



The Aisling Society
of Sydney

ANNUAL REPORT FOR 2010

THE COUNCIL OF THE AISLING SOCIETY 2010

PRESIDENT
VICE PRESIDENTS

DR JEFF KILDEA
MR PATRICK TANSEY
MRS ANNE STEVENS
MRS MARY LEE
MR PETER GRAY
MISS MAUREEN McLOUGHLIN
MR PETER GRAY
MR DAVID VAUGHAN
DR MARIE LEECH
MRS AILSA HOBAN
MRS TRUDI O'NEIL
MR TONY EARLS
MR JOHN RYAN
PROF ANDERS AHLQVIST
MR BRENDAN O'CONNELL

HON. SECRETARY
HON. TREASURER
ARCHIVIST/LIBRARIAN
PUBLICITY OFFICER
COUNCILLORS

HON. AUDITOR

Trudi O'Neil also generously continued to perform the invaluable role of Minutes Secretary, which is very much appreciated.

MEMBERSHIP

The Society has 78 financial members and 4 honorary life members. This year there were also four honorary members, being winners of the Aisling Society Prize at the University of New South Wales and the University of Sydney for 2010. In 2010 we welcomed one new member, namely Dr Pamela O'Neill.

ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING

The 2010 Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 24 February at the Consulate-General of Ireland. The Annual Report for 2009, which had been prepared by Peter Gray and circulated to members beforehand, was presented, as was the Treasurer's report which had been prepared by Maureen McLoughlin and likewise circulated. Both these reports were accepted.

An Election of Office-Bearers was held, resulting as set out above.

ORDINARY MEETINGS

Our ordinary monthly meetings were held as always in the rooms of the Consulate-General of Ireland, for whose support and generosity we are again most grateful. Again we had the enormous advantage of the genuine interest of both our 2010 Consuls-General, Pat Scullion and Catriona Ingoldsby, and of the Vice-Consul, Siobhan Kelly Antonucci.

- FEBRUARY** The February Ordinary Meeting followed on the Annual General Meeting, and featured a beguiling Talk by **Fr Tom Devereux** about his time in Australia, particularly as the chaplain to the young Irish here.
- APRIL** **Tony Baine**, long-time member and Past President of the Society, shone a probing light on some less-explored aspects of Irish society, in his wide-ranging Talk entitled "*Arthur Cox, lawyer, and the religious diaspora in Dublin*".
- MAY** Professor **Ronan McDonald**, inaugural Director of the John Hume Institute for Global Irish Studies at the University of New South Wales, spoke to us with contagious enthusiasm about the Institute and his hopes for its future.
- JUNE** **Clare O'Farrell** and **Gerard O'Farrell**, daughter and son of our distinguished former member Professor Patrick O'Farrell, brought us up to date with their impressive progress in developing a website devoted to their father's work, in a delightful joint Talk entitled "*Patrick O'Farrell - legacy and inspiration*".
- AUGUST** We were very pleased to have the opportunity to welcome **Evelyn Conlon**, visiting Irish novelist and short story writer, whose thought-provoking Talk was entitled "*Corridors of Truth: what fiction adds to history*".
- SEPTEMBER** **Jessica Bellamy**, winner of the 2009/2010 Aisling Society Prize for English at UNSW, graciously accepted our invitation to speak to us on the theme of her winning essay, "*Discovering Yeats' Abbey Theatre*".
- OCTOBER** Historian Dr **Anne Cunningham** gave us an absorbing and typically deeply-researched Talk on "*Christopher Coveny – Australian Exile*".

SOCIAL FUNCTIONS

ST PATRICK'S DAY DINNER:

For our St Patrick's Day celebration on Friday 20 March we returned to the splendid Strangers Dining Room in Parliament House in Macquarie Street. 83 members and their guests attended. Our new President, Dr Jeff Kildea, welcomed the guests, and introduced our speaker. The national anthems of Ireland and Australia were sung, to accompaniment by Arlene Tansey, and the message from the President of Ireland was read.

After dinner, our speaker for the evening (as well as our host) was our member **the Hon Tony Kelly MLC**, Minister for Planning, Infrastructure and Lands. Appropriately for the Macquarie Bicentennial year, Tony spoke to us on "*Lachlan Macquarie and the impact of his Governorship on Irish Australians*".

