



ACAI NEWSLETTER

ASSOCIATION OF CHURCH ARCHIVISTS IRELAND

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Gentle Readers,

Greetings to you from your executive committee and welcome to another year of activities in the Association! By this you will have received the immediate activities organised between now and Christmas and indicators of items for 2008

On October 12, the editor Sr. Teresa Delaney, Bro. Ignatius, Spiritan archivist and I attended the launch of a special edition of the journal of the Irish Society for Archives at the European Parliament Office in European Union House, Molesworth Street, Dublin. The issue commemorates the 400th anniversary of *The Flight of the Earls and the Founding of the Irish College in Louvain*. The journal was launched by Sean Ó Neachtain MEP who gave quite an emotional speech. There was a very large attendance at the function. This will bring to a conclusion a very successful year of commemoration of these two unique episodes of Irish history.

For those of you who use the Web the 'Learn About Archives' website <www.learnaboutarchives.ie> is hosted by the Society of Archives Ireland and our Association submitted some material for this site. The Irish Society for Archives site is www.ucd.ie/archives/isa-index.html. Other websites of interest to archivists are www.archives.org.uk - this is the principal professional body for archivists, archive conservators and record managers in the UK and Ireland. Lest this sound confusing it is worth remembering that in Ireland we have two societies for archives with almost similar titles: *The Irish Society for Archives* and a branch of the *Society for Archivists* - it is up to you to disentangle them and their very useful websites!

For church documents in Northern Ireland see <http://www.proni.gov.uk/records/church.htm> For historians of women religious and custodians of their archives it is worth checking <http://www.jiscmail.ac.uk/lists/HWR.htm>.

It would be useful if members of the Association who are 'Web Buffs' and who become aware of interesting places of archival information or reading, to share these through the Newsletter. Think about it.

Sr. Máire Kealy one time member of our Association has had a book published by the Irish Academic Press entitled '*Dominican Education in Ireland, 1820 - 1930*'. It will be launched by Mary Hanafin T.D. at the Dominican Resource Centre, Dublin on 8 November. Congratulations to Maire on a fine piece of research, the fruit of many hours researching in archives.

I look forward to meeting many of you on the November 10 visit to the new purpose-built archives of the Dominican Sisters in the Resource centre in Cabra. Until then

Sincerely
Dominique Horgan. Op. Chair

Brigidine Bi-Centenary

In the lush midlands SW of Dublin lies the tiny town of Tullow in the diocese of Kildare & Leighlin. In 1807, on the feast of St. Brigid, 1st February, six women responded to an invitation from its Bishop, Daniel Delany. They made their way from their homes in Tullow and its surrounding farms to the simple building beside the church that the Bishop had had built for them. Although it was February 1st and the official first day of spring in Ireland, we may be sure that it was a slushy and probably wet walk to their new home where the Bishop was waiting to welcome them. It was on this day that he planted in the grounds a sapling from St. Brigid's oak tree in Kildare to symbolise the link to that ancient place of learning and spirituality

Without fanfare, without market research and certainly without a strategic plan, the modern story of the Brigidines began. Daniel Delany had a dream and the six women shared it with him. They were pious catechists but they were poor and without formal education, they had never seen a nun, but, with him, they dreamt of improving the lives of those who lived in Ireland in the shadow of the Penal Laws. The need for education and for revitalising the faith was tremendous. This was 1807, less than ten years since the 1798 rebellion. Dominating the Main Street of Tullow now is the memorial to Fr. John Murphy, who in '98 was hanged and decapitated in Tullow Square. His head was put on a spike opposite the church, the one they were now walking towards just nine years later. These were troubled times indeed and it helps us understand why they didn't want to be too conspicuous in Tullow town.

