

CELTIC CROSSROADS:  
LOCAL MEMORIES OF A GLOBAL IRISH HUB.  
19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> CENTURY WARWICK

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*Introduction*<sup>1</sup>

This paper traces the experience of one young Irish family from County Clare who migrated to the southern Darling Downs in Queensland in 1883. Their story was told by their granddaughter, Mary O'Seighin (née Talty, deceased 2018) and provides her living memory of their migration account and subsequent settlement in Warwick - a place she recalled as having a 'big Irish Catholic community'.<sup>2</sup> Mary's story was recorded by the author in January 2003.<sup>3</sup>

*The Journey*

In 1883, Gaelic speaking 27-year-old Peter Talty took the momentous decision to leave County Clare in the west of Ireland and emigrate to Australia. He sailed on board the passenger ship *Chyebassa* with his 20-year-old wife Mary Hogan, their two-year-old son, Hugh, and his 12-year-old niece Ellen Creedy. As Peter and his little group set sail for Australia several of his siblings headed for America, on the opposite side of the world. The *Chyebassa* followed the eastern shipping route, sailing through the Sunda Strait and stopping briefly at Batavia just weeks before the island of Krakatoa tore itself apart in a cataclysmic, volcanic explosion.<sup>4</sup> After a ten-week voyage, Peter, Mary, Hugh and Ellen disembarked in Brisbane in late July. The memory of their journey was kept alive by the family as recounted by Mary:

Well, both my grandparents came from County Clare and they were married when they left Ireland. And they arrived in Australia in 1883 with one child, 2-year old Hugh. And they came on the ship Chyebassa and they arrived in Brisbane and I believe they went by bullock dray up Spicers Gap over the...through to the Darling Downs. Swan Creek was where they settled and went on from there.<sup>5</sup>

Peter's 12-year-old niece, Ellen had her own transport 'I believe she rode a horse from Brisbane to Swan Creek. First time ever on a horse at twelve years of age so that would have been quite a feat for her!' <sup>6</sup>

Traffic bound for the Darling Downs today crosses the Great Dividing Range at Cunningham's Gap but nineteenth-century travellers were more familiar with Spicer's Gap, twenty-three kilometres to the south. Travellers headed for the southern Darling Downs picked their way over steep, razorback ridges and dense sub-tropical undergrowth to reach farming and grazing land at the headwaters of one of Australia's great rivers, the Condamine, which flows inland to form the Murray-Darling basin. Bushfires, flash floods, acute illness: all took their toll; a little abandoned settler graveyard near the summit attests to the loss of life these incidents caused.<sup>7</sup>

According to Mary, Peter took the decision to leave Ireland because he saw no future for his young family there, ‘well, what I’ve been told, the circumstances, they were pretty poor at the time and they were a young couple and just had the one child and thought it didn’t seem that there was much future staying in Ireland so they decided that they would come to Australia.’<sup>8</sup> It is likely that there were friends, or possibly family members, who had gone on before and were already settled in Swan Creek who encouraged him to join them, giving him assurances that a better life was to be had in Australia, ‘they obviously had friends here who must have been communicating with them and saying oh, come to Australia.’<sup>9</sup>

There was every reason to go. County Clare was locked in a deadly land war between landlords and tenants.<sup>10</sup> Forced evictions were commonplace occurrences. Pitched battles were fought between local farmers, the bailiffs and the police. Families barricaded themselves in their homes, stuffing windows and doorways with gorse bushes to deny entry to the authorities but, ultimately, they were no match for the battering ram which smashed through the stone walls or the flaming torch which set the thatch alight.<sup>11</sup>

### *Swan Creek*

The Talty family spent their first years in Queensland at Swan Creek, twelve kilometres east of Warwick, in the foothills on the western side of the Great Dividing Range.<sup>12</sup> By 1883 Swan Creek was a busy rural community of established farmers, publicans, shopkeepers, wheelwrights and blacksmiths. Most importantly of all for the little farming community, it boasted a railway station linking it to Warwick and to markets for produce and timber coming from the Darling Downs.<sup>13</sup>

