Scotland and the Easter Rising

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Music and film
Mother’s Day, an increasingly important feast, changes every year in the UK, sometimes by as much as a month. Not everyone, including Catholics who should know better, are aware that this is because it is always the Fourth Sunday of Lent. In the past it was the custom, on Laetare (Latin: Rejoice) Sunday, to give servant girls a day off to visit their mothers. Since Easter depends on the lunar calendar it can change by as much as 28 days from year to year. 2016 is almost as early as it can be.

The first Christians celebrated the date of the Resurrection according to the Jewish calendar. Like the later Muslim one, this is fixed according to the cycles of the moon. By the time of the Council of Nicaea (331) many Christians had adopted the Roman or Julian calendar fixed by Julius Caesar. This is based on the solar cycle. Gradually it was agreed that Easter should be celebrated after the spring solstice (21 March) on the first Sunday after the first new moon after that date. This prevailed until 1583. As part of the renewal after the Council of Trent Pope Gregory XII corrected the Julian calendar by skipping 10 days. Italy was the birthplace of the scientific revolution. It took Great Britain almost 200 years before it overcame its suspicions of a Papist plot and accepted the Gregorian calendar. The Orthodox Church never accepted the change in its church calendar. The result is that the Eastern Churches still celebrate Easter later than in the West.

In 1928 the UK Parliament passed a bill fixing the ’Easter Holiday’ on the Sunday after the second Saturday of April. This was ignored by the churches and remains in abeyance. However when schools instituted a ‘Spring break’ they gradually agreed this should be at the beginning of April, irrespective of when Easter might be. This has considerable impact on families and, through them, on everyone else.

Accordingly the Churches, or at least the Western ones, have begun to talk about agreeing on a fixed date for Easter, probably on the second weekend of April. This is unlikely to happen any time soon. The Eastern Churches are against it. The West is moving to a seven day week when Sunday will lose its significance. The secular world copes fine with a different date every year for Mother’s Day. In comparison to ‘Midnight Mass’ (itself now at various times to suit the congregation) the Easter Vigil has attracted paltry numbers. It is the occasion when we are invited as adults to renew our Baptismal vows year on year. Whenever it occurs it should be the occasion for a song and a dance.
A Scottish academic explores the role of women which emerges from the newly published book *Scotland and the Easter Rising: Fresh Perspectives on 1916*.

In this, the centenary year of the Easter Rising, reappraisals and recollections are taking place. Among the acts of commemoration is this volume – to which I, among 26 others, am a contributor. The first aim of its editors is to foreground the Celtic connections between Scotland and Ireland in which the Rising was forged and thus to draw attention to its ‘Scottish dimension’. Chief among these is the figure of James Connolly; a leader of the rebellion and one of the seven signatories to the Proclamation, Connolly was born in the Cowgate in Edinburgh, then known as ‘Little Ireland’, to Irish parents who had emigrated from Co. Monaghan.

The other purpose of this volume is to insist that any consideration of the Rising is incomplete without an understanding of the tripartite claims of socialism, feminism and nationalism that were inscribed within it, even on a literal level: the Proclamation of the Irish Republic read by Patrick Pearse outside the GPO on Sackville Street at the instigation of the Rising enshrined among its principles the rights of gender equality and universal suffrage. In 1897 James Connolly famously wrote that, were nationalism not to be socialist in its aims, the new Ireland would remain in chains to England through the hold of its capitalist institutions upon the country, averring that ‘[i]f you remove the English army to-morrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organisation of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain’. This socialist republic would however not be achieved without recognising the place of feminism within it, and its necessity to the emancipation of man as well as woman. In chapter VI of his pamphlet *The Re-Conquest of Ireland*, entitled ‘Woman’, Connolly makes a statement that is prescient not only at the time of its writing in 1915, but that remains so more than a century later in 2016, when he writes that ‘[t]he worker is the slave of capitalist society, the female worker is the slave of that slave’. If, as Connolly claimed, the cause of labour is the cause of Ireland, the cause of Ireland that of labour, and the two cannot be separated, he equally held that ‘[i]n Ireland the women’s cause is felt by all Labour men and women as their cause’ (*The Re-Conquest of Ireland*), placing the three into indivisible relation.

All of the contributors to this volume emphasise that the Easter Rising and its subsequent events must be seen in the wider radical contexts of international socialism and suffrage movements; inflected by them, it serves in turn to occupy a point in the historical continuum of labour rights and feminism. There were more than 100 female participants in the Easter Rising, a number which does not take into account those who participated indirectly. Their role had, until relatively recently, been obscured and...
written out of the histories of 1916, and as Kirsty Lusk and Willy Maley observe, the work of recovery remains incomplete though '[n]ot only was the Easter Rising an attempt at declaring Irish independence from Britain, it was also a statement of equality and equal suffrage for women and the first attempt to assert a Socialist Republic' by rebels who included women among their ranks. The editors of this volume contribute significantly to the ongoing recuperation of their voices; its contributions highlight the multi-faceted roles played by women in the events of 1916, among them Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington; Constance Markievicz; Margaret Skinnider; Nora Connolly O'Brien; Kathleen Behan, who was to become the mother of Brendan and Dominic Behan; and Ishbel Hamilton-Gordon, Lady Aberdeen. Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington was the wife of Francis Skeffington. A suffragist and pacifist, he took her name upon marriage and was murdered during Easter week by the British army while attempting to stop looting. A republican and feminist, Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington participated in the Rising, taking supplies to the leaders in the GPO. In its aftermath, she travelled to America to conduct a tour highlighting the cause of Irish self-determination and publicising the murder of her husband at the hands of the British forces; she was not allowed legally to return to Ireland and stowed away to Dublin, where she was arrested and sent to be jailed in England alongside Constance Markievicz at Holloway Prison. She was released after going on hunger strike, whereupon she managed to avoid being re-imprisoned and returned to Ireland. Sheehy-Skeffington's story emphasises, as do those of others, a thread that runs throughout female rebel histories of 1916: as the socialism of the Rising was inextricable from its feminism, the event itself was a catalyst for further, and long, political struggle.

As Alison O’Malley Younger points out in her contribution to the collection, Countess Constance Markievicz was ‘an unlikely rebel’ due to her patrician upbringing, but a suffragette and republican who believed in national self-determination as ‘a driver for political change that would lead to recognition of the rights of the Irish people’. Having been active during the Dublin lock-out of 1913, Countess Markievicz held St Stephen’s Green in Easter week and was spared execution on account of her gender, instead spending more than a year in jail. In 1918 she was elected the first female MP to the House of Commons, a seat she refused to occupy in line with Sinn Féin policy; she would later be elected to the Dáil.

It was at the invitation of Markievicz that a young Coatbridge school teacher named Margaret Skinnider would travel to Dublin in 1915 as a member of the Glasgow branch of Cumann na mBan, (the League of Women) in order to smuggle bomb-making equipment in preparation for the Rising. Skinnider had a history of feminist political activism in Scotland; she was known to police as a suffragette, and had participated in protests outside Perth prison in 1914 at the treatment of suffragette hunger strikers. Skinnider joined Cumann na mBan after having first become involved with the Irish Volunteers in Glasgow. It was also in Glasgow that she joined a rifle club, and Lusk observes that it was on that trip to Dublin to meet Markievicz that she also met Thomas MacDonagh, who was to gift her the revolver she would later use in her role as a dispatch rider and sniper during the Rising. Skinnider fought alongside Markievicz on St Stephen’s Green and was shot three times while attempting to burn down houses, surviving and being allowed by special permit to leave Ireland and return to Scotland on account, as Lusk observes, of her Scottish accent. From there, she would travel alongside Nora Connolly O’Brien, her close friend and fellow participant in the Rising, to New York. Like Sheehy-Skeffington, they participated in raising awareness of the Irish cause on American soil.

Nora Connolly O’Brien, the daughter of James, who had also been active in the Rising, and Lusk notes that ‘[l]ike Skinnider, it was her connection with Scotland that allowed O’Brien to leave Ireland’. Also like Skinnider and her father James, Nora Connolly O’Brien was an embodiment of that Scottish-Irish hybridity that is now being examined in accounts of the Rising. While in America, both she and Skinnider wrote their memoirs of Easter week, resulting in The Unbroken Tradition (1918) and Doing My Bit For Ireland (1917) respectively. The Easter Rising was not the end of Skinnider’s political trajectory but a catalyst within it: during the Civil War she would become the Paymaster General of the Irish Republican Army in 1922 before being arrested and imprisoned in 1923. Although she applied for a military pension in 1925, she was refused it owing to her gender and would not be granted the award until 1938. Margaret Skinnider died in 1971 and was buried alongside Constance Markievicz in Glasnevin Cemetery.

In their introduction to this volume, Lusk and Maley write that ‘[n]ot only was the Easter Rising an attempt at declaring Irish independence from Britain, it was also a statement of equality and equal suffrage for women and the first attempt to assert a Socialist Republic’. The disappointment of one was bound up in the disappointment of the others, the Anglo-Irish Treaty installing a new order that saw James Connolly’s earlier statement endorsed. However, as the editors state in their introduction, a consideration of the Easter Rising in its centenary year allows us also to reflect upon current political situations across both Scotland and Ireland, offering ‘the prospect once more of radical change and new connections and conversations’. Inextricable from these is that of the position of women in the political and national spheres, then and now.

1James Connolly, ‘Socialism and Nationalism’ (1897), from Shan Van Vocht at www.marxists.org

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See the review of Scotland and the Easter Rising: Fresh Perspectives on 1916, on page 16.
Scotland and the Easter Rising

A Dublin born academic who has lived and worked in Scotland for many years puts the Easter Rising in the context of World War One and the long development of constitutional nationalism in Ireland.

I'm from the Irish Times', I said pompously. 'My editor will want to know what is your party's position on Northern Ireland'.

'Jesus Christ', said the SNP press officer.

That, as near as I can remember it, opened my report on the SNP National Conference in 1971. The press officer was Douglas Crawford MP for Perth and East Perthshire, 1974-1979. His reaction, however voluntarily, had an almost Joycean dual meaning. Northern Ireland, embarked on its Thirty Years' War, was all about Jesus Christ as visualised by His warring disciples. And the SNP wanted to keep as far as it could from a conflict inflaming the Old Firm and capable of searing Scottish divides. Its neutrality was inglorious, but to Scotland's great good fortune, it worked. The SNP ensured its success by vigorous, sometimes excessive, vigilance guarding against discreet sympathisers with Ulster Catholics or Protestants, and Scotland was spared the horrors of murder and maiming by IRA, UVF and their spawn.

