ECHOES OF IRISH AUSTRALIA

Rebellion to Republic

Edited by
Jeff Brownrigg
Cheryl Mongan
Richard Reid

PREFACE

Galong district nurtured me to maturity. I attended the village boarding primary school for boys conducted by the Sisters of Mercy, St Lawrence's College, from 1940 to 1948. You absorbed the landscape of green rolling hills, crops of golden grain, flocks of sheep and herds of cattle and learned the names of families and their religious traditions in the village church. The ten-year-old boy is one day assisting the Irish pastor as an 'altar boy' at the local cemetery. While adults huddle, the boy wanders off and becomes awe-struck by the great monuments and the inscriptions – Ryan, Corcoran, Whelan, Cusack, Browne, Tipperary, Clare, Limerick, Clonoulty. The intellectual thirst for understanding arises. For months to come, the lad asks and listens, reads atlases, forms impression and prejudices.

Years later when parish priest in Braddon, ACT, I met Richard Reid, a young teacher from County Antrim, Ireland, and certainly not from the social and religious tradition which held me in thrall. We shared information and experiences at conferences and seminars. I told Richard the story of Galong, its cemetery, Ned Ryan and the Irish 'diaspora' in southwestern New South Wales. Together we visited the village as I had conceived the idea of a weekend seminar at St Clement's Monastery where we would share our knowledge with local residents and members of regional historical societies. As we drove, I teased Richard by claiming that the landscape was a 'fair copy' of Tipperary! We considered several titles for our seminar and settled on 'Shamrock in the Bush'. It is a wonder to both of us that that once-only event has now reached its fifteenth season.

'Shamrock' is built around the story which lies behind the great red brick edifice of St Clement's. There is 'Galong House' which echoes another abiding presence at Galong, that of emancipist Tipperary man Edward 'Ned' Ryan and his family. The Ryans were the power in the land hereabouts for over 60 years between 1850 and 1914. If ever there was a place to hold forth on the story of Irish-Australia this was it and the 'Shamrock in the Bush' was born.

Year by year, organised by Richard Reid and Cheryl Mongan, eminent speakers, events, tours and music and poetry have enhanced the understanding of Irish-Australian history at 'Shamrock'. The topics and speakers for 2007 presented in this book give a sense of the range of issues covered in the past fifteen years. This in itself is cause for satisfaction. What the future will bring is not known. I can but say thank you to all former and present participants. I note with pleasure that we gather in 2007 in a wonderfully renovated monastery/conference centre, a restored 'Galong House', and a research library of Irish resources.

Thank you to all those who have made that new scene a reality.

Reverend Brian Maher
Patron
'Shamrock in the Bush'

August 2007

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume grew, as do a lot of things, from a good bottle of red, shared around a dinner table.

With the approach of the fifteenth 'Shamrock in the Bush' it was felt that the occasion should be marked in a significant way. Inspired by, what has been a cavalcade of memorable papers, from the fourteen previous 'Shamrock' gatherings, the obvious choice was a publication.

Firstly, our thanks to Fr Brian Maher for suggesting St Clement's Retreat and Conference Centre as the venue for the gatherings and Fr Patrick Corbett, Rector of St Clement's Monastery, Fr Leo Coffey and Sisters Frances McAleer and Gerardine Agnew; and other members of the St Clement's community who have made us so very welcome over the years; and ever receptive to requests as diverse as dance floors! The recent refurbishment of 'Galong House' and St Clement's Monastery is a testament to their belief in the survival of the Ryan legacy. We would like to acknowledge Fr Max Barrett who led the way with his book on the Ryan family – *King of Galong Castle*, truly a sound base from which to explore the Irish experience in the Galong area.

Many people have contributed to this volume of essays. The task of encompassing so many facets of the Irish in Australia is an enormous undertaking. Our thanks to the authors who have contributed their expertise, experience, enthusiasm and energy to this publication, which does indeed echo the Irish experience in Australia.

Our special thanks to Mrs Carmel MacDonagh and Mrs Deirdre O'Farrell for agreeing to the reproduction of the essays of their late husbands and to the Tasmanian Historical Research Association and the National Library of Australia, for facilitating the reproduction of the manuscripts and pictorial material.

Photographer Brendon Kelson was ever willing to allow us the use of his extensive library of images and to return to the dark room, again and again, to produce images as they were needed.

Our thanks to our editor, Carolyn Page, who had the unenviable task of introducing a degree of uniformity to twenty-three very different essays – a necessity in a publication of this nature. Her daughter Kate compiled the index. Our thanks also to Diana Page for her comments and proofreading.

Rosanna Horn, our graphic designer, brought the book to life in a very short time. With her skilful use of imagery and design techniques she has produced a publication worthy of the subject.

Over the years the Embassy of Ireland has given the 'Shamrock' great support in particular Ambassadors Richard O'Brien, Declan Kelly and Máirtín Ó Fainín; former First Secretary Ray Bassett; and Liz Coyle.

At the heart of all are our speakers. They now number in excess of one hundred and have contributed in history, biography, music, art, Celtic meditations and even the intricacies of excavating 'long-drop toilets'. However, the 'Shamrock' would not have survived without the continued support of the participants who have returned year after year – some have attended every 'Shamrock' since its inception in 1993. Participants have come from every Australian state and territory and Ireland, with one participant making an annual trek from the 'back of Bourke'.

There has been music from John Dengate, Teagan Permoeller, the late Denis Kevans, Ballyhooley, Cooking for Brides, Canberra Celtic Choir, Strings Attached and Gael mor. These individuals and groups brought their own special moments to the gatherings as did the Sydney Irish Ceili Dancers and the Governor's Pleasure.

For fourteen years 'Shamrock' was held under the auspices of the Canberra and District Historical Society and thanks go in particular to Esther Davies, Helen Digan and the late Bernard Fennessy for their support. Participants have also been hosted by local historical societies and the communities of Boorowa, Yass, Harden, Marengo, Jugiong and Binalong. Our special thanks to the community of Galong, who, over the years, have hosted presentations in St Michael's Church, the Royal Hotel, the Memorial Hall and the public school.