The family lived under canvas for the first year and Mary recalls they were forcibly struck by the coldness of the winter weather. ‘I can understand why so many of them went up on the Darling Downs because in the winter-time it’s a very cold place to be and I think if you’re going to find green anywhere in Queensland, you’re going to find it up there you know. So, I see why it attracted a lot of them to there you know.’<sup>14</sup> Although family history never mentions the final cataclysmic explosion of Krakatoa, even though the sound was heard in Australia, we know that event caused temperatures to drop by up to one degree around the world for the duration of the following year. The aboriginal (Githabul) name for Warwick – Waringh Waringh, signifies a ‘cold place’ and we can assume that the name derived from the local climate being cold before temperatures dropped further following the Krakatoa explosion.<sup>15</sup>

Peter found work with the railways and worked on the extension of the Killarney rail line which ran from Warwick through the little towns that hugged the foothills of the Ranges. The work was completed in 1885 and the line opened for business in 1887. The family think it is unlikely that Peter worked on the railway in Ireland but other family members did work for the railways. The Percy French song, ‘*Are ye right there Michael, are ye right*’, published in 1902 as a parody about the tardiness of the West Clare railway system, was dedicated to Michael Talty, a relative.<sup>16</sup> According to his grand-daughter Mary, Peter Talty spent the rest of his working life with the Queensland railways, the ‘ribbon of steel’ that stretched from the border with NSW to far north Queensland and inland to rural centres like Roma and Charleville.<sup>17</sup>

My grandfather worked in the Queensland railways until he retired, so he died at 83, so he was a long time employed in the one job. He worked on that

Killarney line and from what I understand he was there most of his time around that Darling Downs area, you know.<sup>18</sup>

The railways were vitally important to the settlement and economic success of Queensland. Government immigration policies saw immigrants landed at Cooktown, Townsville, Mackay, Rockhampton, Maryborough, Bundaberg, Brisbane and other ports along the coast.<sup>19</sup> Given the vast distances and the dispersed nature of settlement in Queensland, the railways provided the fastest and most modern transport of goods and people. The proud boast of the railways was that there would be a line within a half-day cart ride for any farmer, an important consideration for any farming community needing to transport produce to market.

Queensland Railways' First Chief Commissioner was the Irishman Abraham Fitzgibbon who recruited a workforce comprised largely of Irishmen. Fitzgibbon had considerable experience in surveying and construction of railways in Ireland, Canada, the United States, Ceylon and New Zealand.<sup>20</sup> Fitzgibbon successfully argued for use of the narrow-gauge track as the most economic and suited-to-purpose choice for the Queensland terrain.<sup>21</sup>

### *Faugh-a-Ballagh*

One of the first four locomotives to arrive in Queensland was named the *Faugh-a-Ballagh*, Irish for 'clear the way' with the subtext 'or prepare to fight'. It was imported from England and was the first locomotive in Queensland to run under its own steam during a test run from Ipswich to Toowoomba in 1865. For many years afterwards it was a familiar sight as it whistled and roared across the Darling Downs. The Warwick line intersected with the main line running from Toowoomba in the northern Darling Downs to Wallangarra on the New South Wales border. At this point passengers were required to alight from the train on the narrow-gauge line on the Queensland side of the platform and board the train on the broader rail gauge on the New South Wales side of the platform to travel on to Sydney. Warwick, a two-and-a-half-hour journey up the line was an important inter and intrastate crossroads and a meeting point for new migrants travelling to the interior. Rail lines radiated out from Warwick to the little villages and farms that dotted the Southern Downs within a 35-kilometre range. It was an integrated and sophisticated transport system, linking farming communities to growing regional and urban centres.<sup>22</sup>

With the population growing rapidly and transport for agricultural produce guaranteed by the railways, Warwick and district prospered. Big hotels graced the streets leading to the railway station where passengers could stay whilst awaiting connections to the coast or inland Queensland. The railway station was the transport hub of its day, not unlike a major airport or bus interchange of today. Immigrants from Ireland continued to arrive, taking advantage of the Queensland Government's Assisted Passage Scheme and at the urging of the Catholic Archbishops to take up land, secure voting rights and help to shape their own destinies.<sup>23</sup>