The centenary of the Easter Rising of 1916 breeds occasional envious looks from Scots bewailing Scotland's lack of comparable romantic gesture. In fact the envy should entirely be on the side of Ireland. The Easter Rising did not 'bring the gun' in to 20th century Irish politics; that was done by the Ulster Unionists when they landed their German guns at Larne on the eve of World War One. But the Irish nationalists quickly followed their example. And the first guns in lethal fire (other than those from the UK army) were fired in Dublin streets on Easter Monday, 1916.

The Easter Rising's most obvious attraction was martyrdom, which is at least historically accurate. While taking place, it was almost universally condemned; when punished by 15 executions after secret courts-martial, it won sympathy swollen into growing support though Irish legerdemain and UK incompetence. The slain leaders were chiefly intellectuals of memorable quality, most notably Patrick Pearse (educationalist); James Connolly (Socialist, journalist); Thomas MacDonagh (poet, translator, critic); Joseph Plunkett (minor poet); Tom Clarke (prison autobiographer); Michael O’Hanlon (historical novelist for children).

The Easter Rising was in fact a psychological infection from the Great War slaughterhouse, and its votaries gave their lives with the same absurd logic that drove countless thousands of Irish and British to take up arms and be killed. World War One wrote its epitaphs in a great deal of fine poetry, and a world that was learning to inhale the blood of its dead in verse did so in Ireland as well as anywhere. One could mourn the Wilfred Owens and Francis Ledwidge wrote an epitaph for MacDonagh in verse shortly being killed in the UK forces. Surviving poets added laments in unease at their own continued lives and fear that the dead drained away the integrity of the survivors. Yeats did it one way, Hugh MacDiarmid in another. Growing conviction that World War One had been wrong induced the delusion that Easter 1916 had been right, for all of the obvious fact that it had been product and facet of the same suicidal holocaust.

It is natural to compare the independence Scotland nearly obtained so recently in 2014 with that acquired by Ireland in a process beginning in 1916. But it is misleading. The Irish settlement of 1921-2 followed the armed conflict of 1919-21 but in fact was the heir to a century of constitutional nationalism mobilised by Daniel O’Connell, and later by Charles Stewart Parnell and lesser mortals, some in that form of nationalism called Irish Unionism and its runaway child Ulster Unionism. There was peripheral violence, from the haves as well as the have-nots. But 19th century Ireland developed its own progress to democracy, teaching England, Scotland and Wales along the way. Then, pre-1914, the detestation for politics was inflamed by the Parnell split and the bullying clerics of all denominations, occupationally suspicious of a democratic ideal whether they were Catholics or Protestant clergy; the Ulster Covenant promising resistance to Home Rule by force if necessary had the Church of Ireland Primate Archbishop of Armagh and the Presbyterian Moderator of the Irish General Assembly among its prime signatories. But with the outbreak of World War One, politics in the UK emasculated itself, acknowledged its impotence in the face of arms smuggling and army revolt,
and sent the soldiers and sailors to repair moral bankruptcy, crying a holy war which promptly became a holocaust. There was a further dimension bred by the 18th century demilitarisation of the Catholics, who were taught to bewail their emasculation. Omnipresent warmongers perpetually accused opponents of war of cowardice: the Easter Rising sought to oppose the war in a comparable military way.

What were the justifications for the Easter Rising? In most respects they resembled the case sometimes put forward by Scottish Catholics denouncing anti-Catholicism today: right truth, wrong time. What were the justifications for the Easter Rising? In most respects they resembled the case sometimes put forward by Scottish Catholics denouncing anti-Catholicism today: right truth, wrong time. There had been vicious and contemptible oppression of Catholics but it was no longer true.

The motives of the seven signatories of the Proclamation were sufficiently various. Pearse wanted the restoration of the Irish language; Welsh nationalism made little headway on the road to political independence but its linguistic revival did far better under Union with England than the Irish variety managed when free. Thomas MacDonagh was a Gaelic revivalist but his chief motivation seems to have been a search for Irish literary authenticity: Scotland and Ireland had much to learn from one another, notably in new Gaelic poetry, and, as it would prove, from new directions taken by James Jocye and Neil Gunn, but were products of nationalism, not independence. In them as in Plunkett their self-sacrifice (and the sacrifices of the many whose lives were involuntarily sacrificed because of them), could be construed as ‘art for art’s sake’, reflective of the influence of Oscar Wilde noticeably in his fascination with Christ (from ‘The Selfish Giant’ to ‘The Ballad of Reading Goal’). It did not mean orthodox belief in any sense: MacDonagh at different times sought the priesthood and defected from Catholic faith. Six of the signatories died in communion with the Catholic Church in which they had been born: Tom Clarke, the oldest, apparently did not, and typified a lifelong Fenianism under the ban of the Church, conceivably deriving from his youth in Dungannon, in Ulster, where he probably knew sectarian hatred. But that matured in a bitter imprisonment for homicidal intensions against the British public during the mid-1880s, followed by an intransigent hatred without Scottish counterpart.

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The one Scot among the seven, James Connolly, seeking to permeate Irish nationalism with Marxian Socialism, may have shared however briefly in Christ-like sacrificial identification, but his agenda had a reality lacking amongst the rest. His writings have every relevance to Scotland today but the killing in which he ended has no more relevance to a future Scotland than songs of ‘The Scottish Soldier’ – warming the heart, perhaps, but wounding the head. The Easter Rising left its country a crown of thorns.

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Reactions in Scotland

A Dundee historian examines some of the reactions to the Rising in Scotland and the controversies surrounding the event and its commemoration. Should we remember and commemorate this failed attempt to set up an Irish Republic?

The story of the Easter Rising and of Scottish and Catholic reactions to it were more complex and contradictory than most popular perceptions would have us believe. It was not a simple case of Green versus Orange or Red, White and Blue.

In recent weeks we have seen the former Justice Minister Kenny MacAskill calling on Scotland to celebrate the centenary of the Rising. Ironically, of course, it was MacAskill who was responsible for the legislation which means that football fans ‘celebrating’ the Rising are committing a criminal offence. There has also been controversy about whether North Lanarkshire Council should fly the Tricolour from council buildings to commemorate the Rising.

There are clear links between Scotland and the Easter Rising. One of the seven signatories, James Connolly was born in Edinburgh and lived and worked there for a number of years. He also, as so many Scots of Irish heritage have done, served in the British army. Connolly also lived for a period in Dundee. His attitude to religion is one of the enduring debates about the Rising. He was baptised in St Patrick’s in the Cowgate in Edinburgh and married in St John’s in Perth. Getting married in the Catholic Church would seem to demonstrate that at least on some levels Catholicism was important to him. He also received the last rites prior to his execution. A Catholic Truth Society pamphlet was produced soon after the Rising which claimed that Connolly’s Socialism was not of the atheistic Marxist variety but rather that he was influenced by Catholic Social Teaching – a claim that is stretching the point at best.

Connolly experienced some of his politicisation in Dundee and along with Winston Churchill’s role as the MP for Dundee, this might allow the city to claim that the modern Irish state was forged there. Connolly’s role in politics led to him being a trade union organiser and eventually to his being tied to a chair in the stonebreaker’s yard in Kilmainham Jail in Dublin. Some would say that it was the execution of the seriously wounded, and probably dying Connolly, in what appears to be a particularly cruel manner, that changed Irish public opinion in favour of the Rising. Churchill, a symbol of Britishness, served as the MP for Dundee from 1908-1922. In order to win in Dundee, he had to placate his Irish electors and at election time he attended meetings of the Irish nationalist organisations in Dundee. Churchill latterly played a key role in the negotiations which led to the establishment of the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. Nevertheless, the Sinn Féin supporting Archbishop of Melbourne, Daniel Mannix, visited Dundee in 1921 and his anti-Churchill tirade is often stated as playing a part in Churchill’s subsequent defeat at the 1922 General Election.

The Easter Rising took place in the middle of the First World War and cannot be understood outside this context. From the perspective of the 21st century the First World War looks like a pointless waste of life, but at the time it was popular. The Scottish Catholic community was strongly supportive of the war, especially the hierarchy.

In the early 20th century the majority of the Catholics in Scotland were the descendants of the Irish. They paid close attention to Irish politics. The Catholic Church in Scotland did not always agree with the flocks’ pre-occupation with Irish politics. The clergy in particular felt that the promotion of Catholic schools should be the political

On Easter Sunday 1916 at St Patrick’s Church in Dundee the Irish curate gave a lecture on Home Rule. Clearly he could not have predicted that the following day in Dublin there would be a revolution which would ‘change utterly’ the future of Ireland.
priority. The Catholic Church in Scotland in this period often had an uneasy political truce with the congregations trying to find politicians who favoured both Home Rule for Ireland and state aid for Catholic schools.

Prior to the Easter Rising the settled will of the Irish both in Ireland and in Scotland was to accept Home Rule, a form of devolution. On Easter Sunday 1916 at St Patrick's Church in Dundee the Irish curate gave a lecture on Home Rule. Clearly he could not have predicted that the following day in Dublin there would be a revolution which would ‘change utterly’ the future of Ireland.

The Easter Rising was carried out by a minority of a minority, by a force and a political organisation which had no popular mandate. Initially it was hugely unpopular in Ireland as well as across the Irish diaspora. The Dundee Irish nationalist establishment met before the executions had begun and described the Rising as ‘Mad, Motiveless and Meaningless.’ This view was widely held at the time. In part this was because of the perception that the Rising could only have happened with German help and also the belief that it would help Germany. At a time when the First World War was still relatively popular, this was an anathema.

Part of the unpopularity of the Rising was that it was doomed to failure from the outset. This presents a particular Catholic difficulty with the Rising. In terms of Catholic just war theory the Easter Rising stands up to very little scrutiny. There was never any prospect of success – there was no chance that the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army could defeat the forces of the British Empire in a conventional military encounter. None of the self-proclaimed leaders of the Rising and of the Irish Republic they proclaimed had ever won an election to any form of public office and therefore had no mandate. Pearse’s idea of blood-sacrifice to redeem Ireland’s freedom could also be seen as a form of suicide by proxy. There were disproportionately high civilian (or non-combatant) causalities. On New Year’s Day this year with all the solemnity and pomp that they could muster, the Republic of Ireland started this year of commemoration with a ceremony where the names of the 77 Volunteers who were killed as a result of the Easter Rising were read out. No mention was made of the names of the around 130 members of Crown Forces who were killed – many of whom were Irish. Neither was any mention made of the 300 or so civilians, including as many as 40 children, who were killed.

