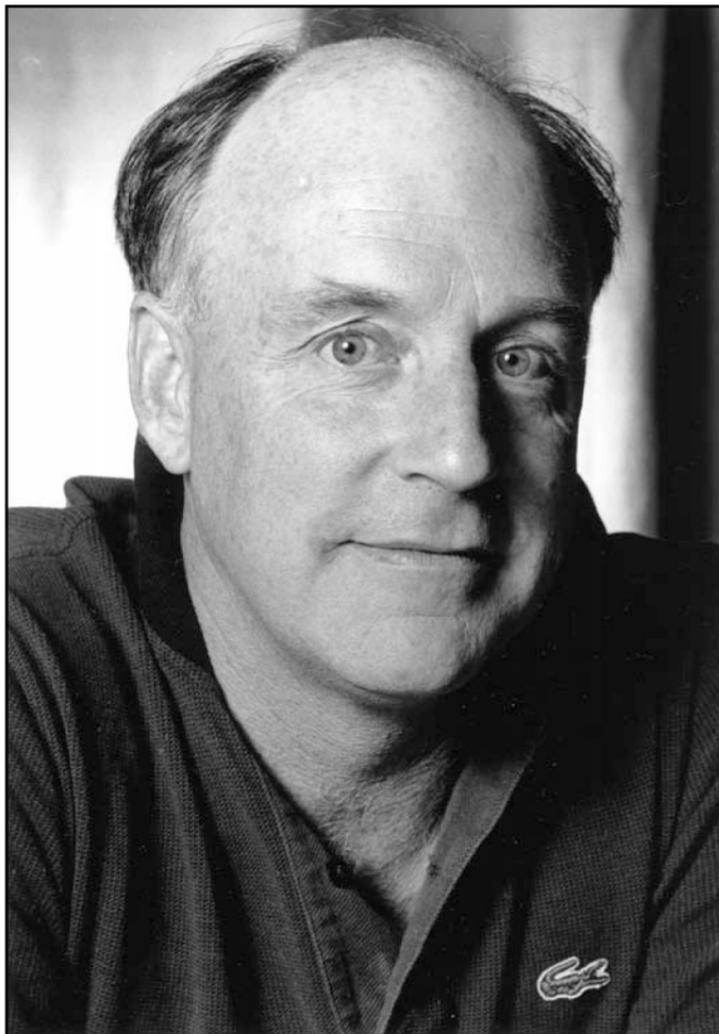


footprints

JOURNAL OF THE MELBOURNE DIOCESAN HISTORICAL COMMISSION

Volume 32, Number 2

December 2017



John Clarke 1948–2017

Photo used with permission from the ABC Library.

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* **Kindly note**

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Subscriptions

Subscriptions are \$16.50 (incl. GST) per year.

Individual copies are \$8.25 (incl. GST).

If your subscription is not up-to-date please send your payment to *Footprints*.

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ISSN 0015–9115

Front cover photo: © ABC Library

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EDITORIAL

It is with great pleasure that we now send out the December 2017 issue of *Footprints*. Our apologies that it is running late. It is late due to the most successful Goold Symposium which was held in conjunction with the University of Melbourne in February. The annual subscription invoice will be sent out with the June issue which we hope will be out June/July.

In this exciting December issue we have included three articles by John Clarke from when he was doing some family history. John discovered the story behind the creation of the marble bust of Mannix that sits in the Mannix Room of the Goold Museum. A tribute to John Clarke, a talented and lovely man is included on page 3. The Carmelites of St Teresa's Church, Clarendon Street, Dublin, have given permission to include the wonderful article about the funeral of Michael Davitt in 1906. This was written by the Carmelites and sent in by John Clarke. The Passionists of Templestowe have also given permission for us to include a very interesting observation from their Monastery Church in Dublin about the young men going to Confession on the night before the Easter Uprising.

Father Paul Gardiner SJ sent us an impressive commentary on the work of Father Ottavio Barsanti OFM. Sister Bernadette Wallis MSS has sent in a taste of an upcoming work on the letters of her uncle, Father John Wallis, who founded the Missionary Sisters of Service to cater for isolated families.

In our next issue, we hope to focus on the wonderful work of the Australian Research Council Grant Team who are looking at the work of Archbishop James Goold OSA.

Rachel Naughton
Editor of this edition

TRIBUTE TO JOHN CLARKE

I met John Clarke, the well-known New Zealand Actor, Comedian and Writer, in 2015. He had begun to research the Catholic side of his Irish family and this brought him to the Melbourne Diocesan Historical Commission. He derived great enjoyment from this research as he did with everything. John told us about the Irish born Architect, Thomas Kelly, who came to Australia in 1868. Thomas Kelly was related through his mother Jane (Fox) to the famous Irish artist, Kathleen Fox, who John had discovered was ‘a sort of cousin to my grandmother’.

Kathleen Fox was John’s favourite. He sent us a copy of the CD from Irish RTE Television, of the important interview with Kathleen. He was proud of her and described her, despite her age at the time, as strong, funny and a gifted story-teller, not to mention her obvious talents as a painter. John was delighted when I commented that it obviously runs in the family. He laughed and laughed. He was very generous like that. He could make you feel funny and witty even when you knew that it was really him. His conversations made you feel great, he was like a humour coach.

Our phone conversations were random and long. They would have gone on for an hour if I allowed them. ‘I must get back to work John.’ The topics ranged from jokes to poems. He told me that his relative, Kathleen, had been a more educated and intellectual Irish, not interested in the street fighting rebellions of history, that is until 1916. ‘Ah,’ I replied, a “terrible beauty is born” (WB Yeats). He was very excited by this quote and it was then that I discovered his passion for poetry and particularly for Yeats.

Clearly it wasn’t just me that John befriended. It seems he befriended everyone and anyone and he was genuine. He’d have an hour long conversation buying a newspaper. His warmth and engagement, his stimulating intellect, and of course that humour inherent in his face and voice, lifted the spirits of all who had the privilege of encountering him in their life. John was looking forward to seeing his articles in print in Footprints but before we had published them, he died unexpectedly, aged 68 on 9 April 2017. So now, in his memory, here they are as our tribute.

Rachel Naughton
Archivist, MDHC Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

THE MANNIX BUST

In discovering his relative, Kathleen Fox, John Clarke made a most significant contribution to the Goold Catholic Museum Collection. In the recording that he acquired from the Archives of RTE Ireland, Kathleen tells the story of the creation of the Mannix bust that features in the Collection. We had previously known nothing of its provenance.

When Kathleen was invited to come and do a portrait in oils of Daniel Mannix in 1920, she had to travel to London where Mannix had been obliged to stay while he was in England. He was under a form of house arrest with his movements restricted so that he could not travel to Ireland nor to any city in England that had a significant Irish population. He stayed at the accommodation for retired and visiting overseas clergy, provided by the Sisters of Nazareth in Hammersmith

According to Kathleen's story in the interview, she took the opportunity to first ask permission and then invite her friend, the sculptor, Albert Power, to come over and do a bust of Mannix at the same time. Kathleen's story about Albert, told by John in one of his articles, is very amusing. Albert first made the bust in clay. He took this back to Ireland and later created the bust in marble, completing it in 1922. The marble bust has engraved on the side, no doubt by the sculptor himself, *Ailbe de Paor 1922*, which is Albert's name in Gaelic. The marble bust was used by English sculptor, Nigel Boonham, as the model for the head of Mannix when, in 1999, he created the larger-than-life-sized bronze statue of Mannix that stands outside St Patrick's Cathedral, Melbourne. Nigel actually took a mould of the bust. John Clarke also discovered that the original clay bust is still with the Power family in Ireland.

Rachel Naughton, Archivist
MDHC Catholic Archdiocese of Melbourne

Bust of Archbishop Daniel
Mannix created by Irish
sculptor, Albert Power (Ailbe
de Paor) in London 1920.
John Clarke discovered the
background story.



KATHLEEN FOX INTERVIEW

John Clarke

Archivist's Note

In 2015 John Clarke had donated to the MDHC Archive, a CD of an interview with his Irish relative Kathleen Fox, the artist. John kindly supplied us with the images.

The Interview

The interview is about an hour long but in the middle the local priest arrives for afternoon tea and they leave the recorder on. Then it restarts formally and off they go again. It's a bit all over the place but it's definitely worth it. The interview was obviously done on tape, and when it was transferred to a new medium, the transfer stopped when the tape ran out. So twice or three times on the CD, the interview seems to be over rather abruptly. But don't turn it off. The tape was then rewound back past the stoppage then the recording to the new medium was continued. So it's all there. Just let it run.

The interview was done in Dublin in 1963 when Kathleen was 82 or 83. It was conducted by Nora Niland, a curator from the Yeats Museum in Co Sligo. The Yeats Museum had recently purchased Kathleen's well-known painting 'The Arrest. 1916'. The other painting they question her about is the portrait of Daniel Mannix. The painter Jack Yeats said this was the finest portrait in Ireland.

Kathleen Fox (1880–1963). Born in Dublin, studied drawing and painting at the Metropolitan School of Art, under William Orpen, acting for a spell as his assistant. In 1908, she won a gold medal for a work comprising a copper cup and 'baisse-taille' enamel, decorated with figures. Two years later, her oils, watercolours, enamels and stained glass panels were also well received at the school's 'Past and Present' exhibition. Leaving Dublin in 1911, she took a studio in London before travelling to Paris to continue her studies. While away, she submitted works to the Royal Hibernian Academy, the first of over 80 submissions over the following 45 years. Returning to Dublin, she ventured into the violent scenes of the Uprising, capturing on canvas the arrest of Countess Markievicz at the College of Surgeons (The Arrest, 1916). Fox continued to exhibit at numerous venues including: The National Portrait Society's

1921 Exhibition, the Walker Art Gallery, Liverpool, the New English Art Club, the Royal Society of Portrait Painters, the Society of Women Artists, the Royal Academy and the Oireachtas. In her later years, she also exhibited at the Dawson Gallery, Dublin and the Contemporary Irish Exhibition at Aberystwyth. Kathleen Fox died in Milltown, Dublin, at the age of 83. Examples of her work are in the Crawford Art Gallery; the Hugh Lane Gallery, Dublin; the Limerick City Gallery of Art; the Yeats Museum and The Model and Niland Centre, Sligo.

Kathleen married Lt Pym during the First World War and they had a daughter in 1918. A month later Pym was killed in action.

Other people referred to include:

Constance and Casimir Markievicz

Albert Power. Irish sculptor and contemporary and friend of Kathleen.

Willie and Patrick Pearse. Brothers, both arrested and shot in Easter 1916.

Joseph Plunkett. Arrested and shot.

Grace Gifford. Plunkett's wife (married in Kilmainham Gaol the night before he was shot) and Kathleen's friend and model.

Kathleen's brother (Major Sinn Fein) was Lt Col Charles Vincent Fox DSO, Henley single sculls champion, first British officer to escape from Germany during WW1 and get all the way back to England.

Kathleen's brother-in-law was Lt Col John Frederick MacKay VC.

Lady Scott was Kathleen Bruce, sculptor and widow of Robert Falcon Scott.

Frank Rigney became a well known illustrator in the US.

Paintings referred to include:

The Arrest, 1916

The Ruins of the Four Courts

Portrait of Daniel Mannix

Those of Yesterday

Archivist's Note

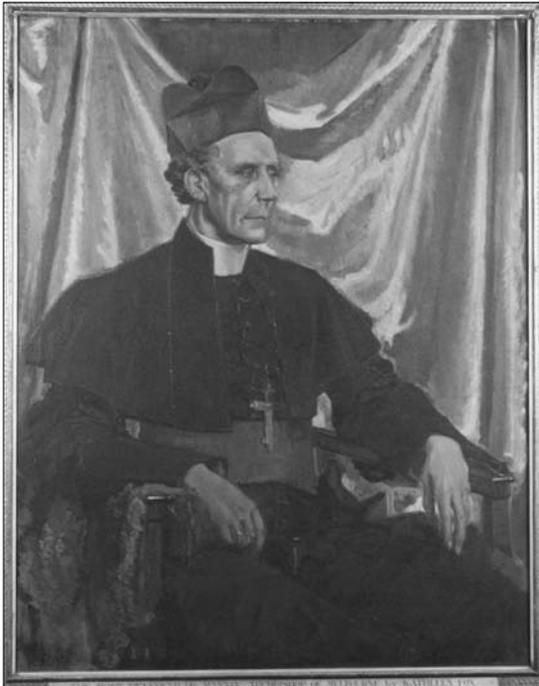
The following images appeared in John's article. We believe that he would have obtained them from the Internet. *The Arrest of Countess Markiewicz* 1916 and *The Ruins of the Four Courts* do appear online. However, we could not find any mention of the portrait of *Daniel Mannix* nor *Those of Yesterday*. We could not find any contacts to ask permission to use the paintings, so we have decided to use small black and white images of them to illustrate John's article as he did.