From the middle of the 1860s to the end of the second decade of the twentieth century, Warwick's Catholic community built the old and the new St Mary's churches, a church hall, a convent, three schools and outlying parish churches in each main village settlement, all with money raised from subscription by the parishioners. They aimed high. Over time, construction progressed from simple timber and bark huts to elaborate sandstone-built edifices.<sup>24</sup> In 1865 the "Old Church" was completed and later formally named St Mary of the Assumption. In 1874 the first St Mary's School was established by the Sisters of Mercy. In 1893 the construction of Our Lady of Assumption Convent, now known as the Abbey of

the Roses, was completed. The convent was designed by the same firm of architects (Simkin and Ibler) who designed the Breakfast Creek Hotel in Brisbane. The stained-glass windows depicting the Four Evangelists were designed by the Royal Bavarian Art Institute for Stained Glass, who also made glass for the Vatican. The statue of St Patrick was designed by Frédéric Auguste Bartholdi, the same sculptor who designed the Statue of Liberty. In 1926 construction of the New St Mary's Church was completed.

Regular attendance at church services swelled the coffers which were further amplified by donations, bequests, gifts and special fundraising events such as fairs, sports days, family picnics and race days. Church ledgers for the 1920s itemise gifts donated for the Christian Brothers fundraising bazaar, including a turkey gobbler, a sack of potatoes, a bag of cheese, a dressed doll, a wedding cake, a pair of camisoles, a case of wine.<sup>25</sup> These gifts indicate a rural, domestic economy and the input of women to the fundraising effort. The average ticket cost 6 shillings and all monies raised went to the building fund for the Christian Brothers school. Buildings were raised stone by stone, window by window, as money was found to finance each stage of building. Church ledgers for the years 1865–1925 list who donated money, how much they gave and where they lived.<sup>26</sup> Those who were a little more hesitant about giving a donation were encouraged to do so by visits from the ladies of the sodality and the occasional mention from the altar. On one occasion the Priest ordered the church doors closed following mass so no one could slink away without paying their dues. Donations varied from a few shillings to £5 or more. These donations continued unabated with only minor falls during the years of First World War and the Depressions in the 1890s and 1920s.

Catholic emancipation had granted the Irish religious freedom but political freedom still lay in the future. Lacking any real political influence within Ireland, Irish Catholics looked to the princes of the church for leadership. In Australia, they found it in men like Archbishop Mannix and local Parish Priest, Monsignor Potter of Warwick. According to Father Peter Murphy, 'Potter, like (his predecessor) Horan, structured the parish as in rural Ireland.'<sup>27</sup> This allowed the priest to keep track of parishioners and to call on them to organise community events such as the annual St Patrick's Day Parade, or to participate in fundraising activities on behalf of the parish.<sup>28</sup>

Between 1900–11 this faith-based, social and economic community erected nine local parish churches in the villages and townlands that radiated out from Warwick to all points of the compass with Warwick as the administrative centre of operations. A further two were built in 1954 and 1957 respectively. A high point for Warwick's catholic community came in February 1920 when Archbishop Mannix visited Warwick and laid the foundation stone for the new church. According to local church historian the Rev Father McKey, 'the people went wild with delight to have Dr Mannix in their midst and carried him shoulder high around the grounds'.<sup>29</sup> Fr Peter Murphy recalled that 'a carnival spirit gripped the town. Nine trains converged on Warwick. People drank the pubs dry, ate the cafes out and chaired the Archbishop around the grounds.'<sup>30</sup> The church was completed in 1926.

### *Killarney*

Meanwhile Peter and Mary Talty were busy with a young and growing family. They moved from Swan Creek to a farm on the hilly northern outskirts of the town of Killarney, 35 kilometres from Warwick. Killarney was originally an outstation of Canning Station, named either by the Leslie brothers, squatters in the district in the 1840s, or by their Irish convict servant Peter Murphy. Major settlement occurred in the 1850s when cedar cutters moved into

the area to harvest the exotic cedars and rosewood timbers for which the district is famous. For the first few years all went well but tragedy struck with the death of seven-year-old Mary Ann Talty in 1891 whose clothing caught alight in a backyard fire, a not uncommon occurrence when open fire was the main source of heating and cooking.

