival to Sligo and I sincerely hope that the study of genealogy will continue to strengthen and cement the ties that bind us not only to our ancestors but also to each other – the Irish at home and abroad".

I imagine we could juxtapose the word archives for genealogy here and the talk would be even more pertinent!

The Allen Library

On Saturday 20 November twenty archivists were warmly welcomed to the unique institution of the Allen Library in North Richmond Street, Dublin. Br. Thomas Connolly and his two co-workers – Noelle and Sinead received us with warm hospitality in contrast to the miserable atmosphere prevailing in Dublin that day. Br. Thomas treated us to a quick resumé of the history of the house. Blessed Edmund Rice lived there from 1831 – 1838 and during our tour of the house we visited the bedroom he had occupied during those years, and the lovely old grandfather clock on the stairs was bought second hand by him, and it still works!

The house was always associated with books for even in the early days there, two Brothers - Austin Grace and Louis Swan - were always on the look out for bargain books. The early account books of the house, which have thankfully survived, record the purchase of the *Annals of the Four Masters*. (Some latter day philologist recorded 'The Annals of the Four Wasters'). Those early scholastic Brothers were anxious to obtain good books as the house was always associated with scholarship. It was a Model School, a Training College and even housed Brothers who were Inspectors of Schools, and who went out from there to examine future teachers, long before the Marino Institute came into being.

Daniel O'Connell laid the foundation stone of the school next door and he used the occasion to hold one of his famous political gatherings. As well as his memory being commemorated in the name of the school, he is also given a place of honour in a dedicated room in the house. His political strivings were closely related to the humanitarian ideals of Blessed Edmund Rice, and those ideals were fostered in the teachings of the Brothers always. The library now has collections of 'An Gael Óg', *Our Boys* and all educational publications of the early Brothers.

The eponymous Br. Allen spent most of his life there and he lived to be 84 years of age. He was a native of Co. Cork and had a consuming interest in Irish history. Legend has it that when he heard of the 1916 Rising he went down town and cajoled his way through and even obtained the knob of the door of the G.P.O. He began to put items like that into glass cases and explain their significance to the boys he was teaching, some of whom were sons and nephews of the leaders of the Rising. By degrees the boys took along items of interest from their homes and in time a significant collection was formed. Those hard artefacts and other memorabilia have been given to the National Museum, and retained all the paper based material and thus the name – Allen Library.

Renovations have been carried out in the house over the years, and approaches were made to some libraries for help, but nothing was forthcoming until 1994 when the Brothers wished to celebrate the sesquicentenary of Blessed Edmund Rice. They then asked FÁS for assistance, and were lucky enough to obtain the services of Noelle Dowling and the whole library work has just grown and gained momentum ever since. According as religious houses close, books are taken in and must be sorted, recorded and organised, so it is an ideal training ground for would be librarians and archivists. Work with all modern media is carried out now by young people who are well aware of the treasures contained in those hallowed precincts. It contains one of the best collections of Pearse material and we were able to admire a map of the Kerry coast

used by Roger Casement during his ill-fated expedition. It is not a religious archive as such but it does contain items of value, like the little Book of Hours – a Latin Prayer Book which originated in the Netherlands.

We hope that the girls will give a more detailed description of this wonderful amenity in our proposed edition of IRISH ARCHIVES. They certainly did us proud on the occasion of our visit and having regaled our minds with the extent of the collections there, they sent us on our way refreshed with a nice cup of tea. Many thanks indeed to Brother Thomas, Noelle and Sinead.



Death of Fr. Thomas Raymond Barry C.S.Sp. 1932 – 2005

Ray was born at Drumheriff, Drumshanbo, Co. Leitrim, on 29 December 1932. After his secondary school studies at Presentation College, Carrick-on-Shannon he entered the novitiate in Kilshane where he made his first profession on 8 September 1951. In 1954 he was awarded a B.A. degree from U.C.D. and in 1955 the Higher Diploma in Education. He prefected at St. Michael's College for the years 1954 – 1956. Ray studied theology at Fribourg where he received a B. D. in 1958 and S.T.L. in 1960. He was ordained to the priesthood on 19 July 1959 and made his Consecration to the Apostolate on 17 July 1960.