The Easter Rising is a historical fact and it is clear that it set in train a series of events which would eventually lead to independence for part of Ireland. There were some great men amongst the leaders of 1916, who set out an idealistic vision for what their country could be. Modern Ireland hasn’t lived up to their ideals but then does the modern USA live up to the ideals of its founding fathers. Does the Catholic Church live up to the ideal of its founder?

In 1916 the vast majority of the Irish in Scotland were initially appalled by the Easter Rising. Over a relatively short period of time attitudes changed and people believed that the Rising was a good thing. The hundreds of thousands of Irish men who fought in the forces of the British Empire in the First World War were forgotten. A narrative was created which claimed that there was a struggle against British rule in Ireland which began just after Strongbow arrived in the twelfth century.

By 1920 or 1921 the vast majority of the Irish in Scotland supported the setting up of an independent state in Ireland. There were some church influences on this, with Archbishop Daniel Mannix speaking at several places in Scotland in favour of the Irish republic. There were republican priests in Scotland, such as Father John Fahy who served at St Joseph’s in Dundee. He was an active member of the IRA and said a Requiem Mass for the Lord Mayor of Cork, Terence MacSwiney, who died on hunger strike in 1920. Much Catholic opinion at the time felt that this was a form of suicide and should have excluded MacSwiney from public commemoration in the church.

Father Fahy was an important figure in Irish politics but is now largely forgotten in Dundee. His predecessor as curate at St Joseph’s in Dundee Father James Shine from County Tipperary was killed on the Western Front in 1918. There is a fine memorial to him and the few hundred others killed in the First World War from St Joseph’s parish which is still there today. No such memorial to Father Fahy exists.

We should commemorate the Easter Rising, but if we are going to we also need to make the effort to find out more about it. It is a complex and contradictory picture. It is important that we actually have an idea of what happened in this period in Ireland as well as in Scotland. Our understanding of the Rising must be placed in the broader context of the First World War and shouldn’t come from some half-remembered rebel song. The Easter Rising and its aftermath changed the course of the history of these islands in the north Atlantic and probably continues to do so even to this day.

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Glasgow City Archives, which is based in The Mitchell Library, holds the records of the Parochial Boards (later Parish Councils) for Glasgow and other areas of the west of Scotland. These bodies were responsible for the administration of poor relief from 1845 to 1930. Some readers may recall parents or grandparents talking about being ‘on the Parish’, and the stigma attached to those who found themselves in that situation.

The City Archives has more than a million applications for poor relief or public assistance, as it became in 1930, for the Glasgow parishes. These are the most important and popular source for family historians in the Mitchell Library and are crucial for those with Irish connections. The applications tell the stories of individuals, their day-to-day experiences, sometimes over decades, and allow us to make real connections with our own families, our communities, and with the lives of many of the city’s population in Victorian Glasgow.

In 1845 a new Scottish poor law act was introduced to deal with pressing problems arising from large-scale urbanisation and economic depression. These tribulations were exacerbated by the Disruption of 1843, in which 450 ministers left the established Church of Scotland, weakening the church’s ability to cope with its role in poor relief. The act left the law largely unchanged, but altered the administration and funding arrangements, while leaving long-established principles (from 1579) in place.

In terms of administration, the act established a Central Supervisory Body and local Parochial Boards. Much to the chagrin of ratepayers, there was a new right to introduce compulsory assessments, which became very common by the 1860s. The act provided for Inspectors of Poor to be appointed and for the establishment of poor houses.

In terms of the law, parishes continued to be responsible for their own poor, with parishes being able to remove applicants to their parish of settlement (in Scotland, Ireland or England) or to claim costs. Settlement was by parish of birth, with wives taking theirs from their husband, or by residential rights. In 1845 the residential qualification was five years in a particular parish; this was reduced to three years in Scotland in 1898. The crucial principle that relief was for the destitute and the disabled and not the unemployed, remained. Family members were expected to assist in unkeep.

These principles required Inspectors to establish the identity of applicants, their eligibility, i.e. their disability, and their needs. As a result, applications provide core information for families, often stretching generations, which include name of applicant, birth place, age/date of birth, religion (from 1865), disability, dependents, marital history, other relatives, and previous addresses. The Glasgow records offer so much more, often with press-cuttings (usually relating to court cases), sometimes letters, and an occasional photograph. Inspectors would visit applicant within a day or two of their application. The home visits, together with checks made among neighbours or workplaces were used by the inspector to establish moral worth. The inspector’s impressions of the applicant, their house, and any comments by neighbours, are often recorded.

Applicants were offered indoor or outdoor relief. Under the 1845 Act, this decision was non-discriminatory, with the poor house being reserved for the sick, disabled and elderly. Outdoor relief took the form of small sum of money, or benefits in kind, such as clothes or coal. This was to be only partial help, a subsidy to earnings, charity or friendly society, but most of all family help. However, in order to curb costs and clamp down on pauperism, the poor house began to be used as a test with particular applicants being offered the poor house instead of outdoor assistance. Those who refused would lose their entitlement to relief.

By the 1850s the poor house was offered not only to destitute persons incapacitated by youth, old age, and disease (mental or physical) and with no one to look after them. It was also designated for the following: fraudulent claimants, and ‘all persons of idle, immoral or dissipated habits who if
admitted to outdoor relief, would squander their allowances in debauchery, or otherwise misapply them’. By 1870s, women with illegitimate children, or widows with children, who might be at risk were only offered indoor relief. Conditions within the poor house also became more discriminatory, with the view that the poor house was only ‘a test if the rules and regulations were so strict as to tender it more irksome than labour, without such discipline and restraint, to those who are not truly fit objects of parochial relief’. With the change in emphasis, the comments about morality within applications became much more pronounced. Notwithstanding such restrictions, outdoor relief remained the norm in Scotland. The record number in Scotland for indoor relief was in the 1890s for Barnhill in Glasgow, when 20% of paupers were given indoor relief.

In addition to the destitute and disabled, we find a large number of women, married or widowed with children, those claiming desertion and those with one or more illegitimate children. There are large numbers of Irish and other migrants. It can be anyone and everyone. People’s circumstances changed and with no safety net, they could suddenly be reliant on poor relief. The poor law applications are a gold mine if you are seeking Irish ancestors, with their large numbers of first generation Irish, many born pre-civil registration, and some born in the 18th century. The applications often identify their county of birth, required by 1865, and sometimes will give parish or occasionally even townland. Given geography and the human desire to be close to family and friends, more than two thirds came from the six counties of Ulster and from Donegal.

Contemporaries in 1874 talk of ‘the hordes of Irish poor that swarm into Scotland for the express purpose of becoming chargeable to the Poor Law Boards’. In fact only at very specific times were the Irish poor over-represented among relief applications. The 1845 Act allowed parishes to order their removal, or claim costs. Many chose voluntary removal because of difficulties in getting assistance. They would get their fare home paid and some would abuse the system and come back and forward. A small number would have their removal ordered, meaning in theory they had no choice but to return to Ireland. In fact, although many Irish had no right of settlement, few compared to numbers of non-qualifying actually returned. Many had ill-health and few were removed immediately as they had to be fit for transport. In any event the administrative work to ensure they left was resource-heavy.

Glasgow’s records are a stand-out in a UK and European context, if not globally. They are our most popular family history source, including for those with Irish ancestors. Nothing else provides so much detail about people and society, and a taste for the life of large swathes of the population in Glasgow, particularly those whose lives are not recorded elsewhere. Here you might discover rich stories of your own family, and gain an insight into living and working conditions, poverty, crime, drunkenness, illegitimacy, marital breakdown and much more. Such raw and emotional stories make lives come alive.

Check out: [www.glasgowfamilyhistory.org.uk/ExploreRecords/Pages/Poor-Law.aspx](http://www.glasgowfamilyhistory.org.uk/ExploreRecords/Pages/Poor-Law.aspx)

Dr Irene O’Brien is City Archivist for Glasgow and Chair of the Scottish Council on Archives.

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**An appeal from Open House**

Started by a group of Catholics in Dundee, Open House has been publishing for over 25 years, with the aim, as our tag line states, of reflecting faith issues in Scotland. We aim to encourage comment and debate. Financing Open House has always been a hand to mouth affair yet we have continued in the spirit that God will provide and to date God has, but there are challenging times ahead.

Thankfully many of our subscribers include a donation with their annual subscription, for which we are grateful, but this income is unpredictable. In some years donation and advertising revenue bridge the gap between income and expenditure but usually we are grateful to cover costs.

As an increasing number of publications move to an online platform, it’s time for Open House to consider our future and we need your help. Our preference would be to research all our possible options and make a choice for the future in a deliberate, considered way, rather than make decisions driven by costs.

Would you consider setting up a small direct debit, for the next 12 months, to support us through this process? The small band of volunteers and contributors who produce 10 editions every year are committed to ensuring a future for Open House. Your financial support will help give us the time and resources to develop a long term, sustainable solution.

Our bank details are:

- **Account Name**: Open House
- **Sort Code**: 80-73-31
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Please identify your deposit as a DONATION. Florence Boyle, Open House treasurer.
Sectarianism in contemporary Scotland has generated intense and heated debate and has prompted a series of government initiatives and actions. As part of these initiatives, the Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland was established in August 2012. The role of the advisory group is to provide the Scottish Ministers with advice on all issues relating to sectarianism in Scotland. The advisory group is an independent body but supported by the Scottish Government and has published two reports: Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland. Independent Advice to Scottish Ministers and report on Activity 9 August 2012 – 15 November 2013 and Tackling Sectarianism and its consequences in Scotland. Final Report of the Advisory Group on Tackling Sectarianism in Scotland - April 2015. The Final Report raises many pertinent issues and while it is at times unclear about solutions to resolving sectarianism, it deserves to be read more widely (it is available through open access).

This article examines some key aspects of the Final Report. The article begins with the background to contemporary sectarianism and the evolution of the Final Report, and then examines the definition of sectarianism and the scope of sectarianism. It argues that sectarianism should be understood within the wider range of religiously aggravated offences.

