



www.irishfaminememorial.org
Newsletter No. 7 - June 2019

Dear Members and Friends,

This newsletter is to update you about our activities and inform you about the arrangements for the 20th Annual Gathering on the last Sunday in August - the 25th.

GIFCC Committee

The Committee has met three times so far this year. Meetings take place in the Sydney CBD on a Saturday morning. We have eight committee members one of whom 'attends' by phone from rural NSW. If you would like to attend a meeting, please let us know. Our next meeting is scheduled for Saturday 10 August 2019. We are keen to find people who are interested in joining the committee. At present we have one (1) vacancy.

Apart from our formal meetings, Committee members are in constant communication via email and phone. Perry and Trish as Chair and Secretary, also attend numerous meetings at the Irish Consulate, Sydney Living Museums, Western Sydney University and Mamre.

20th Annual GIFCC Famine Commemoration, Sunday August 25th

Due to a major refurbishment and upgrade of the exhibition spaces at the Hyde Park Barracks Museum and installation of a lift, the Museum is closed until late in 2019. This means that our annual event this year will be different - we will start the day with a Seminar "**Looking forwards and remembering**" commencing at 10.00 am at The Mint Building, Macquarie Street, next door to the Hyde Park Barracks Museum. The Seminar will take place in the Gold-melting Room which is located behind the main building. Lunch will be included.

At 2pm, following the Seminar, we will proceed to the outside of the Memorial for a Ceremony of Commemoration. This will be **open to ALL** at **no charge**.

N.B. As seating is limited, admission will be strictly by pre-paid bookings only and as Sydney Living Museums are organising lunch the cost will depend on their catering fees and two SLM staff fee.

Bookings for seminar: We intend offering priority booking to GIFCC Members on a first-paid basis only. We are not able to reserve seats. Price and how-to-book, and other details will be advised mid-July by email and also on our website.

Outline of Seminar and Commemoration

Event Date: Sunday, 25 August 2019

1. Seminar: Registration from 9.00 am; proceedings start at 10.00 am
Venue: The Mint, Macquarie St, Sydney
2. Commemoration: 2.00 pm – 3.00 pm
Venue: The Irish Famine Memorial, Hyde Park Barracks Museum, cnr Macquarie and College Streets, Sydney.



3. Ongoing celebration: 3.00 pm onwards
Venue: TBA

Cost and Bookings: to be confirmed. Members will receive prior notification.

Western Sydney University (WSU):

1. Great Irish Famine Refugee Scholarship at WSU - 2018

We are delighted to report that our first **Scholarship winner**, Negar Zarei, who received our scholarship last year, completed her Bachelor of Nursing Degree at the end of 2018. Perry McIntyre and Trish Power attended her graduation ceremony in February (see photo below). A video of Negar receiving her degree from the Chancellor, Prof Peter Shergold AC, was posted on our website. We wish Negar every success in her future career.

After receiving the scholarship in 2018, Negar Zarei responded saying: “Thanks for everything. I appreciate the Great Irish Famine Commemoration Committee for helping refugees in this country”.



The selection process for the **2019 Scholarship** has been completed and a recipient chosen. The successful candidate will be announced at the August Seminar.

2. Fund-raising Appeal for the Great Irish Famine Refugee Scholarship at WSU

In collaboration with WSU we have developed a brochure promoting a major Appeal for donations in support of our Scholarship Fund at the University. This will be circulated to GIFCC Members and the wider community with the objective of strengthening our ability to fund our scholarship into the future. At present we offer a one year scholarship worth \$7500. A four year Scholarship costs \$30,000. Over time, these amounts will no doubt need to increase. The Appeal will be launched officially on 25 August 2019.

Our 2018 Scholarship was **just one of 81** donor-funded Refugee Scholarships supporting students at WSU. While WSU is **ranked 2nd in the world** for reducing inequalities by promoting inclusive and equitable quality education, with 757 students who are refugees on permanent humanitarian visas, there is still a great need for more support. A scholarship has a profound impact on the recipient, enabling them to prioritise their studies, reduce financial stress and increase their likelihood of success.



News from the Irish Consulate in Sydney:

Le Cheile: The Irish Consul General, Owen Feeney, has instigated a networking breakfast at the Consulate named **Le Cheile** – “bringing the community together”. This group has met a few times this year with Trish and Perry attending. It is a terrific and very useful way for those of us involved in ‘things Irish’ to meet each other and exchange ideas. Groups include, for example, St Patrick’s Day Parade, Irish Welfare Bureau, the Irish National Association, Irish Tourist Board, the Irish Echo, people running Irish Language classes, The Aisling Society, The Rose of Tralee/Kerry association and other groups run by Irish born people. The Consulate is very proactive and supportive of all these groups and more and is always willing to give support and advice where appropriate.

