



Newsletter Number 6, March 2019

Dear Members, Orphan Girl Descendants, Friends, Supporters,

Welcome to our 20th Commemorative year

Since our last newsletter in October 2018 the GIFCC committee has been busy. On 5 November 2018 we held our **AGM**, kindly hosted by new Irish Consul-General, Owen Feeney at the Consulate in Market Street, Sydney. In September 2018 we had accepted Dr Patricia Strong's resignation from the Committee; Trish has since moved to the NSW North Coast to be near her family. Suzanne Holohan also stepped down from the Committee. This left two vacancies on the Committee. All 7 remaining Committee members successfully stood for re-election and new nominee, Gerry Faulkner was elected as our eighth member.

The 2019 committee:

Perry McIntyre (chair), Martin Folan (vice-chair), Trish Power (secretary), Breda Drumgoole (treasurer & public officer), Eva Millington (publicity), Peter O'Connor (membership) with Joan Leach and Gerry Faulkner as committee members. You will know Joan for her singing at the annual event and also Gerry who has been our long-standing MC at the August event. Brendan O'Connell is reappointed as auditor – thank you Brendan! Nominations for one more committee member remain open.

The Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad 2018



In our last newsletter we told you of this award granted posthumously to **Tom Power** by Irish President Michael Higgins for his 20+ years' work for the Irish Community in Sydney including the establishment of the Famine Memorial at Hyde Park Barracks. In

November, Tom's widow Trish Power, along with four family members, attended the presentation ceremony at Áras an Uachtaráin, the House of the President, in Phoenix Park, Dublin, where Trish received the award on Tom's behalf. Trish's account and photographs indicate that this was an incredibly wonderful occasion although tinged with sadness that Tom wasn't physically present. Tom was one of 10 recipients of this prestigious award.

Above Left: John Power (Tom & Trish's younger son), Sr Bridie Power (Tom's sister), Trish Power, President Michael D Higgins, Shelia Murphy (Tom's sister) and Tomoe Shimada-Power (John's wife).

Top Right: President Higgins presenting the award to Trish. **Bottom Right:** The award, made from Carlow Ash and fused coloured glass on a slate base.





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Western Sydney University Refugee Scholarship and Prize

Several meetings at Western Sydney University with the Development Manager, Scott Lyall, have cemented our firm relationship with the university. In August 2018 we assisted Scott and WSU Professor Carol Liston in the selection of the recipient of our Inaugural WSU GIF Refugee Scholarship. Likewise, we have recently assisted in the selection of the recipient of our 2019 Scholarship. This involves interviewing the final 3 or 4 of the most suitable applicants as pre-determined by a WSU Scholarship panel and who meet the GIF Scholarship criteria. The experiences of these modern day refugee women resonate with the 19th century Irish famine survivor immigrants to Australia and the students are deeply aware of and empathetic towards the Irish orphan girl and immigrant story. It is important to note that Western Sydney University highly values our efforts to fund these awards and we remind you that we rely largely on your generous donations to fund the GIF Scholarship and the Annual Prizes. [See over for **How to Donate** information].

Message to Descendants of Orphan Girls

Perry McIntyre, GIFCC chair and Historian, corresponds with many descendants about their orphan girl ancestors but not all of you are Members of GIFCC. In order to continue receiving this newsletter, we encourage you to become members - **the GIFCC is there because of you and also for you!**

As Perry has shared information with you, some of you have willingly shared details and documents with Perry and, in the past, with Trevor McClaughlin. This two-way sharing is an important contribution to establishing profiles of these young women and their subsequent lives in Australia. Annual Membership costs \$5. [See below: Become a Member]

Support us & become a member

We welcome new memberships anytime and remind everyone that annual membership/renewal is due before July 1st, 2019.

Membership benefits include GIFCC Newsletter and discounted entry to our events.

Request a membership/renewal form by emailing:

memberships@irishfaminememorial.org

Forms and payment (\$5 p.a.) can be posted to: GIFCC, PO BOX 209, Roseville, 2069

Website

The www.irishfaminememorial.org website and associated database of workhouse orphan girls was set up by Trevor McClaughlin many years ago. While Perry has updated it in recent years, its platform is old and difficult to manage, so we are in the process of upgrading it. Hopefully the new-look site will be up and running in the next few months. The url will remain the same. Meanwhile, the old site remains accessible online, even though a few functions are misbehaving and we are not currently updating information.



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Some upcoming events in Sydney

- Sunday 17 March: 11.00 am St Patrick's Day Parade begins at The Rocks, Sydney. For details keep an eye on <https://www.sydneystpatricksday.com/>
- Sunday 17 March: 12.00 noon - Mass at St Patrick's, Church Hill
- Monday 18 March: 10.30am – Mass at St Mary's Cathedral, Sydney
- Friday 22 March: 6.30 – Aisling Society Dinner at Parliament House, Sydney - \$150. See their website <https://aislingsociety.org.au/> or contact the secretary for details if you are interested in attending the dinner contact@aislingsociety.org.au
- Many other happenings throughout Australia occur about this time, so keep your eyes open.