A number of widely publicised events have highlighted contemporary sectarianism in Scotland: riots between Celtic and Rangers fans in the 1980s; the murder of Celtic fans Mark Scott (1995) and Thomas McFadden (1999) and the Donald Findlay incident in 1999. It was further highlighted by the speech on ‘Scotland’s shame’ delivered by James MacMillan at the Edinburgh International Festival in August 1999. MacMillan argued that Scotland had changed for the better, but a deep-rooted anti-Catholicism remained in Scottish Society.

The catalyst for the Scottish Executive intervention was the escalation in hostility between some supporters of Celtic and Rangers football clubs. Jack McConnell, the then First Minister, convened the Summit on Sectarianism on February 14, 2005. The Summit produced a Record of the discussion of the Summit on sectarianism held on 14 February 2005 and subsequent Scottish Executive documentation emerged. The Scottish Executive and (later) Government commissioned reviews of existing research of the evidence on sectarianism in Scotland, seeking a greater understanding of sectarianism and the manifestations of sectarianism. The reviews were published in 2005 and 2013. The Scottish Government funded community based projects aimed at tackling sectarianism from 2012, introduced anti-sectarianism legislation in 2012 and commissioned new research on sectarianism (published in 2015).

The remit of the advisory group is focused on ‘sectarianism as it has been experienced in Scotland, essentially Catholic-Protestant tensions and relationships’. The advisory group consists of: Dr. Duncan Morrow; Dr. Cecelia Clegg; Ms Margaret Lynch; Rev Ian Galloway and Dr. Michael Rosie. The group sought to answer two main questions. What is sectarianism in Scotland now? How should we best deal with its consequences? The advisory group consulted a wide group of individuals and organisations over a twenty-three month period. They consulted representatives from the Scottish Government, local authorities, churches, the police, football, youth workers, charities, the Orange Order, academics and Education Scotland.

The Final Report revises the definition of sectarianism provided in the Interim Report, defining sectarianism as follows:

Sectarianism in Scotland is a mixture of perceptions, attitudes, actions and structures that involves overlooking, excluding, discriminating against or being abusive or violent towards others on the basis of their perceived Christian denominational background. This perception is always mixed with other factors such as, but not confined to, politics, football allegiance and national identity.

The advisory group states that this definition could be further developed and welcomes further discussion on how sectarianism is conceptualised. It acknowledges that the term sectarianism has become more commonly used to refer to wider religious conflicts and tensions in contemporary Scotland but the ‘Catholic/Protestant divide’ is the predominant manifestation of sectarianism (no matter how the term is reconfigured) in Scotland (section 1.8.1).

It is important to make two points here. First, one of the challenges in the sectarianism debate is that the construction of a widely accepted and usable definition of sectarianism remains elusive. This is exemplified in the advisory group revising its own definition for the second report – a group that contains recognised experts on sectarianism. The second point, the restriction of the definition and the discussion to Christian sectarianism...
appears highly reasonable and justifiable on the grounds of the historical roots and contemporary manifestation of sectarianism. However, it is becoming increasingly important to understand sectarianism within the wider issue of religiously aggravated activity and crime and the trends in these crimes.

The highest recorded number of religiously aggravated offences has been against Roman Catholics (since these records commenced in 2011-2012), followed by Protestants. These offences have been gradually decreasing since 2012-2013 and the figures for 2014-2015 are: 328 charges for offences against Roman Catholics (58% of all charges) and 145 charges for offences against Protestants (25%). The figures for the offences against the Jewish and Muslim communities have been much lower and have fluctuated. The figures for 2014-2015 are: 71 charges for offences against Muslims (12% of all charges) and 25 charges for offences against Jews (4%). Since the latest figures for 2014-2015 were published there has been a steep rise in hate crimes against Muslims in the aftermath of the Paris attacks of November 13, 2015. Police Scotland reported more than 60 racially or religiously motivated crimes against Muslims in Scotland in the week after Paris. There is also great anxiety within the Jewish community in Scotland that anti-Semitism is increasing. The figures for religiously aggravated offences for 2015-2016 will make for very interesting reading and there is a possibility that the number of charges for offences against Muslims may be the second highest in the country after Roman Catholics. This worrying trend may influence how we understand sectarianism within the context of the wider range of religiously aggravated offences. This may redirect the focus of public and government attention towards this wider range of religiously aggravated offences and the implications for Scottish society.

The \textit{Final Report} comments on the variety of perceptions of the scope of sectarianism that often leads to a polarization of views. Some perceive sectarianism to be widespread throughout Scotland while others consider sectarianism to be more prevalent in the West of Scotland. The \textit{Final Report} draws from the recent \textit{Scottish Social Attitudes Survey 2014} and research conducted in Glasgow (reported in 2003) to highlight that while many people have a perception that sectarianism exists in Scotland, a much smaller number of people have experienced sectarianism. The \textit{Final Report} does not dismiss or devalue these perceptions, but it is clear that there is a gap between the perception and the experience of sectarianism and this merits closer scrutiny - the \textit{Final Report} repeatedly argues that there is a need to have a more robust evidence-based approach to sectarianism in Scotland. This will help to establish facts and how effective interventions can be undertaken. As discussed above, the landscape of religious discrimination in Scotland is changing and perhaps it is now time to have a more rigorous analysis of all forms of religious discrimination and religiously aggravated offences.

\textbf{Professor Stephen McKinney is Leader of Creativity, Culture and Faith (Research and Teaching Group) in the School of Education, University of Glasgow.}

\textbf{Selected references:}


\textbf{Missionary history}

\textbf{BILL TOLLAN}

\textbf{Pioneering Scots}

In March this year the Mill Hill Missionaries celebrate the 150th anniversary of their foundation by Herbert Vaughan, later Cardinal Archbishop of Westminster. A member of the Scottish Mill Hill community recalls that from the earliest days there were members from Scotland.

By the time of his death in 1873, David Livingstone was a national hero – and an inspiration to many who wished to follow in his footsteps. He had sought to open up the ‘dark continent’ of Africa to allow missionaries and traders to follow, to eradicate the slave trade and improve the lives of the indigenous people. The Victorians had no doubts about the benefits of the Christian religion and Western civilization. But, unlike many who followed him, Livingstone had a deep respect for the local African people, and would not have approved of the way the colonial ‘scramble for Africa’ unfolded.

Fr Herbert Vaughan was filled with a similar zeal to bring the Gospel message to Africa. In founding St Joseph’s Missionary Society in 1866 he was spurred on by the zeal of the various Protestant missionary societies, and felt it imperative that Catholics should be no less zealous in their missionary efforts. As Bishop of Salford, Vaughan had met the great explorer Henry Morton Stanley on his return from Central Africa in 1876.
In 1895 the first group of five Mill Hill Missionaries arrived in the Protectorate of Uganda. They were welcomed by the mainly French White Fathers who had begun missionary work in 1879.

(Five years earlier Stanley had famously found Livingstone, allegedly greeting him with ‘Dr Livingstone, I presume’.) The Bishop was Vice-President of the Manchester Geographical Society. He keenly desired that some of his missionaries should be assigned to Africa. However, Vaughan was unimpressed by any boasting about the growing extent of the British Empire. Such boasting, he wrote, is ‘vanity and weakness...whatever the character of the conqueror or the intentions of their government’. His motivation was rather ‘to put down the curse of African slavery and to establish in its place the voluntary and sweet service of Our Lord Jesus Christ’.

In 1895 the first group of five Mill Hill Missionaries arrived in the Protectorate of Uganda. They were welcomed by the mainly French White Fathers who had begun missionary work in 1879. A civil war of 1892 had created the impression that Roman Catholics were French, and Protestants were British. The newly-arrived MHMs were led by an Englishman, Bishop Hanlon; the other four included a Dutchman, an Irishman, and two Scots – Frs James Prendergast from Dundee, and Thomas Matthews from Dumfries. Fr Matthews was to spend the rest of his life in Uganda, dying on Easter Sunday 1942. He was the last survivor of that first group that had made the arduous journey on foot from the coast to Kampala. His fellow Scot, Fr Prendergast, was dead within five years of his arrival.

Surviving letters to headquarters from the missionaries give vivid descriptions of their journey to their new mission, and the early years of the Mill Hill Mission. Their ‘caravan’ had set out from Mombasa on the East African coast on June 22nd and arrived in Kampala, Uganda, on September 26th. They covered on average 13 to 14 miles a day, but with many interruptions on the way. The ‘caravan’ consisted of over 160 people – including ‘askaris’ (armed guards), porters, cooks, tent-boys and guides. These were recruited with the help of a local agent, who also procured a number of donkeys – for carrying goods and sometimes the missionaries themselves. Fr Prendergast wrote he’d been appointed ‘chef de cuisine’ for the journey, while Fr Matthews was to be in charge of the tents.

Five weeks into the journey Bishop Hanlon wrote, ‘During the first three weeks of our travels from Mombasa we were nearly roasted, and the skin was crisped from our faces; during the past fortnight it has often been scorching hot during late morning and early afternoon, and very cold at night and early morning. During the past week we have slept nearly every night in a Scotch mist...We have each a donkey to ride when we are tired, but for the most part do our marches on foot...We are one of the few caravans that have come so far without losing some men by death, either from disease or exposure or wild animals or equally wild natives of the Interior’. At times there was a shortage of food and/or water; other times they had to negotiate large swamps, or cross big rivers. Porters were often difficult to handle, and some disappeared with their loads. ‘Of the 160 men who made up our caravan on leaving the coast, 26 deserted and caused us great inconvenience; eleven were left sick at different stations on the way...three died, and a fourth was speared to death by the remorseless Wanandi tribe’.

Two hundred warriors of this warlike tribe had attacked an advance party of the caravan of the Protestant Church Missionary Society (CMS) that was following the same trail as the MHM group. All but seven of the 31 porters were killed. Bishop Hanlon had been forced by exhaustion and the desertion of porters to leave behind eleven crates in charge of an askari. The crates were to be brought on later. Four of these were abandoned on the road, the rest were carried by porters who joined up with the CMS caravan, but were then ransacked by the Wanandi. Many valuable items were thus lost.

Arrived at last at their destination, Fr Prendergast wrote: ‘By the help of God and the assistance of the prayers of all our friends at home, we have accomplished the task – to journey on foot for two months and a half through barren desolate country, through jungle and swamp, through the midst of thieves and murderers, through paths infested by wild beasts and savage natives. Thanks be to God, we are all in good health, in spite of the terrors and dangers we had to pass through’.