Others who have generously supported the Shamrock are Peter Crisp of Crisp Galleries, Tourism Ireland, Image Photography, Barbara Moore and Maureen Collins.

Now completed, this publication, *Echoes of Irish Australia: Rebellion to Republic*, is worthy of another good red and a special toast – to Joseph Carl Robnett Licklider, whose groundbreaking research led to the development of the Internet. Without this means of instant communication as essays, indexes, documents and images came in from around the world, this book might never have seen the light of day.

Jeff, Brownrigg, Cheryl Mongan and Richard Reid.

CONTENTS

Foreword vii

List of Illustrations x

Preface xi

Acknowledgements xii

Introduction xiii

Irish-Australia and the 1798 Centenary in Sydney 1
Dr Ruan O'Donnell

Restoring Family Tes: Convict Family Reunion in NSW 1788-1849 12
Dr Perry McIntyre

Tasmania—Home for Ireland's Forgotten Rebels of 1848 23
Peter H MacFie

'She Would Prefer the Old Porridge': the Leaving of Ireland for New South Wales, 1848–1870 33
Dr Richard Reid

'This Species of Immigration': the Irish Famine Orphans 1848-1850 45
Cheryl Mongan

Resisting the Siren Call of Empire?: Kelly Country During the Boer War and the First World War 59
Prof John McQuilton

It's a Long Way to Tipperary: Seeking Irish Origins in Nineteenth-century Queensland Records 70
Dr Jennifer Harrison

Under Orders: a Gimpse of a Clerical Past 80
Dr Michael McKernan

Protestant Irish in Australia 88
Dr Trevor McClaughlin

Fenian Convicts Transported to Australia 99
Dr Keith Amos

An Irish Rebel in Victoria: Charles Gavan Duffy, Selectors, Squatters and Aborigines 108
Dr Val Noone

The Irish Sisters of Mercy in New South Wales 1859–75 118
Prof Oliver MacDonagh

The Vehement Voice of the South—a Slice History of the Public Reception of Daniel Henry Deniehy's Controversial Career 125
Dr David Headon

'A Certain Shade of Green': Aspects of Irish Settlement in Nineteenth-century Colonial South Australia 135
Ann Herraman

St Patrick's Day Procession, Melbourne, 1920: an Australian or Irish Event? 145
Dr Elizabeth Kwan

Paranoia and Prejudice; Billy Hughes and the Irish Question 1916-1922 155
Dr Jeff Kildea

Irish Mothers and Mother Ireland in the Verses of 'John O'Brien' and Other Poetical Priests 167
Prof Jeff Brownrigg

The Songs my Father Sang to Me: Irish Influences on the Life and Music of Slim Dusty 182
Dr Noeline Kyle and Rob Willis

The Nineteenth-century Ryan 'Tower-House' as Built Monument 191
Dr Lycia Trouton

Irish Australia at an End: the Australian League for an Undivided Ireland, 1948–54 202
Prof Patrick O'Farrell

Proudly Promoting a Celtic Nation Abroad: the First Irish Diplomatic Representative to Australia, Dr TJ Kiernan and his Folk-singer Wife Delia Murphy 215
Carol Kiernan

The Establishment of Diplomatic Relations Between Australia and Ireland, 1921–1964 222
Dr David Lee

Republicanism in Ireland and Australia 233
Prof John Molony

Bibliography 243

Biographical Details of Authors 254

Name Index 259

Thematic Index 267

INTRODUCTION

Buried in the midst of the pages of this book is a startling and arresting image. An Australian country singer in R M Williams boots and Akubra hat, well known in Ireland for his song 'The Pub with No Beer', heads down a road in Belfast 'in clear sun and cool wind' for a rendezvous with family history. Slim Dusty, born David Gordon Kirkpatrick in Kempsey, New South Wales, was looking for the Methodist church in Albert Bridge Road, Ballymacarrett, where his Kirkpatrick grandparents were married in 1880 just three years before they boarded the emigrant ship for Australia.

In Australia the Kirkpatricks joined that large community of Irish-Australians where, as the late Professor Oliver MacDonagh asserted, their numbers formed between a quarter and a third of the total European population and, down to 1900, represented 'a proportion of "Irishness" considerably higher than anywhere else on earth, the homeland itself excepted'. That statistic amply justifies the continuing interest, both academic and popular, in the influence of the Irish in Australia and the stories their experiences reveal about the development of a uniquely Australian way of life.

'Who were the Irish in Australia', wrote Patrick O'Farrell, 'All kinds and conditions of men and women who came from Ireland'. O'Farrell's pioneering *The Irish in Australia* was 'a little of their story so far'. This book hopefully adds to the tale. It takes readers on a journey from the convict days, when Ireland was part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, to the establishment of full diplomatic relations between an independent Republic of Ireland and the Commonwealth of Australia.

Jeff Brownrigg, Cheryl Mongan and Richard Reid

August 2007

ECHOES OF IRISH AUSTRALIA
REBELLION TO REPUBLIC

A COLLECTION OF ESSAYS

Edited by
Jeff Brownrigg
Cheryl Mongan
Richard Reid

ST CLEMENT'S RETREAT AND CONFERENCE CENTRE
GALONG

Also by

Jeff Brownrigg

A New Melba?: The tragedy of Amy Castles.

Cheryl Mongan and Richard Reid

'a decent set of girls': the Irish Famine orphans of the Thomas Arbuthnot 1849-1850.

'We have not forgotten': Yass and district's war 1914-1918.

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How was it to know that 'home' was much too distant to be seen again, or that one now lived in an expanse into which more than a thousand Irelands could be fitted, or to find the hereditary rhythm of the seasons on which so many of the European patterns rested no longer formed the framework of the year?