Daniel Delany, like so many of his countrymen, had been smuggled out of Ireland to go to France for an education. He spent fifteen years in Paris where he attended the Sorbonne University and after ordination, continued with a teaching career in Paris. It is obvious that Dan (as he called himself and signed all his letters) moved in a circle of the wealthy self-exiled Irish gentry and with them he enjoyed the sophistication, comfort and culture of European life. He was persuaded, however, to return to Ireland when the Penal Laws were relaxed a little and when he returned he was aghast at the misery and degradation of his fellow countrymen, most of whom were wretchedly poor.

Bishop Delany lived only seven years after the foundation. He entrusted the education of the fledgling group to Miss Judith Wogan Browne, a member of a wealthy family, the gentry Browne family of Castlebrowne, later Clongowes Wood College. She had been educated by the Irish Dames of the Benedictine Convent at Ypres in Belgium, but had returned to live in Tullow in 1780. She never actually became a member of the congregation but she used her wealth, her wide social contacts and most importantly her education to assist and train those early Sisters. She lived in the Convent with them, dying there at the age of 98, and is buried in the Convent cemetery.

The philosophy of education as a pathway to a fuller and better life has always been central to the work and life of the Brigidines. This year we join with all around the world who celebrate two hundred years of that philosophy. On 1st February last Our President, Mary McAleese joined with the Sisters and their friends in Tullow for a wonderful celebration. She read the First Reading at the Eucharist and planted an oak sapling taken from the oak Bishop Delany planted in 1908. She had some pertinent things to say. I quote: *"Back then six of them were making a start. It was a good time to start, it was a springtime and the order has known great summers and great autumns, but I think the present day Brigidines may be feeling that there is a*

hint of winter around as they grow older and as they look behind them and see that very few now choose this way of life."

Two hundred years is really a drop in the ocean of history. The delight in bicentenary events continues to be enjoyed and celebrated inclusively in all parts of the Brigidine world. Yet as we look back, it is with a feeling of pride at all that has been achieved in Ireland, England, Wales, Australia, New Zealand, United States, Kenya, Mexico and China. The celebrations are not over yet, for in November the dead will be commemorated in the many cemeteries all over the world where so many great Sisters have gone before us to their eternal reward. We can reflect, often with bewilderment, at all the changes that occurred, at the sense of loss, at the uncertainty and challenges of the future. They dug the well for others to drink from. '**Fortiter et Suaviter**' was the motto chosen by Daniel for the Sisters, and it continues to be lived out quietly and proudly, but also with great hope and confidence. Mary McAleese also said and again I quote: "*Even oak trees don't live forever. Yet in a curious subtle way they do. They give new life through their acorns and saplings.*" We Brigidines hope there are many acorns and saplings in the hearts and minds of people who have learnt to cherish and live the Brigidine charism. From them, from you, will come new responses just as Daniel Delany planted his sapling from St. Brigid's ruined monastery to carry her spirit forward. **Fortiter et Suaviter** – Nothing is as strong as gentleness, nothing as gentle as true strength.

At the launch of the bicentenary celebrations, Sr. Anna Creagh, Provincial Leader said: "Our theme for 2007 is **Heritage and Horizon**. Ours is a rich heritage. Bishop Delany in choosing St. Brigid as our model emphasised that he was not founding a new congregation but rather re-founding the Sisters of St. Brigid, linking our congregation to the spiritual heritage of St. Brigid of Kildare – peacemaker, woman of deep faith, justice and hospitality with a great love of all creation.

Ours is a story of ordinary women in our frailty and splendour, human, flawed and with sparks of greatness. Each era had its own challenges and over the decades we have tried to read and respond to the signs of the times. The call of Bishop Daniel Delany to free people through education – rich and poor alike, women and men, boys and girls – has been our response. Our horizons have widened to struggling, developing local communities, new immigrants, and travellers. In the 21st century new needs have emerged, thousands of displaced people, exploited women and children, our damaged planet in need of healing – a search by so many for healing, holistic and spiritual living.