In 1960 Fr. Ray's first appointment was to **Sierra Leone** where he was a teacher and chaplain at St. Edward's Secondary School, **Freetown**. In 1962 he was appointed as Vice-Principal at St. Paul's Secondary School, **Pujehun**. From 1964 until 1974 he was Headmaster at **Yengema** Secondary School.

We offer our sincere sympathy to Fr. Ray's family and confreres.

Fr. Brian O'Toole C.S.Sp.
Provincial Secretary.

(Many of our members will recall an inspiring talk on 'MISSION' given by Fr. Ray a few years ago at our A.G.M. May his dear soul rest in the peace of the Lord.)

In 1974 Fr. Ray took a Sabbatical at the Institute Catholique, Paris. He returned to Sierra Leone in 1976 and became Director of the **Pastoral Centre at Kenema** and later served at **St. Kizito's Seminary in Kenema**. On leaving the seminary and Sierra Leone in 1993, the class of 1992/'93 wrote:

"Fr. Barry, You have been a loving father to the church in Sierra Leone, Liberia and the Gambia for the past thirty-two years of your life. Now that you are leaving us we wish you God's richest blessings and protection wherever you go. Thanks".

In 1994 Fr. Ray was appointed to the **Generalate in Rome** as Director of Information Services. On 1 January 2002 Fr. Ray took up his new appointment as **Irish Provincial Archivist**.

For the past year Ray had not been fully well and had been admitted to hospital a number of times for treatments and on-going tests.

Sr. Angela Bolster

Sr. Angela Bolster died on the morning of 2 February in St. Maries of the Isle, Cork. She was a native of Mallow. She did a degree in History in University College, Cork, and afterwards taught for many years in St. Aloysius School in Cork city. Later she did a Ph. D. in History, taking for her thesis: *The Sisters of Mercy in the Crimean War*". Afterwards she worked as Diocesan Archivist for the Cork and Ross Diocese for a number of years and wrote and published four volumes of the history of Cork. She also wrote several books on Catherine McAuley, and it was her dearest wish that all followers of Catherine would really come to know and love their foundress. Catherine's wish was to bring Christ to those she served. That too was Angela's. She undertook the enormous task of adding Catherine's name to the list of saints. She undertook the task of searching out and illuminating what it was that made Catherine different; discovering what fresh and formative insight the love of God had produced in her. At the request of Dr. Dermot Ryan she commenced the compilation of a Historical Report on the cause. The Postulator – Fr. Martin Nolan, OSA Nominated Angela for the position of Vice Postulator and she was the first woman to have been accepted by the Sacred Congregation for Causes. She presented the *Positio* for examination on 12 December 1984. In 1990 Catherine McAuley was declared Venerable by decree of John Paul II. What a day of great joy for Angela!

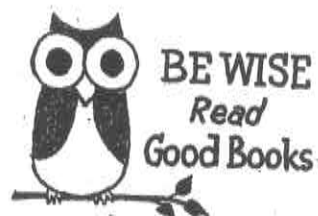
Sr. Angela was an inspiration, an exemplar of single-minded purpose and persevering dedication to a lonely, isolated task. Ar dheis Dé go raibh a hanam uasall!

Sr. Kathleen White

Sr. Kathleen White, a well known and much loved member of the Presentation Congregation, died on 11 January 2005. She was born in Clonlahy, Cloneen, Co. Tipperary in 1935. She entered the Novitiate at Stradbroke Hall, Blackrock, Dublin in 1952. After Final Profession she became a member of George's Hill community, which was to be her home for almost 40 years. She taught in the Post Primary School there with dedication and enthusiasm, which characterised her whole life. Later she served as Principal. In 1992 she was changed to Athenry and in 1994 she moved to Kirwan Park, Mountmellick, where she remained until her appointment as secretary at the Northern Provincialate in 1998. Over the next five years she became widely appreciated for her outstanding professionalism and concern for all with whom she came in contact. As she hoped to take on the care of Archives she welcomed the training offered by ACAI Summer School in 2003, which increased her enthusiasm for a new and exciting ministry. She transferred to the community at Maynooth, but a few months later she had to cut short her Sabbatical Year when she was hospitalised. She showed great courage and determination in coping with limitation and pain, but through it all she spoke with appreciation of ACAI Newsletters and notices which she received.

At the start of 2005 she was moved to the Nursing Home at Kilcock. It was here that she died on 9 January. She leaves with all who knew her a deep sense of loss and the memory of someone who was kind, good and true. Leaba i measc na naoimh go raibh aice.