MID-YEAR LUNCHEON

71 members and their guests attended the luncheon, which was held on a glorious sunny Saturday 24 July, once again at the Sydney Rowing Club on the banks of the Parramatta River at Abbotsford.

Dr Gabrielle Carey, writer and university teacher, gave the sixteenth Annual *Joan Ward Memorial Address*. She spoke most engagingly to us about some aspects of her life especially its intersections with Ireland and Irishness, and read beautifully from her recent book *So Many Selves*.

CHRISTMAS PARTY

This year's party was held on Monday 29 November at the NSW Leagues Club in Phillip Street in the city, in former days a regular venue for our monthly meetings. The party was as usual a very convivial evening, and was attended by 46 members and friends.

AISLING SOCIETY MILESTONES IN 2010

- **Dr John Best** was awarded the Order of Australia, a wonderful honour for which our heartfelt congratulations are offered
- **Brendan O'Connell's** enormous contribution to the Society over fifty years was fittingly recognised at the St Patrick's Day Dinner by the conferring on him of Life Membership
- In May Consul-General, Pat Scullion, left Australia after six years to take up his new posting as Irish Ambassador to Cyprus. He takes with him our very best wishes and thanks for his tremendous support of and interest in the Society. We also extend the warmest of welcomes to his successor, Catriona Ingoldsby
- The Society purchased two copies of the recently published, magisterial, nine-volume Dictionary of Irish Biography, and donated one to each of UNSW and Sydney University
- As the poet wrote, April is the cruellest month. In April this year the Society lost two wonderful members of very long standing: **Philip Lee**, Life Member and twice President of the Society, and **Dennis Kelliher**, and in the same month former member Professor **Colm Kiernan** as well. Later in the year **Margaret McMahon** also died after a long illness.
We miss them all. They gave us much. May they rest in peace.

EVENTS DURING THE YEAR IN WHICH MEMBERS OF THE SOCIETY PARTICIPATED

- Our Life Member Bishop David Cremin celebrated his 80th birthday in February, and many Aisling members were among the more than 400 people who attended the celebration luncheon in his honour
- St Patrick's Day Parade: a large group of members led by our immediate past President, Patrick Tansey, marched under the Society's banner accompanying the 'Aisling Car' in the Parade
- The Society again made donations to the St Patrick's Day Mass Committee and to the St Patrick's Day Parade Committee.
- In March, Peter Gray represented the Society at the traditional Lansdowne Club St Patrick's Day Lunch, by kind invitation of the Club
- Both our President, Dr Jeff Kildea, and our Vice-President, Mary Lee, represented the Society at the UNSW prizegiving in April, when our two prize winners were Robert Jones in History and Jessica Bellamy in English
- Jeff Kildea also represented the Society at a ceremony held by the School of Philosophical and Historical Inquiry at Sydney University in May, when our prize was awarded jointly to Belinda Jang and Jessica Stone

- November saw the triumphant and long-awaited launch of both the Australian Ireland Fund Chair in Modern Irish Studies and the John Hume Institute for Global Irish Studies, at the University of New South Wales. Professor Ronan McDonald, inaugural Director of the John Hume Institute, delivered an address entitled *Beyond Ireland: Cultures or Encounter and Exchange*. Many Aisling members were present at this wonderful occasion, at which our President Jeff Kildea formally presented the University with the Society's gift of the Dictionary of Irish Biography

AISLING SOCIETY PRIZES

In 2010, Prizes of \$150 were again offered to students from the University of New South Wales, the University of Sydney, the University of Wollongong, Macquarie University, the University of Western Sydney and the Australian Catholic University. Prizewinners announced in 2010 were:

University of New South Wales	Jessica Bellamy (English prize) and Robert Jones (History prize)
University of Sydney	Belinda Jang and Jessica Stone

CONCLUSION

My thanks again to the members of the Aisling Society for the honour they give me by entrusting me with the Secretary's role. Thanks also to Jeff Kildea as President, Maureen McLoughlin and Trudi O'Neil in particular, and all the Council members generally, for the help and support which I have received during the year. I again record also the Society's sincere thanks to the Consulate-General of Ireland, especially Pat Scullion, Catriona Ingoldsby and Siobhan Kelly Antonucci, for their interest in and support of our activities and for continuing to welcome us to their elegant premises at 1 Market Street. I look forward to another enjoyable and successful year in 2011.

Peter Gray
HON SECRETARY

January 2011