

The O'Lavery Library Project | NEWSLETTER



Autumn 2017

The Secret is Out!

One of historical Belfast's best kept secrets will be revealed this week with the formal opening of the refurbished James O'Lavery Library under the tower of the prestigious St. Malachy's College in north central Belfast.

Hitherto only a few privileged scholars and researchers have been able to work among the dusty tomes of this rich and varied antiquarian library. Now, thanks to a generous grant of almost £600,000 - from the Heritage Lottery Fund and with partner-funding from the Diocese, this historic room has been transformed. A major in-house conservation programme has also been taking place to clean and repair damaged volumes.

Now the Irish collection of the eponymous James O'Lavery, the scientific and mathematical books of Bishop Cornelius Denvir and the theological library of



Bishop Patrick Dorrian will be accessible to historians and general readers. In addition some smaller collections have been housed in the new facility including books from the Garron Tower library.

The next step of cataloguing some 6,000 books together with manuscripts, periodicals, letters, photographs and archival material is now under way.

A Cabinet Reshuffle

For 145 years the books of the 'Founding Fathers' of St. Malachy's College



nestled behind the glass fronted doors of dark pitch-pine cabinets. At some stage an unattractive brown lacquer was applied to the wood and yet a few panel members thought that, for the sake of authenticity, the 19th century shelving with its original glass doors was worth preserving.

Most of the 'remainers' (including the archivist) have been won over by the freshly finished white ash cases. The innovative layout of modern, open-



plan shelving with attached display cases by architect Kieran McCambridge and the accurate craftsmanship of contractor Peter McErlain and his team

have managed to create a distinctive ambience. The books have the accommodation they deserve and students will experience a most congenial atmosphere.



In Search of Charles Cosslett

The Diaries of an 18th century student at Trinity College Dublin were the subject of an historical talk in the College Library in June as part of the O'Laverty Library Project Outreach. Author and historian, Mr Hugh O'Neill informed a large audience about the discovery of two diaries of Charles Grimké Cosslett in the College Archives. Hugh went on to tell us how this was followed by another surprising discovery - that these little books were part of a larger set housed in the William L. Clements Library in the University of Michigan at Ann Arbor in the United States.

Hugh, a student at St. Malachy's in the late 1950s and a retired university lecturer, described how he pieced together what he knew of Cosslett's background:

"Charles' father was a judge in North Carolina who owned slaves but also land in the townland of Annadorn near Loughinisland, Co. Down. Young Cosslett kept a diary record of his travels in Ireland, England, Scotland and the Isle of Man, spanning the years from 1793-1795. Such journeys in that era had become common and many of those who undertook them wrote accounts of their journeys. In a sense they replaced the 'Grand Tour', the continent of Europe being closed to travellers from the British Isles due to the French Revolutionary wars.

Cosslett's travels took him all round Ireland, mainly by the coastal route. He also went to Scotland, going as far as Loch Lomond and Glasgow, and from there south into England

where he reached Portsmouth. Two journeys were made to the Isle of Man. Occasionally he travelled with a companion but very often his were solitary travels.

We do not know how six diaries came to be in the United States nor how the first two arrived in the College. Thanks to the good offices of Cheney Schopieray, Keeper of Manuscripts in Ann Arbor I was permitted to photograph the former in 2015, subsequently transcribing them and extensively footnoting them.

