



# AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC HISTORICAL SOCIETY INC NEWSLETTER

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE ARCHBISHOP OF SYDNEY

ISSN 1837 - 4123 (print) ISSN 1837 - 4131 (online)

Vol XX No I Feb 2010



*Built entirely of sandstone, St John's College was designed by architect William Wardell. The Freehill Tower as shown here, was added in 1937 by the architects, Hennessy and Hennessy.*

## A visit to Sancta Sophia and St John's College, Sydney University

A very pleasurable afternoon was had by members attending the Society's excursion to Sydney University's Catholic residential colleges, Sancta Sophia and St Johns, in November last year.

We began our tour at Sancta, at once charmed by an impressive mosaic artwork by Blake Prize winner, Mary Hall, which adorned the entrance hall. Our guide, Dr Susan Kelly, an ex-student of the College and current College Councillor, explained that the University of Sydney in 1859 had granted the four main denominations (Presbyterian, Wesleyan-Methodist, Catholic and Anglican) land to build residential colleges to meet the spiritual needs of their young men. In turn, it was hoped that these young men would have their morals protected from contact with the impious wider world.

Social changes saw the rise in women wanting access to this higher education, and Sancta's Hall of Residence for women was opened in 1926 under the stewardship of the Order of the Religious of the Sacred Heart, Sisters committed to the equality of women in society. It became a College in 1929, and remained under the Sisters' administration until 1991.

I'm not sure why, but it was such a pleasure to walk through so much oak and cedar panelling, and up and down the many narrow wooden staircases. The chapel, the dining hall, the board room, the library, each a delight in turn. Towards the end of our tour, we were even treated to a peek into the room of senior student elect, Ms Liz Jones, who had accompanied us on the tour. It was a good size room, not too messy, complete with a lovely view through leadlight casement windows over the quadrangle.

Sancta has been well-supported by prominent Catholic benefactors in the past, especially Sir Mark and Lady Sheldon. Sir Mark's sister had entered the Order of the Sacred Heart in 1898, and he had served

## Dear members

Welcome to the first edition of the newsletter for 2010. You will notice that this is early as the Council has several important announcements to make to its members.

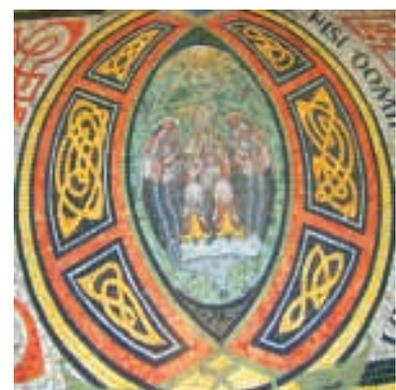
We would like to inform you that there will be no February meeting, and the Annual General Meeting (AGM), which is usually held in February, will now take place in March. Notice of the AGM is on page 3 of this edition.

As several of our long-term Councillors have resigned, we also need to give members adequate time to consider submitting their nominations or applications to Council before the AGM. We are in need of extra help so please consider volunteering for the Council.

The next edition of the newsletter will be out in June, and will be the usual 8 pages. It will also include the 2010 Lecture Program. The meeting dates until this issue are 14 March, 11 April, 16 May and 20 June.

We would like to thank our members for their ongoing support, and look forward to seeing them throughout the year.

*ACHS Council*



*The traditional symbol of St John, the eagle. Detail from tiled floor, St John's College.*



Clockwise from above: *Entrance to Sancta Sophia College; Members enjoying a well-earned break in the dining room, St John's College. L to R: Ruth McAteer, Joan Unwin, Ruth Lynch, and Rae Wales; Sancta dining room, donated by Sir Mark and Lady Blanche Sheldon, in 1957.*

on Sancta's Council for almost 26 years. Lady Sheldon had been educated at the Convent of the Sacred Heart in Rose Bay, Sydney, also run by the Sisters.

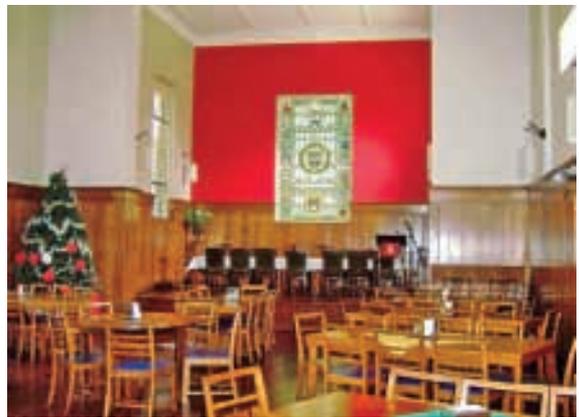
Dr Perry McIntyre, who has been with St John's College for three years in the position of Archivist/Historian, greeted us under the portico of the College for the second part of our tour. It became clear to us early on that Dr McIntyre was really more of a curator as she guided us past the fine paintings of former rectors and benefactors to St John's, beautiful bookcases, and sumptuously carved wooden statues. In this mid-Victorian Gothic-Revival space, we knew we were in an institution that was built to stamp its mark in early Sydney. The grand stairways had tested our limits, and thankfully we stopped for a revitalizing cup of tea in the dining hall. Here, amongst the treasures on the wall, we pondered an impressive floor to ceiling full-length portrait of Archbishop Polding painted by Montague, which had recently been restored with funds provided by Cardinal Pell.