[From Oliver MacDonagh, *Sharing the Green: A Modern Irish History for Australians,* Allen and Unwin, 1996]

Precisely who, and what, shall be called up from the ranks of the dead? Those Irish and that Irishness that came to Australia? that Irish Australia they found and made there? their descendents? Within the moving swirl of that evocation, all precision vanishes: an elusive complexity rules.

[From Patrick O'Farrell, *The Irish in Australia*, New South Wales University Press, 1987]

FOREWORD

'Galong House', the home built by 'Ned' Ryan from Tipperary in the 1850s, was always a place of hospitality and conviviality. In Ned's time, it was said, there were people at Galong who 'lived on his bounty for thirty years' and the 'punch bowl was a nightly institution'. This open-handed tradition was upheld by his son, John Nagle Ryan, who was, once described by a journalist as a man 'of self-denying kindliness, of Christian charity'. In the 1890s, travellers could see a light shining in a window of 'Galong House' put there by Ned's daughter, Anastasia Nagle Ryan, to guide them on their way.

Behind this care for their fellow men lay a deep Christian commitment and it was the will of the last of the Ryans that 'Galong House', and the acres surrounding it, be dedicated forever to the spiritual life. In 1918, St Clement's Monastery, a house of the Redemptorist order, opened its doors as a minor seminary. Later, it became a retreat centre, a mission which continues to this day in which the Redemptorists are helped at every turn by the Sisters of St Joseph.

Since 1993, St Clement's has welcomed participants to the 'Shamrock in the Bush' weekend. Ably run for fourteen years by the Canberra and District Historical Society, 'Shamrock' now forms part of the monastery's calendar. Indeed, it has become something of an 'institution' in its own right with a following who want to book their rooms in advance from year to year!

This year is a special one for 'Shamrock' – its fifteenth anniversary. To commemorate the occasion St Clement's is publishing this series of essays on topics Irish-Australian, Echoes of the Shamrock. I commend this volume to you, each written by an expert in his or her particular field. Perhaps, as the 'Shamrock' faithful gather again in the shadow of 'Galong House' to hear tales of Irish-Australia, and its place in our national history, they will hear, in the words of Kenneth Mackay written in 1897, 'some brilliant flash of wit by the men the Ryans loved to gather round them'. I am confident that these new echoes of the 'Shamrock' would have been listened to with delight and amazement by Ned Ryan himself and that he would wish me, as Rector of St Clement's, to wish all who attend these gatherings a 'hundred thousands welcomes' –

Céad Míle Failte!

Fr Patrick Corbett CSsR

Rector

St Clement's Retreat and Conference Centre

August 2007

The Nineteenth-century Ryan 'Tower-House' as Built Monument

DR LYCIA TROUTON

Galong House c.1860 after the erection of the stone tower. (St Clement's Retreat & Conference Centre, Galong)

'Folly gate-houses, scattered about Ireland, are often the only reminder of a family that has gone.'

Desmond Guinness and William Ryan, *Irish Houses & Castles*

'The two-story tower … added [to the Ryan homestead] c.1859, had a castellation of stone, reminiscent of medieval castles in Ned's home, county of Tipperary.'

Richard Reid, *Galong: Paradise of the Ryans*

'Australian egalitarianism—the proposition that all should be equal as men—was not a process of levelling down, the demolition of hierarchies and class barriers (the great socialist illusion) but the opportunity for all to level up, be aristocrats of an archaic kind', like the infamous Gaelic Chieftain 'Earl' Red Hugh O'Donnell of the 1590s.

Patrick O'Farrell, *Vanished Kingdoms: Irish in Australia and New Zealand, a Personal Excursion*

This article is the textual accompaniment to a series of images of the built legacy of the Ryan family of Galong. One of the most interesting parts of this legacy is the distinctive Australian re-creation of an Irish-style tower, a building that follows a model which goes back to the Norman conquest of Ireland in the late 11th century. The tower was added to a characteristic, though quite modest, Georgian colonial house in the 1860s. Modelled on the Norman 'keep' houses that are still in evidence, though often seriously decayed, in County Tipperary, County Clare and in other places in Ireland, the tower adds a certain *gravitas* to the essentially colonial parts of the dwelling that had accumulated from about 1830. I also construct a sketch of the builder of this Australian tower, examining the character and influence of Edward 'Ned' Ryan (1786–1871), a transplanted Tipperary-man and former convict who became a substantial figure in his region and the colony of New South Wales. I take special interest in his legacy as a pioneer and, following PS Cleary's lead[1], his contribution as an Australian 'nation-builder'.[2]

The impulse to construct a tower was not unlike a later Irishman's wish to restore one at Ballylee in County Galway. In the 1920s, Irish poet W B Yeats renovated a Norman tower-house, adding cottages to augment the usable space in the ancient, venerable, derelict building. In some respects it is quite like the complex of buildings that Ned created: a cottage attached to a tower in Ballylee and a tower attached to a cottage in Galong. Yeats' tower became the subject of one of his most important volumes of verse, *The Tower*. He invested the structure with various personal and poetic significance including ideas that it embodied continuity, Irish history, permanence, memory and numerous other qualities. Yeats' tower, like Ned's, resisted time and change, standing as a memorial to fragile human lives: expressing a desire to create and leave behind some enduring monument.

For Ned, the construction of his home grew from powerful memories and associations, memories that he wished to keep alive in the place of his exile. His first impulse, having lived for almost 20 years in rudimentary huts, was to build a house with gracious columns supporting a wide veranda and with an elegant fanlight over the front door. It was a vision very much in the style of the homes of Sydney's well-to-do whose substantial houses were known to him from his first years in Australia. The tower came later, reflecting a need for a display of his origins and his rise in the community he helped to create. Models for these building projects lingered in his imagination but Ned also harboured broader recollections of Irish landlords and their 'big houses' that symbolised their wealth and power. The wider landscape of his youth and young adulthood included numerous towers providing a tangible sense of the past.

