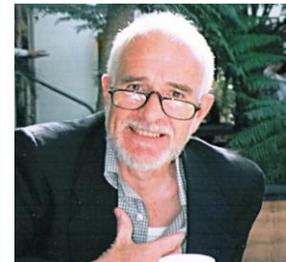


**Second Famine Memorial Anniversary  
19 August 2001**

**Memorial Address  
Dr Trevor McClaughlin  
Macquarie University**



**Preamble:**

Chairman, Tom Power welcomed Mr Seamus Brennan T.D.:

Distinguished guests, ladies and gentlemen. On behalf of the members of the Great Irish Famine Commemoration Committee it gives me much pleasure to welcome into our company on this special occasion, Minister of State Seamus Brennan, Teactaire Dail, on a rather appropriate day—Emigration Sunday. Also welcome to Irish Ambassador Richard O'Brien.

Just on three years ago, the President of Ireland, was here at this very spot to inaugurate the construction of this historic and significant monument. She delivered a wonderful speech on that occasion and concluded with a very important announcement saying, that the Irish Government would contribute a substantial sum of money towards the monument's completion.

I would like, therefore, to recognise the part played by our guest of honour, Minister Brennan, in securing those funds for us, at a time when he was besieged by requests coming from all quarters for assistance to stage Famine commemorations. Little did we realize that there would be a flow on affect in that the Federal Government of Australia, which up to that time had refused our request for assistance, would follow suit with an equally substantial grant. May I say we are very mindful of Our Ambassador, Richard O'Brien, who worked tirelessly with Canberra and Dublin to secure these grants.

The Minister, I am sure, is very familiar with the historic significance of this place, the birthplace of the Irish/Australian relationship, where previously so many of our countrymen were housed as convicts and later young orphan girls of tender age found hope and sometimes love after fleeing the traumatic events in their own country.

In commemorating the Great Irish Famine, we are, as the President said in her speech on that day three years ago, in a very special way, 'rescuing our Famine dead from the oblivion to which those terrible times condemned them'

The young women whose lives we commemorate and celebrate here are not historical curiosities or mere statistics; they are very much alive in spirit in the lives of their descendants. Many of them, I am pleased to say, are here today. I would like to give them a special Irish

welcome, Cead mile failte roim go leir. You can be extremely proud of your orphan girl heritage and the part they played as the pioneering mothers who worked so hard in the development of this land.

I would also like to recognise here the scholarly research of Dr Trevor McClaughlin in keeping alive the orphan girl story in particular and all the other historians & genealogists—Dr Anne Maree Whitaker, Dr Richard Reid and Perry McIntyre whose work and research are sometimes not sufficiently appreciated. You will hear Dr McClaughlin speak later.

Minister, it would be remiss of me not to mention the help and continuing support given us by the Chairman, the Trustees and Staff of the Historic Houses Trust of NSW. Without their co-operation I doubt that this Famine memorial would have materialized on this location. We, of the Irish Community, are forever in their debt for agreeing to give us this unique site. It is gratifying to know that each day this monument is passed by over 2000 workers, business people and visitors who go to and fro to the Registrar General's Office. Many stop and ponder. Others sit down and have lunch at the Famine table. Indeed we are grateful to the Registrar General himself, Mr David Mulcahy, for his outstanding support for this project from its very beginning.

Minister Seamus Brennan, we appreciate that you have given valuable time to be with us in celebrating this day and we hope your visit here is a most enjoyable and a memorable one. We wish you a safe and pleasant trip back to Ireland

Thank you.

### **Dr Trevor McClaughlin Macquarie University**

Dr McClaughlin (pictured) began his speech with a quotation from his favourite contemporary Irish poet, Louis de Paor. It is from a collection entitled *Cork and Other Poems (Corcach & Dánta Eile)* published by Black Pepper. The poem is called *Bóthar an Ghleanna/Under Ground* which Louis says is about the Famine though few people have understood that. Evidently it is about a mass grave at the time of the Famine, something the orphan girls who came to Australia were lucky to escape.

<b>Bóthar an Ghleanna</b>	<b>Under Ground</b>
...Laistiar den bhfál iúir tá fásra cnapánach ag fáisceadh dorn, ag cnuasach cloch i muinchillí cré, tá stumpá i cn á mh ag tolladh slí faoi thalamh, ag fuineadh an úir ina smúdar chomh mín le cnapáin luatha snaptha ag fiacla róin nó go ngobann plaosc is muineál righin tré pholl aníos i measc na réaltaí...	Beyond the yew trees stones clench their fists in sleeves of earth, bones tunnel under ground grinding clay to a powder fine as crushed cinders, poking their scraggy necks up and out through holes among the stars