

The following talk was given at 21st Australasian Irish Studies conference, Maynooth University, 20 June 2015 by Damien Burke, Assistant Archivist, Irish Jesuit Archives.

The archives of the Irish Jesuit Mission to Australia, 1865-1931

One hundred and fifty years ago, two Irish Jesuits arrived in Melbourne, Australia at the invitation of James Alipius Goold, bishop of Melbourne. For the next hundred years, Irish Jesuits worked mainly as missionaries, and educators in the urban communities of eastern Australia. This article will seek to explore the work of this mission from 1865 until the creation of Australia as a Vice-Province in 1931, as told through the archival prism of the documents and photographs held at the Irish Jesuit Archives.

MISSIONARIST (206 (2))



Mother of Sorrows, pray for us!

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*THE soldier struck a triple stroke
That smote thy Jesus on the Tree:
He broke the Heart of Hearts, and broke
The Saints' and Mothers' hearts in Thee.*
—Francis Thompson.

"Better is the day of death, than the day of one's birth."
—Ecl. vii., 2.

AUASNTZRACLIA

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Requiem Service

for Our
Dead
Soldiers



"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

St. Patrick's Cathedral
Melbourne
April 30th, 1916

Background to Irish Jesuit Archives

In 1540, Ignatius of Loyola founded the Society of Jesus (Jesuits). Ignatius, with his secretary, Fr Juan Polanco SJ, wrote in the Jesuit Constitutions in 1558, that 'precise instructions were given to all Jesuits on the missions to write to their superiors at home, and to those in Rome, for the dual purpose of information and inspiration.' From this moment onwards, the Jesuits, have been acutely aware to the value of documents.

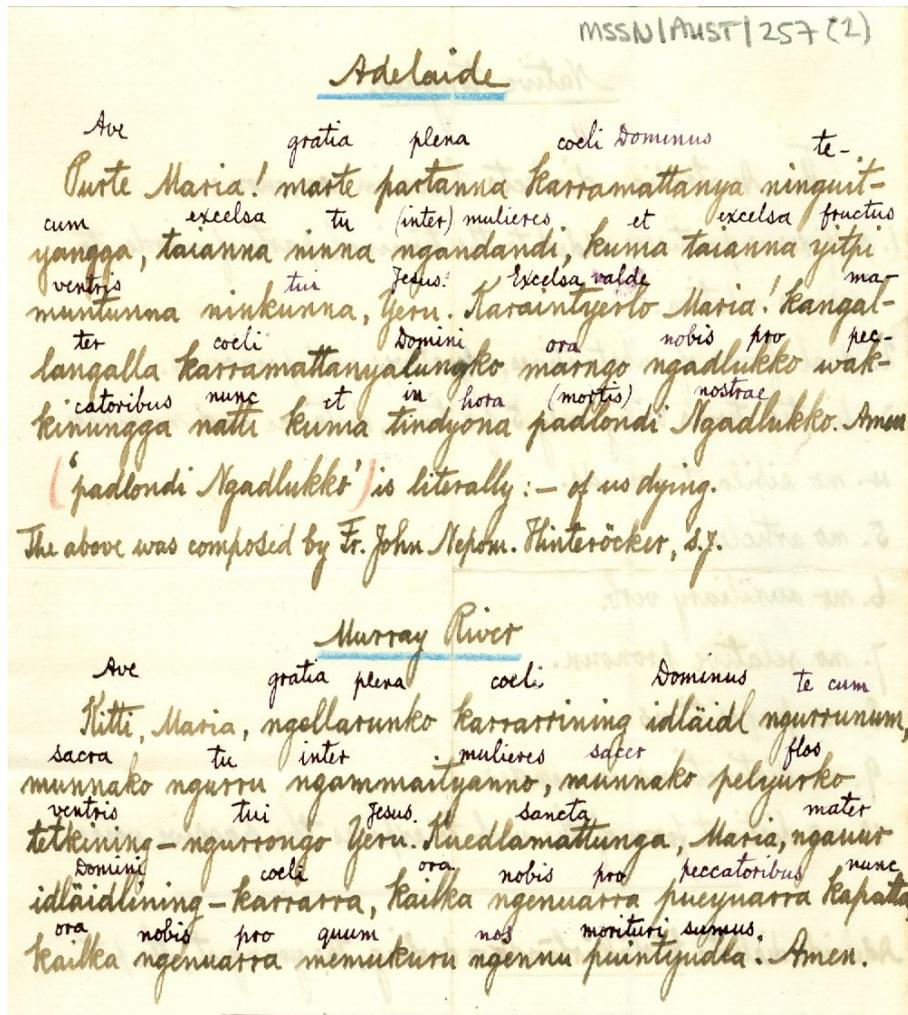
'God has blessed the Society with an incomparable fund of documents which allow us to contemplate clearly our origins, our fundamental charism.'