The Crimean Journals of the Sisters of Mercy 1854 – 1856
Maria Luddy (Editor) hbk 260pp Four Courts Press Price €45.00



In 1854 twenty-one Sisters of Mercy travelled to the Crimea to nurse the wounded in the War which had begun in the early months of that year. Six of them from the Bermondsey Convent in London travelled in October, and placed themselves unreservedly under the control of Florence Nightingale. The other fifteen, drawn from five convents in Ireland and two in England were a little more cautious. They were prepared to accept Miss Nightingale's direction in the matter of nursing, but they were determined to maintain their religious life, and to that end Mother M. Frances Bridgeman was appointed Mother Superior.

Florence Nightingale was not amused, and announced that there were enough nurses in the area without the addition of the fifteen. Right from the start there was tension, resolved only partially when the Sisters were given responsibility first in Koulali, and then in Balaclava. Whether because of this or in the normal course of spiritual discipline (more probably the latter), all fifteen nuns were encouraged to keep personal Journals. Unhappily in the intervening century and a half, most of these have disintegrated, or been otherwise lost, but three have survived.

Dr. Luddy has placed them in a significant order. That of Sister M. Aloysius Doyle is placed first. It is in the main a simple, direct account of her experiences from the time she leaves her convent in Carlow until her return, though her transcription of some official letters suggests that these were circulated among all the nuns, so that all knew what was happening.

The next journal is that of Sister M. Joseph Croke from the Charleville Convent. Again we are offered a direct personal account, but Sister Joseph had a sense of humour, and a flair for verse, both of which she used to lighten her narrative. The Journal of Mother Frances Bridgeman from the Kinsale Convent is very much for the official record, and goes into a great deal more detail than either of the others. It was a later reworking of the Journal written on the spot.

Sister M. Elizabeth Butler and Sister M. Winifred Sprey, both from the Liverpool Convent, succumbed to cholera, and were buried in the Crimea.

From three different perspectives we have the same story, and a fascinating story it is too. If any of us still have some notion of the Crimean nurses as gentle ladies with lamps, smoothing the pillows of 'our gallant wounded heroes', this will set the picture right. It was a brutal situation, and only the toughest women were capable of surviving as nurses. To this was added, as was only to be expected at that time, the complications of sectarian prejudice, and the unshakeable conviction of the army that all was well in their organisation.

Miss Nightingale does not come well out of these accounts. She was a strong-minded woman doing an extremely difficult task in almost impossible circumstances, and strong-minded people (men and women) in such situations are apt to resent what they perceive as rivalry. But that does not pardon the hostility of the initial reception which she gave the Sisters, nor does it excuse the waste which her control of supplies entailed.

We must remember, however, that this is not an impartial history. It is the account of a mission written in the heat of the engagement. That is its great value. It is the record of a few remarkable women performing a remarkable service in the midst of all the political, religious and humanitarian problems of the mid 19th century, and greatly enriches our knowledge of the period.

DLC

Sr. Rita Dooney, RIP

In our last edition we published a letter "China Calling" which had been sent on by Sr. Rita Dooney, of the Columban Sisters, Magheramore. Who would ever have guessed that this edition would carry her obituary? We are particularly grateful to Srs. Ita McElwain and Redempta Twomey for the following short account of her life.

After a short illness, Sr. Rita died peacefully in hospital on 10 November 2004. She was born in Ballaghaderreen, Co. Roscommon, on 3 September 1926. At her baptism she was given the name Gertrude. She joined the Columban Sisters in Cahiracon, Co. Clare in 1947 and became known as Sr. M. Rita. Sent to California after she made her vows, she enjoyed teaching the children of Our Lady of Guadalupe School in Los Angeles, and while there she did further studies and she graduated 'Summa Cum Laude' from Mercy College, Pittsburgh. For many years she served the Columban Sisters communities in the USA as local and Regional Superior. Those years broadened her perspective on mission, especially as she visited Peru, which was then part of the USA region. Those post Vatican II years were challenging times as communities worked to implement the Council's decrees, but her great love of the Church and of the Congregation informed all she did.

On her return to Ireland in the late 1970's she brought those same gifts to her work in the Archives, helping to set up the office, retrieve documents and undertake the extensive cataloguing needed. It was a work of love by a woman who, in the history of the founding of the Congregation, in links with the Society of St. Columban, saw the mission unfolding, the vision taking flesh. Down in the basement as she bent over her desk to sort documents, fragments of letters, old photos, Rita saw the gracious, sometimes turbulent, movement of the Spirit in the unfolding story.