In 1894 Peter acquired by Conditional Selection 160 acres of agricultural land described on the surveyor's map as being steep, rough and covered in dense vine scrub.<sup>31</sup> The land, known to this day as Talty's paddock, was located close to land farmed by the Brosnan family who hailed from County Kerry and who had come to the area in the 1860s. The Brosnans were notable for their farming and horsemanship skills and second generation Brosnans played a pivotal role at Warwick Railway Station as the new century emerged.<sup>32</sup>

Then in 1904, Mary, struggling to deliver her eleventh baby at age forty, died in labour, the baby girl she was trying to give birth to, died with her. Both were buried in the public cemetery in Warwick, in a grave marked by just a little stone, until their descendants located the grave and added a memorial marker. As an early chronicler of life on the Downs observed:

When considering the hardships the pioneer women had to go through, camping under tarpaulins spread over bullock drays, cooking rough food as best they could, under cold and wet weather conditions at open fires, at the same time nursing infants and seeing to their other children, which they dare not allow out of their sight, and comparing our present-day luxurious mode of travelling by trains, trams and motor cars, it is enough to make the present-day people refrain from complaining at the trivial ills that they sometimes imagine are hard to put up with in life.<sup>33</sup>

Peter carried on, working on the railways and caring for his children. Mary recalled 'he did the best he could for them under the circumstances. He had a two-year old, he had about six of them under the age of thirteen when she died.'<sup>34</sup> Mary's mother said he was a saint, he lived only for the children:

I remember my mother saying, "you never bothered to marry again Peter"? and she said he told her, "there will never be another one like my Mary," you know. And he died, some forty years or something after her and he never worried about anybody, you know.<sup>35</sup>

Peter instilled in his children a strong belief in the value of education for self-improvement and economic advancement, a spirit that still lingers in the family today. A frequent refrain of Mary's was her grand-parents' poverty and lack of education, making them easy targets for exploitation and abuse. Perhaps Peter drew strength from the strong community life that centred around the church and its many social activities. Father Peter Murphy wrote that: 'Warwick's population was always close to 40 percent Irish, born in Ireland or here. The men had come in the 70s, 80s and 90s, as shepherds or railway workers, and the women as domestics.'<sup>36</sup>

### *Community Life*

Mary recalled growing up in a community that was so thoroughly Irish in its composition that she thought she was Irish:

I thought I was Irish until one of the nuns told me, “no, you are not Irish.” And I went home and I said “I’m not Irish!” And my mother said, “no, you’re not Irish. You are Australian,” you know. I might have been about 10 or 11, you know, but we used to...we came from...our home was very Irish. Do you know what I mean? I mean we would be around the piano on a Saturday, playing and singing Irish songs, you know. So yes, we were very much entrenched in the Irish traditions.<sup>37</sup>

In a town where, as she recalls, the doctor, chemist, dentist and shopkeepers as well as the farmers, were all Irish, it is not hard to understand her confusion:

Even the farmers were Irish. We knew a lot of the farmers outside of Warwick there and if they weren’t born in Ireland they were – like my Dad, of Irish parentage, yeah. So yes, there was a big Irish Catholic community in Warwick.<sup>38</sup>

Her words are echoed by Fr Peter Murphy who wrote:

Warwick’s parish was very Irish in practice as well as in structure, with an enthusiasm that was unique. Parishioners loved the Mass and the Family Rosary. They travelled miles to Mass, after milking many cows and fasting, and it was late morning before they broke their fast. Mass Sunday was also a big social event, with the people hanging around all day, talking shop and enjoying games.<sup>39</sup>

Mary recalled her grandfather as an old man singing songs in Irish:

Oh yes! He used to sing in Irish. Of course, we didn’t know what he was singing about or anything, but you knew he was singing something that was different to what we were used to. It certainly wasn’t English. He used to sing that Mother Macree a lot you know. And he’d have us sittin’ on his knee, joggin’ along there and singin’ his songs and he was a great story teller, spooky ones and we’d be just about ready to climb under the table. Ghost stories! Quite a lot! I think he made them up, yeah, I’m sure they were all made up. Quite a character he was!<sup>40</sup>

Story-telling, including ‘spooky’ ghost stories have long been a part of traditional Irish life, along with the oral transmission of family and local history. Peter’s speech was peppered with Irish words and expressions, ‘they were both Irish speakers, yes. He (Mary’s father, Tom) used to say if they wanted to say something in front of the children and they didn’t want them to know, they would speak Irish.’<sup>41</sup> She thought he was ‘going crook at us kids’ until her own father, Tom, pointed out that he was speaking Irish:

I recall I couldn’t quite pick him up at times because of his accent. And I would say it was because he may not have spoken English at all ‘til he came to Australia.