Father General Pedro Arrupe SJ, 1976

A history of Irish Jesuits in Australia (1865-1931)

The Irish were not the first Jesuits in Australia. Austrian Jesuits had arrived in the colony of South Australia in 1848, after their expulsion from the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Their

mission centred on South Australia and the Northern Territory until 1901, when the Austrian and Irish missions amalgamated.



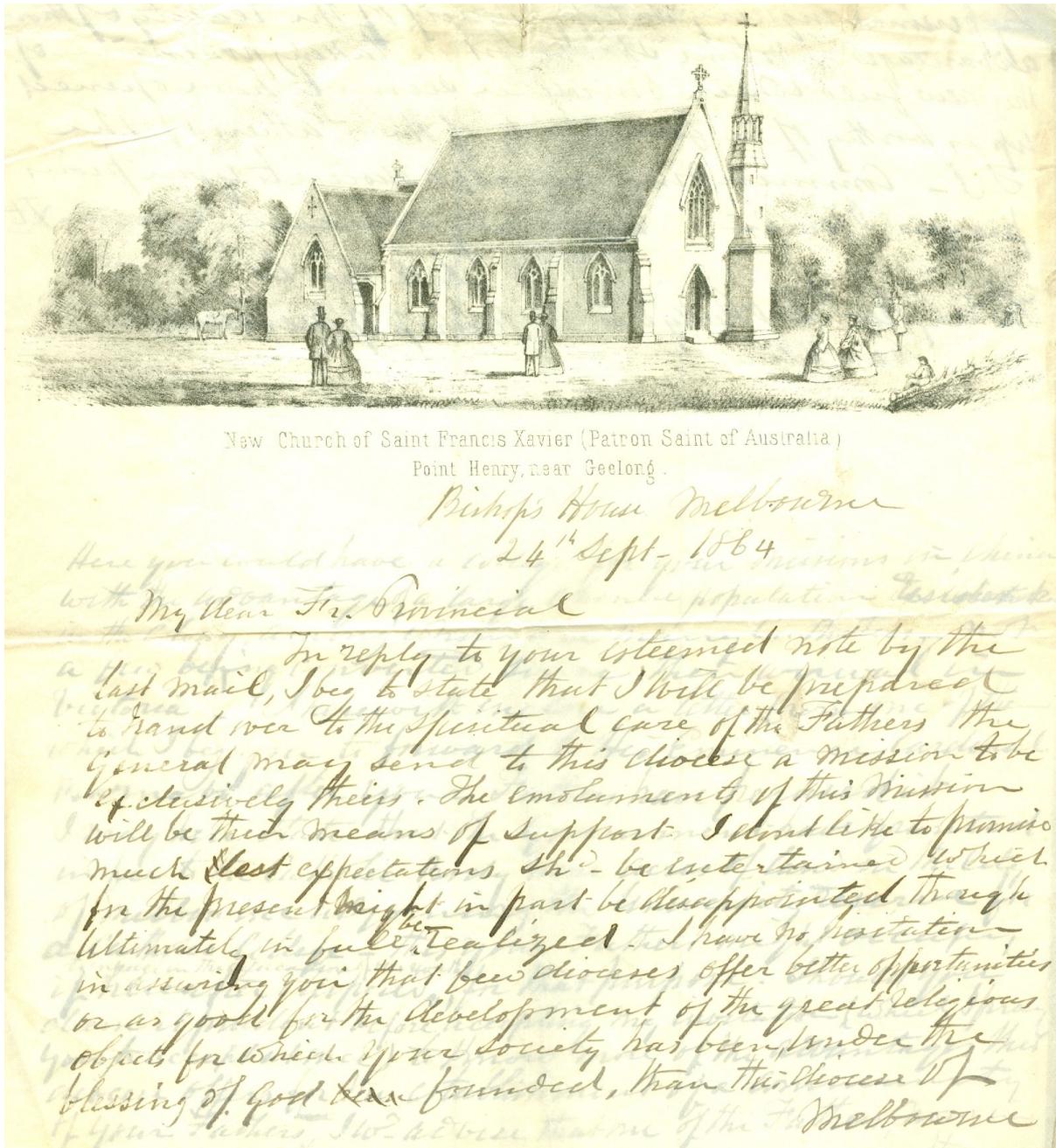
Hail Mary in native tongues enclosed in letter to Fr James Tuite SJ from Fr William O' Dowling SJ, St Mary's, Georgetown, South Australia, 23 November 1882.