(Above): The Arrest 1916

(Below): The Ruins of the Four Courts





(Left): Portrait of Daniel Mannix

(Below): Those of Yesterday



KATHLEEN'S STORY

John Clarke

Like a great many other people who should be fixing the spouting or getting the house rewired, I'm working on a family history project. In this context a relative in Ireland recently sent me an interview recorded in 1963 with Kathleen Fox the Irish painter, who was a sort of cousin of my grandmother. The interview is conducted by Nora Niland, a curator at the Yeats Museum in Sligo and it focuses on two of Kathleen's works in particular. One is a painting of the arrest of Constance Markievicz in Easter 1916, which the Yeats Museum had purchased from the artist. The other is Kathleen's portrait of Daniel Mannix, which Jack Yeats regarded as the finest portrait in Ireland. Kathleen was 83 when the interview was recorded. She has a very clear voice, an engaging personality and a gift for story-telling.

In the Easter of 1916, she was teaching at the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art when she heard there was 'a rising', so she left the art school and walked down to St Stephens Green to see what was happening. As she approached the College of Surgeons her painter's eye was caught by a large area of yellow colour in the street, surrounding a small streak of dark green. As she moved closer, she realised the yellow was the khaki of British troops and the green was the small Irish citizen army, who were being brought out of the College, under arrest. The central figure in this group was Constance Markievicz, whom Kathleen knew from the art school. She also knew Willie Pearse who was a sculptor, and his brother Patrick Pearse and Joseph Plunkett, who was the fiancée of another of her art school friends, Grace Gifford. Within a few days of the arrest sixteen of the men were executed in Kilmainham jail. Willie and Patrick and Joseph and the others were all among the dead. Grace Gifford somehow talked her way into the jail and she and Joseph Plunkett were married the night before he was shot.

Like Constance and Grace, Kathleen was from an educated and comfortable background and until the Uprising and its shocking aftermath, she had little interest in politics. As W B Yeats famously pointed out, however, the Easter Uprising changed everything.

'I write it out in a verse –

*MacDonagh and MacBride
And Connolly and Pearse
Now and in time to be,
Wherever green is worn,
Are changed, changed utterly:
A terrible beauty is born.'*

What had seemed like the subject for a painting with its colours and contrasts, quickly became in Kathleen's mind a subject of historical and political importance. Working in great secrecy over the next weeks and months, she hired models and made studies for a large painting of the arrest. Dublin was by this time in full rebellion and British reinforcements had arrived with instructions to suppress any expression of Irish independence. At the risk of arrest and the possible confiscation of the painting, Kathleen completed the work in her private studio and arranged for it to be taken out of the country, to New York. Nearly thirty years later the painting was returned to Ireland and it remains, along with Kathleen's painting of the Ruins of the Four Courts building after it had been blown up, one of the significant works painted during the Rising.

By 1920 Kathleen had built a fine reputation and had a studio in London, where she was approached and asked to paint a portrait of Archbishop Mannix. The situation was slightly unusual. Mannix would not come to the studio and had in fact not intended to be in London at all. The ship on which he was travelling to Ireland had been intercepted by two British destroyers and he had been taken off and removed to England. The British government didn't much like Mannix. He had campaigned against two conscription referenda in Australia during the war and both had been defeated.

Kathleen was delighted to do the portrait and was keen to share the opportunity with her friend, the sculptor Albert Power. So she contacted him and invited him to come over the following day and do a bust of Mannix while she was doing the portrait. Power slipped a few tools into his pocket and caught the boat to England and then the train to London, where Kathleen met him at Euston Station. He had no luggage and to her considerable surprise, he had no clay.

Although rather uncomfortable about doing so, Kathleen telephoned her friend Lady Scott, who was the widow of Robert Falcon Scott the explorer and one of the most prominent sculptors in Britain. She kindly agreed to supply what was required and Kathleen and Power went around

to her house in heavy rain to pick it up. They entered the house through a hallway in which were displayed many of Lady Scott's beautiful works, marble sculptures of prominent people, generals and great men. Power's critical eye fell on each statue as they passed and he commented; the nose was wrong here, the ears were wrong there. As Kathleen's embarrassment and discomfort became acute, she began to laugh and in fairly short order both she and Lady Scott had the giggles. The sight of the dripping wet little man having the effrontery to criticise the works of a friend upon whose kindness he was dependent, was ridiculous. As they left later that evening with a bucket of clay and some tools and equipment, Power turned to Lady Scott and asked 'Would you sign the bucket?' 'Would I what?' asked Lady Scott. 'Would you sign the bucket?' said Power. 'If you'd sign the bucket it'd be worth a lot of money.'

The following morning Kathleen Fox and Albert Power presented themselves at Nazareth House in Hammersmith and were ushered into a small room where they were introduced to Daniel Mannix. While Kathleen was trying to get the portrait done, she says Mannix was visited by every bishop in England and didn't sit still for a second. Later in her studio, Kathleen completed the work, which now hangs in the Municipal Gallery in Dublin.

Albert Power took his clay head of Mannix back to Dublin in a box, which he put in the corridor of the train. The train was full of British soldiers, who threw their kit on the box and sat on it and Power thought poor Mannix might be flattened by the time they got home. [He dared not ask them not to for fear they might ask him what it was and ask to look. If they knew it was Mannix in their midst, they may have thrown it out the window]. The model survived however, and back in his studio, Power made a superb head of Mannix in white marble, which was bought by Melbourne for £500. This head now sits in the Mannix Room of the Archdiocese Museum, appropriately enough, in Albert Street. The reason the work was not previously recognised as having been done by Albert Power is that on the side of the base, in small printing, are the words, Ailbe de Paor 1922. Ailbe de Paor is Albert Power, in Irish.

THOMAS ANTHONY KELLY

John Clarke

Thomas Anthony Kelly was born in Dublin, Ireland, in September 1840. He was the son of Thomas Hawkesworth Kelly and Jane (Fox) Kelly. Thomas Hawkesworth Kelly's parents were Henry Kelly and Margaret Hyland. Jane's were Antony Fox and Kate Crothy. Thomas was baptised at St Mary's Cathedral in Dublin on 24 September 1840. His parents and godparents were present. His godparents were Edward Fox, from his mother's family, and Ellen Kelly, his father's sister.

The Kellys, the Hylands, the Crothys and the Foxes were all old Irish families whose origins had been on what was once ancestral land but who, by the end of the C18th had been dispossessed and were among the educated, urban and mercantile families of Dublin. Henry Kelly was a lawyer, Thomas Hawkesworth Kelly was a senior government official, the publisher of the Gazette, the official record of Insolvent Debtors Court of Ireland. Jane Fox's father was Antony Fox, also a lawyer. Thomas Anthony Kelly had siblings: Michael Hawkesworth Kelly, George Kelly and Marie Kelly. Marie married a French writer and went to live in Paris and as her parents grew older they also moved to Paris where they died, Thomas Hawkesworth Kelly in 1869 and Jane (Fox) Kelly in 1878.

Thomas Anthony Kelly became an architect and in 1862 he entered the competition to design the Carlisle Bridge. On 10 July 1863 he was appointed supervising architect for the Royal Marine Hotel at Dun Laoghaire (*pictured*). He was 22 years old. At the same meeting John McCurdy was appointed chief architect¹. In 1864–5 Thomas entered the competition

to design the O'Connell monument and his address between 1864 and 1867 was 20 Lower Ormond Quay. The Royal Marine Hotel is still a magnificent building looking out over the sea at Dun Laoghaire, down the coast a few miles south of Dublin city.





This photograph of Thomas Anthony Kelly was taken in Dublin on 17 October 1867, not long before he left Ireland and arrived in Victoria, Australia, in 1868. At the time, Melbourne was being enriched by the gold deposits found in central Victoria and was one of the fastest growing colonial cities in the world. There was plenty of work for an architect with talent and energy. The Catholic Church in Victoria had been established by men from Dublin and Thomas may have known them. Over the next decade or so, he designed a number of churches and schools and his style is a significant aspect of Melbourne's early buildings. He

was a prominent member of the Australian Institute of Architects. He went to Sydney in 1882 to work there and although we don't know what happened to him after that, the book from which this information is drawn was published in 1889 and Kelly is spoken of as if still alive at that point.

In February 1873 Thomas Kelly married Catherine Bullen, in Melbourne. The marriage certificate² describes him as Thomas Anthony Kelly, 30, an architect, born in Dublin. The Bullens were well off and were also in the business of building and developing the great city. In 1845 Kate's father John Bullen had purchased two blocks of land on the beach at St Kilda (now in The Esplanade) and in 1873 a Memorial was signed by John's widow, Harriet, for the release of these properties for a dowry. It may be that these were wholly or in part, Kate Bullen's dowry.

Some brief history of the Catholic church in Victoria might help here. Significant British arrivals in Australia began in Tasmania and NSW, with convict settlements. When free European settlers arrived in Melbourne, then called the Port Philip Settlement, in the 1830s the Archbishop of Sydney appointed Patrick Bonaventure Geoghegan (from Dublin) to run the Catholic church in the Port Philip Settlement. The population of Port Philip in 1841 was 11,738 and the Catholics numbered 2,411. St Francis, the oldest surviving Catholic church in Victoria, was built in 1841. The

Diocese of Melbourne was created in 1848 with James Alipius Goold (from Cork) as its first bishop. Goold was about the age of Kelly's father. The Catholic population of the colony was 18,000 in 1851 and had grown to 88,000 by 1857 as a result of the gold rush. James Goold (*pictured*) was also instrumental in setting up many Catholic schools in the diocese and in introducing to the diocese several religious orders devoted to education and works of charity, including the Jesuits, the Christian Brothers, Sisters of Mercy, Good Shepherd Nuns, Presentation Sisters and Little Sisters of the Poor. When



Goold was appointed Bishop of Melbourne in 1848, St Francis' Church became the cathedral church of the new diocese. Construction of a new church on Eastern Hill in East Melbourne commenced in 1858, to be called St Patrick's Cathedral. Construction of the cathedral was not completed until 1939. Until the mid-twentieth century, the Catholics of the archdiocese were almost all Irish or of Irish origin. The priesthood was exclusively Irish until the early part of the twentieth century, when training of native born priests began.

The gold rush of the 1850s and 60s enriched Victoria to the point where, by the late C19th Melbourne was the biggest colonial city in the world. One of its important early architects was Thomas Anthony Kelly.

The Bullens

The Bullen family, into which Kelly married, was successful but problematic. John Bullen and Harriet Taylor had built their fortune in Melbourne property. John was named after his father, who had come from Woolton, just outside Liverpool. He was a distiller and he operated from premises on the corner of Bourke and Elizabeth Streets. In 1848 he bought a 145 acre rural property to the north of the city. He named it Woolton and the house was where the clubhouse now is at the Northcote Golf Course.

Kate was one of ten children born to John Bullen and Harriet Taylor. The children were John (died in infancy), Harriet, Hugh, Lucy (died aged 3), George, Fred (Jerry Drummond's grandfather), Kate (born 9 March 1846 and brought up at Woolton), Mary, John Bonaventure and Lucy. John Snr was on the committee of the Melbourne Building Society and represented Gipps Ward on the Melbourne City Council from 1846–49. He died in 1864.

The Fitzpatricks

There was more drama with the family Harriet jnr had married into. She married Peter Andrew Charles O'Farrell, a solicitor. Among other things, her husband Peter was legal advisor to Dr Goold, Catholic Bishop of Melbourne. In 1863 it became public knowledge that St Patrick's College, East Melbourne was unable to pay its debts. Anonymous letters to the press made derogatory remarks reflecting on O'Farrell, who believed these to be the work of Michael John Page Hanify, a clerk of Petty Sessions. O'Farrell sued Hanify for libel. The case was heard before Sir Redmond Barry, who later presided in the matter of Ned Kelly. O'Farrell lost the case and was ruined financially and emotionally.