The Ryan family, with Ned at its head, built and inhabited what became known as Galong House or, locally, as Galong Castle. They established and added to the complex of buildings from the 1820s to 1890s. Afterwards,

it was gifted to the Redemptorist Order and became incorporated into the structure of St Clement's monastery and seminary. The modest country home of the Ryans, in the Lachlan squatting district, has several iconic features of an Irish 'big house', a long-standing Irish heritage and certainly embodied Ned Ryan and his family's sense of their being local gentry with obligations and responsibilities.

Manor houses were associated with the Ireland's ruling class, especially in post-Elizabethan times, a class linked to British imperialist ascendancy and English colonialism. So, the Irish people tended to either despise or have an ambiguous attitude towards these houses as symbols of the unequal treatment of Catholics.[3] Fortified dwellings became an important part of the deliberate 'plantation' of Ireland by (especially) English Protestant settlers, starting in 1541 in the reign of Henry VIII.[4] Of more than 3000 castles built in Ireland after the early 1400s, hundreds have been ruined or burned in the course of tribal and later, nationalist strife.[5] Yet the architectonic, landscape and sculptural features of Irish country homes are intriguing.

During the 18th century, a time which produced a golden age of Irish religious and secular architecture, the wealthy Protestant Ascendancy lived very well, but conditions were often grim for the Catholic majority in Ireland. Yet Catholics owned less than one eighth of the land, their lives, religious freedoms and education usually curtailed under the much-hated Penal Laws.

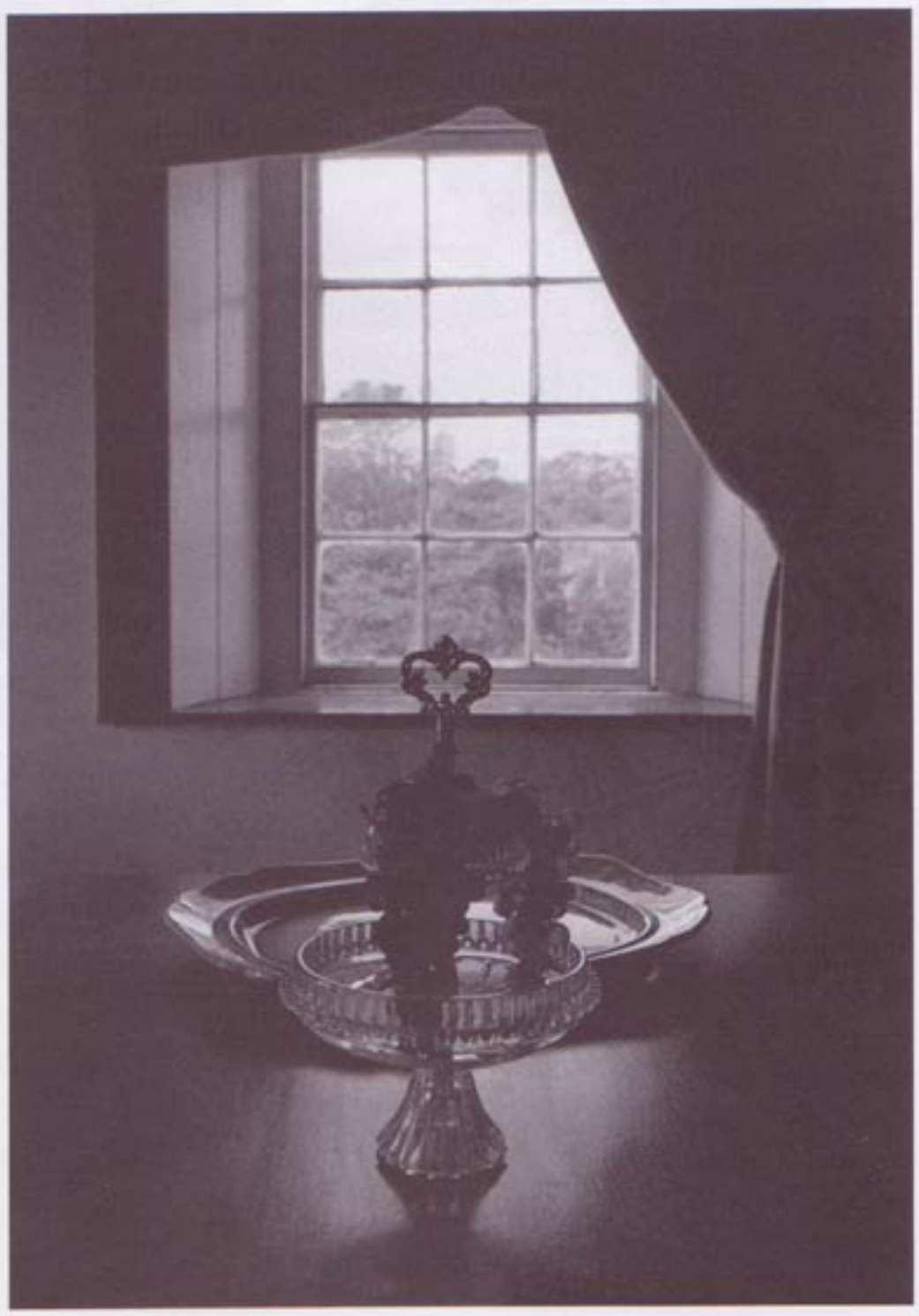
Ned Ryan, a Catholic from Clonoulty, County Tipperary, was much affected by what he saw as iniquities of the occupation of his country, acted on impulse and was transported to penal servitude in Australia. In this paper, I have chosen to focus on Ryan's tower to emphasise aspects of characteristic Irish architecture imported to Australia from Ireland. Ned Ryan's tower is probably unique.