Traditionally boys attending St John's College came from the Catholic elite - St Pat's at Goulburn, St Stanislaus' at Bathurst, St Joseph's and Riverview. However, the first two residents whose names appear in the College's original 1861 register shown to members, were a Patrick Joseph Healy from Maitland Grammar (successfully finishing a B.A. and M.A. to become a barrister, and later Senior Crown Prosecutor of NSW); and William Charles Browne from Sydney Grammar (who completed a B.A. to become a pastoralist and grazier at Singleton). It was an irony not lost on members that the latter, William Charles Browne, baptized C of E, was one of these first two residents enrolled

## POST CONFERENCE DONATIONS

The Society is pleased to inform members that profits from the 2009 ACHS Conference were distributed to the Broken Bay Institute and the Catholic Institute at Strathfield.

"Thank you for the lovely financial gesture of a contribution to the costs of the BBI contribution to the ACHS's 2009 Conference." wrote Dr Gerard Goldman "We are particularly pleased at Br John Luttrell being able to provide such solid assistance to ACHS." Rev Gerard Kelly, President of the Catholic Institute, wrote "I am so pleased that the venue worked well for you, and that those who attended were able to feel comfortable in the lecture and common spaces." A copy of the Conference Proceedings was also given to the State Library of NSW.



within this Catholic icon.

It was also interesting for members to learn that Sancta and St John's College now take both male and female students, and some of the students even attend other Universities.

Both Dr Kelly McIntyre were extremely generous with their knowledge and time. It was a thoroughly enjoyable tour, with the added bonus of a 'workout' for the members.

*Denise Corrigan, ACHS*



# NOTICE OF ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2010

The next meeting for the Society is the Annual General Meeting to be held  
**2:30pm Sunday 14 March 2010**  
at St Mary's Cathedral College Hall, Sydney.

We will be electing a new Council at this meeting. Positions to be filled include: President, two Vice Presidents, Secretary and Treasurer (who shall comprise the Executive) and up to seven Councillors. Please come along with your nominations.

## ACHS Journal

The 2009 Journal was posted in January, and all members should have received their copy by now. We're very sorry to say that Brother John Luttrell will be standing down as editor after 11 years of excellent work. During this time, John also acted on the ACHS Executive as President and Vice President, and organised the past two ACHS Conferences. He will be much missed by all, but we are pleased to say that John has agreed to remain on Council for 2010.

## Memberships are now due

About one-third of our membership subscriptions are now due. To check when your subscription is due, you need to access the date on the printed address label on your newsletter envelope. If the date is January 1 2009, this will be your last newsletter until you a further subscription is received from you.

## Please consider being an ACHS Council Member for 2010

We are in desperate need of some new volunteers (or past Council Members may like to volunteer again) to put themselves forward for the 2010 ACHS Council. Council meetings are usually held every second month at midday, before the afternoon lecture series. Meetings are friendly, well-run, and kept as succinct as possible. The Society can not continue to function as well as it has done in the past years without the help of many hands. Please see the *Notice of AGM 2010* (above) for positions that are vacant.

• If you wish to discuss the obligations of being a Council member please contact Helen Scanlon at [hscanlon@optusnet.com.au](mailto:hscanlon@optusnet.com.au).

## Welcome to our new members

Maree Ganley, Marie Conroy, David Patrick Lynch and Neville McCormick.

## Tribute to Damian Gleeson

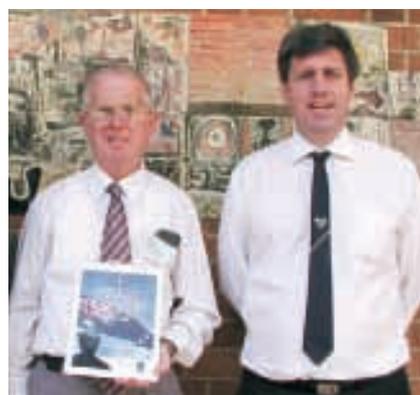
At the end of 2009 Dr Damian Gleeson stepped down as President of the Society, after serving in that position for three years. He had previously joined the Society Council in 2006 as Publicity Officer. The next year he generously agreed to stand for the Presidency and was elected in February 2007.