In 1868 Peter's brother Henry James O'Farrell made the first attempt ever made in Australia on the life of a member of the British royal family when he attempted to assassinate Prince Alfred, the Duke of Edinburgh. He was tried and hanged. In 1882 Peter Andrew Charles O'Farrell attempted to assassinate Archbishop Goold. This was the end. He left the city, the state, the country and the hemisphere. He later died in France.

Significant events in the lives of the Bullen family include a celebrated court case involving the ownership of land on the north-west corner of Bourke and Elizabeth Streets. The other principal litigant was T. A'Beckett and after the case was lost in the Supreme Court in 1861, John Bullen appealed. Costs were awarded against him and the total cost was reckoned to be in excess of £800. In 1863 John appealed to the Privy Council and lost again.

Thomas Kelly's Work

These events must have presented great difficulties for Thomas Kelly. He depended in large part on the Catholic church for his work and living and he knew many of the figures involved. He designed part of Goold's house. Goold commissioned him to build more than a dozen churches and Goold spoke when their foundation stones were laid.

After their marriage Thomas and Kate (*pictured here in middle years*) lived at Vermont Villa, Jolimont Road, East Melbourne and Thomas had professional rooms at 12 Beehive Chambers, 100 Elizabeth Street.



He appears in the directory of architects for a while after 1873 but then disappears³. At this time things went very bad for Anthony's business. He guaranteed the credit of a building contractor, and was caught with the debt. He lost the lot.

Reports of such matters appeared in the newspapers, of which *The Argus* was the biggest and most widely circulated. Through these years Thomas Kelly was mentioned in reports of his financial troubles and in reports of the design, construction and official openings of churches and schools.

Some of these reports follow:

NEW INSOLVENTS.

***The Argus* Tuesday 14 October 1873**

Thomas Anthony Kelly, of Melbourne, architect, compulsory sequestration. Causes of insolvency – Having become guarantee for a contractor who had since become insolvent.

Liabilities, £904 0s 10d; assets, £247 10s; deficiency, £747 10s 10d. Mr. Goodman,

In November 1873, this appeared in *The Argus*:

An examination was held in the estate of T. A. Kelly, of Melbourne, architect. Mr. Woolcott appeared for the assignee and creditors, and Mr. M'Kean for the insolvent, who was examined. He said that in March last he obtained certain goods from McLean Bros, and from Robertson and Moffatt. Many of those goods were included in a bill of sale which he gave to his brother-in-law; indeed generally they were all included in that bill. On the 4th July, all the goods mentioned in the bill of sale were in his house, and they were all in his house yet, being left with his wife, who had never given up possession and use of them. He paid Wallack Brothers £267 on the 3rd or 4th July because they had got judgment against him, and put bailiffs in possession of his goods. The meeting and examination closed.

***The Argus* 14 February 1874**

The release motion (a device whereby his estate is released to the court for dispersal in the matter of his debts) in the estate of T. A. Kelly, of Melbourne, architect, lapsed, there being no attendance.

***The Argus* Tuesday 4, 1874**

A special meeting of the Victorian Institute of Architects was held yesterday at the Melbourne Athena-urn. Mr. Lloyd Tayler, the vice-president, was in the chair, and there were present Messrs. M. Flannagan, George Wharton, W. H. Ellerker, N. Billing, T. A. Kelly, J.T. Conlon, P. Matthews (lion, secretary). The minutes of the last meeting were read

and confirmed. Mr. G. J. Inskip, of Stawell, architect, was nominated as a member, and Messrs. G. J. Figgis, of Ballarat, and W. Keals of Auckland, New Zealand, as associates of the institute. Letters were read from the president, Sir Redmond Barry, Mr. H. A. Blair, and Campbell and Co., of Melbourne, and Mr. John Gordon, architect, Albury; also a letter from Mr. W. Pie, relative to a sample of polished and rough rimu, a New Zealand red pine, produced. The propositions standing in the names of Mr. Sydney Smith and Mr. N. Billing were put and carried, and a deputation consisting of Messrs. Lloyd Tayler, N. Billing, George Wharton, John Flanagan, Thomas Watts, W. T. Gore, and the lion, secretary, with power to add to their number, Vi OB appointed to wait upon the Minister of Education to request that the designing and carrying out of the building of state schools be placed under the direction of the architectural profession, as was done by the old Board of Education.

The Argus Monday May 4th 1874

The ceremony of opening St. Monica's Church, a Roman Catholic place of worship just completed at Footscray, was performed yesterday by the Very Rev. J. Fitzpatrick D.D., vicar-general, who officiated in the absence from the colony of the Right Rev. Dr. Goold. The church is a plain bluestone building, capable of accommodating about 300 persons. A description of it has already appeared in these columns. The architect was Mr. T. A. Kelly. The cost of the building was about £1,500. It is anticipated that additions will require to be made in the course of a few years, but the accommodation now provided will be adequate for the present wants of the district. A large congregation assembled to witness the opening ceremony. Mass was read by the Rev. Father M'Gillicuddy, and the dedication sermon was preached by the Rev. J. F. Corbott. The musical arrangements were superintended by Mr. Albert Richardson. An efficient choir was present. The principal vocalists were Madame Florence Wekey, Mrs. Richardson, Mr. Charles Beverley, Miss Richardson, and Mr. J. B. Whitty. The musical service comprised the Kyrie, Gloria, and Sanctus, from Mozart's Twelfth Mass, and the Credo, and Agnus Dei from Haydn's No. 1. The offertory piece was Curschman's 'Te Prego' which was sung by Madame Wekey, Mrs. Richardson, and Mr. Beverley.

No death notice exists for Thomas in NSW Pioneers listings or in NSW BDM listings. I could not find him in professional or residential listings in Sydney in 1882 or 1889.

Then this appeared, describing Sir Thomas Fitzgerald, a famous surgeon:

Sir Thomas Fitzgerald was qualified in the old country, before he came to Australia. His father was a graduate of the Dublin University, who

conducted a classical school before he accompanied to, or joined his son in, Victoria. Both of Sir Thomas's parents died in Melbourne. "Tom" got his general literary education from his own father. It is interesting to observe how school-fellows were scattered over the world after they left school, and how they often meet afterwards in the queerest and most unexpected ways, and under wholly different circumstances. Two of Tom Fitzgerald's schoolfellows at his father's academy met Tom and each other long years after, away in Melbourne. One of these was Mr. C. A. Tracy, son of a Doctor of Music, and himself a man of some note in the colonies, who, for many years was organist of one of the Melbourne cathedrals, and died the other day in Sydney. The other was Mr. T. A. Kelly, an ecclesiastical architect, who designed a score of churches in and around Melbourne, and is now in Sydney. The last time I saw Mr. Kelly was in Pitt Street, Sydney, when, curiously enough, Sir Thomas Fitzgerald was one of the subjects of our conversation, and Kelly told me with great glee how he persistently and consistently licked' Fitz, in their French studies at Fitz's own father's school.

A brief biography of Kelly⁴ was prepared by George Tibbits in the mid-1980s as part of a project to record the life and careers of leading Melbourne architects, and which was intended to form the basis of a publication similar to that finally got together by Goad and Willis. This read as follows:

KELLY, Thomas A. (f.1869–1894) architect, worked in Melbourne between at least 1869 and 1873. Nothing is known about Kelly apart from his substantial body of work. Most of his commissions were for the Catholic Church and they included many suburban churches such as St Mary's, Williamstown, S.S. Peter and Paul, South Melbourne, and St Augustine's Church, West Melbourne, and some regional churches in Echuca, Colac and Geelong. He also designed St Patrick's College in East Melbourne and St Francis Xavier College, Kew. Kelly's secular buildings were few and small in scale. They included shops, cottages and stores. A notice advertising for tenders for a school in Gundagai, NSW, under the name T.A. Kelly of Sydney may also have been the same architect. This is possible as he only appeared in the Melbourne *Directory* between 1869 and 1879. In 1869 Kelly was practising at 83 Swanston Street but by May the same year had moved to O'Connors Chambers at 100 Elizabeth St, where he stayed until 1875, and then moved to the Beehive Chambers in Elizabeth St. During this time he was living in Neptune St St Kilda, in 1869, Punt Rd, Richmond, in 1871 and Vernon Villa, Jolimont Rd, Jolimont, from 1872 until 1879.

Sources: *Australian Architectural Index*, University of Melbourne; E. Sideridis, *Architectural Biography: Thomas A Kelly*, Investigation Project 1981, B. Arch., University of Melbourne. Thomas 1894.

The above indicates that Thomas Kelly may have died in 1894 (1869 was the beginning of Kelly's period in Australia, not the date of his birth).

During the 1870s, Thomas's uncle, Edward Fox, and his cousins Ned, William, Charlie and Frank also emigrated from Dublin and for a few years they all lived in Melbourne. And although they later went to New Zealand, Charlie (Charles Aloysius) Fox ended up returning to Melbourne and his daughter Mabbo Fox remembered visiting Thomas Kelly and Kate Bullen on a farm called Woolton, which was on land where the Northcote golf-course is now.

Kate (Bullen) Kelly outlived her husband Tom. She later lived at 7 Burwood Avenue, Camberwell. She travelled extensively with her sister Lucy and is listed in the 1912 Electoral Roll as Kate Hawksworth Kelly. At the time of her death she was normally resident at 'Kooloora', Embling Rd., Malvern and her death certificate, 10 August 1919, states that she is Thomas Anthony's widow and that she has no issue. Kate died at a private hospital in Redan St in St Kilda in 1919. In her will, she left items from her household to a large number of beneficiaries, including members of Thomas' family, Charles Fox the younger, Patrick, Kitty, Mab and Anthony.

Catherine Kelly, nee Bullen, is buried in Brighton Cemetery. Her husband Thomas Anthony Kelly is not buried there. Interestingly, her name is again registered as Kate Hawkesworth Kelly, which was not her name according to either her marriage certificate or her death certificate but appears to be a name in her husband's family. Michael Hawkesworth Kelly was her brother-in-law, Thomas Hawkesworth Kelly was her father-in-law.

Kelly's Buildings

Buildings listed in the microfiche index of Victorian architects under Thomas A or Thomas Aquinas Kelly, include the following. The projects are listed at the date of their inception and it's not always clear exactly what work Thomas Kelly did.

1854 St Mary of the Angels, Geelong

(Kelly designed the present church, which replaced the original wooden building of 1854.) St Mary of the Angels is one of the finest churches in Victoria, officially recognised by the National Trust of Victoria and the Historical Buildings Council.

On 27 November 1842, a small wooden chapel was erected on Geelong's

Yarra Street, thanks to donations from the congregation. This modest hut was one of Geelong's first churches. The town of Geelong had only been officially proclaimed four years earlier, the area being pioneered by squatters. The town of Geelong was in its infancy and, much like the rest of the state, still a rugged place to live. In the next few years an influx of Irish immigrants swelled the district's Catholic population to around 1,000. This meant that the wooden chapel was simply too small, so the generous congregation set about raising the money for a new church. In 1846 the foundations for a stone church were laid on the present site.

The foundation stone was laid by Fr P.B. Geoghegan and the church was completed the following year. Thanks to the gold rush, Geelong continued to prosper and the population swelled. In 1852 the number of Catholics in Geelong had grown to almost 4000, so it was decided that the congregation needed an even larger church. This new church was not going to be just a place of worship, but a building that would do justice to the name of St Mary and one which would serve as a striking icon for Geelong.

The plans drawn up by Messrs Dowden and Ross called for a magnificent cathedral-like building, 200 feet long, 130 feet wide and costing 40,000 pounds. It was to feature a giant bluestone spire, flying buttresses and an exquisite rose window. The bluestone construction would be complemented with the finest Barrabool sandstone quarried from the local hills. So in 1854, amid widespread celebrations, the foundation stone of the new St Mary of the Angels Church was laid. However in 1856, work on the new church ceased, turning the grand vision of Dowden and Ross into nothing more than an eyesore for the community.

After seventeen years, the arrival of Archdeacon Slattery to Geelong in 1871 was the catalyst for work to commence on the new church and in 1872 the new St Mary of the Angels was dedicated. Despite the fact that the spires were not yet installed, it was an impressive structure that dominated the local landscape. It seated over 1000 people and was lauded in the local press for its artistry.

1854 St Patrick's College, Grey and Landsdowne streets

Kelly did later work.