N.B. Through an Irish Community Organisation Network initiative of Consul-General Owen Feeney, a new on-line calendar of events is being developed which will assist organisations to coordinate their events and avoid date/time clashes. It will simply be called **The Irish Calendar**. We plan to participate in this. More details in due course.

Our 20th Annual Commemoration at the Memorial

Once again we will hold this event on **Sunday 25 August 2019** at the **Australian Memorial to the Great Irish Famine** at Hyde Park Barracks. Details will be confirmed on our website closer to the day and in our mid-year Newsletter. Sydney Living Museums is undertaking refurbishment of the exhibition spaces within the Barracks between February and November. This work involves a major upgrade to the displays in the Museum and installation of an internal lift. The Hyde Park Barracks Museum is closed during this time but SLM have confirmed we will be able to access the Memorial in August. As we are planning a somewhat special event this year, we may, however, need to conduct some of the event at a nearby venue; discussions are underway. So you can plan ahead for a full day on Sunday 25 August - an advanced 'heads' up, especially for those of you who live beyond Sydney.

Donations

We remind you to consider a donation to our Outreach Programmes, **GIF/WSU Refugee Scholarship** and the **Mamre Fund**. These donations are tax-deductible.

Alternatively, you may like to donate to the **GIFCC Inc.** to support our on-going costs.

Donations to GIFCC are **not** tax deductible. To make a donation, please go to:

www.irishfaminememorial.org.au and then to the **How to Donate** link.

Bequests

We invite you to consider making a **Bequest in your Will**. If you would like information about making a bequest, please email: contact@irishfaminememorial.org.au to request a **GIFCC Bequest Brochure**



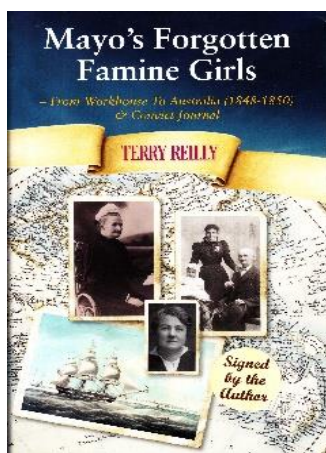
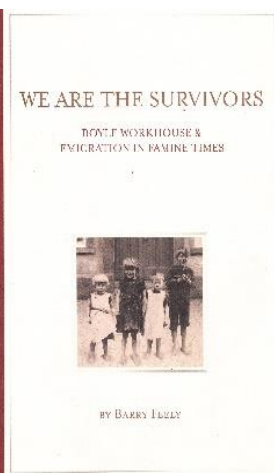
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Some Books Which May Be of Interest

Three books have recently come to our attention. We are not in the game of promoting books or the work of other organisations but thought these were worth noting.

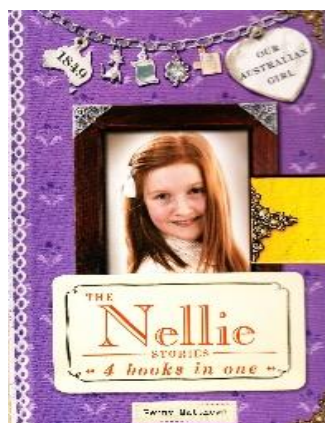
Barry Feely, *We are the Survivors: Boyle Workhouse & emigration in famine times*, self-published, Boyle, Co. Roscommon. Barry is a Boyle man who has carried on his business as a stone cutter and carver since he was apprenticed as a stonemason to his father in 1955. He and his brother developed their business into one of the largest in Ireland, still occasionally working on restoration of altars. This innate local knowledge of the area, the stone and the landscape has allowed Barry to write a terrific local history of Boyle based around the workhouse and the famine orphans who emigrated to Australia. Modern artist, Michelle Simon, enhances this book with wonderful sketches based on contemporary illustrations.

The book can be ordered via <http://www.feelystone.com/book/> using Paypal.



terryreilly@eircom.net

Terry Reilly, *Mayo's forgotten famine girls: from workhouse to Australia (1848-1850) & convict journal*, Plan Publishing, Ballina, Mayo, 2017. Terry, a native of Mayo and former editor of the *Western People* newspaper, has always been a fan of uncovering local forgotten stories. In this book he makes extensive use of research by descendants of the orphan girls as well as work by historians in Australia and Ireland, especially the work of Barbara Barclay, also in Mayo. He has pulled together the stories of 'almost 140 girls with Mayo connections' and was particularly interested in the 87 from Ballina Workhouse. This book sells in Ireland for €20 so if anyone wants a copy I suggest you email the author at



Penny Matthews, *The Nellie stories: 4 books in one*, Penguin, Random House, Australia, 2016. Sells in Australia for \$25 RRP. This is children's fiction, but based on a workhouse girl who goes to Adelaide on the *Elgin*, a ship which did bring orphan workhouse young women to South Australia. It is a good, historically accurate yarn. I recommend it as a way to get early readers interested in Australian and Irish history. The author is a freelance writer and editor based in Adelaide. The book is readily available in book shops in Australia.