This jubilee time of two hundred years is a time of great joy and thanksgiving. It is also a time to acknowledge and to say sorry for our mistakes – we didn't always get it right. May Bishop Delany's focus on love and his dying wish for us to "Love God and live together in peace and charity" renew us at this time. May Brigid's flame continue to ignite all of us with a passion for justice and peace. Bishop Delany had the imagination to revive the old order of St. Brigid on February 1st two hundred years ago. We don't know how God is re-imagining the continuation of the gift of Brigidine life in the Church and in the world into the future, but we remain open to the mystery of life and trust and believe in the Spirit to guide and lead us to new horizons.

Sincere thanks to Sr. Mary Dalton, 9 Páirc Mhuire, Tullow, Co. Carlow for forwarding the material for this article. Ed.

Conference
History of Women Religious of Great Britain and Ireland

This conference was held on Friday 31 August 2007 in the Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, University of London. The one day event was organised by Carmel Mangnion, Caroline Bowden and Susan O'Brien. It was the sixth such conference, and the day was dedicated to the memory of Sr. Gregory Kirkus CJ who died on the previous day, aged 96. She had been archivist and librarian at the Bar Convent, York for over twenty five years, and was affectionately regarded by those working in the field of the history of female religious, as her work in that area was highly valued.

The delegates were of an extremely varied background and included academics from all over Europe and the US, archivists, seminary staff and several members of religious communities. This diversity made for highly engaging discussion sessions as well as stimulating conversations during coffee-breaks. It proved a supportive, open and productive forum for the discussion of research. No fewer than four papers were presented on the life of the Catholic recusant Mary Ward and the history of her Institute of the Blessed Virgin Mary. Several Sisters of the Congregation were present, and they were able to offer privileged insights on their Foundress.

Other themes covered, which emerged from papers looking at seemingly unconnected issues and disparate historical periods, included moves towards self determination and self-governance by female religious, the working lives of both cloistered nuns and active Sisters and the representation of women religious in artistic media.

At the close of the meeting there was discussion on the possibility of widening the focus at next year's conference, but the consensus among the delegates was that the network should maintain its current geographical focus. The seventh annual conference promises to be a similarly profitable and enjoyable occasion for all working in the field of the history of women religious.

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CARING FOR COLLECTIONS
A Manual of Preventive Conservation

As part of its strategic plan 1997 – 2000 the Heritage Council identified the need to produce high quality information on aspects of heritage and also the need to assist people in improving their skills to care for and maintain our heritage. The Heritage Council is delighted that through partnership with the Institute for the Conservation of Historic and Artistic Works in Ireland this publication has been produced.

Written and researched by **Susan Corr**, this publication aims to inform the general reader of the basic concepts of collection care and good housekeeping. It can be obtained free of charge from The Heritage Council, and will provide much relevant advice and material. As well as providing all the usual necessary information which is to be expected in such a publication, it also provides a Glossary of terms, Further Reading material, Useful Reference material, Useful Addresses and a Bibliography. Certainly a useful aid for any discerning archivist.

**Gift of Love Linking Michael Collins to his sister –
Sister Celestine.**

It was a carefully chosen gift that was lovingly engraved before being sent across the water to England to mark a special rite of passage. The beautiful brass candlestick was a present from the family of War of Independence hero Michael Collins to the Yorkshire Convent where his beloved sister – Celestine had entered. Now, more than a century later, the candlestick is being gifted back to Collins's home town of Clonakilty, Co. Cork, because the Convent in Endsleigh is closing down. And the hero's descendants are overwhelmed – they were unaware it existed.



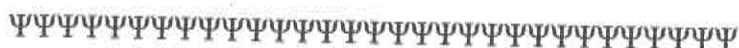
The candlestick will now take centre stage as the most important item of memorabilia in the Michael Collins Centre in Clonakilty. It was engraved with a request for prayers for Michael Collins's father, Michael John Collins, who was 75 when his famous son was born. Sister Celestine who was born in May 1883, was exceptionally close to her brother and was devastated when he was shot dead in 1922 during the Civil War.