1869 St Peter and St Paul's, Emerald Hill

The foundation stone of the first stage of the current church, built to hold 600 people, was laid in 1869 and the church was completed in 1872. The second stage was built in 1879.

“St Peter and Paul's is an imposing bluestone church built in two stages, the first of which was designed by T. A. Kelly and built in 1869–72, and the second was the transepts and sanctuary of 1912–13.

The western facade is somewhat French in character and incorporates an elaborate traceried rose window, portal and tower base, and triangular nave clerestory windows comparable with those of St. Mary's Geelong, also designed by Kelly. The eastern sections, also vaulted in plaster, are of a simpler style than the nave, and incorporate carved marble fittings and attractive stained glass but have been diminished by recent liturgical changes." From Miles Lewis (ed), *Victorian churches; their origins, their story and their architecture*, National Trust of Australia (Victoria), Melbourne, 1991.

1869 St Brigid's, Nicholson St, Nth Fitzroy

In 1869 it was proposed to build the church. The land was a two acre grant for the building of a church and a school. The money to build was then subscribed. Kelly did the first part of the church in 1869 and Goold laid the foundation stone for the building which was first used as a school. It was made of native bluestone and done in the gothic style. The nave was 60 feet long and when completed it would house 400 people and would cost £1200. This was not expensive. The original section, which cost L800, can be seen near the spiral stairs to the choir loft. The original church ended at a point FS+ mark which can be seen behind the high altar on the bluestone outside. In 1872 the chapel was completed. In 1873, when Fitzroy was growing very quickly, the chancel was begun. By 1879 the population had doubled and with T A Kelly as architect the walls were built. The presbytery has a photo of construction.

1869 74 Powlett St, East Melbourne

(House is no longer there.)

1869 He shifts to O'Connors Chambers, 100 Elizabeth St, later known as Beehive Chambers.

1869 St Augustine's, Bourke St West

The original land grant of 2 acres was made to the Church in 1850 in the area bounded by Spencer and Collins Streets. The first St Augustine's was a timber building erected on the site in 1853 and was the third church in the City of Melbourne. The building of the present church commenced in 1869 with the foundation stone being laid by Bishop Goold on 5 December 1869. The architect for the church was Mr T A Kelly and it was constructed by Messrs Reed and Stewart. The sanctuary and sacristies were added in 1884, and the church tower was completed in its present form in 1929. The church is set back approximately 20 metres from Bourke Street; frontage constructed in decorated Gothic style of axed bluestone with sandstone dressings. The entrance has Malmsbury stone and is surmounted by a crocketed gable. The exterior has the appearance of a triple nave with the gabled roofs of the aisles and

nave springing from the same level. The tower with caps and finials in cut bluestone is the most prominent feature of the Bourke Street. In the interior, the central nave is separated by the aisles with cast iron columns with moulded ribs and the arched cast iron spandrels are filled with ornamental scroll patterns. Above these spandrels an open ivy pattern frieze extends the entire length of the nave on either side. The timber ceiling and closely spaced timber trusses are varnished. The windows include stained glass by Ferguson and Urie.

1869 St Mary's, Williamstown

(next to St Mary's school)

1869 Church at Abbotsford Convent

(This chapel has been beautifully restored by Steve Pelly, a Melbourne builder.)

1870 St Luke's, North Fitzroy

1871 Three brick cottages in Johnston St, East Collingwood

1871 RC Presbytery, Vacluse, Richmond

(The original four rooms downstairs and four rooms upstairs were Kelly's. The cloisters and alcove have been added since).

1872 Warehouse at Seymour

1872 New college (Xavier) at Kew

1872-83 New church at Colac

1872 Church of Immaculate Conception, Collingwood

This is actually in Glenferrie Rd, Hawthorn.

1872 Buildings at Lancefield

1872 Convent and Presbytery at Kilmore

OPENING: THE KILMORE CONVENT. Newspaper Report:

On Sunday last. The above Convent, which has recently been erected and nicely furnished was solemnly opened by His Grace the Archbishop of Melbourne, assisted by the Revs. Father. Kelly, S.J. Farrelly and Quinn. The building, only the first wing of which is completed, was designed by Mr. T. A. Kelly, architect, under whose superintendence also the work was carried out, in a highly creditable manner, by Mr. Reid, who may be now designated a local contractor – at all events he may be described as an expeditious and energetic one. After the early Masses were celebrated, His Grace offering up the sacrifice, High Mass was offered up at eleven o'clock, the Rev. D. Quinn being celebrant, his chanting and the responses of the choir being very impressive. The choir of the Nicholson-street Convent sung the Mass, in a manner solemn and soul-stirring, and Father

Kelly, in the absence of Father O'Malley, preached the sermon on the occasion, an able, exhaustive one, very pertinent to the occasion. At the conclusion of the Mass a procession of the girls attending the Convent school, numbering about one hundred and tastefully dressed in white, preceded His Grace from the church to the Convent, at the same time singing a litany with much taste. Arriving at the Convent His Grace performed the solemn service of opening the place, after which most of the visitors from a distance were invited to the schoolroom, where Father Farelly, with his customary thoughtfulness, had provided something substantial in the way of refreshments. As many of the visitors who filled the handsome church, had come from Lancefield, Pyalong, Darraweit guim, Beveridge, Broadford and other districts, the refreshments were acceptable. At the conclusion of the repast Father Farelly thanked those assembled for their cordial co-operation that day, and Mr. Doherty of Hughes Creek, by way of response, spoke in strong terms of the works Father Farrelly had done on the mission, not the least one of which was the one which had been so favorably opened, that day. Admission to the eleven o'clock Mass was by ticket, and we believe the sum realised cannot be far short of £15. The good nuns will have a handsome balance in hand with, which to commence operations. Accommodation is now to be had for at least a dozen boarders, and the class-room is really nicely filled up. The work inaugurated under such favorable auspices is, from an educational point of view, calculated to confer an inestimable benefit on the community, and our local clergymen may really be congratulated on the success of their efforts. Another feature in connection, with, the opening, and one which should be mentioned, was the fact that very many members of other denominations attended to give their countenance and support to so worthy a cause.

1872 Wooden buildings, Little Collins St

1873 Warehouse at Stephen St

1873 Church at Gisborne

1873 Shop and dwelling, King St, West Melbourne

1874 School at Heathcote

1877 Sacred Heart at Abbotsford Convent

Built in 1877 and was designed by Thomas Kelly, who was the pre-eminent architect in the 1870s. Mr Kelly's trademark was the use of spare Gothic forms, with distinctive roof forms and buttressed walls. The building was constructed around a courtyard, so in the main, the 'penitents' who were housed here were constantly contained within its form.

The main function of Sacred Heart was to provide a space where the inmates of the Magdalen Asylum could be housed. The Magdalen Asylum was a refuge space for women who had been placed in the Sisters' care through the Courts or the police.

From the Sisters' perspective, the girls who were here were provided with 'caretaking, education and reformation of those who ... had led an irregular and abandoned life or had been living as common prostitutes or thieves.' The majority of these women worked in the industrial laundry (which provided key income for the site) or they operated the industrial sewing machines on the top floor of the building which was known as the Granary Room. Others worked in one of the two separate ironing rooms located on the ground floor.

Over the years, various changes were undertaken within the building. In the mid-1940s the majority of the many bathrooms were renovated and bright coloured tiles and multi-coloured terrazzo was installed. In the 1950s and 60s further alterations were made to improve the inmates' quality of life.

1894 Contract for school in Gundagai

A PhD thesis on Kelly and his work exists at Melbourne University: *Thomas A. Kelly*, by E. Sideridis, 1981. This is authoritative on his work but says little about his life.

Endnotes

- ¹ *Dictionary of Irish Architects 1720–1940*.
- ² There was also a notice in *The Argus* 26 February 1873:
KELLY—BULLEN.—On the 20th inst., at the residence of the bride, by the Rev. C. O'Hea, Thomas Anthony Kelly, architect, Melbourne, to Catherine, second daughter of the late John Bullen, Esq., of Woolton, Northcote.
- ³ There is a death cert for a Thos Kelly, aged 59, in 1906. It is number 8120 in the Victorian register. I checked this and it's not the right man. This Thomas had 5 children and was married to Mary.
- ⁴ Kindly provided by Allan Willingham, architectural historian, Melbourne.

Michael Davitt story sent in by John Clarke. Reproduced with permission from the OCD Carmelites, St Teresa's Church, Dublin.

VOICES FROM THE PAST ...

MICHAEL DAVITT (1846–1906)

AND

**ST TERESA'S CHURCH
CLARENDON STREET, DUBLIN**

Fr F. McCormack OCD



Our Church in Clarendon Street has seen many distinguished visitors, memorable events and huge crowds, in its long history. The event which drew perhaps the biggest crowd of all was the funeral of the great Michael Davitt in May 1906. Within a two-year period (1879–81) Davitt achieved what to previous generations had seemed an impossible dream. As charismatic ‘Father of the Land League’ he so welded together the tenant farmers of Ireland as to bend and smash forever the yoke of unjust landlordism, placing in the tenants’ hands a new and bloodless weapon – ‘collective passive resistance’.

First used in 1880 to punish the harsh Captain James Cunningham Boycott (Estate Agent of the great absentee Lord Erne), the case made newspaper headlines worldwide and gave a new chilling word to universal language ...

Though long years in penal servitude had failed to break Davitt’s health and spirit, on Wednesday May 30th 1906 he was destined to die quietly in Dublin after a brief illness – blood infection from a tooth abscess gone wrong! He was only 60, and it seemed somehow an unfitting end for so great a man, who as a child-worker (1857) in the ‘dark satanic mills’ of Haslingden, Lancashire, had his right arm eaten by a great satanic machine and yet lived to tell the tale, surviving an immense loss of blood and infections without number ...

Contrary to the popular wish, he had given strict orders in his Will for a private funeral. He spelt out the details further in the few days before his death, obviously remembering some incident in the distant past when

he made the odd request that his body should be brought to the church at the unusually late hour of 9 pm, and without advance public notice. So it was that, in the late evening of May 31st (Thursday), his coffin was borne quietly to Clarendon Street, for all the world like the funeral of the ‘common man’ for whom in life he had such profound respect. But great crowds seemed to appear as from nowhere, and the streets close to the church were packed. From then until Saturday morning, countless people filed past the coffin which the Friars placed before the High Altar. The newspapers agreed that between noon and 6 pm on Friday alone, over 20,000 people had filed past, entering by the ‘sanctuary door’ and passing down the church. Thousands of floral wreaths, many telegraphed from all over the world, had to be stored in the sacristy and reception rooms. Solemn Office of the Dead and Requiem Mass was celebrated on Friday and Saturday morning. Finally, at 10 am on Saturday June 2nd the funeral procession left the church for Broadstone Station, for burial in his native County Mayo, followed again by vast silent crowds. At all the intervening railways stations on the way to Mayo the funeral was greeted by similar silent crowds and murmured prayers. There was a sense of deliberate anti-climax, a lack of public display, which no one wanted but everyone knew was dictated by the deceased ...

Davitt’s decision to be buried from St Teresa’s caused great surprise, even to our own friars, his international stature giving him the right to a public funeral at the Pro-Cathedral with the highest honours of Church and State. He hadn’t belonged

to any of our Sodalities or the revered Third Order – indeed he wasn’t a devout or devotional Catholic in the accepted sense. Rather the Spirit had filled him with an irrepressible burning drive to ‘break unjust fetters ... /and let the oppressed go free/and break every yoke/to share his bread with the hungry/ and shelter the homeless poor, to clothe the man



Michael Davitt seated outside what has been a temporary prison for Fenians in Fremantle, Western Australia, in 1895.

he saw to be naked ... ' (Is. 58.7). In short, the reason he chose St Teresa's for his funeral was simple and highly personal: almost thirty years earlier, an unknown Fenian friend whom he loved dearly, an excommunicate, had died suddenly in Dublin and the community of St Teresa's had managed to interpret the current Canon Law on Excommunication so as to ensure him a dignified passing.