Some of the words she was able to recall were *garsún* (boy), *bóthar* (road), *bóithrín* (pathway). Mary did not mention whether or not her father, Tom, spoke Irish but he clearly knew what the language sounded like and understood some of what his father, Peter, was saying. Mary's own children have recovered the language and one is a fluent Irish speaker who regularly broadcasts in the Irish language on community radio in Brisbane.

The strong sense of community and social life entwined around Irish identity continued well into the middle of the twentieth century.<sup>42</sup> St Mary's Hall, known to Mary as the CUSA (Catholic United Services Auxillary) was the venue for social gatherings:

Oh, there was lots of Irish people. They used to all meet at what they called the CUSA, the little old hall next to the Catholic Church in those days and they'd meet there with all their offspring and there'd be dancing and singing, and all sorts of chatter you know and getting' together, catchin' up with one another and all that, you know. So, yes it was quite a community!<sup>43</sup>

Mary recalled her own father playing the piano, fiddle and accordion or "squeezebox". None of the family learned music formally, it just came naturally to them, she recalled:<sup>44</sup>

They all played and [had] quite good singing voices. But they all played - like my Dad played the piano, flute, a little old squeezebox. They were all very musical. None of them ever learned any music it was just a natural sort of a thing.<sup>45</sup>

### *The War Years*

Things changed dramatically as the new century dawned. Larger rail centres like Toowoomba won contracts to undertake maintenance on the engines and rolling stock and they employed a growing workforce to fill their various trade vacancies, drawing in the previously rural workforce to an urbanised and unionised environment. By July 1917 Peter Talty had sold his land in Killarney, and was living at Cranley, near Toowoomba, though this did not end the family's association with Warwick. The older Talty sons were working on the railways with their father when World War I broke out. Queensland Railways were the largest single employer in the State and 2,500 railway employees enlisted for service in the Great War, among them the Talty boys.<sup>46</sup>

Three Talty brothers enlisted and their names are recorded on the Toowoomba Railways, Toowoomba Employees Honour Board for 1914–19. In later life Peter Talty would reminisce about his own attempt to enlist at the same time as his sons but he was rejected. The first to enlist was Peter Talty jnr. on 1<sup>st</sup> October 1915. At the time he was single and worked as a fireman with the railways.<sup>47</sup> He returned to Australia on 21 June 1919. Next was Michael who enlisted on 28 February 1916 at the age 20. He was listed as a single, Roman Catholic labourer from Cranley near Toowoomba. He either died at the Battle of Bullecourt or was wounded at that battle and later died of his wounds: records differ on the matter. His father Peter later said he died at Bapaume. He is buried in Grevillers British Cemetery at Pas De Calais, France.<sup>48</sup> Thomas Lawrence Talty, Mary's father, enlisted on 19 June 1916. He was described on his enlistment form as 18 years of age, single, Roman Catholic and a railway employee from Toowoomba.<sup>49</sup> Thomas left Australia from Sydney on 14<sup>th</sup> June 1917 with

the Reinforcements to 31<sup>st</sup> Battalion. He returned to Australia on 16<sup>th</sup> February 1919, but not before visiting County Clare in his parent's native Ireland, according to his daughter Mary:

When Dad was over there in the first World War, he was stationed on Salisbury Plains in England and of course he went across to Clare to meet some of the relatives. When I was over there about four years ago (1998 or 99) I met this little man who would have been a cousin of my father's, in his 80s, and he said "I remember your father coming here, in this very house he stood" he said, "eh, talking to us in a soldiers uniform," he said "I was only a little kid at the time". Well, Dad was only 16 himself when he went over there so you know---and he lived just over the one hundred mark so it's quite possible this fellow had the right person, you know. He was talking to him. It was very interesting to listen to him, to what he could tell you about the background and everything, you know.

Mary thought there could be truth in her elderly relative's story because her father had lied about his age when he enlisted. He told them he was 18 years old when in fact, he had barely turned 16.

