



A Heritage Preserved!

No serious study of the history of east Ulster can be undertaken without reference to the work of scholar-priest James O'Laverty. He was Dean of St. Malachy's College from 1857 to 1866. Now his important historical library is being preserved for future generations together with the set of Gaelic manuscripts which bear his name. Professor Eoin MacNéill was one of the first scholars to survey this priceless collection. Noting that they had passed into the keeping of St. Malachy's on O'Laverty's death in 1906 he made a special plea that they would not be neglected.

An award of £592,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund has financed a major project of conservation not only of O'Laverty's books and manuscripts but the personal libraries of Bishops Denvir and Dorrian and the archives



of the College. The books will gradually be moved into the new cabinets in a completely refurbished library.

Getting There!

The renovation of the 'Old Library' is nearing completion. The inadequate glass fronted pine cabinets have been replaced by bespoke ash shelving with museum-standard display units and carefully regulated

lighting and temperature controls. An elevator now provides improved access to the first floor. A 'cultural corridor' will soon help tell the stories associated with the library contents and the rich heritage of St. Malachy's

from the influential McCabe family to the development of the modern College. An ambitious education/outreach programme has been created to inform not only our own students but other local schools and the wider community.

Our thanks are due to architect Kieran McCambridge from McLean & Forte for his vision and innovative design and to contractor Peter McErlain and his team for their patience, professionalism and craftsmanship.





Decades of Dust!

An 'in house' fully equipped conservation studio has been created in the Crumlin Road wing of the College. A volunteer team led by Sean Madden and Rachel Mullan have donned aprons and masks to clean away the accumulated grime of many decades. With the use of special vacuum cleaners, brushes and sponges an initial deep surface cleaning and disinfection has helped books, pamphlets or stories

become readable once again. Our own students participating in the Lower 6th (Year 13) Enrichment Programme have received tuition in conservation techniques. Volumes with cracked and broken bindings require more serious intervention and these have been identified and moved to Sean's conservation workshop in Lurgan for more intricate repairs. It

is hoped that 60% of the entire collection will be ready for moving into the new library space by the end of August.



Left: A page from an old manuscript. Right: A student working at a table in the conservation studio.

The Cosslett Diaries

The archives of the College comprise, for the most part, registers, roll books, ledgers, photographs, letters and programmes. A small number of items have no clear provenance and it is not easy to see how they ended up here at all. One such item is the remarkable 18th century journal of Charles Grimké Cosslett. It includes a detailed and most readable account of a journey through

Ireland in the early 1790s in a little notebook along with a similar record of a trip from Edinburgh to London and onwards to Portsmouth in a separate volume. Cosslett is one of the landed gentry, a student at Trinity College Dublin with a



great deal of time on his hands. He is a keen observer of people and places. Towns, country houses, bridges, cathedrals, ships and harbours all come under his scrutiny.

Historian and author Hugh O'Neill has made himself an expert on the Cosslett Diaries. Hugh, a member of the project team, has travelled to the United States and throughout these islands to investigate the real Cosslett as part of the Library Project. He has produced an 'ebook' and detailed commentary which will shortly be available on the website. This picture of Ireland and Britain during a momentous decade of the 18th century will provide much valuable material for historians of the period.



The 'Tower' Collection

An additional antiquarian 'gem' will be added to the O'Lavery Library when the book collection of St. MacNissi's, Garron Tower (now St. Killian's College) will be moved from its Antrim Coast home to be housed here. St MacNissi's was founded by five priests who left St. Malachy's in 1951. Although some books have been added over the years this unique and fascinating collection of pamphlets, manuscripts and historical works are mainly from the library of Canon Daniel McEvoy whose family have a long association with St. Malachy's.



Gaelic Scholar and Statesman honoured by 'Blue Plaque'

On a bright Friday morning in April the front quad was a busy place as a large group of students, 'old boys', current and former staff, academics and politicians witnessed the unveiling of a blue plaque to Eoin MacNéill by his grandson, former Tánaiste Senator Michael McDowell. A speech from Principal Mr Paul McBride underlined the pride which the College takes in having educated such an influential Irish statesman and scholar. President of Ulster History Circle, Mr Chris Spurr, explained the work of the organisation and acknowledged the place of MacNéill in Ireland's cultural history. Senator McDowell said that he was delighted to visit the College for such a splendid and timely commemoration of the 150th anniversary of his grandfather's birth.

This brief ceremony was followed by a lecture to visitors and 6th



form students from St. Malachy's and other local schools. Senator McDowell gave a detailed and balanced talk on the 'Legacy of Eoin MacNéill' to an appreciative audience.



The cataloguing part of the O'Laverty Library Project will be started in September. We have some volunteers to help with the process but would welcome a few more. If you have an interest in history and books and feel you can give a couple of hours a week we would love to hear from you. Training will be given.