The new missionaries soon began the serious work of establishing new missions, learning the language, and laying the foundations for what was to become the thriving Church of today. But five years after his arrival, James Prendergast succumbed to the deadly black-water fever. Fr Matthews wrote home of the great energy his colleague had brought to his missionary work, how he had mastered the language, built the great reed Church at Nsambya, and was much loved by the people. Great crowds attended his funeral Mass. ‘They flocked to the graveyard from all parts, and amidst the genuine sobbing and weeping of his loved and loving people the remains of dear Fr Prendergast were laid to rest’.

The Upper Nile mission originally entrusted to the Mill Hill Missionaries covered a huge area of present-day Uganda and Kenya. The same area now has four Dioceses in Uganda and eight in Kenya – administered today mainly by Ugandan and Kenyan priests, Bishops, and Religious.

Fr Bill Tollan is a Mill Hill Missionary who lives in Glasgow.

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I am 17 years old and I am a sixth year student in a secondary school in Glasgow. I want to tell you about a community project that I feel incredibly passionate about. ‘I Am Me’ is an award-winning community drama project that raises awareness of the bullying and harassment of people with disabilities. *Disability hate crime* is one of the most under-reported crimes in Scotland and the UK, and ‘I Am Me’ is a moving, hard-hitting drama aimed at challenging attitudes and behaviour towards disabled people. It is especially suitable for young people in secondary schools, and it has been performed all over Scotland.

The ‘I Am Me’ project led to an initiative called ‘Keep Safe’. ‘Keep Safe’ works in partnership with Police Scotland and a network of local businesses to create ‘Keep Safe’ places for disabled, vulnerable, and elderly people when out and about in the community. People can access these premises to seek assistance and help if they feel lost, confused, scared, in danger, or have been the victim of a crime. The ‘Keep Safe’ initiative is currently running in Renfrewshire, Inverclyde, Dumfries & Galloway, and the Scottish Borders, and is being rolled out across Scotland.

I have been made the leading ‘Keep Safe’ ambassador for my secondary school. This programme matters to me so much because I can personally relate to the topic of disability hate crime, having watched my autistic and epileptic brother, James, get bullied during his time at school.

During our time in secondary school, I’d be responsible for making sure James was happy and healthy during school, and that he’d get home okay. I acted like an older sister to him, despite being his little sister by almost two years, and this has been a responsibility I’ve had pretty much since I was of age to look after myself. From when he joined me in primary school until the end of our fifth year in secondary school, I was responsible for someone else in addition to myself.

Police Scotland says that a crime becomes a disability hate crime when it is motivated by malice or ill will based on a person’s disability or perceived disability. Police Scotland also says that ‘most people don’t know about disability hate crimes, who they can contact or what can be done about it. It’s just not seen as a problem or taken seriously.’ So how does this affect my brother James? Well, James can’t read facial expressions or sense tone or distinguish sarcasm from someone being serious. Some boys would patronise him and act like they were very friendly with him when in reality they were bullying him. It caused James great mental stress trying to figure out why the people he thought were his friends were now pointing and laughing at him. Some disability organisations call this ‘Mate Crime’.

James grew up the slimmest person in our family. Nervous anxiety burned up any calories that he consumed. Then we found out he had epilepsy, and the medicine he needed to take made him gain a lot of weight and increased his appetite. They mocked him for being ‘fat’.

The social skills associated with autism are very poor, and James doesn’t have an awareness of the latest ‘trends’ in the year group. He can’t spot when there’s a new Nike trainer out that everyone needs, or notice the hype of having the latest designer clothes. Many of my fellow students thought James was ‘stupid’, looking at his grades. I wish they would reflect on their own experience of getting their preliminary exam results back, knowing that the poor mark in front of them didn’t represent their capabilities, knowing that they are worth more than that low mark. I wish they would reflect on how it must feel to have that poor mark held in front of you pretty much every day, knowing that it WAS your best work, that it WAS what you were capable of, but knowing that still wasn’t enough.

I watched my brother fall to the ground in a seizure on his birthday, seeing him standing up cutting his cake one minute, collapsed onto the ground the next. I think that’s enough hardship for anyone’s life, without having to face cruelty at school as well.

Predicting James’ future is hard. Because of his medical requirements, he doesn’t have the same ‘freedom’ with alcohol as you’d assume an 18-year-old has. It will be a challenge for him to obtain a licence to drive: the requirement is to be seizure-free for two years. Holidays, independent travelling and relationships in the future could all be problems. He’s dependent on my mum as a young adult, but will he always be this dependent? Will he be able to financially support himself? Will he need to live with my parents?

I’m using James as an example because he helps me personally relate to the topic of disability hate crime. He shows me the reality of having a disability. And how desperately important it is for those around him to be kind, not cruel.

Leading the Keep Safe ambassadors has given me the chance to help make a difference by raising awareness of disability hate crime. I invite you all to join me in appreciating diversity and in speaking up for the powerless. James has taught me that there is far more to people than what you see. No one knows what’s going on in anyone’s personal life.

The ‘I Am Me’ drama has been filmed and made available as a DVD. The ‘I Am Me’ film can be used as a free resource by any school, group or organisation in Scotland, and it comes with an accompanying training pack about disability hate crime.

You can find more information about ‘I Am Me’ and ‘Keep Safe’ on the website: http://www.iammescotland.co.uk/
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of Fairtrade tea were up by 3%, coca 14% and Fairtrade coffee at 12%. Sales sales are on the rise. Top of the list is

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But the good news is that the Fairtrade

a third in the UK last year.

Not only do we eat too much of it, but

Articles can be sent to the editor at any

view they would like to share, please

Inspired by Laura Matheson’s article on

February, 2016) on

Open House,

As ever, Brian Quail never lets pass an opportunity to parade his piety about nuclear weapons (Letters, February, 2016), I hold none of the views he seems to impute to me.

Personally, I would scrap Trident as a waste of time and effort. I also regard nuclear weapons as wholly immoral, now as in the past. In my Open House lecture I was ‘simply’ expressing my opinion as a keen observer of history that mutually assured destruction has, at times, been an effective reality. As Mr Quail himself says, ‘it could well be argued that deterrence has worked’, though he follows up with a non sequitur ‘in the very reverse way we imagine’: that is, the USSR developing a counterbalancing arsenal to that of the USA. I am not an ‘apologist’ for either of these superpowers any more than I am for nuclear arms.

Gerard Carruthers, University of Glasgow

Just eating

Not only do we eat too much of it, but changing patterns of consumption are depriving poor famers overseas of much needed income. Changes in EU market regulations have led to a shift away from cane sugar towards subsidised home produced beet sugar, just when we are being encouraged to eat less. Sales of Fairtrade sugar collapsed by more than a third in the UK last year.

But the good news is that the Fairtrade Foundation, which aims to protect famers in the developing world by promising a minimum price and a premium to invest in community projects, have announced that other sales are on the rise. Top of the list is Fairtrade wine, which grew by 17% last year, followed by Fairtrade flowers at 14% and Fairtrade coffee at 12%. Sales of Fairtrade tea were up by 3%, coca products by 6% and bananas by 5%.

The politics of aid

It was good to read Gerry Hand’s reflection, The Challenge of Giving (Open House, February, 2016) on the work of SCIAF and our motivations for charitable giving. He rightly raises the question of why we give money while highlighting the Church’s teaching that we need to go beyond addressing basic needs to questioning the underlying causes which keep people in poverty, hunger and injustice.

Having heard him on numerous occasions, I am not surprised that Gerry encourages us to go further and get involved in potentially contentious areas of economics and politics. In many respects this echoes the words of John Paul II on solidarity as the appropriate virtue for an interdependent world: ‘not a feeling of vague compassion or shallow distress at the misfortunes of so many people, both near and far. On the contrary, it is a firm and persevering determination to commit oneself to the common good: that is to say the good of all and of each individual, because we are all really responsible for all’. [para.38, Social Concern, 1987] As a former employee, I am particularly proud of SCIAF’s commitment to education, written into its founding remit in 1965 as follows:

SCIAF is the official overseas agency of the Bishops, clergy and laity of Scotland. It exists to help the world’s hungry, underprivileged and destitute. It hopes also to make the realities better known and to arouse a lively awareness of the obligations deriving from Christian charity and responsibility. [Founding a Fund, John J. McKee, 1985] In short, it’s not enough to raise funds, it’s important to ask why, as summarised in the quote attributed to Brazilian archbishop, Dom Helder Camara:

“When I give food to the poor they call me a saint. When I ask why the poor have no food they call me a communist.”

Putting coins in a collecting can, or a SCIAF WEE BOX, is a first step towards changing the world for the good of all, but we shouldn’t stop there. If that involves doing some hard thinking and becoming part of Pope Francis’ church ‘bruised, hurting and dirty because it has been on the streets’, then we should think ourselves lucky that we have the understanding, technology and potential to make a real difference.

John Dornan, Cumbernauld

LETTERS

The Editor of Open House email: editor@openhousescotland.co.uk

All correspondence, including email, must give full postal address and telephone number.

Nuclear weapons

As ever, Brian Quail never lets pass an opportunity to parade his piety about nuclear weapons (Letters, February, 2016), I hold none of the views he seems to impute to me.

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NOTEBOOK

Memorial Bursary

Applications from scholars and postgraduate students are invited for the Bernard Aspinwall Memorial Bursary, which is supported by the Scottish Catholic Historical Association.

The bursary or bursaries (of between £100 and £250) will be awarded for research trips and/or publication expenses for projects on any aspect of Scottish Catholic History. A covering letter, CV, brief project description (200-500 words) and breakdown of expenses are required by way of application. The deadline for applications is 30th April 2016.

Please send applications with a covering letter containing your home, telephone and email contact details to Professor Gerard Carruthers email: gerard.carruthers@glasgow.ac.uk

Or write to him at 7 University Gardens, University of Glasgow, G12 8QQ.

Young people

Inspired by Laura Matheson’s article on page 14, we would like to encourage more contributions from young people to Open House. If you work with young people or know any who have a point of view they would like to share, please encourage them to do so.

Articles can be sent to the editor at any time – see details on the back page.

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Scotland And The Easter Rising, Fresh Perspectives On 1916

Edited by Kirsty Lusk and Willy Maley.

This book seeks, as its title suggests, to put forward new perspectives on the 1916 Easter Rising in Ireland and its relationship and importance to Scotland both then and today. Twenty-eight interventions in poetry, short story and essay, and an afterword by Owen Dudley Edwards, are presented.