The extraordinary truth of being called by God to share in the mission of Jesus filled her with gratitude and a great and deep love of her congregation. In her heart and prayer she held all the Sisters, from Chile to China, from Myanmar to Massachusetts, from Pakistan to Peru. No

one read newsletters from the missions more avidly than Rita and few were better informed.

Nurtured by the word of God, Rita drew her life support from the Eucharist, for here we touch on the deep mystery of the kenosis of Christ. We are called to risk all, to trust without fear. Rita lived out this mystery and in her gentleness, her gratitude and her strong love, she revealed something of the splendour of God. Thoughts of death are never far from us these hushed November days. The leaves fall and the darkness and evening mists seem to unveil, rather than hide, the faces of those who have gone beyond darkness and death. We move through the short days with the consciousness that our time too is short, our lives as fragile as the falling leaves. Rita was her usual warm and gentle self until Friday 5 November, but that morning she complained of dizziness. The doctor ordered rest and appropriate medication, but later she deteriorated and was hospitalised. A brain scan showed that she had sustained a cerebral haemorrhage and the prognosis was bad. The Sisters accompanied her in turn and two were with her as she drew her last breath.

It was a quiet November day as her funeral liturgy was celebrated in the presence of her brother John and his wife Kathleen as well as many nieces and nephews and friends as well as the Columban Sisters and priests, on Friday 12 November. Her sisters – Sr. Rosarii, Mercy Templemore, Mary Ann and Bridget were not well enough to travel, but their thoughts and prayers were with those who laid Rita to rest, appropriately in Magheramore, for as Sr. Ita McElwain said at the beginning of Mass – "Rita was in Magheramore longer than anyone, her gentle presence a blessing on all. May she rest in the peace of the Lord.

The Convent in the Trench

The following is excerpted from the book "Beyond Catherine"- a summary of talks on various foundresses of the Mercy Order, and presented to Mercy Archivists in Baggot Street in November 2003. We quote the following here by kind permission of Sr. St. John Enright RSM who has laboured in South Africa for more than 40 years.

In 1896 Bishop Anthony Gaughran, a native of Dublin, was appointed Bishop of the first ecclesiastical vicariate in South Africa. In 1897 he approached the Mercy community of Strabane for help. Five professed Sisters volunteered for this mission and four other young women asked to join the Sisters. The group led by Sr. Teresa Cowley, left Strabane on 24 September 1897, and after 24 days on the high seas they reached Capetown where the Cabra Dominicans treated them to exceptional hospitality. A train journey of two days took them to Kimberley en route to Mafeking. In Kimberley they were hosted by the Holy Family Sisters with a warm welcome and learned that not only was there no Convent ready in Mafeking, there wasn't even a plot of ground secured. They rented a house in Kimberley and from there tried to expedite the work in Mafeking. Finally in February 1898 they headed north again and as they could wait no longer Sr. Teresa rented two houses – one for a Convent and one for a school, which opened immediately.

The Convent school was built by 1899 and shortly afterwards the Boer War broke out, and the Sisters found themselves in the centre of a legendary siege that was to give the obscure little town of Mafeking a permanent place in military history. Bishop Gaughran encouraged the Sisters to leave, but as the annals say – “they chose to stay” – a euphemism for “they refused to go”! The British Army commandeered the Convent as their headquarters and built the Sisters a trench – 50 feet long, 5½ feet wide and roofed with corrugated iron on which were heaped sand bags and clay. The Sisters lived in the trench for the entirety of the 218 day siege. The annals also record that as the army moved in the community assembled in the chapel and repeated aloud the acts of faith, hope and charity and contrition, after which the chaplain – Fr. Ogle removed the Blessed Sacrament. One almost wants to continue “*And it was night*”.

As might be expected, far from pitying themselves, the Sister teachers became nurses overnight, and became quite proficient at the task. They tended the wounded, wrote letters to soldiers' families, prayed with the dying, and often gave their food to the wounded men. They performed these duties for soldiers of both sides of the conflict. Many letters of gratitude to the Sisters survive and we are told also the touching story of John Hoyne and Frank Gallagher who as youngsters had attended the Convent school in Strabane. They later joined the British army and served in Mafeking. When wounded during the shelling they were overjoyed to find themselves being nursed by their former teachers.