The Tower at Galong House

The tower, as Irish icon, began to interest me in January 2007, when I was selected to live as an artist-in-residence in Francis Turnly's 1820 'Curfew Tower', as it is popularly known, in the village of Cushendall, County Antrim, Northern Ireland. At the time, a Peace and Reconciliation colleague working at Corrymeela, in nearby Ballycastle, remarked to me, 'Wow! What a fantastical place to spend your time?! … I am familiar with that iconic building from my childhood days spent at the seaside! … Is that tower one of those old Norman structures full of mythological significance? … What is it like inside?...'[6]

This article explores the origins of a 19th century Irish tower in Australia and why such an architectural device was built in New South Wales by Ned Ryan. Ryan was a visionary man of strong character. He seems to have been able to accommodate (sometimes literally) people from diverse religious and political backgrounds. This generosity of spirit grew out of his sense that success had generated bounty that he was able to share. He seemed to understand that creativity and productive lives might be fostered where personal, domestic and community harmony existed and strove to create such circumstances in his own circle of friends and relations. But this spirit extended to public figures as well as less fortunate denizens of the colony.

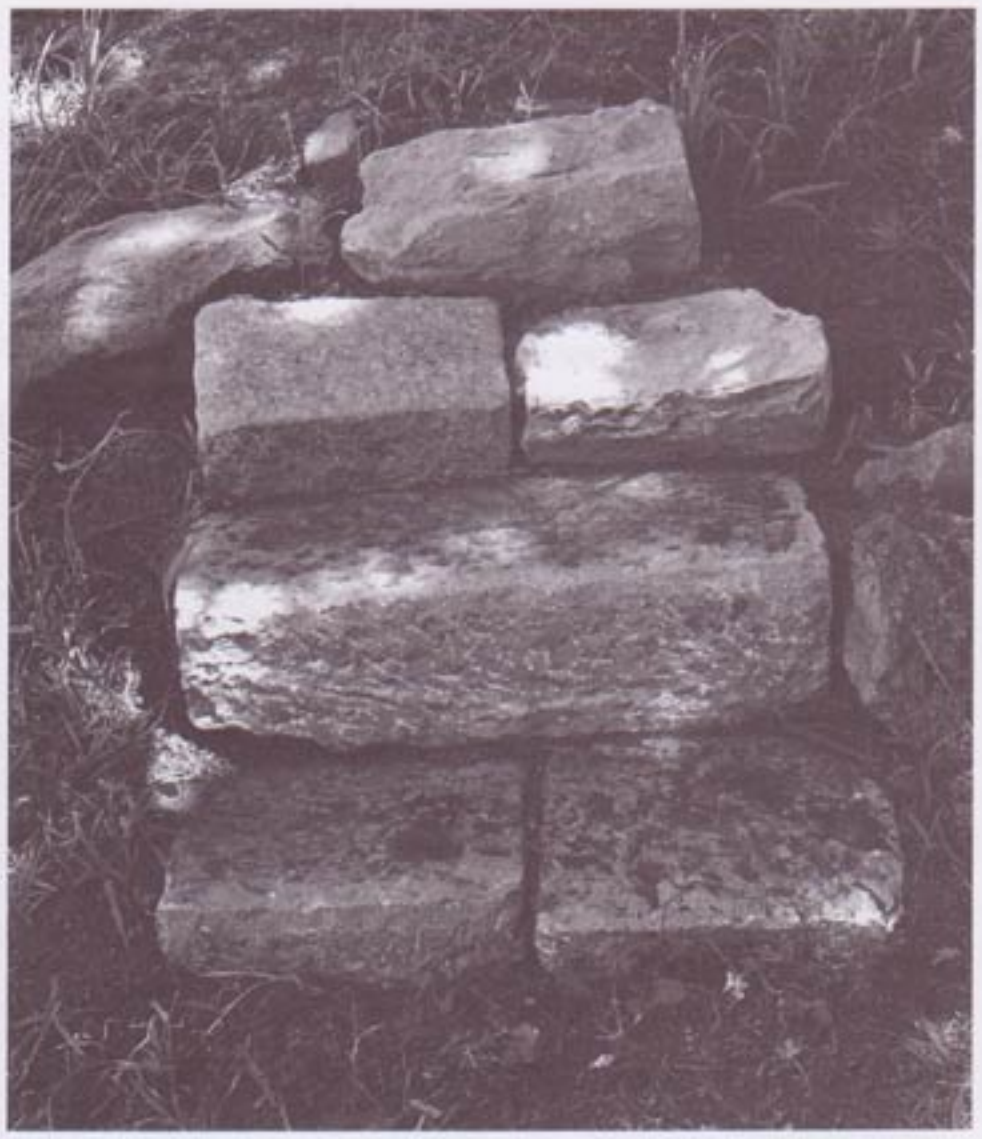
View from a window of the Ryan tower. (Brendon Kelson)



In conjunction with this essay, I have been observing closely the heritage restoration and preservation project, including a new museum-archive, in the Ryan family homestead at Galong. The 1850s house, which has undergone restoration including the reinstatement of the tower castellation by stone mason Carl Valerius, was officially opened on 14 April 2007.[7]

'The Paradise of the Ryans'

The place where Ryan was to build his 'castle' had rewarding landscape features: a creek and a hill, these days commonly referred to as Rosary Hill, with an excellent view. The central, Georgian colonial Ryan house has a chapel (now a museum/archive) on one side and the recently-restored tower on the other. Ned probably recognized the capability of the place to support a functioning farm. Its reliable water supply was crucial, but the location included vistas of hills and creek valleys that provided a context for his building. It was no Eden and the softer colours of the gardens of Irish country houses were absent, but the Ryans created a place to live where recollections of the past were incorporated into the structures they built and the landscape they crafted.