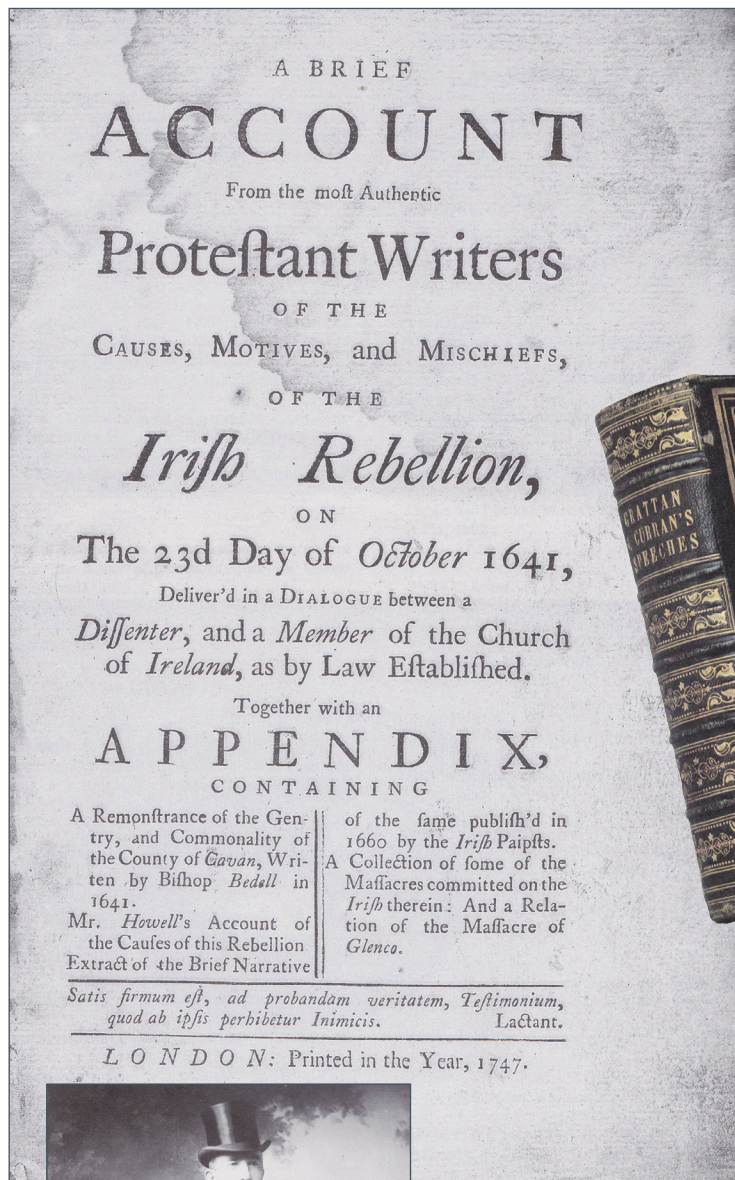
As to how the first two came to be in St. Malachy's College an admittedly speculative explanation is available. A priest of the diocese of Down and Connor, one Fr Anthony Cosslett was P.P. in Holywood before his transfer to Glenarm. It seems likely that Fr Cosslett was a younger son of the diarist and that he may have

left the books behind in his move to Glenarm. He was later succeeded in Holywood by Monsignor James O'Laverty whose library was bequeathed to the College. Solving this mystery will involve more research and this is a work in progress at this point."

You can read a more detailed account of Hugh's research in the forthcoming edition of *Familia*, the **Ulster Genealogical Review**.

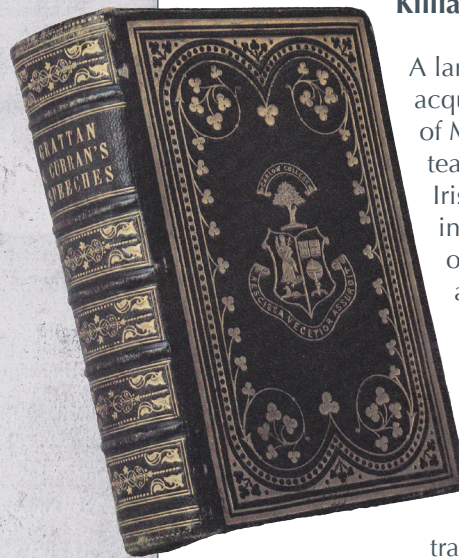


Jewels from 'The Tower'



Canon Daniel McEvoy (1874-1960) and items from the Garron Tower Collection

One morning in early July a large white van made its way down the picturesque Antrim coast road towards Belfast carrying a valuable cargo for delivery to St. Malachy's College. Inside were 96 strong archival boxes each filled with books – the antiquarian library of Garron Tower. This was a collection of books, pamphlets, manuscripts and other more modern material which had been donated to the former St. MacNissi's College (now St. Killian's) over the years.



A large part of the new acquisition is from the library of Mr W.J. Elliott, a former teacher. These are mostly Irish history and folklore but include a substantial number of works on European art and architecture. The bulk of the collection, however, is from the library of Canon Daniel McEvoy (1874-1960). These are comprised mainly of 18th and 19th century books, pamphlets and tracts relating to Ireland. It reflects his diverse interests. It is particularly rich in works relating to the 1790s, a range of Annals, parish histories, religious tracts of different denominations and a comprehensive range of general histories of Ireland. The rebellion of 1798 was clearly of particular interest to him.

Daniel McEvoy was born in Glenarm. His father Hugh had come there to work for Archibald McNeill, the father of Eoin MacNeill. Daniel enrolled in St. Malachy's College in the autumn of 1888 and soccer football was his major interest. He appears in an early team photograph. Later his two great passions in life were the acquisition of books and Celtic Football Club. Unlike many of his clerical colleagues he was not a fan of the GAA. He was legendary for his support of Belfast Celtic and, it is said, became an 'honorary director'.