Tim Crowley, who runs the Michael Collins Centre, was overjoyed with the discovery. *"The convent wanted it on public display where people could see it. So it ended up coming here and we are absolutely thrilled to have it. Until we actually got our hands on it, I thought it was a dream. It is a very rare item."* he said. *"It is probably the most important item we have here connected with the family. You could imagine Michael's mother buying that and getting it engraved and sending it off to the convent around 1903 or 1904. I've been in touch with members of the Collins family and they never even knew the candlestick existed."* he said.

Sister Celestine entered the Convent of Mercy in Endsleigh, Hull in 1903, where she took her final vows on 4 January 1906. She completed her teacher training at Endsleigh College, which was owned by the Sisters. She later lived in Crossbeck Convent, Middlesborough, and taught the Infant class in St. Peter's School, before becoming Headmistress. After her retirement in the 1950's she was Superior of the Convent, Southcoates Lane, Hull. She later moved to Whitby where the Sisters have a retirement home, and she died there on 3 April 1972. She was very close to Michael and he visited her whenever he was in England, sometimes in disguise.

She attended Michael's funeral accompanied by her Reverend Mother Ninian; but she could not bring herself to return to Ireland for a long time after, as she was deeply affected by his death. The candlestick will now reside in the Centre which features a photographic/memorabilia exhibition and audio/visual presentation in a traditional setting of a cottage/theatre. Close to the cottage is the Ambush Trail, a section of 1920's country road with armoured car, Crossley Tender and other features. The final day of Michael Collins's life is retraced along this trail on the guided tour. The festival now in its sixth year, usually takes place in August with lectures by important historians and other interested people.

Adapted from The Daily Mail, Tuesday August 7, 2007.



Obituary
Sr. M. Cabrini Delahunty

The death occurred recently after a short illness of Sr. M. Cabrini (Kitty) Delahunty, Convent of Mercy, Cobh and late of Curraghmartin, Carrigeen, Mooncoin. Daughter of the late Richard and Margaret Delahunty (nee Walsh), she was born in 1931, the fourth eldest in a family of fourteen. She was predeceased by her brothers James, Pat and John and her sister Anna (Grant),

A gifted academic and educationalist, she received her primary education in Carrigeen N.S. and while still in 5th class, she was awarded a Co. Council scholarship, taking first place in the county. She then attended St. Mary's College, Mountmellick where she also excelled, winning Inter Cert and University Scholarships. After her Leaving she chose to train as a National Teacher in Carysfort, and soon after qualifying she entered the Mercy Convent there. In 1957 she was conferred with a B.Sc. (Hons. Special) degree in Experimental Physics in UCD. She continued her studies there, receiving a H.Dip. Ed. and H. Dip Psychology. In the early sixties her order sent her to Washington D.C. to study for an M.A. in Experimental Physiological Psychology. On her return to Ireland she lectured in Science and Psychology in Carysfort and was President of the College in the early seventies.

In 1968, as background to the work on the new Maths. curriculum for Primary Schools, Sr. Cabrini was given a grant by the Dept. of Education to investigate the merits of her theory that a parallel development of language and mathematics could be beneficial for deprived children. The report on her research carried out on pilot groups of children from a Dublin Primary, and First Year pupils in a city Secondary School earned her a Ph.D. from the National University. She later lectured in UCD, Maynooth and UCC.

During the mid eighties when the use of computers in Irish classrooms was in its infancy, she was writing computer programmes in Language and Maths. which were used extensively in "Early School Leavers" courses throughout Ireland. In 1990 she was appointed Cloyne Diocesan Archivist by Bishop John Magee, and worked diligently in that role until her recent illness. As part of her work, she undertook the mammoth task of cataloguing and storing thousands of documents. She was of immense help to local historians and also professional historians and academics in their research. She was held in high esteem by her fellow archivists and was invited to make a presentation to CAS in 2005. She also served the diocese as secretary of the Historic Churches Advisory Committee.