Visits of Irish Government Representatives:

In March, Member of the Irish Parliament, Heather Humphries TD, paid a visit to the Sydney Famine Memorial. GIFCC members, Martin Folan and Eva Millington, were present. Minister Humphries said she was ‘Very pleased to have the opportunity to visit Sydney’s beautiful and moving famine memorial this morning. Well done to the Great Irish Famine Commemoration Committee for their wonderful work’.



More recently, Mr Ciaran Cannon, Minister of State for the Diaspora and International Development was touring Australia and New Zealand. His mission was to find out about how the Irish Government can better assist Irish people living abroad to actively be involved in their ex-patriate Irish Community and maintain a connection with Ireland. Discussions took place at a Consular Le Cheile. A broad-ranging and very interesting discussion took place. Minister Cannon visited the Famine Memorial and laid a wreath on behalf of the Irish Government. He was deeply impressed and moved by the memorial. He also met with executives of the Hyde Park Barracks Museum and Sydney Living Museums.

Mamre Update

As many of you are fully aware, our first effort to support refugees was a donation to the programme run initially by the Sisters of Mercy at Mamre House, St Mary’s. The management has now been taken over by Catholic Care Social Services, Parramatta Diocese, and we have been in discussion with them about utilising the capital accumulated over the last 20 years from donations to the GIFCC’s Mamre Fund. Under our initial agreement only the interest could be utilised. Following discussions the Acting Manager, we have agreed to release funds for two special projects at Mamre. We will let you know more about this when arrangements are finalised. Our opinion was that, given the low interest rates at present, we should release the capital to support a larger project instead of only using the limited amounts of interest generated.

You will still be able to make Tax Deductible Donations to the Mamre Fund.

New Donation and Bequest Information Forms will be uploaded on the website soon.

Our website: www.irishfaminememorial.org was upgraded last year so that it is easier to manage the back end. However, there are still some issues which we are working on. Particularly for those of you who want to use the Orphan Girl database, rather than click on the



green symbol – ‘View Orphan Database’ at the bottom of the page, go to ‘Orphans’ on the top menu and then down to ‘Orphan Database’. Like all search fields, less is best, so just use the surname of the girl you are after – the default is the name as on the shipping list. Perry is happy to receive updated details about orphan girls, preferably with some documentation such as marriage certificate or death certificate so together we can confirm details with you.

This upgrade of the website has cost a considerable amount which was largely funded by a grant from the Irish Government Emigrant Support Programme. However, there are on-going costs with regard to managing the website. Any assistance in the way of a donation to GIFCC, however small, is very welcome.

The Irish Calendar: In our last newsletter we flagged a new on-line calendar of events being developed to assist organisations to coordinate their events and avoid date/time clashes. Simply be called **The Irish Calendar** it has been developed by Irish businessman David O’Leary as Irish Community Organisation Network initiative of Consul-General Owen Feeney. Check it out at <http://theirishcalendar.com/>

Famine Emigrant News from Canada.

This is part of an article which was sent to us by a close supporter of our Famine Memorial. The few comments in brackets are by Perry McIntyre:

[Remains of Great Hunger victims emerge, 172 years on](#)



A storm has exposed the bones of Irish children on a Canadian beach, recalling a holocaust of greed that devastated Ireland and changed the world. Abridged from an article for the Washington Post by Michael E. Miller.

In the spring of 2011, a powerful storm swept over the stony shores of the Gaspé Peninsula in Quebec, Canada, just as another had 164 years earlier. After the squall ended, the damage was



being documented when a surveyor spotted something sickeningly out of place among the pebbles and driftwood: Children's bones.

The grim discovery launched a scientific quest to identify the remains and solve an intercontinental mystery more than a century and a half in the making. Last week, Canada's national parks agency announced that chemical analysis of the bones and others later found nearby indicate that they belonged to Irish immigrants who had fled the country's Great Hunger, only to drown in an 1847 shipwreck within sight of their new home.

The findings shed light on the local folklore and fragmentary scholarship surrounding the Carricks shipwreck. They also illuminate a lesser-known chapter of Irish and Canadian history. Next month, the remains will be reburied by officials from Canada and Ireland as well as descendants of the shipwreck's survivors.

Fleeing The Great Hunger in a 'coffin ship'

In March of 1847, nearly 200 people crammed inside a small, two-masted ship called the Carricks of Whitehaven, which was bound from Sligo, northwest Ireland, to Quebec City in Canada. Many were women or children. Some were sick with typhus, cholera or dysentery. [Unlike the emigration to Australia] All of them were probably starving. They were tenant farmers who had tilled the fields of Henry John Temple, known as Lord Palmerston, then the foreign secretary and the future prime minister of Britain, according to a forthcoming documentary called "Lost Children of the Carricks."