The strange circumstances were as follows. In the dark evening of Sunday January 13, 1878, following their release on parole after many years of penal servitude, a group of four Fenians arrived at Kingstown Harbour, Dublin, on the ferry from England. Acclaimed as national heroes, they received a wildly enthusiastic reception from the assembled crowds, as bonfires blazed on the encircling hills and rockets streaked the night sky. The men were conveyed in triumph to the European Hotel, Bolton Street, where they were to stay for a few days. Among the group, in addition to the 31-year-old Davitt on his first visit to Dublin, was one Charles McCarthy, to all appearances an old and stooped man – though his calendar age was but 44! The special-category status of political prisoners did not exist in those days. In fact the opposite was true, and Irish rebels were systematically singled out for severe and humiliating treatment. McCarthy was particularly vulnerable, as he had been a Colour-Sergeant in the British Army before espousing the nationalist cause, and had originally been sentenced to death for treason. Following commutation of sentence, he served his time in all the great convict prisons – Millbank, Dartmoor, Pentonville and Chatham, where despite a grave heart condition he had been denied medical care, while being required to complete his daily quota of stonebreaking. Now at last he was eager to return to his native Cork and the wife and family he had not seen for years. But on Tuesday January 15th, while assembling for a formal breakfast at Morrison's Hotel, Dawson Street, as the honoured guests of Charles Stuart Parnell, a distressed McCarthy suddenly called out to Davitt, who helped him to a sofa where he died in a few moments. While the police and Coroner were being summoned, his friends tried to take stock of the dreadful situation.

It was a most delicate and embarrassing development. Though the local Church authorities (acting in accordance with universal Canon Law forbidding all secret societies, bound by solemn oath, and pledged to overthrow the State), had officially condemned Fenianism and declared its members excommunicate, the great mass of the Irish people, at that time

among the most devout of world Catholics, seemed totally oblivious to the condemnation, and continued to view the Fenians as champions of the exploited poor. So there had been painful confrontation, always damaging to the Church. Some years previously (1860) at the death of a prominent Fenian, the Archbishop of Dublin not only refused the Pro-Cathedral for the funeral but forbade any priest of the archdiocese to take part in it. Nevertheless there was a splendid parade and open-air ceremony in Glasnevin Cemetery, in the presence of many thousands of laity.

Understandably then, Davitt, Parnell and the friends of Charles McCarthy at Morrison's Hotel, were at a loss what to do, and called around to nearby St Teresa's for advice. The Vicar Provincial, Fr Edward Holland, skirted a fresh confrontation between the Archbishop and the 'sensus fidelium' by offering to receive the excommunicate body, not in the church itself but in the 'Confraternity Room'. Long since demolished, this was an oratory or hall which opened from the main church. While the ordinary people considered it a sort of side-chapel, it was in fact a separate entity attached to the Priory, and recognised by the friars as forming no part of the church. This valid distinction upheld the law on excommunicates, and saved the friars from a potential clash with the Archbishop and the Holy See.

Meanwhile McCarthy's body lay all day at the hotel, even in death a victim of bureaucratic red tape. Since he was still technically a prisoner at his death, many formalities had to be completed. About 5 pm the Coroner convened a jury of householders from Dawson Street, and declared the inquest open, so that the body could be viewed by the Court (as required by law) and formally identified. It was Davitt, reported as being 'deeply moved', who publicly identified the remains and answered questions. The inquest was then adjourned until the following day, to allow time for an immediate autopsy at the City Morgue. So it was that, about 9 pm on that dismal Tuesday evening, Davitt finally accompanied McCarthy's body from the Morgue to Clarendon Street ('in a single-horse hearse', a reporter noted pointedly), where the friars received it in the Confraternity Room. They then made ready to welcome the sorrowing widow and family, due to arrive from Cork at 10.15 pm on the last train. Ample time was allowed them in their vigil beside the body, and the church remained open till after midnight.

On Wednesday January 16th, the newspapers carried the story for the first time, noting 'inter alia' the arrival of the widow and family from

their home at 36 Cornmarket-Street, Cork. The news of the death brought great crowds to the church, especially in the evening when work ended at 6 pm, and the various Trade Unions rounded up their members and arrived in force. The Confraternities (Third Orders) of the City churches had arranged to sing the Office of the Dead at 8 pm, but so great were the crowds that the leader did not ‘intone’ until twelve midnight. Afterwards Fr Patrick Kelly OCD addressed the congregation, and is quoted as saying: ‘The solemn religious ceremony is now at an end. We have tonight honoured the deceased because he suffered a great deal for this country. That is all I shall say now, on account of the lateness of the hour, but I have one request to make which I hope one and all will comply with. Tonight no one can see the remains, so I ask you to return to your homes peaceably and orderly’.

Next day (Thursday) the newspapers carried for the first time extensive verbatim reports of the long Inquest just completed, with detailed evidence of the appalling maltreatment suffered by the deceased at Dartmoor and Chatham, where he was refused any rest or treatment for his heart condition. Though the State sought an unqualified verdict of death from heart disease, an indignant jury insisted on adding a qualification, to the effect that the ill-treatment received in prison had hastened his death. This had an immediate and electrifying effect on the whole country, drawing greater crowds to file past the bier of a hitherto unknown man. However, the coffin remained in the ‘Reception Room’ at all times, though we read of Solemn Offices of the Dead and High Mass being sung daily in the church.

Sunday January 20th was chosen for the funeral to Glasnevin Cemetery, a week to the day since McCarthy’s triumphant arrival in Dublin. And so it was that the body which had arrived so humbly at the church in a plumeless one-horse hearse, was now borne forth in regal triumph, ‘in the magnificent glass carriage of Messrs Fanagan of Aungier-Street, drwn by the team of four Belgian horses of spotless black’; both hearse and high-stepping horses decked in the rich ostrich mourning plumes then so popular. The hearse was followed by an estimated 200,000 people – among them the numerous Trade Unions, amidst a sea of colourful banners, and political associations from all over the country – marching to the music of thirty-five bands; a cortege which took six hours to traverse the special five-mile route chosen by the organisers. News reporters in College Green noted that the march past a given

point took one hour and ten minutes. It was considered the largest public funeral ever seen in Dublin, except that of O'Connell in 1847. A perfect model of organisation, stewarding and timing, it was a tremendous publicity coup for the Fenian movement, which seemed to take over the whole city for the day.

Walking behind the coffin was Michael Davitt, so deeply affected by McCarthy's death which at first had seemed in vain, but ended in galvanising a nation's feeling and bringing onto the streets of the capital an estimated half of the country's population. Beside the open grave Davitt made two resolutions: to intensify the struggle so painfully begun ...; and to have his body, too, brought to Clarendon Street at journey's end, at the same hour in the evening, a single-horse with no plumes ...



Chalice presented to the Order in memory of Michael Davitt by his widow.

Fr F. McCormack OCD

References

The above notes are drawn from:

- (a) the *Freemans Journal*, January 14, 15, 16, 17 & 19, 1878.
- (b) Moody, T.W., *Davitt and the Irish Revolution 1846-82*, Oxford UP, 1982.
- (c) O'Hara, B., *Michael Davitt Remembered*, Memorial Museum, Straide, 1984.

In 1880 there were in Ireland some 13,000 landlords, one-third of whom lived outside the country; 300 of them had estates of more than 10,000 acres. There were 500,000 tenants, of whom only 135,000 had leases. The other 465,000 held their land only by verbal agreement and could be evicted at six months' notice.

The Land Law (Ireland) Act 1881 introduced the revolutionary new principle of dual ownership by landlord and tenant, legislated for Fair Rent, Free Sale and Security of Tenure, and provided for gradual 'peasant proprietorship'.

Gladstone later admitted that without Davitt's Land League there would have been no such Land Act. (cf. Hickey & Doherty, *Dictionary of Irish History since 1800*, Dublin 1980.)

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THE PASSIONISTS IN DUBLIN AND THE EASTER UPRISING OF 1916

Fr Denis Travers CP

In the April Newsletter, Fr Denis wrote about the Passionists' beginnings in Ireland, viz: 'In 1856, the Congregation purchased a house and property called Mount Argus, near Dublin, where our monastery and church still stand today. A community was formed there and then soon followed other houses in England, other parts of Ireland, Scotland and Wales'. In this newsletter, Fr Denis relates more about the Passionists' presence at Mount Argus in Dublin.

- 'Don't you think it strange that there are so many young men going to confessions tonight?' said Fr Eugene CP to one of the other priests standing nearby. The scene was the Passionist Church of St Paul of the Cross, Mt Argus, Dublin, and the day was Good Friday, 1916.

And indeed it was true; many men were asking for confession and in fact there were so many that more priests were enlisted for duty and additional areas for confessions needed to be opened up. As well, more places were found in the church to accommodate those wishing to remain for the completion of the Seven Last Words (a Good Friday evening devotion preached by the Passionists).

Of course with the benefit of hindsight the priests realised that many of these young men, all members of the Irish Volunteers militia, who had been preparing secretly for military action, were now preparing spiritually – in case they should forfeit their lives in the Uprising scheduled for Easter Monday.

In fact two of the leaders of the Uprising – Patrick and William Pearse (who were both to be executed later) – had come to Mt Argus during the daytime on Good Friday specifically to see Fr Eugene, but due to the fact that he was out at the time, and their own time was limited, they did not meet up that day. Fr Eugene CP wrote about this missed opportunity in his diary noting that, 'I am so sorry they couldn't wait my return as I never saw them after'.

This would be the sixth Uprising against the British rule in Ireland. All other Uprisings had failed in the course of the past 300 years – mostly because ‘word’ would escape and the element of surprise was usually lost. Thus this one was planned in absolute secrecy, with members of the same family not even knowing that another member was in fact a ‘volunteer’. But like so many campaigns, word had also leaked out and arrests of the leaders was planned for Easter Tuesday morning!

But not all was known and in fact the Uprising began on Easter Monday, so some secrets had survived spies and loose tongues! However, there was confusion (especially when the commander cancelled the planned action – after a German submarine carrying arms for the Uprising did not land the weapons needed). Nevertheless, many men were already preparing for action, and communications not being what they are today, a mere announcement in the papers that the planned ‘action for Monday’ was not to go ahead, did not suffice. Word of mouth was necessary and trusted messengers were enlisted. Thus in one case a sympathetic Passionist priest from Mt Argus was dispatched to all the local commanders in his area to notify them that the Uprising was cancelled. This he duly did, but as things went, other local commanders across the city decided to go ahead anyway.

The Uprising lasted six days and ended in surrender in order to avoid more civilian casualties (54% of the casualties were innocent civilians). At various times in the week, Passionists had been trapped behind the cordons at one point and at other times were called upon to minister to the men at various points of the city.

It must be said that initially many Dubliners were in favour of the Uprising – and indeed the Passionist community was not unanimous in support. In fact only four members were ‘die hard’ supporters of the armed struggle. Three of these men – Frs Eugene, Joseph and Kieran – acted together on the Saturday after Easter when they agreed to hide one of the leaders of the Volunteers, Desmond Fitzgerald, who was on the run from the authorities. This they did without telling the Rector! Their first decision was that he needed to lose his long, luxurious locks and thus they gave him a crew cut! Then seeing him exhausted by fighting all week, they hid him in a makeshift bed behind the organ in the choir loft of the church. When one of the Brothers came to lock up the church for the night he searched in vain for the source of a noise he later described to Fr Eugene as ‘sounding like snoring’. Taken into their confidence –

and sworn to secrecy – the Brother locked up the church anyway and Fitzgerald slept soundly and safely. The next day he was smuggled out with the departing Sunday congregation!

Later Fr Eugene was called to comfort Mrs Pearse and her daughter Margaret when they called at Mt Argus following the execution of both her sons. Fr Eugene prayed for strength several times on his way to the parlour, but in fact found Mrs Pearse to be a tower of strength and ‘she appeared more anxious than anything to forestall the embarrassing or uneasy feelings of those coming to tender their sympathies’ he wrote.

From the sadness of the Easter Uprising was eventually born an independent Ireland.

Till next time, your foreign correspondent.

Denis CP

I SELVAGGI DELL' AUSTRALIA

Fr Paul Gardner SJ

Archivist's Note

The following article was sent for publication in *Footprints* by Father Paul Gardiner SJ, just before his death on 18 March 2017. It is a commentary on the work about the Australian Aboriginal written by Italian Franciscan, Father Ottavio Barsanti, and published in Italy in 1868.



Father Ottavio Barsanti OFM
Original photo from Fr
Linane's Priests A-Z
MDHC Catholic
Archdiocese of Melbourne

It would be hard to pronounce on the literary genre of this remarkable work, first published a century and a half ago. It contains a wealth of colourful information about Australia, yet it would be misleading to describe it as a depository of facts. The author gives a clue to its nature in the titles of the two parts, *critico-scientific* and *historico-apologetic*, but at no point does his attitude deviate from that of a zealous nineteenth century Catholic apologist and preacher.