Short garden steps made of limestone blocks from the original castellated tower of Galong House. (Brendon Kelson)

In imagining a sculptural, contemporary formal commemoration to the Ryans and for St Clements, I began to put concepts into words. How, for example, had the Ryans reconstructed their bit 'o' Tipperary' in the Galong and Boorowa districts.[8] How did others, contemporaries of Ned, describe the development at Galong House? Controversial 19th century clergyman and enthusiastic advocate of non-Irish migration, the Reverend John Dunmore Lang, left a strong impression. He spoke of the Galong region as 'the headquarters and paradise of the Ryans'.[9]

When Ned Ryan was issued his Certificate of Freedom in 1830 he became one of the first Europeans to squat or settle in the area, eventually becoming known by the sobriquet of Edward Ryan, Esquire.[10] Ryan also produced a son, born in Ireland, when Ned was imprisoned prior to transportation, who later became a member of the legislative assembly (MLA) for the district. This was impressive progress in a family with its Australian origins in convictism in one generation and legislator in the next. One legacy of Ned's son, John Nagle Ryan (MLA from 1859 to 1865) was that his character and leadership had a 'gentling effect' on religious differences in the Boorowa community.[11] Perhaps he inherited this attribute from his father?

From 'make-do' slab hut to comfortable country house

'Ryan's Tower' became a monument to family aspirations and a permanent, stone legacy to its own sense of the growing importance of Ned and his descendants. Those wealthy enough to be able to indulge their fancy sometimes had several freestanding follies in their gardens. Plantagenet Somerset Fry, writing about the castles of Britain and Ireland, gives a helpful definition of 'a folly':

an attractive sculpture and delightful landscape feature; a landmark favoured by the landed gentry of Eighteenth and 19th century who went abroad on grand tours to Greece, Rome, Egypt.[12]

Ned's tower was, however, strictly functional, its outward show a sentimental reference to recollected Irish towers. Inside, its room were additions to the available living space. But in Ryan's case, the term 'folly' was unexpectedly apt because, '[u]nfortunately the flat roof proved ineffectual against the weather, and the battlement effect had to be removed at a later date'![13] Recently, (2007) the crenulations have been restored, the tower providing a Gothic touch to what is essentially a modest house that sentimentally evoked another architecture, the gentry's dwellings in Sydney and Parramatta: the sorts of houses that Ned must have seen when he was first assigned. Having more than one level, the new tower required a staircase, another common feature of large houses of the well-to-do. The staircase to the new second floor in the eastern part of the house is the work of William Steele, a carpenter and glasscutter in 1864.[14] Fr Max Barrett provides a more comprehensive description of the evolving home.:

The Castle, as it (was) locally called, is one of the few country houses in Australia possessing any pretence to historic memories …[15]
It would appear that there had been a kitchen and/or washroom attached here to the earliest permanent structure.
The next stage of construction was the two-storey extension at the eastern end, a beautiful structure in stone. This went up about 1860.
The final stage was the western section added by [Edward Ryan's daughter] *Anastasia Nagle Ryan …*
There is a massiveness about the walls of the Castle: in parts they are two-thirds of a metre in thickness. The deep-set windows and the double-glass doors are particularly graceful features.16

When Ryan built Galong Castle - a name and dignity first applied at an unknown time in local and wider folklore - 'part of the house had stone battlements', a great bell was rung every morning before light; peacocks roamed the grounds and the owner always wore a squire's buckskin breeches and boots.[17] Curious aspects of his augmented homestead were, thus, imbued with symbolic significance.

Kenneth Mackay recounted the above scene from his Presbyterian Scottish-Australian boyhood and published it in the Australian-Catholic *Freeman's Journal* in 1897. Ned might be seen as upwardly socially mobile but his picking up the threads of farming life was also a return to something like his early years in Ireland after the privations of his sentence. He rose by dint of his hard work building his 'kingdom' from scratch: very much the self-made man, as Barrett (who published the first comprehensive narrative of Ryan's life in 1978) describes him![18] A 'King' in a 'grass castle' might apply to Ryan's years as a pioneering pastoralist as much as it did to other Australians.[19]

I propose that the 'tower-as-built monument' signifies, in visual/material culture, the robust spirit of Ned and his family. In particular it might be taken to symbolise something of:

- the Ryan's all-encompassing charity and the legendary hospitality they extended to travellers;
- Ned's solid resilience of mind/character (to have attained hard-won material betterment in his new homeland), the Tower a symbolic small fortress and a sanctuary.

But the tower is also an iconic structure which allows surveillance of one's estate and the regulation and protection of one's assets.

With preoccupations such as these, had Ned built an elaborate wing of his home that might have been as much showmanship as practical home-building, especially when one considers the ill-designed flat roof of the tower? There is no doubt that, the tower gives a distinctive architectural colour and interest to Ryan's rather modest Australian country estate of the 1850s.

Ryan's tower and Irish domestic architecture

The tower-house built by Ned Ryan in the mid-1800s has a visual relationship to Irish towers. Ryan's tower sent a symbolic impression to visitors, travellers and tenants about grandeur. A tower is a declaration —a built proclamation of prestige. Historically, a tower might be taken to illustrate the need of man to make visible—in a vertical and permanent form—the rise from hardship, into the establishment, where the aspirant becomes a visible pillar of the community; a man of status and strength of character. The *Oxford History of Art* suggests that:

> *[w]hen considering the design of their castles, medieval lords had a fairly consistent set of requirements: a decent hall was needed for feasting and entertaining, along with private sleeping quarters, a kitchen, and a chapel …As a mark of status, at least one tower was essential …*[20]

and

> *While towers and turrets undoubtedly had a defensive role, they also contributed to an image. Some twelfth-century keeps are so unorthodox in form that they can only be explained as a way of cutting a dash and impressing the neighbours.*[21]

But Ned's tower was no castle. For all of its outward pretensions of being defensive, its inspiration was a part of a nostalgically recollected Irish landscape. The rectilinear stone tower that informed Ned's selection of an extension for his home, is a building type that is also aligned with the freestanding round towers of the 10th to 12th centuries and with monastic architecture. Towers evolved 'when the use of lime mortar, probably introduced [to Ireland] by Christian missionaries in the 5th century, made it possible to build much higher than dry-stone masonry'.[22] The Norman conquest of Ireland in the twelfth century certainly established a need for fortified houses and it is most probably these that Ned recalled.