The Talty brothers are just three names among the 559 listed on the Toowoomba Railway Honours Board commemorating the railway employees in and around Toowoomba who served in the Great War.<sup>50</sup> The casualty rate hit the railway families hard. Travellers and railway workers on the interstate line passing through Toowoomba, Warwick and Wallangarra saw the effects of the war with each passing train carrying casualties home.<sup>51</sup>

On the home front in Australia things were not going well. There was industrial and political unrest throughout the country in 1917, as Joan Beaumont puts it: 'all the war weariness and grievances of the past three years combined to trigger spontaneous combustion.'<sup>52</sup> Mass sackings of railway workers in New South Wales, coal strikes, shipping strikes, shortages of goods, materials and basics of life plus the two conscription referendums of 1916–17, highlighted major divisions in Australian society.<sup>53</sup> The news from Ireland was not good either. The Rising of 1916 had been suppressed and its leaders executed. The country was in a state of turmoil leading up to the war of Independence in 1919.

### *'That' Egg*

When Prime Minister Billy Hughes arrived in Queensland on 27 November 1917 to talk up conscription, he found a less than enthusiastic population. On the 29 November Prime Minister Hughes left Brisbane to return to Sydney via the mail train. The train was scheduled to stop briefly at Warwick to take on water. The Brosnan brothers, Paddy and Bart, former neighbours of the Talty family, had prepared their welcome. As local history records it, the brothers knew a barmaid at the Universal Hotel on Grafton St, Warwick, opposite the railway station. They gave her some eggs to ripen under the roof irons up in the attic, so they would be ready for the Prime Minister.<sup>54</sup>

When Hughes emerged from the back carriage at Warwick railway station to make a speech in support of conscription, he was pelted with eggs. A scuffle ensued and the Prime Minister demanded that the egg throwers be arrested. The local Sergeant refused to arrest the egg thrower on the grounds that he was an employee of the State of Queensland and had no jurisdiction in federal matters. This incensed Prime Minister Hughes. Consequently, he

ordered the establishment of the Commonwealth Police Force, turning what was essentially a minor incident into one of national significance.<sup>55</sup>

As he returned to Sydney, Prime Minister Billy Hughes, addressing a crowd in Armidale, made the comment that Senior Sergeant Kenny did not arrest the egg thrower because ‘there was in Queensland today a Government which stood for Sinn Fein and the IWW. (Cheers).’<sup>56</sup> As for the barmaid who hid the eggs, when later asked by police what she knew about the egging of the Prime Minister, she replied that she knew the hen that laid the eggs.

### *Legacy*

Speaking of the role of memory and the making of meaning in historical account Alessandro Portelli, the internationally renowned oral historian said ‘oral sources tell us not just what people did, but what they wanted to do, what they believed they were doing and what they now think they did.’<sup>57</sup> The Warwick Egg Incident is recalled in story, ballad, commemorative events and even a golfing trophy which the local golf club awarded annually in the form of an egg. Following the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the ‘Egg’, the Australian Federal Police commissioned a commemorative display case from the Warwick Woodworkers Group at the centre of which locals playfully placed an egg. The Egg Incident has entered the public memory locally and is gaining in mythological status.

Mary O’Seighin (Talty) related the story of the egg to me at the same time as she recalled her father’s and two uncles’ involvement in the Great War. The egg was, and is, significant in her memory of them, especially the uncle who did not return from the war. To Mary, a sulphurous smelling egg was nothing compared to the horrors of mustard gas in World War I, it represented a blow for freedom and independence.

In 1935 Peter celebrated his eightieth birthday among ninety guests at the home of his son at a bayside suburb in Brisbane. He had retired from the Queensland Railways in 1920 after thirty six years of service. He was still an active member of the labour movement according to the newspaper report that recorded the celebration of his birthday.<sup>58</sup> His eight surviving children were married and scattered across Queensland from Roma to Townsville and Brisbane, but the connection to Warwick continued when Tom, Mary’s father, took the decision to return to live and raise his own family there.

Peter Talty lived to the age of 83, he never saw Ireland or any of his siblings again but he never forgot his beloved County Clare. When he lay dying at the home of one of his children in Brisbane in 1939, word came from Townsville that a new grandchild had been born and would be named Clare. ‘Ah County Clare,’ he said, ‘God bless her’<sup>59</sup>. As per his final request his remains were taken back to Warwick to be buried alongside his beloved Mary and the daughters who predeceased him.