Notwithstanding her numerous academic qualifications, Sr. Cabrini remained a very humble and unassuming person. She loved her native place and enjoyed returning to South Kilkenny whenever possible. Her whole life was dedicated to God as a religious and her commitment and loyalty were a gift to her community and the wider Mercy family. She bore her illness with fortitude and good humour, believing that she was returning safely to her Father's house. On 22 June she passed away peacefully in the loving care of her Cobh Sisters and the Delahunty family.

She was held in very high regard by the clergy of the diocese as evidenced by the number of them present in St. Colman's Cathedral at her obsequies. Bishop John Magee presided at her Requiem Mass at which her brother Fr. Richard was principal celebrant. Afterwards she was laid to rest in the Convent Cemetery, Rushbrooke. She will be sadly missed by her community in Cobh and by the wider Mercy congregation, by her immediate and extended family and a wide circle of friends. Ní bheidh a leithead ann arís. May she rest in peace.

Many thanks to Sr. Mary Lyons, Charleville, for this obituary.

Honouring God and Community
Confraternities and Sodalities in Modern Ireland

The Department of History at the National University of Ireland, Maynooth, hosted a very interesting Conference on the above topic on the 7 & 8 September last. The conference highlighted the work of a project which has been on-going for some time under the direction of Professor Colm Lennon, Principal Investigator, Dr. Louise Fuller, Associate Investigator and Dr. Robin J. Kavanagh, Project Research Fellow. The keynote Speaker on Friday evening was Professor Nicholas Terpstra, University of Toronto, who as well as expounding on the social and civil society of former times dwelt on comparisons and contexts and welcomed comments and questions.

On Saturday morning Professor R. V. Comerford, Head of Department of History, welcomed all attendees to a full and worthwhile day of interesting input by a broad panel of speakers, most of whom were from his own department in Maynooth. Professor Lennon treated us *'A long view of confraternities'* and Dr. Kavanagh described the project, and Dr. Louise Fuller brought proceedings to a close in the evening by treating us to a very descriptive talk on *'The decline of confraternities and the problems of sources'*. In between times we heard interesting lectures, most of which were illustrated by power-point from Maire Ní Cearbhaill, Cormac Begadon, Jennifer Kelly, and Jacinta Prunty – all from Maynooth; and whom I hope will forgive me for not giving the titles of their presentations. Giving a slightly different perspective, Daire Keogh, St. Patrick's Drumcondra, subject was *'Christian Brothers' evangelisation of*

youth in nineteenth century Ireland'; Martin Maguire, Dundalk Institute of Technology, discoursed on *'Church of Ireland parochial associations: a social and cultural analysis.'* and Carole Holohan University College Dublin, who spoke on: *'John Charles McQuaid and the failure of youth sodalities 1956 – 1961'*.

The topics were varied and wide-ranging and evocative of former and simpler times. An exhibition in the Russell Library of *'Memorabilia and iconographic images of Confraternity'* enhanced this latter aspect, as primary data and information from some confraternities and associations in parishes throughout Ireland between approximately 1775 and 1965 were on display. As well as plaques, banners, medals, and ribbons, there were photographs and registers containing numbers and names of many, many people who contributed time and effort to confraternal practice over the years.

As mentioned the project is on-going and it is hoped to yet collect more material, perhaps even memoirs and oral recollections of confraternal life of parishes, as they had a significant influence on the educational, social, political and charitable life of parishes in the nineteenth and early twentieth century. If anyone has relevant material, no doubt Professor Lennon and his co-workers would gladly accept it. As Saturday 8 September drew to a close, everyone seemed reluctant to quit Renihan Hall, Maynooth – that in itself is testament to an undoubtedly good and fruitful day with which all were pleased.