Literary and cultural links are explored with Sorley MacLean being to the fore. Radical politics are portrayed especially through James Connolly, born in Edinburgh and largely overlooked in Scotland but a hero in Ireland. Constance Markievicz and Margaret Skinder from Coatbridge are the exemplars used to show the power of women in the Rising. I was most struck by two essays. In one Kevin McKenna explores the tension of being Scottish and Irish, and in the other James Kelman gives a slant on radical history by contrasting spiritual or religious (inner) ideas with physical or natural (outer) ones. The book is dedicated to Ian Bell, one of the contributors, who died as the book was going to press.

David Tracey

Eamon de Valera: A Will to Power.
Ronan Fanning.
Faber & Faber 2015.

I met Eamon de Valera one winter’s afternoon in 1954 when I was 12 years old, going home to Donegal for Christmas from college in Kilkenny. I went to Dáil Eireann to meet my local TD, Neil Blaney, who was giving me a lift, and he asked if I would like to meet Dev. We made our way to the Taoiseach’s office, where a tall, thin, bespectacled man in a dark suit sat behind a desk. He stood up and shook my hand, and asked what kind of sport we played at college. Was it rugby, hurling or Gaelic Football? He wished me every success in my studies. My father, a great Fianna Fáil supporter, was very pleased I had met the great man.

Edward de Valera was born in Manhattan on 14th October 1882, the only child of Vivion de Valera and Catherine ‘Kate’ Coll. Kate, like many women in post famine Ireland, had left the country in 1879. She worked in domestic service in New York where she met Vivion, from Spain’s Basque country. When Edward was two, his father left and he never saw him again. Kate’s brother Ned took his nephew back to his home in Knockmore, Bruree, County Limerick. The Colls were very poor.

So how did young Edward make the journey from rural poverty to become Eamon de Valera, teacher, revolutionary, Taoiseach and President of Ireland? Ronan Fanning, Professor Emeritus of Modern History at University College, Dublin, tells the story of this complex man with great clarity and insight. He acknowledges that Dev was a very divisive figure. His petulant rejection of the Anglo Irish Treaty in 1921 and his consequent culpability for the Irish Civil War which followed led to resentment and hatred that lasts to this day. John McAtear of the Donegal newspaper, the Tircionaill Tribune, writing about the general election in February of this year, observed that sentiments were heard at the hustings that go back over 50 years.

Education was the escape route out of poverty for Kate’s son via Blackrock College, the elite school run by Jesuits in Dublin, where his parish priest helped get him a place. Along the way, the young de Valera developed the gritty characteristics of determination and emotional self-sufficiency. He became a teacher and attended University College Dublin, where to his great disappointment he graduated with Second Class Honours. Fanning points out that he became immersed in everything he did. When he became involved in Ireland’s Gaelic revival, he learned Irish, became a fluent speaker, and married his teacher. He changed his name from Edward to Eamon. His interest in Irish culture took him into politics.

Luck played a part in his emergence as the leader of Ireland’s revolutionary nationalists. He had played no part in the preparation for the Easter Rising and during the
Making all things new
- Catholicity, Cosmology, Consciousness.

Ili Delio OSF.

This is an exciting work of theology which is also likely to be the subject of controversy, since it calls in question many of the assumptions and positions taken by traditional Catholic theology. The author is an American Franciscan nun who holds doctorates in pharmacology and in historical theology. She is a passionate disciple of the French Jesuit palaeontologist, Pierre Teilhard de Chardin, and her book might be best summed up as a defence of Teilhard’s reflections on the impact of the theory of evolution on Christianity – a defence and also an updating by introducing some scientific findings that are better established today than they were when Teilhard was writing. Delio makes the claim that ‘Catholicity’ is the central organising principle at work in the universe; by ‘catholicity’ the author means the yearning or drive or propensity for wholeness and completion which she sees to lie behind evolution, Big Bang cosmology and Quantum physics; catholicity is also a central characteristic of human consciousness and is exemplified in Jesus’ activity of healing and making people whole. This all makes sense if we see it as Divine Love – Teilhard’s Omega – drawing us and the cosmos into ever greater unity and wholeness. God is the power of evolution, who is both within the evolutionary process and also ahead of it, drawing it forward. He is not the traditional God of the Above but the God of the Ahead. Where traditional theology tends to be other-worldly, Teilhard’s focus is on this world, which is truly the Milieu Divin. We humans are the product of evolution, indeed ‘evolution made conscious’, and we are called to absorb ourselves in the evolutionary process by becoming co-creators of the world through the energy of love, caring for all things, human and non-human. The author is not only science-friendly but technology-friendly, seeing the creation of the world-wide web, for example, as part and parcel of the evolutionary process, fostering an enlarged sense of cosmic wholeness.

This sense of wholeness was present in the Middle Ages, when Bonaventure could describe creation as ‘a limited expression of the dynamic love between Father, Son and Spirit, exploding into a thousand forms in the universe.’ But this human sense of wholeness, which saw the world as truly sacramental, revealing the presence of God in nature, was shattered by the rise of Scholasticism and of left-brain thinking. Delio distinguishes between right-brain and left-brain thinking. Where the former focuses on connectivity, belonging and relatedness, the left-brain reaches out to nature by way of analysis, linear thinking and manipulation; it fails to see how the various parts fit together to form a whole. Left-brain thinking became dominant with the rise of science and as a result of Descartes’ fateful distinction between the res cogitans – the thinking thing – and the res extensa – the extended thing, the world of matter spread out in space and time. This gave rise to either/or thinking – either science or religion, either matter or spirit. By contrast, Delio considers modern – Quantum science to be in league with the religious sense of God’s presence in the universe. Where Plato and Aristotle separated matter and spirit, seeing matter as base, inert and shapeless, Newtonian physics

Struggle his military competence was inept at best. He surrendered with his battalion after the failed uprising and was imprisoned. Why was he not shot with the rest of the leaders? Various reasons are given – that he had not signed the independence proclamation, that he was born in America. The real reason was probably that the British authorities realised their mistake in executing the leaders. The senior officer who had ordered the executions was called back to London, and De Valera and several others were imprisoned in England. While in prison he became leader of the Irish prisoners and was released in June 1917. His victory for Sinn Féin in the East Clare by-election that year made him a household name. In 1926 he resigned from Sinn Féin and founded Fianna Fáil, because he had decided to enter the Dáil, and to do so he had to take an oath to the British crown – which he had refused to do when it was one of the conditions of the treaty which Michael Collins had brought back from London in 1921. Disagreement over the treaty had led to the civil war in which Collins was killed.

Fanning weaves his way through the fragmented and often confusing story of Irish politics leading up to and following the rising of 1916. De Valera became obsessed with Irish independence and came to believe that only he could solve Ireland’s problems. The title of the book – Will to power – suggests a man who was driven by ambition and a compulsion to control. As leader of Fianna Fáil he often took unilateral action and reported back to his colleagues who would rubber stamp his decisions. He re-wrote the 1938 Irish constitution single handed. Fanning’s book shines a clear light on a complex and driven man and leaves judgement to the reader. It is a book which is hard to put down.

Eamonn Cullen
changed our understanding of matter, seeing it as atomistic, extended and
weighty, composed of corpuscles, but maintained the division between
mind and matter; these continued to be considered radically different
realms of existence. But in a chapter entitled ‘Quantum Consciousness’
Delio argues that quantum physics reveals mind to be a property of
matter, that ‘consciousness is integral to all aspects of cosmic life’, that the
universe is brimming with consciousness from the most elementary particles to vast galaxies;
that consciousness can no longer be considered a human phenomenon
since ‘the operations of the human brain mirror… the underlying
operations of the universe’.
I must confess to not having enough understanding of science either to contest or assent to Delio’s argument here. I can see how she claims that
Einstein’s overthrowing of
Newtonian physics, which had
explained the world as operating like a machine, and the introduction of
quantum physics caused the universe to look ‘more like a great thought
than a great machine’, leading to the conclusion that ‘mind is within
matter’, but I have to take her reasoning on trust on this point. Her
allegiance to the thinking of Teilhard is strong here, since, as she says,
Teilhard gave the primacy to consciousness ‘as the stuff of the
universe’. She writes, ‘mind is relationship and matter is that which it
relates. Neither on its own could evolve or express anything; together
they give us ourselves and our world.’ She adds, ‘The discovery of the quantum phenomena has
established a new covenant between the mind and the mindlike
background of the universe… the human mind recapitulates Mind or
consciousness in the universe.’ She
endorses Einstein’s view that human beings are an integral part of a whole
called the universe and goes on to say that ‘If we are part of a whole,
then religion tells us about the whole; it gives meaning and direction to the
whole.’ Religion helps us to ‘reach a level of consciousness that we are not
alone; divinity is at the heart of life itself. How we respond to the divine
lure is how we live in the dynamic energy of catholicity.’
Jesus is the supreme exemplar of
creative wholeness. Focusing on
God’s immanent presence in the
world, he gave a new pattern to
Jewish custom and tradition,
challenging the exclusivity of Jewish
society based on what was deemed ‘clean’ and ‘unclean’, consortng with
the marginalised, such as lepers, and
sharing table fellowship with tax
collectors and prostitutes. He
preached the Kingdom of God not as
an abstract ideal but as a lived reality
which forged community. ‘Jesus’s
deep oneness with God empowered
his sense of catholicity, a non-dual
consciousness of belonging to the
whole and the whole belonging to
God.’ The Kingdom of God is
liberating, it is God’s future already
present in the good that people do, in
every act of love and every work of
peace; God breaks into human life
and we join his kingdom as the new
whole. Jesus saw no separation
between himself and others; all are
invited to the divine banquet. In this
way, through the power and energy
of love, love of God and neighbour, a
radically new community, a new
catholicity, is formed.
Clearly if Delio’s emphasis on
catholicity, as she has expounded it,
to be taken seriously there
would have to be a re-thinking of
human and religious priorities. Her
emphasis is less on orthodox
doctrine and more on orthopraxis,
on living religion in community and
togetherness, on caring for each
other and the environment, on
treating the world as our natural
habitat, on keeping our focus on the
world we live in today rather than
some other world to come. She
clearly regrets some of the turns the
Christian tradition has taken, such
as the adoption of Christianity as the
new state religion by the Emperor
Constantine in the fourth century
CE, which placed a new emphasis on
power, law and authority, when
‘politics trumped cosmology, and
universality trumped catholicity’.
She also takes a dim view of what
happened at the Council of Nicea in
325 CE, which changed the
understanding of Catholic from
being a sense of the whole to a sense
of the true. ‘Nicea disconnected
worlds from anthropos’. And she is
scornful of the emphasis of the
medieval Church and the Reformers
on sin, guilt and damnation, saying
that they wanted a harsh,
judgmental God, which was
certainly not the God of Jesus, who
died so that the Spirit could reign
over us, the Spirit which seeks
wholeness and unity. And she
strongly advocates greater dialogue
both between the world religions
themselves and between them and
modern science: ‘world religions
must come together for the sake of
the world, because the whole earth is
in desperate need of a spiritual
center.’ In short, she wants a new
spirituality, not an otherworldly one
but one of faith in God and faith in
the world which focuses our minds
on the unifying power of love,
urging us to ‘make an option for the
whole’. She finds the yearning for
wholeness to be found in secular life
more often than in the institutional
Church, in music fests, sports events
and social media. She declares, ‘We
are religious to our core, and
catholicity is the energy of life’s core
toward ultimate wholeness.’ And
adds, ‘The problems of our age are
cpy problems to be fixed but
relationships to be healed.’
Well written and persuasively
argued, this is a book to ponder. It
does, however, present some
problems. Delio argues powerfully
in favour of Teilhard’s contention that
evolution has a goal, namely the rise
of consciousness; he called the
human person ‘the arrow of
evolution’. But this is a position that
many evolutionary scientists would contest, pointing to the fact that Darwinian evolution is made possible by means of random variations, which by definition are not goal-directed. What is more, Delio holds that God is both within evolution and, as such, is changing in line with the universe, indeed ‘is coming to birth in the physical universe’. But God is also ahead, drawing evolution forward toward the Omega point, the point of absolute wholeness. It is difficult to see how God can be both in process and already existing as the Omega, the point of absolute wholeness. These misgivings may be due to my failure to understand; on the other hand, they may indicate areas of weakness in our author’s argument.