After the siege, in which the British were successful, Sr. Teresa was decorated with the Royal Red Cross and her companions with the Royal Victoria Medal. Sr. Teresa then promptly presented the British Army with a bill in the amount of £240 for the rental of the Convent. In addition she asked for and received compensation for damages to the Convent during the heavy shelling of the siege – extensive damage and she argued for every last penny. When the war was over she wrote consoling letters to as many families of those who lost loved ones as possible, enclosing

photographs of their burial places. Afterwards she continued the great friendships she and the other Sisters had made with people from every walk of life. Colonel Robert Baden Powell, Commanding Officer during the siege, was a life-long friend and the archives contain several original letters and cards written by him to the community, including a request for a pencil case complete with the sketch of what he wanted.

When Sr. Teresa died on 28 November 1914, she was buried with full military honours in grave No. 811 in the town cemetery. She was a lady possessed of exceptional leadership qualities, together with wisdom, simplicity, gentleness shrewdness, courage and bravery as well as her very strong will. She had been born in 1852 in the parish of Dunshaughlin, Co. Meath, and the age of 25 she entered the young community of Strabane. After twenty years as a beloved teacher with special care of young orphan children she led the mission group to South Africa. She was an archivist's dream – a great record keeper – even in the trenches she managed to keep documents safe: the original plans for the Convent are water-marked but intact. There is also a famous diary of the siege, which was kept by Sr. Stanislaus Gallagher, native of Omagh, Co. Tyrone. We should also mention that another of the founding group – Sr. Gonzaga McDonagh, a talented and accomplished musician, died in Kimberley en route and never saw the promised land of her mission. She was laid to rest in a borrowed grave in the Nazareth Sisters' burial site – a touching reminder of the sorrow of Sr. Teresa Cowley and her new community. We cannot but also think of the borrowed grave on which our faith is staked.



Visit To No. 29 Fitzwilliam Square

On Saturday 12 March a goodly number of archivists assembled at the Georgian Museum on the corner of Fitzwilliam Square to be treated to a very interesting visit to a house - now a completely restored middle-class home of the late 18th century. The house was completed in 1794 by John Ussher, an apothecary and property developer. The first owner was Mrs. Olivia Beatty, a widow who bought the house for £320 and moved in with her family of three children. Her late husband had been a wine merchant, and so left her fairly well provided for. She informed us in the introductory video that she likes to spook about the place even yet. Changes to the house occurred with changing fashions and life-style and some such changes are reflected in the exhibition. The house is now jointly presented by the Electricity Supply Board and the National Museum of Ireland.

We all viewed the video in a studio on the ground floor and then (because of our number) we were divided into two groups for actually viewing the house. All tours start in the basement area where the furniture and appliances would have been functional rather than decorative. The series of bells which summoned the servants to the various rooms – still work! It was good to be reminded of the hard work our ancestors did with few amenities. Items like sugar cones, gophering irons and bed-warmers served to emphasise the drudgery which was the lot of the servants. A rather unusual item in the kitchen was the cricket box. Our guide informed us that according to legend every happy home had a cricket.

The first and second floor rooms are far more grand with ornate ceilings and valuable furnishings. Some of us would have wished to try out the 'Exercise Horse' in the gentleman's bedroom, but luckily it was out of reach.

The third floor was probably one of the livelier areas of the house as it contained the Governess' room, the nursery and playroom. As well as samples of toys which children of that time would have played with, there were framed stitch samplers hanging on the walls, and framed charts from which the children would have learned English spelling and grammar as an introduction to the world of books.

Our guides were very knowledgeable and informative and had endless patience in answering our questions. While a group tour is ideal, as other peoples' questions elicit information one might not think of, perhaps a more leisurely personal stroll through this house might even be more beneficial, educationally, culturally and socially. You can always end your visit with nice refreshment in the ground floor café.



FORTHCOMING EVENTS

Saturday 2 July 2005
Summer Outing to "AIRFIELD"
Upper Kilmacud Road, Dublin.

Meet for lunch at 12.30p.m. followed by a guided tour.



Saturday 12 November 2005
To celebrate our Silver Jubilee
Mass of Thanksgiving
In
The Jesuit Oratory, Milltown Park
(*where it all began 25 years ago*)