In fact, according to ancient monument and architectural scholar, Maurice Craig, castles are the 'commonest kind of antiquity in the Irish countryside.'[23] Sixteenth century castles were fortified private residences of minor nobility.[24] The tower-house was 'a national version of a widespread building type, erected indiscriminately by Gael, Gaelicised Norman and Old English', with a primary feature being its verticality.[25]

Over half the Irish castles are found in five counties: Limerick, Cork, Galway, Clare and Ryan's home region, the county Tipperary. Fewer towers were built in South Central Ulster. The following dimensions give specific detail about such towers:

> *Towers were generally 3–6 stories in height and 9.1 × 12.2 metres or 30 × 40 ft or less across (rectangular).*
>
> *Tower wall thicknesses were: 1.8 × 2.4 metres thick…or 6–8 ft thick, not uniform.*[26]

It is no surprise that a transplanted Tipperary-man thought of a castellated tower for his homestead when he imagined and was able to afford an extension! Castles in County Tipperary, Ireland, include: Aherlow Castle, Birchgrove Lodge, Burncourt, Cahir Castle, Carrick-on-Suir, Cashel Palace, Castle Otway, Lisheen and Shanbally Castle, among others. A rectilinear tower in Bunratty, County Clare, Ireland is an example of a tower that has been well-preserved.

Therefore, the tower was one way that Ryan constructed for himself a powerful image and personal identity narrative. Contemporary Australian historian, Malcolm Campbell, is known for research about Irish emigration, especially adjustments and ethnicity associated with cultural mores brought from the 'old world'. Campbell's research rests upon 1980s 'localisation' theories which have challenged earlier notions of a nationally specific and 'uniform' pioneer Australian immigrant culture.[27] Campbell emphasises the details of Ryan's possible identification as a Tipperary 'Whiteboy'[28], whose younger years in Ireland bore a direct impact on the ethnic composition of the strong Irish community he helped to shape at Galong and Boorowa. Ryan, who had

asserted strong nationalist feelings in Ireland (resulting in his transportation), could lead fellow colonists to negotiate, barter and stake out—and perhaps enthusiastically exploit—their own place within the region and Catholic Australia's new-world society.[29]

Early Australian houses

On 29 January 1788 the first European house was assembled in Australia. It was an insubstantial, prefabricated cottage of five rooms, composed of timber and oil cloth.[30] Australian home-building evolved in the years that followed, when steam-powered circular saws, milling machines and manufactured glass sheets for windows became available.

It is interesting to examine another example of an Australian pastoral estate, similar to the one established by Edward Ryan. *Ercildoune* was built on a rise high above sea level and took its name from the Gaelic word *arciol dun* or 'look-out hill'. It is a country mansion in Victoria, built in the mid-1800s in the style of a Scottish castle and it has a castellated gatehouse and family cemetery. Yet the original fortunes of the two landlords was quite dissimilar : *Ercildoune* was owned by Protestant Irish immigrant Sir Samuel Wilson, whose 1870s income was derived from Irish linen-manufacturing and mining in Ballarat and Bendigo.[31]

Janelle McCulloch, a contemporary design journalist in Britain and Australia, defines 'country house' as everything from 'a grand estate to a modest cottage'.[32] She provides the following definition in her book on historic Australian estates, 2006:

> *The original meaning for the term, however, was a large house built on an agricultural estate; an estate sizeable enough to enable the landowner to not only live on the income but use it to leverage himself into position as a member of with the aristocracy (the heredity ruling class) or the gentry. The house itself had to be a) enormous, with at least 25 rooms and 8,000 square feet of floorspace, and b) filled to its 9 foot ceilings with antiquities and treasures collected from grand tours around the globe. It also had to have a name, although whether the second word was 'hall', 'castle', 'park', 'palace', 'court', 'abbey', 'priory' or 'grange' depended on both its history and the whim of its owner.*[33]

Both 'Galong Castle' and later Ercildoune were substantial dwellings. Regardless of their difference of scale – Ercildoune a house in the grand manner, and Galong House a substantial homestead – but both built to endure. At its height, Ryan's considerable pastoral community and property (legend has it that he owned 100,000 sq. miles and while this estimate is fanciful, it was a very large estate) was 'the size of Ireland itself'.[34]

The 'domestic man' and 'the chatelaine'

Imported Irish values included a strong emphasis on family stability and the maintenance of kinship ties across time and space. An impressive home is a common, middle-class symbol which, amongst other things, highlights the family values of its occupants.

The 1828 New South Wales Census noted that Irish Catholics represented a 'higher fraction of the population and … a higher proportion of … family groups, pardoned men and a higher rate of property ownership in land and livestock'.[35] Pioneer Edward Ryan might have constructed his personal identity around the correlated 'ideology of domesticity'.[36] Ryan's country home, with its modest though impressive tower, signalled his worthiness and honour as a stable pillar of the community and his value as a 'domestic man'. Malcolm Campbell has suggested that once Ryan's landholdings were secured, he could offer up this 'physical testament' to the family he'd left in Ireland over thirty years earlier. His home was a proof of 'his enterprise, industry and ambition' after his degrading conviction and the resulting inescapable abandonment of his family.[37]

> *The single-storey part of the [Ryan house] building went up about the half century mark, after the squatters were given fixity of tenure on their leases and after Ned's family had joined him….*[38]

Ryan's wife, son and daughter migrated to NSW in 1848, during the Great Irish Famine. Women of the Ryan family—immigrant wife Ellen and young adult daughter Anastasia (Annie) Nagle Ryan, as well as niece Anastasia (Annie) Barry Ryan (who arrived mid-1850s) played a 'crucial role' in creating 'a world of refinement and civilised life' in Galong House. It might have been for them that Ned built the substantial little house to which his tower was later attached. Such women 'also acted as the arbiters and enforcers of order and respect … expectations and ideals of womanhood propagated by middle-class reformers' and reinforced by the teachings of the church.[39] These ladies created an air of model Christian behaviour to which Irish women in the region could aspire—activities which included an engagement with the feminine arts of needlework, a refined interest in music, singing and an appreciation of European painting and sculpture.[40] In her later years, the unmarried Anastasia Nagle commissioned the chapel renovations at the western end of the Ryan homestead castle: 'Father William Bermingham said the first Mass there on June 4th, 1889'.[41] Anastasia (Annie) Barry Ryan interests extended to memorial arts. She ordered, and presumably selected, Italian statues imported by Gundagai monumental mason, Frank Rusconi, for her own grave and that of her brother Lawrence, sculptures which still stand today as testimony to her taste.[42]