Joe Fitzpatrick

The Scots College, Spain, 1767-1780

Complied by Fr Michael Briody. Pontifical University of Salamanca, 2015.

It is something of an anomaly that, in the recent decade 2005 to 2015 when the Scots College in Spain had no students preparing for the priesthood, more Scottish Catholics got to know the college and to visit it than in any other decade of its long history. The explanation, of course, was that, temporarily without students, the college was able to host many people from this country who wished to experience life there, often to take part in courses, retreats and so forth.

Of course, the recent decade without students has not been the first occasion that such was the case. There was a period from 1734 until 1771, during which no students were being prepared in the college for priesthood in Scotland. In contrast to the recent interruption, hardly any Scottish Catholics visited the college in that long gap; indeed, hardly anyone in Scotland knew or remembered that the college in Spain existed – and that ignorance included the bishops.

Eventually, word reached the bishops that, unless they acted urgently, the college would be lost to the Scottish church. Fortunately, the bishops responded. The story of how the college was saved from oblivion and even extinction is told in the Memoirs of the Scottish priest who carried out the rescue, John Geddes. The Memoirs, handwritten by John Geddes himself, are in the archives of the Scots College in Spain. Now, for the first time, they have been transcribed, printed and published. This work has been carried out by Fr Michael Briody, a former student of the college and now a priest of the diocese of Motherwell. In the exhaustive task he was aided by several assistants (whose help he generously acknowledges) and the resultant volume, supplied with copious observations, explanations and footnotes, has the important distinction of being a publication of the Pontifical University of Salamanca.

Is the book worth buying and reading? Assuredly, I say that it is. But I would say that, wouldn’t I? As a former rector of the college and an unashamed aficionado, I could hardly say anything else. But anyone interested in a piece of remarkable history of an important institution of the Scottish Catholic Church will be rewarded by reading Geddes’ Memoirs. And even those who, hitherto, may have had little knowledge of, or even interest in, the subject, will enjoy Geddes’ story with its intrigues, its procrastinations and its frank descriptions of eighteenth century life in Spain. For those of us familiar with Spanish officialdom, even the dreaded trámites bureaucráticos we have grown to know were present in abundance for poor John Geddes. Nevertheless, his dogged patience had the ultimate reward of the re-establishment of what had seemed a lost cause.

Once the college was settled in Valladolid and the education of young Scotsmen to be priests in their home country was under way, the Memoirs continue. The journal gives little information about the life of the students, since, as well as his duties directing the community, Geddes still had various matters to settle with authorities in Madrid and Valladolid. He was also engaged in a running dispute with the priest of the church next door. Even so, the patience, determination and courage of the man were equal to the tasks. Geddes ends the Memoirs in something of a hurry and, although he does not explain his haste, we know that he had been recalled to Scotland to serve as a bishop there. The episcopate should not be seen as a reward, a kind of bene merenti for priests. But the book under review assures us that a better man could not have been chosen to assume the responsibilities of a bishop.

Finally, a few words of appreciation for those responsible for giving us the Geddes Memoirs, Fr Michael Briody and his team. They have provided not only access to a document of great interest as well as importance. Moreover, Fr Briody has adorned Geddes’ text with enlightening introductions, footnotes, summaries and other helps that enhance the document and increase its readability. Only one grumble or, rather, suggestion. Given the difficulty of remembering who’s who, especially among the many grandees in the narrative, a full list of dramatis personae (personarum) might be a boon to those of us who admit to memorial fallibility (provided, of course, that we remember to consult it).

Maurice Taylor

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FILM

Spotlight (2015)
Director: Tom McCarthy
Writers: Josh Singer, Tom McCarthy
Stars: Mark Ruffalo, Michael Keaton, Rachel McAdams.

You know a movie must have something going for it when it gets attention from both ends of the spectrum, Mammon and God. Hollywood has given the film Spotlight an Oscar for Best Picture, while in Rome members of the Pope's Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors enjoyed a private screening on 4th February, to help them grapple with the Roman Catholic's Church's history of criminal abuse of children by clergy. Then on 11th February, the editors of the New York Times gave the film a shout out when they opined that Spotlight offered the Vatican ‘an emphatic lesson in accountability’.

For a Hollywood film, at least, the ingredients usually associated with a hit are missing—there is no sex, no guns, no violence. Instead, this engaging and enthralling movie tells a disturbing tale of human exploitation, of individual corruption covered up by institutional hubris. Spotlight was inspired by the efforts of a Boston newspaper to expose an epidemic of abuse of young Catholic boys by an organised crime syndicate—except that in this case the syndicate was the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Boston led by the big Don, Cardinal Bernard Law. Obstructive and uncooperative, Law at one point in the history of this sordid tale tried to pose as a victim himself, accusing the local media of ‘Catholic bashing’, a posture that quickly collapsed when a local judge ordered all the incriminating diocesan files made public.

The film records the research and detective work by a squad of investigative reporters known as the ‘Spotlight team’, for the old protestant Yankee newspaper, the Boston Globe, during 2001-2002. The team’s reporting on criminal activity by men in black, and the obstruction of justice by Law and his managers, earned them a Pulitzer prize.

The five principals in the reporting team are excellently captured by Rachel McAdams, Mark Ruffalo, Brian d’Arcy James, Michael Keaton and John Slattery, who manage to convey the teamwork and choreography involved in getting the story right, without submerging the individual idiosyncrasies which give the movie a lot of its colour and drive.

A key catalyst for the investigation comes from a very real victim, Phil Saviano (Neal Huff) who confronts the reporters with his own story of abuse by a priest at a young age, together with accounts of other victims that he had tried to tell the Globe about several years earlier, without success. Now he berates the Spotlight team for dropping the ball, and this time manages to grab their attention when he points them towards Dr Richard Sipe, ex-Benedictine priest and expert witness in pedophile cases. Sipe’s voice appears in a phone call when he tells the Spotlight team that he estimates 6% of diocesan priests are pedophiles. This would amount to an amazing 90 priests in Boston alone—until the incredulous reporters discover that their own research uncovers 871 Sipe’s predictions and Saviano’s prodding send them to the Globe archives like archaeologists digging for the records of the many abusive priests moved around the diocese for decades.

But the Globe’s editor, Martin Baron (Liev Schreiber), newly arrived from the Miami Herald, wants more than a headcount—he directs the team to go after the system, the hierarchy, the bosses, all the way to the top, including the Cardinals. As the investigation picks up steam, we get caught up in the thrill of the chase. And we soon discover that the Archdiocese has sympathisers among many Catholic apologists in Boston. Baron is disparagingly referred to as ‘that Jewish fella from Miami’ by one of the local Catholic Mafia who tries to remind the Spotlight reporters where their loyalties should lie. Paul Guilfoyle (of ‘CSI’) gives an unctuous performance as the prominent fundraiser and flag waver for the Archdiocese who has chilling exchanges with Michael Keaton as he tries to persuade the reporter to soft pedal his investigation.

Lawyers and the judiciary do not come off well in this movie, with the exception of the famous victims’ attorney, Mitchell Garabedian, authentically and wonderfully played by Stanley Tucci. Historically, lawyers were compelled to negotiate private, ‘hush money’ settlements for victims with the Archdiocese; Law and his henchmen, proven incapable of enforcing the vows of their deviant priests, perversely imposed a vow of silence on lawyers, victims, and families. Between 1992 and 1996, five different judges impounded all the records in local County lawsuits involving priest molesters, keeping them from the public, ‘....given the institution involved and sensitivity for victims.’ Another hurdle for the Spotlight team to overcome, but they appeal to a courageous Superior Court Judge, Justice Constance Sweeney (Laurie Heineman), who orders all documents to be made public. Nevertheless, the Archdiocese’s preferred secrecy was aided and abetted, not just by a sympathetic sub-culture, but also by Massachusetts laws (strongly supported by Church lobbying) exempting clergymen from mandatory reporting of child abuse incidents to police. Conspiracy theorists will love this movie!

Spotlight serves as an iconic reference point, a gathering place for pulling together many loose ends into a coherent story. It is fast becoming a handy shorthand for referring to the exposure of the global criminality of the Roman Catholic Church, for which, in America at least, Boston represented Ground Zero.

[In conjunction with the movie, the Boston Globe is re-publishing some of its Spotlight stories, which can be read at bostonglobe.com]

Arthur Mccaffrey
MUSIC

BOREAS

Ahoy Hoy

Isle Music, ISLE04CD

The Scottish folk-roots scene loves cross-cultural collaborations. Boreas is a new, exciting partnership between Scottish and Norwegian musicians. On this album Rachel Newton (Scottish harp, voice, electroharp), Lori Watson (fiddle, voice), Britt Pernille Frøholm (Hardanger fiddle) and Irene Tillung (accordion) perform Scottish and Norwegian traditional material interwoven with their own tunes, in thoughtful, innovative arrangements.