Why were the Irish Jesuits in Australia?

A combination of occurrences: first, an invitation by James Alipius Goold, the first Catholic bishop of Melbourne (later Archbishop) to the Irish Jesuits in 1864 to re-open the secondary school, St. Patrick's College, Melbourne (which had foundered in bankruptcy two years previously) and to undertake the Richmond mission. Second, the will of Fr. John Joseph Therry named the Irish Jesuits as beneficiaries to his property in Australia.

Thus, Australia became the first overseas mission of the Irish Jesuit Province, established in 1860. The recent foundation of schools in Galway and Limerick tested the manpower of the Jesuits however by 1890, 30% of the Irish Province resided in Australia. Initially, the Irish Province was generous in the calibre of men sent out. By the 1880's, a shortage of manpower meant this quality had dipped. It was a sign of desperation when in 1888, Fr Patrick Duffy SJ, aged 74 departed Ireland for Australia. Those that were sent were labelled 'invalids, good for little and the troublesome'. When the Jesuits ceased running University

College, Dublin in 1909, the tide had turned and Jesuits of high intellectual calibre (including Fr George O' Neill SJ, who taught Jimmy Joyce) were once again sent to Australia.



Letter from James Alipius Gould, bishop of Melbourne to Fr Edmund O' Reilly SJ, inviting the Jesuits to set-up a mission, 24 September 1864.

When the first two Irish Jesuits, Frs. William Lentaigne and William Kelly, arrived in Melbourne on 21 September 1865, they found a growing Catholic population. Within a year of taking charge of St Patrick's College, the intake had increased from 30 to 102 'lively, precious little, colonials who prefer play to study'. Fr Joseph Dalton SJ arrived in 1866 as Superior of the Mission and is credited with the growth of Jesuit establishments. He was not without his Jesuit detractors - they suggested that they couldn't succeed with him in charge as 'he has no firmness in character'. He also stood trial for kidnapping children in 1875!

From 1865 onwards, the Irish Jesuits formed parishes and established schools while working as missionaries, writers, chaplains, theologians, scientists and directors of retreats, mainly in the urban communities of eastern Australia. By 1931, this resulted in five schools, eight residences, a regional seminary in Melbourne and a novitiate in Sydney.