Ellen Creedy, Peter’s 12-year-old niece who travelled with him from Ireland, married a ‘chap called McConville from Ireland, at Swan Creek, when she turned eighteen’. She ultimately settled in a house behind the Catholic Church in Warwick where she lived until her death in 1962 aged ninety-one years. She was known as a daily attendant at mass and referred to locally as Granny McConville:

I can remember her quite well. She lived across from St Mary’s church in Warwick as she got older, with her daughter and her family. She used to go to mass every morning and everybody in Warwick knew Granny McConville, they called her; you know.<sup>60</sup>

The local squatter family, the Leslies who attempted to recreate a southern hemisphere landed gentry but failed in that venture, are commemorated in the public space. Their faces are sculpted onto granite boulders overlooking the town dam. The public park is named after them. They are commemorated as the rugged pioneers forging a way for others to follow but, without the labour of the many like the Talty family, Warwick would never have been built. Inasmuch as the Leslie family were an international land-owning elite, the Talty family were a globalised working-class family whose members were long called on to provide labour and troops for various wars.

The Talty family are remembered privately, through family history and story, and in the military memorials of their World War I contribution. In addition to a love of education, Peter Talty instilled a love of Ireland and a strong sense of identity in his children, an identity reinforced by Warwick's strong Irish presence. He also imparted to them a strong commitment to the Labor movement.<sup>61</sup> As Mary's story attests, the Talty family rode the railways out of a rural life into economic prosperity. Perhaps, as Patrick O'Farrell suggests, Peter Talty found farming 'too uncertain, too worrisome.'<sup>62</sup> The transmitted family history from one generation to another allowed the family in Australia to remain a part of a global Talty family and to reconnect whenever circumstances permitted, such as during the Great War. Modern technology supports the forging of family relationships on a scale Peter could only have dreamed about. Peter and Mary Talty left Ireland to give their children a better life. Their legacy is a love of education, a strong sense of family, strong community and cultural values. They would be proud were they to know of their descendants and of their achievements today.

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## REFERENCES

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- <sup>18</sup> Mary O’Seighin, interview.
- <sup>19</sup> Sr Rosa MacGinley, ‘Irish Migration to Queensland 1885–1912’, *Queensland Heritage*, 3:1 (1974), p.20.
- <sup>20</sup> George Bond, ‘The Genesis of the Queensland Railways: Great oaks from little acorns grow’, *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland*, vol. 7, no. 3, 1965, pp. 529–32.
- <sup>21</sup> ‘The Queensland Rail Journey’ <https://www.queenslandrail.com.au/ourhistory/the-queensland-rail-journey>
- <sup>22</sup> See Southern Downs Steam Railways <https://www.sdsr.org.au/> for history of Killarney rail line
- <sup>23</sup> N.J. Byrne, ‘Robert Dunne, 1830–1917, Archbishop of Brisbane’, PhD Thesis, University of Queensland, 1990, p. 176.
- <sup>24</sup> Rodney Sullivan and Robin Sullivan, ‘Irish Symbols in Warwick 1870–1917’, *Australian Journal of Irish Studies*, 19, 2019, forthcoming.
- <sup>25</sup> St Mary’s Catholic Church, Warwick, Archived ledgers for the 1920s, Toowoomba Diocesan Archives, Marian Centre, Toowoomba.
- <sup>26</sup> Diocese of Toowoomba Archives, Marian Centre, Toowoomba. Note: Ledgers contain Minutes of Meetings by date of entry and are unclassified.
- <sup>27</sup> Murphy, *Warwick and the Irish*, p. 29.
- <sup>28</sup> Pauline Peel, ‘The Day We Celebrate, St Patrick’s Day, Warwick, Queensland’, AJIS Online series 2019: 1 <http://isaanz.org/ajis/australasian-journal-of-irish-studies-online-series/>
- <sup>29</sup> Rev. Father J. McKey, *The Light of Other Days*, Self Published, 1978, p. 50.
- <sup>30</sup> Murphy, *Warwick and the Irish*, p. 28.
- <sup>31</sup> Department of Natural Resources, Mines and Energy, Queensland, Document No.10870219
- <sup>32</sup> ‘A Day to Remember: The Warwick Egg Incident 100 Years On’, <https://> July 1965, viewed 14 June 2019
- <sup>33</sup> Thomas Hall, *The Early History of Warwick District 1845–1928*, n.p. n.d. p.55
- <sup>34</sup> Mary O’Seighin, interview.
- <sup>35</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>36</sup> Murphy, *Warwick and the Irish*, pp.16, 29.
- <sup>37</sup> Mary O’Seighin, interview.
- <sup>38</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>39</sup> Murphy, *Warwick and the Irish*, p.30.
- <sup>40</sup> Mary O’Seighin, interview.
- <sup>41</sup> Ibid.
- <sup>42</sup> Peel, ‘The Day We Celebrate, St Patrick’s Day, Warwick’.
- <sup>43</sup> Mary O’Seighin, interview.
- <sup>44</sup> McKey, *Fond Memories Around Me*, p. 57: ‘There was always someone who could play the accordion to perfection. Even before the days of the accordion they were able to dance to clapping in order to keep time for the various steps – and everybody had a good time’.
- <sup>45</sup> Mary O’Seighin, interview.
- <sup>46</sup> G. Hallam, ‘The Queensland Railways, the Eggs, the Prime Minister, and Warwick’. *Royal Historical Society Queensland Journal*. vol 23, no. 9, 2018, p. 593.
- <sup>47</sup> Pte Peter Talty left from Sydney on 5th June 1916 with the original members of C Coy, 42nd Battalion. He is described as a Signaller on the photograph of him in his army uniform. His next of kin was given as his father, Peter Talty, then living at Cranley, near Toowoomba, Qld. <http://monumentaaustralia.org.au>
- <sup>48</sup> He left from Brisbane on 8th August 1917 with 14<sup>th</sup> Reinforcements to 26th Battalion. According to the Toowoomba Railways, Toowoomba Employees Honour Board, he was killed in action on