The instrumental pieces are finely constructed and they reward repeat listening. The shivery and gorgeous tune-set Sidvoss opens like a landscape appearing through morning mist, flowing into a majestic Norwegian tune that beautifully contrasts darkly sonorous accordion with brightly crystalline harp. The intricate instrumental interplay of Lori Watson’s tune-set Sillery displays an almost-baroque geometry, spiced up with modern minimalism: Johann Sebastian Bach meets Philip Glass in the Penguin Café. Bjornen (Facing the Bear) paints a big, brightly-sharp landscape. The sustained accordion notes evoke the omnipresent cold, and the heavy rhythmic fiddle builds a sense of menace and threat. Then, like a storm dispersing and yielding to sunlight, Bjornen gives way to the beautiful, wistful Gaelic love-song melody Is trimgh nach robb ma combla rint played on harp and Hardanger fiddle.

The songs on the album are every bit as good as the instrumentals. The traditional Gaelic Nam bu leam thin thu thalaidhean thu (If you were mine I would caress you) is an unsettling lullaby in which a woman sings to a child that is not hers, singing that she is jealous of the child’s mother because she desires the child’s father. The tune and vocal are honey sweet, but the nervous pizzicato fiddle accompaniment hints uneasily that a pet rabbit may be boiling on the stove.

North Sea Holes was composed by Ewan MacColl in 1960 as part of the musical narration of the BBC radio folksong documentary ‘Singing the Fishing’. Boreas give it a very different treatment from the lusty socialist anthem of MacColl’s original Radio Ballad. Here the fiddles, accordion and harp conjure the constant backdrop of the deep ocean swell, seagull’s cries and sunlight flashing on the waves. It is the musical equivalent of the Breton Fisherman’s Prayer that sat the desk of President J.F. Kennedy in the White House: ‘Oh God thy sea is so great and my boat is so small’.

www.boreasband.com

Paul Matheson

BOYS OF THE LOUGH

The New Line

BOTL Records, BOTL01

This is a very amiable, old-timey collection of traditional Irish jigs, reels, melodies and songs, with a Scottish Gaelic ballad and a Shetland slow-air included for good measure. The Boys’ current line-up is founder-member Cathal McConnell (flute, whistles, vocal), Breandán Ó Beaglaoigh (vocal, accordion, melodeon), Kevin Henderson (fiddle) and Garry O’Briain (guitar, mandocello, keyboards).

Can you believe this is the 23rd album released by the Boys Of The Lough? Their first album appeared in 1972, and Cathal McConnell is the only remaining member from that time. Despite the changes of personnel over the years, the sound and spirit of Boys Of The Lough today is still recognisably close to what it was in the 1970s. That’s down to Cathal McConnell’s presiding influence and philosophy: a refusal to dilute the music with the addition of inappropriate vocalists or electric instruments or percussion, and a preference for the natural tone colours of the Boys’ acoustic instruments, traditionally played.

For me, the standout tracks are the two songs with Breandán Ó Beaglaoigh on lead vocal. The traditional Scottish Gaelic ballad Nsàir A Ràimig M’òm Baile (When I reached the village) tells how the bridegroom reaches the village of his betrothed, his ‘beautiful, brown-haired lass’, for their wedding, only to find her laid out and the women sewing her burial-shroud. In despair, he calls on ‘He who made the elements’ to save him from going mad with broken-hearted grief. Singing this love-lament, Breandán’s sweet, soft tenor voice trembles with loving tenderness. It is such a pleasure to
hearing a Scottish Gaelic love-song performed by a male singer as gently and as sweetly as this.

The other standout song is the haunting Fil Fil A Rún Ó, an Irish ballad composed in 1739 in Donegal during the British occupation’s persecution of Ireland’s language, culture and Catholic faith. The ancient, plainchant-sounding melody, and the sonorous depth and tranquility of Breandán’s singing, convey the feeling of a heartfelt, powerful prayer. One tradition says that the song was composed and sung by a mother whose son, a priest, has turned to the Protestant faith, and she is calling him back. Another tradition says that this song is about two brothers who became priests of the Roman Catholic Church. When they returned to Donegal from the seminary in Salamanca, one became a Priest of a poor parish, but the other converted to the Church of England and became a Minister of a wealthy parish. One was buried at the Catholic cemetery in Meevagh, and the other at the Protestant cemetery in Carrigart.

Fil fil a rún ó
Fil a rún ó
is ná h’imigh uaim
Fil orm a chuisle ’s a stóir
agus chidh tú ’n ghlóir má fhillean tú
(Return return my beloved,
Return my beloved
and do not leave me.
Return to me my darling and treasure
And you will see the Glory if you return)

Shuili mise thal is a bhus
i mótla ghrainn óige a rugadh mé
’sn fhaca mé níontas go fóill
mar an sagart ó Dónaill ‘na mhinistir
(I have travelled far and wide,
Throughout Moate where I was born
And I've never yet seen such a wonder,
As Father Ó Dónaill turned Minister)

Dhiultigh tú Peadar is Pól
már gheall ar an ór ’s as an airgid
Dhiultigh tú banrion ná glóir
agus d’iompaig tú go ción a mhinistir
(You denied Peter and Paul
Because of the gold and the silver.
You denied the Queen of Glory,
You turned your coat, became a minister)

Fil fil a rún ó
Fil a rún ó
is ná h’imigh uaim
Ma thillean tu innui no go deo
Fil insan ord
‘nár oileadh tú
(Return, return, my beloved,
Return, my beloved
and do not leave me.
If you return today or whenever,
Return to the order
in which you were ordained).

www.boysofthelough.info

Paul Matheson
OBITUARY

Bishop Ian Murray
1932-2016

Ian Murray, who was Bishop of Argyll & the Isles from 1999 to 2008, died in Edinburgh on 22nd January. He was born in Lennoxtown and studied for the priesthood at Blairs College and Valladolid, Spain, where he was one of the first group of students to attend the reopened college following its closure during the Spanish Civil War. He was ordained in Valladolid in March, 1956.

Ian came back to Scotland and served in parishes in the Archdiocese of St Andrews and Edinburgh before returning to Valladolid as vice rector of the college. He returned to Scotland in 1970 to become the first resident Catholic chaplain at the new University of Stirling.

After another spell in parish work, he returned to Valladolid as rector from 1987 to 1994, when he negotiated the transfer of the college to its present site in Salamanca. In 1999 Ian became Bishop of Argyll and the Isles, and lived in Oban until 2008. He spent his last years in Edinburgh.

Maurice Taylor, Bishop Emeritus of Galloway Diocese, remembers him as a mentor, a colleague and a friend.

I first met Ian in 1965. He was vice-rector of the Scots College in Valladolid and I had just been appointed rector there. He readily agreed to take me to the college and introduce me. On the overnight train from Paris, he taught me a few Spanish phrases that he said would be useful. I recall ‘mucho gusto’ and ‘encantado’. After I had memorised them, we separated for the night, he to his wagon-lit, I to my couchette.

We were together in Valladolid for the next five years. He was my mentor, my colleague and my friend. He was wise, resourceful and unfailingly cheerful. Not once during those years (and despite the unavoidable closeness of our lives and paths as quasi-exiles) did Ian show any impatience or annoyance with me.

As vice-rector, he had a special care for the students. He listened to their suggestions and their complaints with good humour. Sometimes, he exasperated them but then his cheerful rejoinder would be that they exasperated him. He had teaching duties to perform and these he carried out with characteristic panache and insouciance (being, as he was, a committed Francophile).

When he left Spain to return to Scotland, I felt bereft. I truly missed his presence and his effervescent conversation. We met occasionally thereafter, but seldom following his retirement from Argyll and the Isles. People would tell me that they had seen him and that he seemed to be repeating his stories. I was able to say that that was no proof. I knew his stories off by heart.

Dear Ian. What an open, generous person you were. We miss you. Be happy in heaven.

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Moments in time

After a wonderful journey through snow-clad mountains, we arrive at Oban station, strategically situated in the centre of the bustling town and adjacent to the busy harbour. The sun is shining, a real treat after weeks of cloud and rain, so we set off towards the north. First we call at the Episcopal Cathedral of St John the Divine in the main street. The cathedral was started in 1864 but never completed, which has resulted in an unusual arrangement with riveted buttresses supporting the uncompleted end of the nave. However, the cathedral gives a warm, welcoming impression to visitors.

We walk down to the shore and head towards the imposing bulk of the Catholic Cathedral, dedicated to St Columba and completed in 1934. We enter via a side door and admire the interior of the handsome church, which will in three days time see the installation of a new bishop. The view from the cathedral is magnificent; from Oban harbour framed by wooded hills to the island of Kerrera a short distance way across the bay. A Calmac ferry sails in from Mull and departs a few minutes later in a southerly direction en route to Colonsay.

Ahead looms the ancient fortress of Dunollie, perched on a crag overlooking the bay. This was one of the main strongholds of the Macdougalls, whose clan centre is situated nearby in Dunollie House, now a museum. We continue along the quiet coastal road, passing an intriguing pillar of rock topped by trees. This was originally a sea stack, now standing on a raised beach dating from an era of higher sea levels. We stop near a small lighthouse, where a plaque advises us that the stack is traditionally called the Dogstone, where the giant Finn used to tie up his dog Bran. We can now see the island of Mull with snow on the highest peaks and the distinctive shape of Duart castle on the coast. To the north lies the long, low island of Lismore, culminating in a lighthouse at its western extremity. Just off shore lies a curious flat topped islet, known as the Maiden island; there are various legends to explain the name.

Oban’s war memorial is located here; an impressive sculpture of two soldiers helping an injured comrade, with a Gaelic inscription. Nearby, we spot another monument dedicated to all who have been lost at sea, with a verse of the well-known hymn, “Lord, you have come to the sea-shore ( lakeside ) “.

Another ferry sails past; this one from Barra and South Uist. This is an evocative place, on the edge of the mainland, looking out over the Hebrides which are so much a part of Scotland’s history; for hundreds of years, traders, warriors and Celtic missionaries must have passed this way.

Tim Rhead
Tim Rhead is a pastoral assistant in the Episcopal Church.

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