Works by Irish Jesuits in Australia 1865-1931

Schools

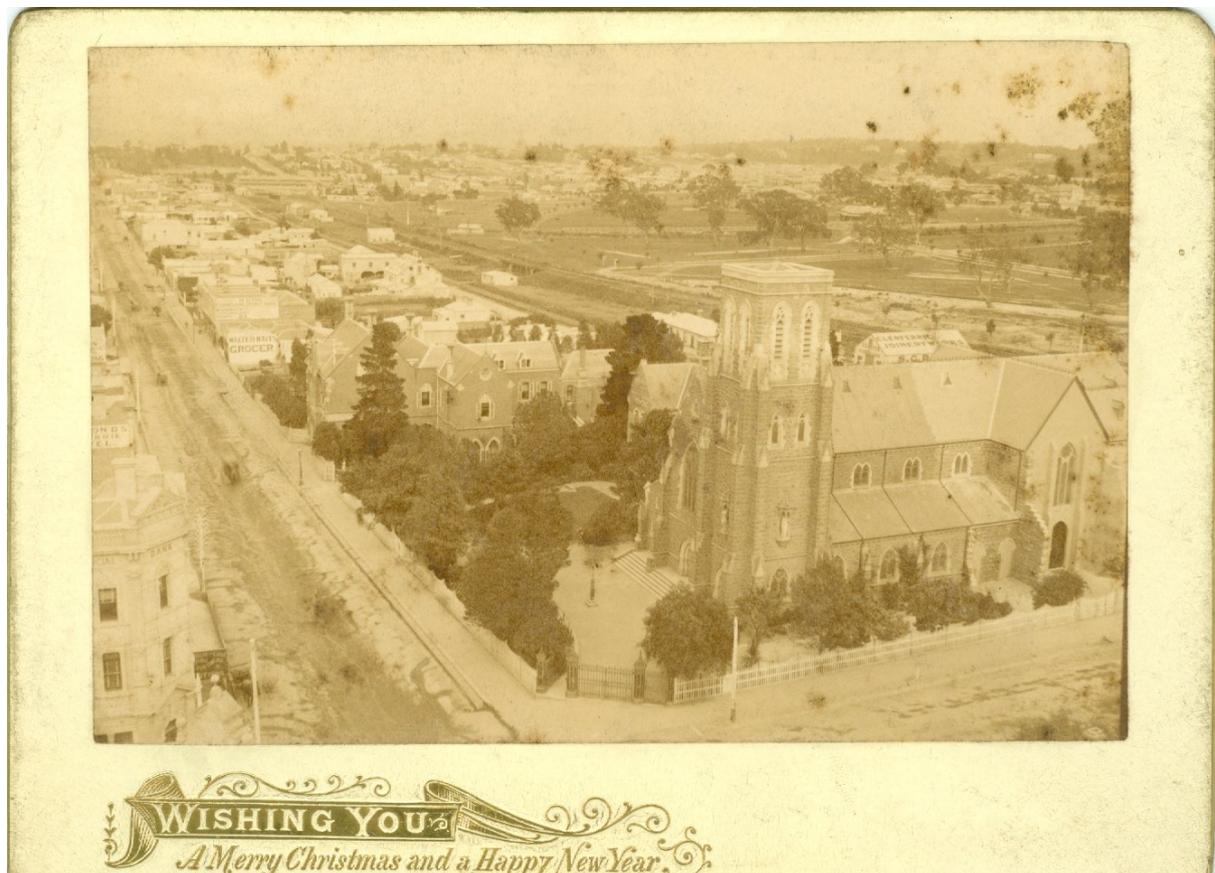
St. Patrick's College, Melbourne	1865
St. Francis Xavier College, Kew, Melbourne	1878
St. Aloysius, Dunedin, New Zealand	1878
St. Aloysius' College, Milson's Point, Sydney	1879
St. Ignatius' College, Riverview, Sydney	1880

Parishes

Hawthorn & Richmond, Melbourne	1866
North Sydney	1878
Invercargill, New Zealand	1878
Norwood & Sevenhill, South Australia	1901
Toowong & Indooroopilly, Queensland	1916
Lavender Bay, Sydney	1922

University & Seminary

Newman College, University of Melbourne	1918
Corpus Christ College, Werribee, Victoria	1922



Hawthorn Parish, 1886.



St Aloysius' College, Sydney, 25 November 1886.
Fr Thomas Keating's, Fr. James Cleary's and Mr McGillcuddy's classes.

The Irish Jesuit Mission to Australia highlighted in the archives

The eight boxes of mainly letters were catalogued to International Standard Archival Description (General), ISAD (G), in 2000 and 2013. They were arranged in respect to the archival tenets of original order and provenance. To note, there are differences between archival systems in Ireland (respect de fonds) and Australia (series system). Previously, researchers had ad hoc access to the archives. Thirty years ago, Fr F.X. Martin OSB used the Irish and Australian Jesuit archives to research James Alipius Goold, in a paper to the Irish-Australian conference in Canberra.

The archives provide a history of the mission, in topics such as agreements with archbishops and bishops to establish a Jesuit house in a particular diocese, the journey by sea to Australia, the administration of various residences, colleges and parishes, the finances of the Mission, the expansion of the Mission (New Zealand and Tasmania) and Jesuits living and working in Australia. Until the creation of the Australian Mission as a Vice-Province in 1931, the Irish Provincial in Dublin was kept informed of every minor detail about the Mission and often decision-making in Australia was delayed until approval was received from Dublin.