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- 7th May 1917. The RSL Virtual War Memory Board says he was wounded at the Battle of Bullecourt and died of his wounds. The Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC) records that he was the son of Peter Hugh and Mary Talty (nee Hogan), of Toowoomba, Queensland, and that he was born at Swan Creek, Queensland. He was the brother of Pte Peter Talty and Pte Thomas Lawrence Talty. <http://monumentaustralia.org.au>
- <sup>49</sup> His next of kin was his father - Peter Talty, Cranley, Toowoomba, Qld. He was the brother of Pte Peter Talty and Pte Michael Talty.
- <sup>50</sup> Toowoomba railway Roll of Honour Board 1914–19. <http://monumentaustralia.org.au>
- <sup>51</sup> Hallam, ‘The Queensland Railways, the Eggs, the Prime Minister and Warwick’, p. 597: ‘The grim side of war [was] in evidence... when a contingent of invalided soldiers returned, including the largest number of cot cases recorded on a similar occasion in Queensland... all along the line the Red Cross attendants did what they could for the returned heroes. Corridor cars were provided from Wallangarra... Brigadier – General Irving said it was the saddest homecoming he had ever witnessed’.
- <sup>52</sup> Joan Beaumont, *Broken Nation: Australians in the Great War*, Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2013, p. 329
- <sup>53</sup> Beaumont, *Broken Nation*, pp. 329–35
- <sup>54</sup> The late Robert (Bob) Keogh, former President of the Southern Downs Steam Railway Association, recounted the story to the author in October 2017, during preparations for the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Warwick Egg.
- <sup>55</sup> Jeff Kildea, ‘A Day to Remember: The Warwick Egg incident 100 years on’: ‘To Hughes, the perceived influence of the Irish in Australia was alarming. In August 1917, he told the British prime Minister Lloyd George: “The Irish question is at the bottom of all our difficulties in Australia. They — the Irish — have captured the political machinery of the Labor organisations — assisted by syndicalists and I.W.W. [Industrial Workers of the World] people. The Church is secretly against recruiting. Its influence killed conscription”’  
<https://jeffkildea.com/articles/>
- <sup>56</sup> *Argus*, (Melbourne) 1 December 1917, p. 18
- <sup>57</sup> Alessandro Portelli, ‘What Makes Oral History Different’, (1979), reprinted as ‘On the Peculiarities of Oral History’ in *History Workshop Journal* vol. 12, 1981, p. 36.
- <sup>58</sup> *Sunday Mail*, (Brisbane), 1 December 1935, p.3
- <sup>59</sup> Mary O’Seighin, interview.
- <sup>60</sup> *Ibid.*
- <sup>61</sup> *Sunday Mail*, 1 December 1935, p.3
- <sup>62</sup> Patrick O’Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed., Sydney: UNSW Press, 1987, p.144