It is clear that this remarkable priest wanted to make his books available to a wider readership.



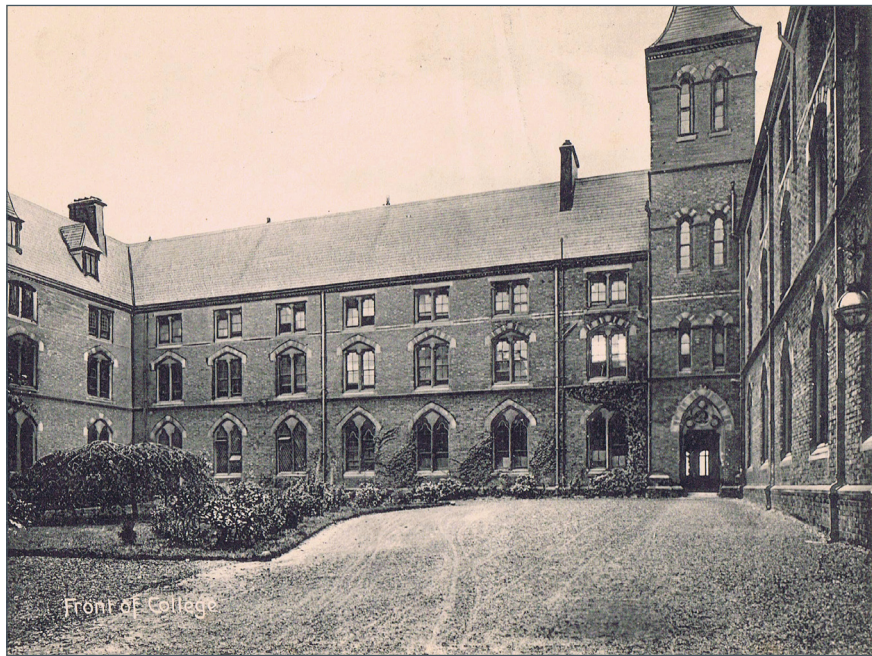
From the Archives

Do you have your kit?

What could a new student expect when entering the College during the time of Dr Richard Marner? An advertisement for the College in the early 1870s gives us some clues.

‘The object of the establishment is to prepare young gentlemen for professional and mercantile pursuits. The course of studies comprises Logic, Natural Philosophy, Latin, Greek, French Mathematics, History, Music and Drawing . . . Special attention is paid to Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, English Composition, Book-keeping and Mensuration – branches of the utmost importance in a commercial town like Belfast.’

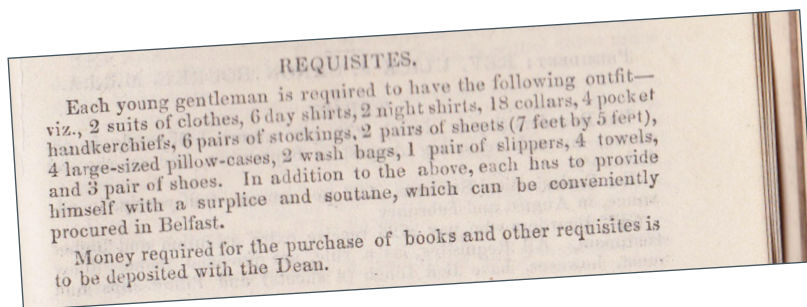
The fees were £7 and ten shillings per term and the following requirements were listed under ‘Requisites’:



‘Each young gentleman is required to have the following outfit – viz., 2 suits of clothes, 6 day shirts, 2

night shirts, 18 collars, 4 pocket handkerchiefs, 6 pairs of stockings, 2 pairs of sheets, 4 large-sized pillow cases, 2 wash bags, 1 pair of slippers, 4 towels, and 3 pairs of shoes. In addition to the above, each has to provide himself with a surplice and soutane, which can be conveniently procured in Belfast.

Money required for the purchase of books and other requisites to be deposited with the Dean.’



Coming soon (dates to be finalised):

Year 8 Heritage Trail; ‘Who do you think you are?’ Tracing the ancestors; Book Care workshop; A major book launch, historical talks and exhibitions

Thanks to:

Hugh O’Neill, Sean McCafferty, Gareth Gilvary, Eoghan Todd, Declan O’Hare, Darren McArdle, Pádraig Crummey, Rachel Mullan, Jason Donaghy, Roddy Hegarty, Marie McCrory, Rachel Coote, Caoimhin Shannon, Éamon Phoenix, Fr. Martin Kelly, John Leonard, James McCrossan

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