His wealth was being affected by the potato blight that had begun to devastate Ireland two years earlier. As the crops withered and the hungry victims stopped paying rent, Palmerston evicted them and put them on sub-standard boats bound for North America. When the Carricks pulled out of Sligo harbor, it was one of hundreds of ships bound for Quebec from Ireland in "Black '47," the peak of the Great Famine. Roughly a million people would flee the island during the Great Hunger, as it was also called. Another million would die of disease or starvation. Between death and emigration, a quarter of Ireland's 8 million inhabitants would vanish over the course of just four years.

But a spot on a brig to North America was not salvation. The same diseases that had torn through famine-weakened Ireland followed the migrants onto the ship. So many died on the journey that the boats became known as "coffin ships." [which we did not have to Australia]. Even if migrants escaped disease, there was also a good chance that their ship would never make it to North America. Of the nearly 400 ships that sailed toward Quebec in 1847 — most of them filled with Irish — 1 in 5 never made it.

By April 28, 1847, the Carricks had been at sea for a month. But just as the ship neared the Cap-des-Rosiers — named after the wild rosebushes that covered its green hills and white-faced cliffs — a storm struck. "The vessel encountered a strong gale ... and was driven, about two o'clock the next morning, on a dangerous shoal about sixty miles east of [Cap-des-Rosiers] and went to pieces in the course of two hours," according to the British magazine *John Bull*. Of the nearly 200 people on board, only 48 survived, according to "Lost Children of the Carricks." One of them, a 12-year-old girl, recalled the carnage years later as an old woman.



More than half the dead were never found. Little else was written about the shipwreck. But some of the survivors settled in the area, and the story of the bodies on the beach passed into local lore. In 1900, St. Patrick's Parish in Montreal erected a monument to the victims near what was thought to be the site of the unmarked mass grave. The monument was later joined by the ship's bell, which washed up on a beach 360 miles away from the wreck in 1966. Scientists have determined that some of the newly uncovered bones were of children who were siblings. They also saw signs of iron deficiencies and a diet of peasants who had survived on little other than potatoes. 'These individuals had a diet low in protein', Ribot said. 'They had a famine in Ireland, food shortages, that might reflect this'. The 21 sets of remains will be interred at the Carricks memorial in early July.

Famine Literature from the Bookshelf

Two significant early books on Famine in Ireland which are still very relevant but which you may not have read are:

The Great Hunger by Cecil Woodham-Smith, first published 1962 – written, as the *Sunday Time* noted, by 'the first historian ... with the courage to recount the horrifying facts in detail'. Also *The Irish Famine* by Colm Tóibín, first published in part in the 'London Review of Books', 1998, then as a book in 1999 and republished with Dairmaid Ferriter in 2005.

One last word!! - Membership

GIFCC Memberships fall due on 1 July each year. We have kept the annual fee at the nominal amount of \$5. Additional contributions are always welcome as a donation to GIFCC.

Please complete the revised Application/Renewal Form** and email to: secretary@irishfaminememorial.org OR post to GIFCC, PO Box 209, Roseville NSW 2069. Payment can be made electronically by Direct Transfer or by posting a Cheque.

An updated **Member Application Form** is on the last page of this newsletter and will be on the website soon. Please note that we are requesting additional information regarding your orphan girl and/or your special area of interest in the Irish Famine Memorial in Sydney.

We are moving into our 20th annual event and it is 24th years since President Mary Robinson's plea in 1995 to remember the victims who died and those who were displaced in the Great Irish Famine. We look to the future, but we must not forget the past.

To quote another well-known refugee to this country, Sir Frank Lowy, "If you don't know where you are from, you can't know where you are going"

Perry McIntyre, Chair, Trish Power, Secretary & all committee members.
June 2019



APPLICATION FOR MEMBERSHIP
of the
GREAT IRISH FAMINE COMMEMORATION COMMITTEE
(Incorporated under the Associations Incorporation Act 2009)
www.irishfaminememorial.org

Name.....

(please print clearly)

Address.....

.....State.....Postcode.....

Email.....Phone

I hereby apply to: (1) Become a member []

(Please tick one)

(2) RENEW my membership [] Membership No. *(if known)* []

of the above-named Incorporated Association. In the event of my admission as a member, I agree to be bound by the Constitution of the Association.

Please indicate if you are an **orphan descendant**? YES [] NO []

If YES, Orphan's nameShip of arrival

or NO [] Please indicate your area of interest:-

Genealogy [] Historian [] Irish community [] Other []

Signature of applicant

.....**date**.....

Membership is \$5 per year payable for the year commencing 1 July.

Please indicate your payment of \$.....by:

1) Direct transfer to GIFCC CBA account BSB 062 030 Account 1001 3868

Reference: your name and/or membership number OR

2) Cheque payable to Great Irish Famine Commemoration Committee

Please **email** completed form to secretary@irishfaminememorial.org **OR**
post to GIFCC, PO Box 209, Roseville NSW 2069