Anastasia Barry became known as 'the monument maker' and was renowned for her charitable works with the local Catholic community, extending the legacy of the Ryan dynasty.[43] The role of women ('the chatelaine' if we accept that Galong House was, indeed, Galong Castle) in public life in the 19th century was only acceptable if carried out discreetly and based around household arts and the management of charitable concerns, such as children's education. The Catholic Church routinely propagated the distinctiveness of the 'Holy' family, seeing the family unit as a building block for economic and cultural survival.[44]

The family vault of Edward Ryan (foreground) with the elaborate Rusconi monuments erected over the graves of Anastasia Barry Ryan and her brother Lawrence (left background). (Brendon Kelson)

The Ryan dining room

While Ryan might like to be remembered for the hospitality and compassion he showed to the disadvantaged and to fellow pioneers, the Ryan house also played host to several distinguished gatherings and celebrations. In the late 1860s and early 1870s in the Lachlan region, there was an easy co-existence between Irish Catholics and Protestants. This is evident in the political alliance of public servants John Nagle Ryan MLA (Ned's son) and Protestant magistrate Nicholas Besnard. Among the significant banquets held at Galong Castle over the years was one which celebrated the British Empire—in particular, Queen Victoria's acceptance of an offer, by the acting Premier of New South Wales William Bede Dalley, of a contingent of Australian colonial troops to assist with the conflict in Sudan in 1885. So the Ryans' legacy as contributors to Australian nation-building was wide-ranging. Ryan's values asserted themselves, in part, by providing hospitality for colonial government ministers and various dignitaries—where else but in his large dining room!

Entertainment at the 'Castle' would have included fine dining with these Irish linen napkins and engraved silver napkin rings. (Brendon Kelson.)

By 1837, after serving fourteen years as a convict and a further eleven as an illegal occupant, living in a slab hut on crown land (until the mid-1850s), Ryan had slowly gathered a certain modest domestic grandeur within his 355 cultivated acres. As his wealth accumulated, so his largess grew and the tower he built reflected his sense of himself and his status as head of a successful and influential Australian family. The tower gave him space to accommodate his families growing social activities and it provided a sentimental link to towers he had known at home in County Tipperary. In the new land of Australia, it is significant that Ned Ryan was a liberal Catholic who socialised with other men of status across the Catholic-Protestant divide, more surprising, perhaps, given the religious and nationalist issues that were entrenched in his young adulthood in Ireland that lived in his imagination and of which Ryan's tower was a tangible symbol.

[13] Barrett, p. 156.

[14] ibid., pp. 118 and 156.

[15] Kenneth MacKay, 'An historic Catholic home, Galong Castle', *Freeman's Journal,* Sydney, 11 December 1897, p. 7, quoted in Barrett pp. 154–56.

[16] Barrett, pp. 155–6.

[17] Mackay, quoted. in Barrett p. 94.

[18] Barrett gives the following definitions: 'Before 1835, *settler* meant an honest grazier; squatter a bush-looter', p. 46. Barrett remarks that after 1836, *squatter* was a respectable, enterprising person who extended freehold lands to wider fields, p. 53.

[19] Mary Durack, *Kings in Grass Castles* London, Constable, 1959.

[20] Roger Stalley, *Secular Architecture in the Age of Feudalism: Early Medieval Architecture*, Oxford, 1999, p. 83.

[21] Stalley, p. 93.

[22] Lucy Archer, *Architecture in Britain and Ireland 600–1500, London, The Harville Press, 1999, p. 40.*

[23] Craig, p. 95.

[24] Craig, p. 95.

[25] Craig, p. 96.

[26] Fry, p. 96.

[27] Malcolm Campbell, *Kingdom of the Ryans: the Irish in Southwest New South Wales 1816–1890,* Sydney, 1997, pp. 11–13; see also theorists Kathleen Neils Conzen and Donald Akenson and international scholarship on studies of Irish immigrants.

[28] The Whiteboy movement began in southern Tipperary, Ireland, in the early 1760s among rural peasantry. It fought disputes over common land use and collection of tithes due to the forces of commercialisation upon the rural economy and decline in living standards. The movement was dynamic, fluid and composed of various 'middle peasantry' members with various community concerns. Ned Ryan was a 'Whiteboy' and involved and convicted for his part in an 1815 Clonoulty infirmary raid. Campbell pp, 20–23; Barrett pp, 10–25; Reid p. 9.

[29] Campbell, p. 12.

[30] Ian Evans, *The Australian Home, Sydney, 1983 p. 8.*

[31] Janelle McCulloch, *Country Estates of Australia: Cottages, Farmhouses, Manors and Mansions, Sydney, 2006*, p. 172.

[32] McCulloch, p. 170.

[33] ibid.

[34] Campbell, p. 10; Barrett p. 51.

[35] Waldersee, p. 123, quoted in Campbell p. 114.

[36] Campbell, p. 126

[37] ibid., p. 124

[38] Barrett, p. 154

[39] Campbell, pp. 127–8, 131.

[40] ibid., p. 129.

[41] James McCord diary, entry 4 June 1889, quoted in Barrett p.154.

[42] PB Kearney, *Some Highlights in the History of St Clement's College, Galong*, unpublished manuscript, p. 41, quoted in Campbell, p. 129.

[43] Reid, p. 22; Campbell, p. 128-9; Barrett, p. 154.

[44] Campbell, p. 32-33.

[45] ibid., p. 157.

[46] Barrett, pp. 51–52, 54; Reid, p. 10.