During his incumbency, Damian oversaw the maintenance and progress of the Society. There were 33 Society events in that period – mainly lectures and excursions. Council meetings had to be convened, chaired and followed up. The Cathedral venue also had to be prepared for Society meetings and Damian undertook most of the burden of this, after which he would welcome members and chair many meetings. Added to this, he also kept a keen eye on Society communication – via Newsletter, Journal and website. We recognise that Damian undertook this service while fulfilling demanding teaching and administration roles at the University of Notre Dame Australia. He also took on extra work when vacancies could not be filled on the Council.

A concern for the standards, quality and promotion of Australian Catholic history has also marked Damian's leadership. His advocacy for appropriate access for historians to archives was also significant.

Damian has also made a considerable contribution to the

*Damian Gleeson (right) with ACHS Councillor, John Luttrell.*



Society's historical offerings, as the following list demonstrates: *Catholic Lay Women's Impact on Professional Social Welfare in Australia* (paper at ACHS Conference 2005); *Pioneer Female Australian Catholic Social Workers* (paper at AGM, Feb 2007); *Some Themes in Australian Catholic Social Welfare History* (Article in ACHS Journal vol. 28 [2007]); *Monsignor J. F. McCosker's influence on Commonwealth Social Policy 1950-70* (paper at ACHS Conference 2009).

We are grateful for Damian's substantial contribution to the Society and wish him well.

*John Luttrell, ACHS*

# The Irish of County Bondi at Christmas Lunch



Above from left: *ACHS President, Howard Murray, with his wife, Mrs Pat Murray; ACHS councillor, Marg Zucker and guest speaker, Fr Tom Devereux omi; ACHS councillors, Perry McIntyre and Peter Makinson.*

**A**ROUND forty-five Society members gathered at St Mary's Cathedral School Hall on a beautiful Sydney summer's day in December for the annual Christmas lunch. In the absence of our President, Damian Gleeson, who was unable to attend, our Vice-President, Howard Murray, welcomed the guests. Paula Wyatt and her team, who had catered for the Conference at Strathfield in September provided a sumptuous spread, which with a few wines, left us all, in the words of a former Prime Minister, "relaxed and comfortable."

Almost twelve months before the lunch, Marg Zucker had approached Fr Tom Devereux omi to speak at the lunch. Fr Tom readily agreed and chose as his topic *The Irish of County Bondi*. Was there an Irish Diaspora to Bondi which had formed part of Australian Catholic history to such an extent to have somewhat been forgotten as the years unfolded? The issue became clearer as Fr Tom began.

Fr Tom quickly identified that he is in effect a chaplain to an element of contemporary Australian Catholic history, the large number of Irish backpackers who have made their base around Bondi. He is Irish and the second priest in such a role which had been established at the instigation of Bishop David Cremin, who had recognised the need to provide a ministry to the large number of young Irish people backpacking through Australia, but largely finding their way to Sydney for work and sightseeing.

Fr Tom told us that he lives at and operates from St Patrick's presbytery at Bondi. A large house, the presbytery has become something of a centre for people to gather and to stay in emergency conditions, such as on arrival in Sydney until rental accommodation can be arranged.

Listening to Fr Tom, the life of a chaplain to a particular community is anything but tame. The lowlights alluded to included deaths of young Irish men caused especially by falls from balconies, particularly following over-indulgence in alcohol and more generally the effects of illicit drug usage. The repatriation to Ireland of the bodies of some of these young



*Members enjoying Christmas lunch.*

people was a particularly saddening experience. Highlights included the opportunity to celebrate weddings and baptisms amongst the young Irish and just the sense of camaraderie which was engendered when groups came together for particular celebrations. Fr Tom referred to a Mass he celebrated at the Hyde Park Barracks one Christmas where the congregation completely filled the grounds. What made the Mass especially different was the great number of participants who transmitted mobile phone images of themselves and their friends back to their families in Ireland.

It would seem that the backpackers have little trouble finding work. Fr Tom mentioned that many become employed as traffic controllers on road construction, twirling the stop and go signs. Next time we are held up at such a site, we might reflect that the young man or woman with the Gaelic complexion holding us up or letting us go may be one of Fr Tom's charges.

Fr Tom was not able to remain with us for the meal as he had to leave to celebrate one of the more joyful experiences of his working life. He was going to Our Lady Star of the Sea at Watson's Bay to celebrate a wedding from within the backpacking group.

Marg Zucker thanked Fr Tom for his presentation and more generally for the ministry he is carrying out. Peter Makinson formally thanked the caterers and both Helen Scanlon and Marg for the splendid work they had done in organising the lunch.

*Howard Murray, ACHS*