Born in 1825, Ottavio Barsanti became a Franciscan of the Umbrian Province. Going as a missionary to New Zealand in 1860, he became superior of a group of eight Franciscans working with the Maoris. But his turbulent disposition led to a major dispute with Bishop Pompallier and fisticuffs with the vicar general. The outcome was a transfer across the Tasman to Australia, where his talent soon attracted attention. He did parochial work around Sydney and became the secretary of Archbishop Polding. He was known for his scholarship and his efficiency, and before long had acquired a great name as a preacher.

But Barsanti also developed a reputation as a fiery and contentious character. On his return from a visit to Europe a conflict with Dr Polding resulted in his transfer to Melbourne, where he served for a time at the cathedral before moving to a country area. Sharp differences with a

fellow Italian, an Augustinian, led to his return to Sydney. Worse trouble followed, as he was suspended after a stand-up fight with Archbishop Vaughan in a city parish in 1875. He abandoned the priestly ministry, but was reconciled before his death in 1883. His grave is in the churchyard at Petersham, Sydney.

Barsanti was a brilliant scholar whose temperament served him well in the pulpit. But from his style of writing it appears that he never really left the pulpit. With practised rhetoric he expounds the theme that the Australian Aborigine has only one hope of salvation – the Catholic faith. This obtains not only with regard to his eternal destiny, to be attained through a proper understanding of the Christian message, but also with regard to his earthly and human development. The case is argued with eloquence and passion as well as logic and a great array of evidence, but to a modern reader the emotional ingredient is rather a hindrance than a help to persuasion. Moreover, if that reader does not profess the Catholic faith his reaction will be even less sympathetic, as neither the author's Italian religious background nor his experience of life in Australia had enabled him to develop any sentiments calculated to foster the ecumenical good-will that is now expected of all Christians.

The preacher-author's undoubted skill with words seems to have contributed to his unfortunate personal history. The cascade of intense expressions that flowed so readily from his tongue whenever sin or error had to be rebuked was ill-suited as an instrument of dialogue with his fellow priests and with Archbishops. It was more likely to stir anger than to lead to persuasion. But if a man is skilled in the use of a weapon it can be difficult for him not to reach for it in a brawl, and it seems that Father Barsanti was never slow to resort to the telling word in contentious situations. His anti-English sentiments, so passionately expressed in this book, could add significance to the fact that the two Archbishops with whom he had serious quarrels were English. Dr Polding and his successor Dr Vaughan, both holy priests and genuine gentlemen, were Englishmen in a Catholic hierarchy consisting otherwise of Irishmen and one or two Italians. The violence of Barsanti's strictures on the English was such that it is hard to imagine him keeping it under control in situations of excited personal conflict with these English prelates.

Although his scholarly habits are evident throughout the work, it does not seem that the author of *I Selvaggi* had great opportunities to make personal observations on his subject. He arrived in Sydney in

1865, and by 1867 was on his way to Rome on business for Archbishop Polding, carrying his manuscript or at least the material for it. As he points out in his Dedication to his former Superior and mentor Bishop Trionfetti, he availed himself of the opportunity offered by this trip to Italy to have the work published by Marietti in 1868. At the same time he published a companion work on the effect of Protestants on the natives of New Zealand. Parish duties in Sydney over the course of two years, combined with secretarial work for the Archbishop, would not have left him much opportunity for extensive field work for his Australian book. His references to personal experience are for the most part confined to Sydney and its neighbourhood, for he seems rarely to have been far from the capital city. He mentions being up near Coonabarabran once (300 kilometres away), and he visited St George's Sound in Western Australia when his ship made a stop-over there.

This makes the work all the more impressive. He was obviously an attentive reader of books, newspapers, and reviews. He made good use of Father Tenison Woods' *History of the Discovery and Exploration of Australia* (1865), and was especially aware of the value of the *Memorie Storiche dell'Australia* of Dom Rosendo Salvado, the famous Benedictine pioneer of Aboriginal evangelisation in Australia. This work has of late been translated and edited in an English edition by E.J.Stormon. Dom Salvado is honoured in the Abbey of New Norcia in Western Australia as founder and moving spirit. He had done field work, for he lived in the field, and his extensive personal experience of life with the blacks meant that anything he had to say was worth listening to. Barsanti was wise enough to realise this. It was no mean feat in so short a time to marshal the extensive information he found about the Australian Aborigines in this reading, to add to it the results of his direct observation, and then to collate the result with the vast erudition he had already acquired in the course of his professional studies. In addition to scriptural citations and theological reflections, the text of *I Selvaggi dell'Australia* displays an astounding number of ethnological, anthropological, linguistic, geographical, historical, patristic, and classical references.

The result is a sustained tour de force in favour of the unique excellence of Catholic religion, drawing not only on the deposit of faith and religious traditions but also on every evidence available from any source about anything considered relevant to the argument. Since 1868 there has been much painstaking research into the habits and customs of

the Aboriginals, and Father Barsanti's work in this respect, fascinating and colourful as it is, would have to be judged in the light of the scientific results of such studies. The detail of his religious argumentation likewise needs to be reviewed in the light of accepted Catholic thinking. The statement by Church officials at the end of the book that it is erudite and in conformity with sound doctrine could still be maintained, provided it is understood in the strict sense of the words. It means that there is nothing in the book that contradicts the substantial of the Catholic faith, but this should not be interpreted as approval of the theological and philosophical presuppositions of the author, nor does it guarantee that the sustained zeal he displays for the Catholic cause is expressed in a manner that will always be considered the most fortunate.

The impact of the European on the native Australian has long been a matter where emotion and partiality are hard to control. The celebration of the Bicentenary of the arrival of the first fleet in 1788 has provided plentiful evidence of this. Some would like white Australians to believe that they should be ashamed to be living on the continent. This is an irrational projection of the awareness that in Australia, as in all colonised countries, the Aboriginal population has not been treated with the justice and respect to which all human beings have a natural right. It should be noted, incidentally, that it was not only the black Australians but primarily the white English and Irish convicts who were the victims of the brutality and inhumanity of English officialdom. A recent work by Robert Hughes, *The Fatal Shore*, has told this story in horrifying detail. There is evidence that in the earlier period injustice to the blacks also frequently took the form of violent oppression. This later gave way to a neglect which was nonetheless constructively oppressive.

It is a sign of gullibility on the part of modern white Australians if they have a sense of guilt forced on them by interested parties who have reasons, morally laudable and otherwise, to emphasise these unpleasant aspects of their country's history at the expense of practically everything else. A partial presentation of evidence produced to support one interpretation of justice is not a service either to truth or justice. Ignoring a vast array of facts in this way is not only incompatible with a balanced view of the past, but it constitutes an obstacle to a clearer vision of the destiny of the Australian continent, and stalls the contribution its inhabitants can make to the future welfare of the human family.

On the other hand, the fact that these historical grievances are now being exploited by interested parties, by no means all aboriginal, should not be allowed to provoke a reaction which stubbornly maintains that there are no wrongs to be righted.

But a strong denial should be given to the suggestion that nothing has been done and that nothing is being done to redress the wrongs of the past. There is far more to the question than money, but readiness to allot money is at least a pledge of serious interest. One radical activist granted recently (1995) that the Australian government had spent some five billion dollars (\$A5,000,000,000) on Aboriginals in the last ten years. Including those of mixed blood, the beneficiaries would comprise at the most 150,000 individuals, or one per cent of the population. Yet the grievances are still there. It is one thing to acknowledge that the situation is not good, but quite another to be able to declare what the ideal situation would be, and what means should be adopted to create it. Nothing is contributed to serious social debate by repeated laments that Europeans ever came to Australia's shores. They did come, and their descendants and successors have real problems to identify and solve, not only in their own regard but with regard also to those among modern Australians with aboriginal blood in their veins.

What Father Barsanti had to say is hard to disassociate from the way he said it, but if his readers are objective enough to tolerate his religious convictions and his rhetorical style they will see that he has something to offer. It is as true in the twentieth century as it was in the nineteenth that money and material things, far from being the solution, can be part of the problem. One's use of the terms materialism, secularism, and paganism will be conditioned by whether one is for them or against them, but they put the finger on what is wrong not only with Australia but with the rest of the world. The heart of the matter is still spiritual and moral.

It would be absurd to allow regrets for past wrongs to lead to suggestions that the great continent of the south should have been left forever unapproached and unsettled by people of European background. Yet that kind of thing has been heard in connection with the Bicentennial celebrations. It is alleged that there is nothing to celebrate, that the whole story has been a shameful one. That is patently untrue, and grossly offensive to ninety-nine per cent of Australians. If it were true it would apply to the Americas, North, South, and Central, and to many other habitable parts of the globe. It can hardly seriously be maintained that migrations of civilised

peoples are in themselves affronts to natural justice and therefore against the will of the Creator, on the grounds that they disturb the primitive condition of the native inhabitants. It is the selfishness and disordered self-interest of men that is wrong, leading to a lack of respect for the rights of their fellow-men, not their taking of civilised habits and procedures to the territories of uncivilised peoples. Any other principles would lead to the unacceptable conclusion that the very occupation of Europe by Europeans should be considered wrong, on the grounds that they have been guilty over the centuries of so much injustice and inhuman behaviour towards one another. But it is not their being there that is wrong, it is their disordered hearts and their grasping hands.

Father Barsanti never tired of pointing out this truth. In the case of Australia he had no doubt where the responsibility lay – with the English colonialists and the Protestantism they supported. He is an example of a nineteenth century interested party, and in that sense he can teach something to our contemporary interested parties. In his case the interest was religious, not political. He used the primitive native condition of the Aborigines to support anthropological and ethnological views that he thought were taught in the Bible, and he used their condition in the mid-nineteenth century as a weapon to fight the adversaries of the Catholic religion – the English colonisers and their Protestant frame of mind. Although it could be made to appear that his aim was proselyting for its own sake, his argument is an attempt to establish that his interest is the true welfare of the Aboriginal people. In his view, not only was the Catholic Church the only repository of the fullness of the Christian faith, but Catholics were the only true civilisers of mankind. True morality, the only possible basis of a healthy political body, was part and parcel of the Catholic message. Other Christian groups, the sects, were at best like four-footed animals trying to walk on two legs. The English and their religion caused all the social and moral evils observable in Australian society, immigrant and native. To make this point he was constrained to hold up the British as devils incarnate, an accusation for which not all of his evidence was entirely unfounded.

In his wider religious polemic he had a legitimate point to make – the primacy of the spiritual and moral dimension of man – but he made it with excessive sectarian zeal. Catholicism is not a sect, but its adherents can behave like sectarians, and they often did so in the days before ecumenism was encouraged from high places. Barsanti was not wrong

in seeing that the human heart is a far more prolific source of the evils of society, than a lack of higher education or technical know-how. The mistreatment of the Aboriginals, as well as the frightful injustices inflicted on white victims, was not due to the mere fact that the Europeans were there. It was due to their lack of strong and practical moral convictions about the rights of their fellow-men. Father Barsanti argued that this dangerous deficiency could only be remedied by the fullness of the Christian message as found in the Catholic Church, and by the saving influence of Christ living in his selfless Catholic devotees. The position is presented eloquently in the concluding chapters, and as a piece of pure theory there is much truth in the argument. But in practical terms human nature as it is in fact found on the earth, in Catholic as well as non-Catholic countries, is not taken into account. With regard to Australia, not only is it an impossible dream to imagine that the Catholic Church will ever have uninterrupted and exclusive access to the Aboriginal people, but it runs counter to human experience to think that the Catholics who bring the untainted message of Christ will themselves be living examples of selfless Christian excellence. Father Barsanti did not call attention to the record of colonisers from countries with an uninterrupted Catholic tradition.

I Selvaggi contains much memorable reading. There is a good summary of European origins in Australia, and there are informative disquisitions on subjects like language, cannibalism, superstitions, and magic. The exhibition of boomerang throwing obviously left a deep impression on the author, and it is still something that has to be seen to be believed. There is a very colourful description of a corroboree, and an interesting account of Australian animals (the platypus is there, but strangely there seems to be no sign of the koala or the lyre-bird). There are horror stories, too, such as the massacre of Myall Creek, and several rhetorical accounts of drunken degradation. We are told that the marriage laws of the Aboriginals are complicated, and the assertion is supported by the account that is then attempted. Whether there are any jokes in the book is doubtful – the author does not seem to be given to them. But we could more readily accept one or two of his passages, such as the account of why the Scots do not like the Romans, if we could be sure that he had his tongue in his cheek when he set them down.