To misuse an archives term, some vignettes:



St. Francis Xavier College, Kew, Melbourne, 1899

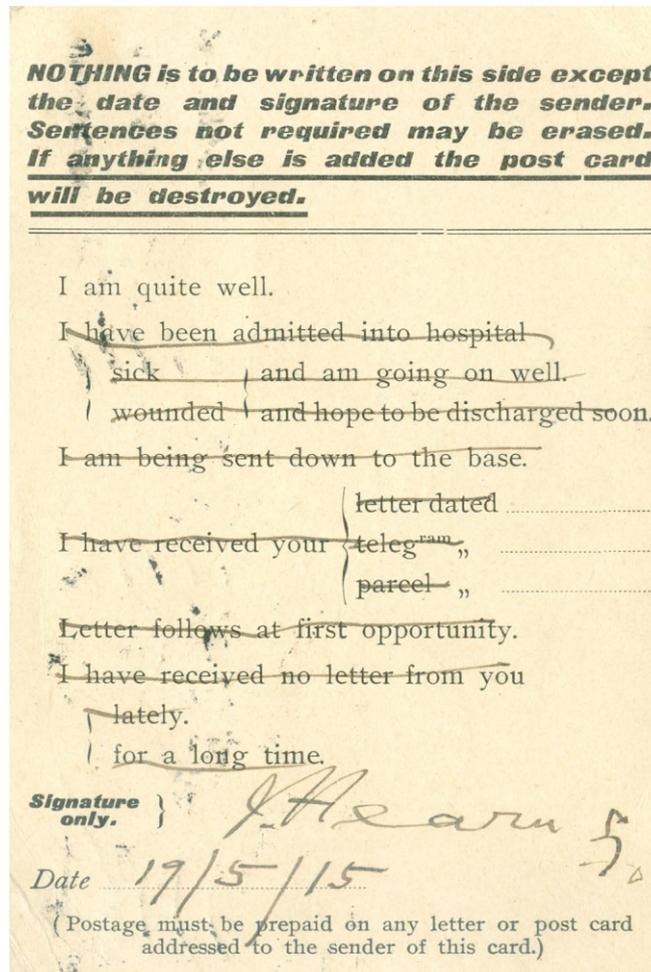
A letter from the Rector of Xavier College, Fr James O'Dwyer SJ, Melbourne, Australia to Father Provincial, Dublin, Ireland, 26 August 1910 notes:

Classes are interrupted. We have had so much excitement over the Premiership: so much loss of time that we cannot afford to lose a day. We won last Thursday from the Scotch-you would think it was a reversal of the battle of the Boyne. Not only past students, old and young to a man, but the whole Catholic element was in a ferment. Any number of priests in evidence - the Christian brothers boys set free to 'barrack' - even the Archbishop was at the match (which although very strange). Is it not an amazing country!



Dr Daniel Mannix, archbishop of Melbourne, showed a special predication for the Jesuits. Geographical they were located next door to each other in Kew, Melbourne and Frs Albert Power and William Hackett were friends and confidants of Mannix. Mannix requested that the Jesuits be involved with Newman College, University of Melbourne in 1918. The Superior, Fr Ryan, writes about Mannix that 'I have never met a more exacting man in driving a bargain'.

Six Jesuits (five were Irish-born) served as chaplains with the Australian Forces in the First World War and two died, Frs Michael Bergin and Edwards Sydes. Both Michael Bergin and 62 year-old 'Blood and Iron' Joe Hearn, earned the Military Cross. Bergin was the only Catholic chaplain serving with the Australian Imperial Force to have died as a result of enemy action in the First World War.



Not all chaplains enjoyed a cordially relationship with the military authorities. Fr Michael Coleman SJ, who was a voyage-only chaplain with the Australian Imperial Forces, caused consternation on the voyage to Egypt in 1915. He narrowly escaped court-martial and Coleman's commanding officer remarked: 'his conduct is I think almost unique in its open defiance'.

Conclusion

For all that is in the Irish Jesuit Archives, there is lacuna. Any papers sent from Ireland, papers on those Jesuits who died in Australia and anything post-1931, reside in the Australian Jesuit Archives in Melbourne. Even after a period of time, items still turn up. I found a photographic album of St. Ignatius Church, Toowong, Brisbane, Australia in a Dublin church basement in 2012.



St. Ignatius Church, Toowong, Brisbane, 1930.

The archives of the Irish Jesuit mission to Australia records the challenges, aspirations and experiences of Jesuits and documents their successes and failures, in pioneering the building up of the Catholic Church and Catholic education in Australia. They remain largely undiscovered.



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