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Cill Éinde – An Spidéal 1907 – 2007

“Thar aon ní eile, bíodh muid ag cuimhniú inniu ar na glúnta daoine a tháinig anseo ag guí, idir ár muintir féin agus daoine gan áireamh ón taobh amuigh. Meallann an séipéal cois sráide isteach muid, le sos agus faoiseamh Dé a bhronnadh orainn faoina rataí téagarthacha. Fógraíonn Cill Éinde dúinn, go discréideach, go bhfuil Dia linn, agus go mbeidh í gcónaí.” *An Moinsíneoir Breandán Ó Ceallaigh. Sagart Paróiste.*

The same sentiments as expressed above must have inspired Fr. Mark Conroy, when he became P.P. of Spiddal in 1897. He found that the existing church was too small for his congregation. It was also in a bad state of repair and was leaking. It had been hastily built about 1854 in the days of famine, poverty and proselytism, by Fr. Colm McGrath. Fr. Conroy decided to build a new church and to convert the old one into a technical and industrial school.

Edward Martyn of Tulira suggested that William A. Scott of Dublin be given the commission to design the new church. In a letter to the local papers on 20 June 1903 he decried the state of architecture at the time and said that – *“architecture should rank with the greatest of arts; that architects were once the greatest of artists, and our miserable modern architecture can never improve until architects became artists once more.”* In suggesting Mr. Scott - then a relatively unknown architect, Martyn saw his work as a sign of the *‘first in-coming wave of what we may hope to be a fresh vigorous tide of architecture in Ireland.’* Mr Scott made a charming little model of the future building to be exhibited at a bazaar for collection of funds and Mr. Martyn would say no more about the design than that it is admired by the most distinguished artists in Ireland. Lord Killanin, whose forbears were the principal donors for the church, writing in 1950, said of Spiddal Church: *“What the architect has created is an original work of art.”* His ancestor speaking on the day of the consecration in 1907 said *“that the church was what it purported to be – a thing of beauty, created for the greater glory of God, and a credit to Ireland and to Spiddal. It was solidly built, possibly rugged, but it had to withstand the buffeting of the Atlantic, and if Enda were to land once more on these shores from Aran, he would bless and welcome this little church.”* While the general style is Irish Romanesque, Scott also used early Christian and Medieval ideas, blended and co-ordinated the whole building down to the smallest detail.

The foundation stone was laid on the 9th October 1904 by Bishop Francis McCormack. The sermon was preached in Irish by Fr. Nicholas Fegan of Barna, who had collected a total of £1,660 in America for the building. The actual dedication, also by Bishop McCormack took place three years later. The sermon again in Irish was preached by Fr. M. O’Reilly, C.C., Monivea. Present also were Sir Thomas Esmonde, M.P., Stephen Gwynn, M.P., Colonel Frechill from Sydney (Chamberlain to the Pope and Spanish Consul) and Lord Morris and Killanin. The builder of the church was Thomas Griffin & Sons and the total cost was £5,581. The architect engaged the Sara Purser Studios to execute some of the art work of the windows and later the Stations of the Cross. The bell has an interesting history as it was one of a pair that hung in the G.P.O. Dublin until 1884, when it was transferred to the Royal University. It was bought by Canon McAlinney in 1915 for £40, and erected in Spiddal in 1916. It bears the motto “Prosperity for Ireland”.

There have been some modifications over the years, particularly those effected by Very Rev. Tom Kyne P.P. in 1985. With the help of ‘Meitheal’ the church was re-roofed with natural slates from Spain, the altar was remodelled, the lighting was

enhanced and a new sacristy was added. Fr. Kyne was visited some years later by students from America who informed him that they had taken a course in Heritage Studies at their University (Fr. Kyne could not remember which University). In the course of their study they had used notebooks by a lady called Nellie O'Donnell, a native of Spiddal.

She must have been rather well educated for she kept a regular diary, in a very good hand. She had emigrated in the early years of the twentieth century when Fr. Conroy was collecting funds for building the church. Nellie had procured work as a house-keeper in some big house where a good number of servants were employed, and from them she regularly collected a small donation, the amount of which she recorded meticulously in her notebooks, and eventually mailed to Spiddal. Those latter day students were rather intrigued to note that the gardener – a Japanese man contributed a dollar for Spiddal Church!