While there can be no doubt about the erudition of the man, his limitless literary energy, his fluency, his enthusiasm, and his strong

apostolic motivation, it is equally evident that there are deficiencies in the work. A lack of practical realism has already been noted, as well as the unecumenical spirit of the writing. The latter defect, to do the author justice, should be seen in its historical context, and it should be borne in mind that the Protestants, who were in the ascendancy, ‘gave as good as they got’ as far as abuse was concerned. We cannot easily re-create the temper of the times.

More serious defects, which could pass unnoticed by readers without specialised knowledge, are his understanding of the function of Sacred Scripture and his philosophy of creation. These are not such as can comfortably be accepted by well-instructed Catholics a century later. To tell the truth, they would not have been accepted six centuries earlier by Thomas Aquinas, for whom it was a basic principle of thought that human reason – embracing philosophy, logic, and the sciences – enjoys a certain autonomy. Certainly, he knew that it must work in harmony with faith, as Boethius had pointed out at the end of the ancient era to future ages of Christian thinkers: ‘Fidem, si poteris, rationemque conjunge.’ That is: ‘If you can, marry faith to reason.’

Aquinas’ confidence was based on the conviction that faith and reason, coming from the one divine source, cannot contradict each other. The Second Vatican Council recalled the same principle: ‘If methodical investigation within each branch of learning is carried out in a genuinely scientific manner and in accordance with moral norms, it will never really conflict with faith, for earthly matters and those that concern faith have their origin in the same God.’ (Vat.II, Constit. *Gaudium et Spes*, #36.)

Each faculty has its proper object, and it is not the Creator’s intention either that faith should take over the legitimate function of reason, or that revelation should usurp any of the territory that he has assigned to the sciences. The Vatican Council said further: ‘If by the autonomy of earthly affairs we mean that created things and societies enjoy their own laws and values, which must be gradually deciphered, put to use, and regulated by men, then it is entirely right to demand that autonomy. Such is not merely required by modern man, but harmonises also with the will of the Creator.’ (ibid.)

Boethius in the sixth century was not just giving advice – he was stating an important fact. Unfortunately, not all subsequent Christian thinkers have grasped what he was saying, and some have gone so far as to say that since God has spoken we have no more occasion to reason.

Others have seen the Bible as a substitute for history and science. But Aquinas grasped the truth, and praised God for it. Those who have not shared his insight have not appreciated the implications of the statement of the Creed that God is the Creator of all things, ‘visibilium omnium et invisibilium’. Nor have they displayed his steady confidence that faith has consequently nothing to fear from reason or human science.

The power and excellence of the human mind is due to its sharing in the power and excellence of the divine mind of the Creator. God knows himself eternally as the fount of all possibility – of all other creatable reality, including the human mind. If he decides to create, all things without exception depend on him and are patterned on him. It is this dependence in being that is the essence of creation, not the priority in time of the Creator, nor a simultaneous coming to being of all forms of created being. God has revealed the fact of creation; it is up to human science to discover the causal relations of various beings to one another. If science and criticism are right in their methods and true in their conclusions, it is unthinkable (because it is impossible, like a square circle) that they could come up with conclusions that run counter to what the Creator says in the Scriptures.

If there seems to be a conflict, the thinkers must retrace their steps. Scientists, if they are wise, will look again at their evidence and turn a critical eye on their procedures; but theologians must also examine whether their understanding of Scripture may not be faulty. Some Christian writers and preachers have emphasised the need for the first ‘retractation’ without giving a thought to the second. They have overlooked the fact that the zeal and skill of ‘masters of the word’ in using the Bible in a fundamentalist fashion is no guarantee that its true meaning is being expounded. As Paul told Timothy (2 Tim.3.16), it was ‘ad erudiendum in iustitia’, that the Scriptures were written, not to reveal the secrets of the natural world or the general history of mankind. This was expressed in relation to the Galileo business by the aphorism that the Scriptures tell us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go. They do not teach error about scientific matters, because about things not intrinsic to the work of salvation they do not teach at all. They assume the mental habits of their human author, his science and his anthropology, just as they are expressed in his linguistic convention. Aquinas regarded this as a commonplace: ‘Divina traduntur nobis per modum quo homines solent uti.’ [Comment.ad Hebr. Ch.1, lectio 4.] In translating an ancient sacred document, and in the even more delicate work of interpreting it, people

of a very diverse culture must beware of imposing their own conventions on the text, and then asserting that what emerges is a faithful account of the author's meaning. If they do this they run the risk of announcing that God has said something he has never said.

Pope Pius XII dealt with these matters in his Encyclical Letter, *Divino Afflante Spiritu* on Biblical Studies in 1943. He cleared the air and liberated Catholic scholars from what seemed to be the dilemma of a timid nervousness in the use of the Scriptures on the one hand, and a rejection of 'the Catholic mind' on the other. He vindicated the scientific approach, with its use of critical and historical methods, and encouraged the study of a myriad of literary and positive subjects that could throw light on the circumstances of the Bible's origins. He pointed out moreover that if biblical exegetes lacked skill in evaluating literary forms their work would suffer serious detriment – they would be hindering rather than helping the revelation of truth. In plain words, what they would be saying about the word of God would be wrong.

The same Roman Pontiff issued in his Encyclical *Humani Generis* seven years later some directives for Catholic thinking about creation and evolution. They were liberating rather than restrictive. They certainly counselled caution and warned against an unscientific acceptance of conclusions that have not been proven. The Pope deplored a frame of mind that would ignore the unique spiritual dignity of each human person and reduce the human race to being merely the highest species in the animal kingdom, not essentially superior to the brute creation. But as far as the development of the human body was concerned, that was a matter for science to determine. Even in the delicate matter of monogenism, which Father Barsanti so strenuously defends, the Pope was very careful in his choice of words. He said that great caution must be exercised, because it is not clear how polygenism can be reconciled with what the Church teaches (*cum nequaquam appareat quomodo huiusmodi sententia componi queat ...*). But he did not say that it is clear that it cannot be reconciled with what the Church teaches.

The Bible tells us that God is the Creator of all things, but it does not teach a scientific cosmogony, even in a manner amenable to concordism. Neither does it reveal anything of the mysteries of phylogeny, or any of the other branches of natural science. It is a religious message, eternally true, but expressed in the conventions of the men of the epoch in which it was written.

The relevance of all this to Father Barsanti's work is that while there can be no question of the praiseworthiness of his purpose – the dissemination of the Catholic faith – his modern readers must be cautioned that his use of means is not necessarily in harmony with the best Catholic thinking of this or of former ages.

It is a pity that more notice was not taken over the centuries of a remark made by Thomas Aquinas seven hundred years ago. He said he accepted a geocentric universe because of appearances, and because of what the scriptures seemed to be implying, but he had no difficulty in imagining that he would have to reconsider his reading of Scripture if at some future time a clear proof were given that another cosmological arrangement was obtained. The implication behind his statement is very important indeed. If the 'workmen of the word' like Father Barsanti had understood it, they would have been less rigid and fantastic in their use of Scripture and less prone to identify a nervous if enthusiastic fundamentalism with faithful preaching of the Gospel. God the Creator of all things visible and invisible would have been more worthily glorified, because his Word would have been more faithfully preached, and the way would have been open to the Spirit of Truth to offer to intelligent men of good will a more liberated insight into the mysteries of Creation and Redemption.

A PRIVATE COLLECTION OF PERSONAL LETTERS OF FATHER JOHN WALLIS TO HIS MOTHER AND HIS FATHER 1927–1947

Bernadette Wallis MSS

On 8 July 1944 in Tasmania, Father John Wallis founded the Missionary Sisters of Service, who will celebrate their 75th anniversary of foundation during 2019. A number of events are planned over a twelve-month period, one of which will be the launch of a book, the title of which is yet to be decided. As a niece of John and a Missionary Sister of Service, I am proudly author of the planned volume.

Who was Father John Wallis?



First of all, who was Father John Corcoran Wallis? In 1910 John Wallis was born in Yea, north-east of Melbourne, Victoria, to Abraham Knight Wallis and Emily (Emma) Kathleen Corcoran. Baptised at the Yea Sacred Heart Church, John began his schooling at the local public school at Homewood, travelling to school riding his horse, Bonnie. He had a year with the Sisters of St Joseph in Yea, before being educated at Assumption College, Kilmore, with the Marist Brothers. His seminary training was in the Springwood and Manly seminaries in New South Wales. His initial applications to be accepted by various dioceses and religious orders had been turned down on health grounds. He was eventually accepted by the Archbishop of Hobart and was ordained as a priest for that diocese in 1932 and served in the diocese till he died on 3 August 2001.

John's life was characterised by his pastoral commitment. He established different ministries in the Archdiocese. He was a man before his time – so when Vatican II was announced, he rejoiced that the 'windows' of the institutional Church were opened, and the freshness of the Spirit could flow. Following the Council, he travelled to many parts of Australia to give lectures and retreats to religious and priests to inform, and impress upon them the call to change.

Private Collection of Letters



A very young Fr John
Corcoran Wallis

The yet untitled book will make public the hand-written letters (now typed, because his hand was famously illegible!) of Father John Wallis to his mother and father in Victoria over a period of twenty years, 1927–1947. The letters are delightfully candid, intimate and illuminating, signed off as ‘Jack’. They reveal a close relationship with his parents and especially with his mother. He regularly mentions his siblings, Marie, Don, Chester, Brian and Charlie, and other relatives. Coming from a farming background, John shows his love for the land and his appreciation of the bush and the natural environment.

The Mystery of the Letters

So, how did the letters come to light at this time in history? The letters, found in a highly decorated Chinese Westward Ho! Assorted Toffee tin, came to my attention in 2014, when I was working briefly in the Missionary Sisters of Service (MSS) archives in Hobart. The faithful and astute archivist, Sister Carmel Hall MSS, had been entrusted with them in 1976. As the MSS archives were moved from place to place, Carmel had had them protected and well-hidden.

John’s brother, Father Brian Wallis who had a strong sense of history, brought the letters from Melbourne to Hobart in 1976, twenty one years after his mother’s death in West Brunswick, Melbourne. As one of the executors of her will, he presumably took her personal papers plus the Chinese Assorted Toffee tin into his possession to deal with them appropriately.

Brian sought a meeting in Hobart with Sister Delphine O’Shea, the MSS Congregational Leader at the time. Delphine promptly brought in Carmel, the Archivist. Brian then made requests as to whether the Congregation could, firstly, care for the letters and, secondly, keep them secret



until after John Wallis died. He feared that John may not see the letters as important and that they may be destroyed. Realising their significance, Carmel assured Brian they would be well looked after.

When John died in 2001, Carmel was busily engaged in her work as the Archivist for the Archdiocese of Hobart, so it was not until she retired from the diocesan work that she again gave the letters attention and revealed that they existed.

One explanation I offer for the Chinese Toffee Tin is that the Lee Gow family of Chinese origin settled in Yea in the gold rush times of the 1860s, the patriarch being Francis Hubert Lee Gow. They had a shop with a vegetable market but also sold many other ‘goodies’ and presumably had confectionary in their stock with such items as the Chinese toffee tin.

Family Background to the Letters

Abraham and Emily (Corcoran) were married on 22 January 1906 at St Brigid’s Church, Fitzroy. Abraham came from Seymour and Emma, as she was known, came from Yea. They eventually made their home at Homewood, Yea in central Victoria. Their children were Marie Corcoran (1908), John Corcoran (1910), Donald Corcoran (1912), Thomas Chester (1916), Brian Emmett (1920) and Charles Patrick (1924). Three of the children were profoundly deaf, namely Marie, Don and Charlie.

Marie attended the Dominican school for Deaf children at Waratah near Newcastle, New South Wales from 1916–1926, so had left school when John went to the seminary at Springwood. Don also attended Waratah (from 1918) and then in 1923 moved to the newly opened St Gabriel’s School for Deaf Boys at Castle Hill, west of Sydney and



Front: John’s parents, Abraham and Emma, John himself. *Back:* Charlie, Chester, Don, Marie, Brian.

across the valley from Springwood. Charlie also attended St Gabriel’s from 1930–1939. This explains the familiarity of John’s deaf siblings with Sydney and being away from home, as revealed in the letters.

From 1927 to approximately 1935 Emma established a business in Seymour, Wallis' Café, on the Old Hume Highway, in order to finance, in part, John's seminary education and the education of the other children. John wrote separate letters to his mother and father addressing them 'Dear Mother' and 'Dear Father'. His mother lived and worked in Seymour most of the time, her daughter, Marie, assisting in the café cooking pastries and pies. His father stayed on the farm at Yea and, at weekends, came to Seymour and brought produce and assisted at the café.

In 1945 Abraham died at home on the farm in Yea. Soon after the farm was sold, Emma and Chester bought another outside Broadford. Eventually, Emma settled in West Brunswick, Melbourne, where the letters in the Chinese toffee tin found a home until her death.

Setting of the Letters



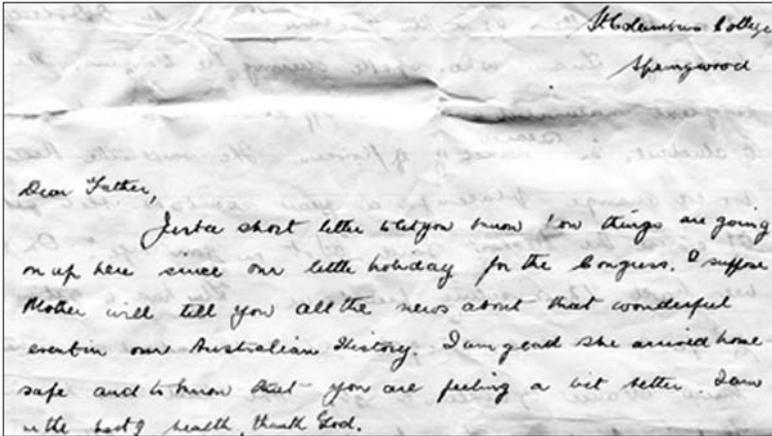
St Patrick's Seminary, Manly

The letters began in 1927 when John was sixteen years of age and entered the seminary at St Columba's College in Springwood at the base of the Blue Mountains. They cover this period of two years doing philosophy studies, then the subsequent time in the seminary at St Patrick's College in Manly for four

years of theological studies. His ordination followed. The letters give insights into his seminary life, ordination and early journey of priesthood in Tasmania; the letters conclude in 1947.

Some of the letters are quite humorous, for example, as the young man wittily described each of the professors ('Pros') to his mother in 1927 after being at Springwood for three months:

By the way it might interest you to know a bit about the Pros as they are called. Monsignor Brauer teaches Physics. He is very clever. He was the head prefect of Manly in his time. He went to Rome 1920 and saw the Canonization of Joan D'Arc. He comes and helps at the "Works". Father Simonds is the Vice Rector and Bursar.[1] He has charge of the money, looks after food, etc. He is very clever and was also Head Prefect in Manly. He is supposed to be the mug of the family as far as learning goes but yet he can read a book in Greek, Hebrew, Latin and has studied



Evolution extensively. He once broadcasted a speech on Darwinism. He also delivered Catholic Credence lectures. He teaches us Latin. He is by far the best teacher here. He is clear and easy to understand.

The next is Father Bowers. He was an All Hallows student and carried off 1st prize of his school. He is an Irishman. He gives a lecture at times to the students instead of a debate. He is very good. He has a great dislike of Americans and is very good at imitating them. He also imitates the English cockney people. He is really funny.

Father Nolan is another Irishman. He is hard to understand in his speech. He teaches Philos [philosophy]. He says “weet” for wit, “terum” for term. He is very nice and is rather humourous. Father Downey is a new priest here. He is a Greek teacher. Father O’Brien is rather clever. He is a good singer and musician. He has composed a Mass, which is commonly sung in the Churches. He has a fine library here and studies very hard. He is a teacher of English in what he excels. Father Wallace has only been ordained a short time. He teaches Mathematics.

In 1928 the Eucharistic Congress was held in Sydney, so we see the enthusiasm of a seventeen-year-old boy devoted to the Church and highly impressed by such an international event and proud that it was so well organised and as well that it took place on Australian soil. While his mother was present at the Congress, he gave his father an eloquent description. The spirituality of the time is evident as he piously informed his mother about various devotions, saints and feasts. He often shared his desire, and encouraged her to pray for him, to be a good priest. The letters indicate the social and political issues of the day, and topics of the seminarians’ debates and discussions such as capital punishment and Prohibition.

In 1932 Archbishop William Hayden ordained John at St Patrick's Church in Kilmore, as a priest for the Archdiocese of Hobart. The letters to his mother leading up to the ordination were short and frequent as arrangements were being made for the huge entourage of people who travelled either from Melbourne by train or came from so many surrounding areas.

Archdiocese of Hobart

The letters continued when John moved to Tasmania. In 1933 he began his ministry as a priest in the Archdiocese of Hobart. Initially, he went to Launceston before then being moved to the Cathedral Parish in Hobart as an Assistant Priest. Significantly, before the end of the year, he was introduced to Bruny Island, an isolated parish that received very little attention from the Church but became a significant place for him in the context of his future life. When he wrote of Bruny Island, he described the setting and much of what he experienced, giving much insight into the isolation experienced by the local people and perhaps himself. The following letter was written in January 1934:

Dear Mother,

I am just on my way home from Bruny Island – on board the Mangana – one of the Port Huon fruit boats. It is fearfully cold – a strong south wind – hail and a fairly high sea. Snow on the mountain ranges to south and west.

Well dearest Mother I have had a week this time with a variety of experience. I have thought more I think of home this week than I have done for many a long time. From the time I landed on North Bruny till I left everything has seemed to recall home – and I have been longing that you might pay a visit to my little Island mission. For you know that as a lad I had thought of the Foreign Missions. Well my work here is something in the nature of a little Mission. I shall try to give you some account of the trip ...

It was on Bruny Island that he met a young mother, Kit Hawkins, who challenged him with questions like: Doesn't the Church care about us? Don't our children matter? What about us? Out of sight, out of mind? This challenge plagued John's mind for ten years before he was able to establish a group of women, and later a religious order, the Missionary Sisters of Service, to go into the 'highways and byways' of rural Australia, so that the Church could minister to those in remote and isolated areas, like Bruny Island. His concern reached out to all people, especially the poor in all aspects.

In the letters we pick up that John struggled in parish life with the workload, including preparing his homilies, the various parish groups

and visiting people, and agonised over the suffering and poverty that he encountered. He shared his vocational worries and his desire to be a religious and maybe go to the Chinese mission rather than continue as a diocesan priest. He joined the Columban Fathers community in Essendon, Victoria, but after some months returned, and committed himself, to Tasmania.

There are definite themes that emerge in letters. For example, John valued books. At the age of sixteen he wrote to his father in his first year at Springwood after a meeting of the student body:

I moved that two men should be appointed to look after the library. This is a fine library but has been very ill-treated. The motion was passed. Jordan Ross and I were appointed to do it. We are going to have a general clean up.



Fr John Wallis with Bernadette in the Catholic Centre Bookshop in the early 1990s.

And in another letter to his mother he wrote of one of the professors, as noted above: '(Fr. O'Brien) has a fine library here and studies very hard'.

John saw that reading was educative and he was impressed with good libraries, so much so that, as a very young priest, he set up the Catholic Library in Hobart; afterwards, the Missionary Sisters of Service conducted bookshops. Significantly, this theme is evident in embryonic form in his early letters.

Aspects of the Letters

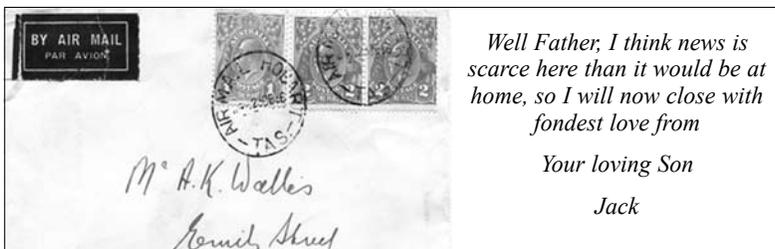
While the letters reproduced in the book will follow chronologically, the volume will not be a full biography of John Wallis. The main purpose is to share the surviving letters written by him to his mother and father and to put them into context. With approximately 100 letters and the contextual material, there will be ten chapters in the book.

Presumably there are a number of letters to his parents that have not survived the distance of time. So, there are some gaps if one looks at the letters as a complete 'journal' of that period of his life. There are also significant events in the family that do not get a mention. One reason is that John would have been with the family for the events. For example, when he was celebrant for Don and Chester's weddings, which do not emerge in the letters. Also, there is no mention of his father's death, although the reader knows his father has died because John is worried

about the welfare of his mother as she moves into the future. For John, there is no need to write to his parents about such happenings in their lives. As well, there are no known letters from either his mother or father to pinpoint exactly what John is responding to in some of his letters. So, there remain some mysteries.

Towards the end of the twenty-year period some letters to his brother, Brian, will be included because of the nature of their content concerning the beginnings of the Missionary Sisters of Service.

It is proposed that, at the end of each chapter, a reflection will be included written by, for example, a theologian, church historian, sociologist, family member or Missionary Sister of Service, as appropriate. As a niece of John and granddaughter of his parents, I feel privileged to work with the letters and to make them available to a wider audience.

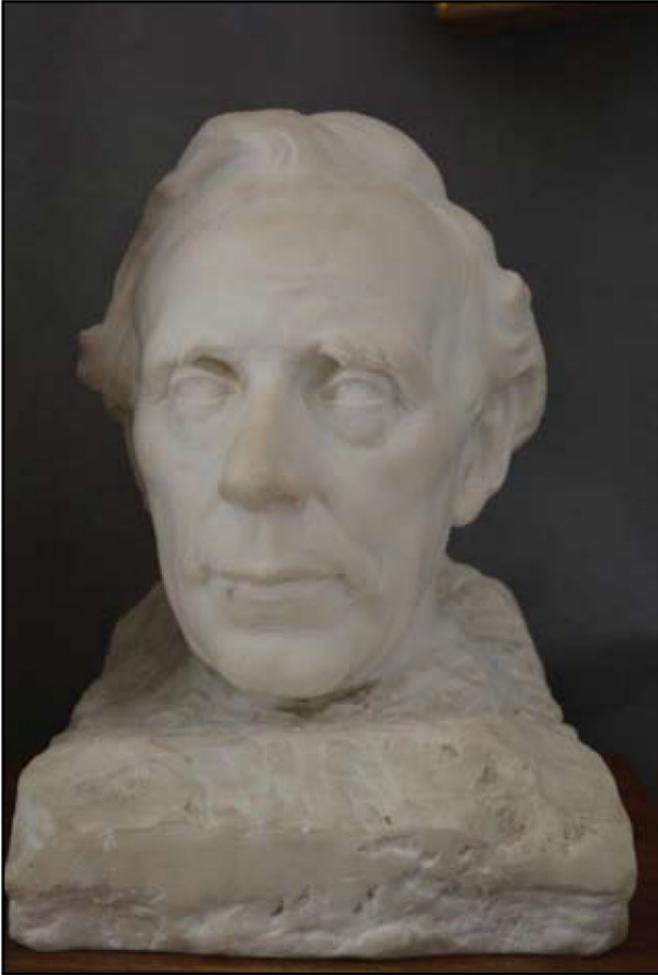


Bernadette Wallis is the author of *The Silent Book – A Deaf Family and the Disappearing Australian-Irish Sign Language*. Self-published 2016. Available from the Missionary Sisters of Service, PO Box 2075, Rangeview, Vic. 3132. \$30 <admin@missionarysisters.org.au> Phone 03 98735520 or Bernadette Mob. 0411 058 046.



The Silent Book will be revelatory for most of us, as we learn of the history of a ‘threatened’ language once so vital in Australia. It is a fascinating tale in diverse ways: in its closeness to the colonial and rural context of its protagonists, its respect for indigenous naming and knowledge of that same landscape, its careful introduction of the reader to a chronology of thinking about deafness and ways of educating deaf children. It adds another rich element to the extraordinary story of those 19th century lay and religious builders of Catholic community in Victoria and NSW. With all this, at its heart *The Silent Book* is a moving account of family life and love and hopefulness.

Margaret Coffey, Broadcaster and Journalist, Melbourne Vic.



**Marble bust of Archbishop Daniel Mannix
completed by Albert Power in 1922.
John Clarke discovered the story of its creation.**