The diaries also recorded that when the great 'flu of 1918 raged throughout the world, Nellie was very worried about her elderly parents so she took her young children - a boy and girl to visit and care for them. Her parents got the 'flu but survived. However, her young son was not so lucky, he succumbed to the ravages of the 'flu and died in Spiddal, where he is buried. Nellie returned broken-hearted to America, regretting that she ever came back, and never again visited Ireland. She continued to write her diary though. Luckily, her family or some descendants who found her notebooks after her death presented them to a University and they now enlighten modern members of our diaspora about life in the early twentieth century, especially about the efforts to build a church worthy of the people, the area and the times – all of which were commemorated so fittingly on Sunday 18 August 2007.

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Archive Awareness Campaign	
Date and Time	3 September – 30 December
Event	<i>Online exhibition entitled <i>The Theft of the Irish "Crown Jewels", 1907</i></i>
Location	<www.nationalarchives.ie>
Contact	Aideen Ireland. Tel: (01)4072300

Callan to Canada

On the 25th August last the Sisters of Mercy in Callan, Co. Kilkenny celebrated the Golden Jubilee of their foundation in British Columbia. On that day fifty years ago the first foundation of five Sisters embarked on the journey to Fort St. James, a small settlement of 1,000 white people and a large number of Indians. The Sisters were responding to an invitation from the Oblate Fathers under the direction of Bishop Fergus O'Grady, O.M.I., as they sincerely desired to have Sisters to help in their missionary endeavours in Canada. The five founding Sisters were Srs. Alphonsus Sheehy, (leader) Gonzaga Whearty, Anthony Barlow, Clare Sexton and Kathleen O'Callaghan. They braved intense cold and other privations at first but with time their presence was instrumental in making a vast improvement in the living conditions of the people.

At the celebration last August the liturgy commemorated those who had the prophetic vision which inspired the mission to Canada, and particular thanks was expressed to all who accepted the call to 'come follow me' in the mission to Fort St. James, Vanderhoof, Prince George, Vancouver, Stoney Creek and Tache. It is only in the Book of Life that their generosity and openness to work with a lively faith and open heart in a strange land, among a people unknown, will be truly recorded and recompensed. The Canadian people who opened their doors and hearts to the Sisters, and shared the little they had with generosity and commitment were also remembered.

It was thought fitting to name the missionary Sisters who have departed this life – they were Srs. Oliver O'Hare, Rosarii Finn, Labloué Sheehan, Stanislaus Harrington, Paul Howlett, and Breda Doyle. May they now share the reward of eternal life as they rejoice in the happiness of heaven for lives generously given in God's service. Four of the founding Sisters were present to plant a Canadian maple tree, and all others rejoiced with them as the celebration continued with a festive meal and a session of wonderful story-telling and shared reminiscences. Before the Canadian National Anthem was sung, a phone link connected with those who could not be present and they were especially remembered in prayer. May they continue to embrace the legacy of Mercy in caring for all God's people.

Callan Convent was long noted for its interest in foreign missions, for in 1884 the then Superior – Mother Michael Maher established a missionary school where girls who wished to train for work in the mission fields could be educated. This missionary school was the only institution of its kind in Ireland. In the seventy five years of its existence, (it closed in 1959) approximately 2,000 girls attended this school which was a 'kind of pre-novitiate', where the vocations of these aspiring women were tried and tested under the care and inspiration of the local Sisters.

It is fitting that we pay tribute to the generosity and dedication of those brave girls who left their homes and families for unknown lands. Some beautiful photographs still exist of those ladies, many of whom never returned to their native land. Happily in more recent years some have revisited their Alma Mater and recalled their early days in St. Brigid's Missionary School.



**A tale of two archives in New Orleans after Hurricane Katrina.
It was the worst of times and the best of times**

October 2005: Over a month under water, in a filing cabinet and in a cupboard, such were the archives of a small group of Sisters in New Orleans whose ministry began there in 1968. How ironic that the last thing we did, before I returned to Ireland from New Orleans in 2003 was to ensure that everything was filed in acid-free boxes. While the thought of the loss of our small archives after Katrina was disheartening to say the least, our concerns were nothing compared with the loss of life and devastation in the city and beyond.

The daunting prospect of reconstructing our records was lessened since I had in Ireland some material from New Orleans, including details from annals and minute books recorded on cassettes and subsequently transcribed. (see footnote.) But the 'best of times' emerged when local area archivists received \$2,000 grants from the Society of American Archivists and the Society of Southwest Archivists towards the cost of salvage. While the process would not reverse any damage already done, after freeze drying the archival contents for about a year, followed by rinsing with warm tap water, it was then possible to peel pages apart to allow them to dry.

November 2006: By the time I next visited New Orleans, the salvage process had just been completed and the first five boxes of salvaged boxes were delivered. Other boxes were to follow. What we found was beyond all expectations. Although photographic albums and photos were not salvageable, most of all printed matter, annals and minutes had survived to varying degrees. Some pages showed very little sign of damage (apart from the dried out appearance of paper that had been soaked.) Other pages displayed rust marks and mould designs and some had been 'Dyed' by the ink running from various coloured pages. Newspaper cuttings survived well – even a 'Post-it' note with its pencilled comment was in place and very legible! Some yearbooks and calendars did not fare well – the glossy pages stuck together as if glued and it was not possible to peel them apart.

Reflecting on our experience and with hindsight it was obvious that some of the damaged records might have survived in better condition had a few simple procedures been established at the time of record keeping in the earlier decades. (But who thinks of those details when trying to cope with the daily challenges of a new mission?) Obviously storage in acid free boxes and envelopes will not protect records from fire or extreme floods such as followed hurricane Katrina.

Our archival concerns seem slight compared with the concerns of those responsible for much larger collections. The following summary and extracts from the notes of another archivist in New Orleans provide an insight. The archives in question were much older and larger than our smaller and relatively recent archives.

" Sudden evacuation: 'Went to archives, unplugged computers, picked up archives' catalogues and the last computer backup." During the following weeks, knowing that the archives were in one of the flooded areas of the city, the archivist made a list of artefacts and records which she thought would be lost, especially items related to the founder and origins of their foundation.

Four weeks later, when the Sisters eventually returned to the city they were delighted to find that the floodwater had not reached the archives in the upper floor of the building. However, until the building was treated for the mould which resulted from the long-standing floodwater, removal of the archives was delayed. Eventually they were moved – twice, because immediate removal required transfer to a temporary facility until a decision could be made about the permanent location of the

archives, such was its size. The formidable task of packing 'loads of boxes' involved two or more hours travel from their headquarters, three days a week from 7am until 5.30 pm, for about five weeks. On moving day 120 boxes filled two large vans. This did not include the furniture, shelving and computers!

The 'before and after Katrina' experiences described above serve as a timely reminder to review emergency preparedness and procedures. Hopefully, we may be spared calamities. As for our congregational archivists the salvaged records from New Orleans will be a constant reminder of the great loss of life and devastation in 2005. If only the shattered lives of those most severely affected by Katrina (and other disasters) could be sufficiently 'salvaged' to enable them to look to the future with hope! Let us keep them in our prayer.

Sr. Maris Stella McKeown OP

Footnote: I had been the local area archivist for our congregation, whose motherhouse is in Dublin. Parental illness necessitated my return to Ireland shortly after I had begun to write a book about our ministry in New Orleans from 1968. I continued writing while in Ireland, "Cabra Dominicans And All That Jazz" was published in 2006 by Dominican Publications, Dublin.

COMING EVENTS

AUTUMN EVENT

Visit to the Archives of the Dominican Sisters, Cabra

Saturday 10 November 2007

2.00p.m.

Buses from O'Connell Street: 38, 38A and 122
(Get off the bus at Navan Road Church)

AGM 2008

O'Donnell House, All Hallows College, Drumcondra

Saturday 26 April 2008

11.00a.m.

Details of our spring event will be available later.