



Queensland Irish Association

# Newsletter

January 2024

## Spectacular new venue for Saint Patrick's Eve Dinner

Book NOW for the biggest and best St Patrick's Eve Dinner of the modern era!

This year, the Queensland Irish Association is taking over the spectacular Main Auditorium of the Brisbane City Hall to host the St Patrick's Eve Dinner on Saturday, 16th March 2024.

Members will find a flyer and booking form attached to this email.

The cost per person remains at \$160, unchanged since 2021.

This is good value for what will be a great night:

- A five-hour drinks package for beer, Guinness, red and white wines, and soft drinks, from 6pm to 11pm.
- A three-course dinner, catered by Epicure at Brisbane City Hall.
- Entertainment by the QIA Dancers and the Queensland Irish Association Pipe Band.
- Toast to Australia Our Nation proposed by Father Frank Brennan SJ AO.
- Distinguished Irish and Australian guests.
- Community singing of Irish favourites.

Bookings close on Wednesday, 6th March.

Ireland has awarded its highest diasporan honour to Queensland Irish Association Vice-President Séamus Sullivan.

Séamus travelled to Dublin to pick up his Presidential Distinguished Service Award for his support for the Irish community in Australia.



**QIA Vice President Séamus Sullivan being presented with a Distinguished Service Award by President of Ireland, Michael D. Higgins in Áras an Uachtaráin on January 16th.**

The award was conferred by President Michael D. Higgins in Áras an Uachtaráin, his official residence in Phoenix Park, on January 16th. This was followed by a dinner hosted by the Tánaiste, Micheál Martin, with the Minister of State for International Development and Diaspora, Seán Fleming, in Dublin Castle.

Séamus has contributed to the Irish-Australian community in many ways over the past 50 years, including assisting those in personal crisis, and promoting and sharing Irish culture in Brisbane, Queensland, and Australia. He was awarded in the category of Irish Community Support.

The Presidential Distinguished Service Award for the Irish Abroad

was established by the government in 2012, and to date 120 people have been conferred with the award.

This year has seen awards conferred on people across seven continents and Séamus is the only one from the Irish diaspora in Australia.

Well done Séamus and we look forward to seeing your award in person!

In addition to our sad losses last year of three prominent Life Members of the QIA, namely Mark Morrissey, Leo Moloney and Noela McCormick, we have this year suffered two further losses of Life Members, to the great detriment of the Association.

*Continued on page 2*

# Spectacular new venue for Saint Patrick's Eve Dinner



**Pauline Donegan was the first female Vice President of Queensland Irish Association.**



**Pauline, top right, on the Board of Directors in 2014 along with Noela McCormick, third down on left.**



**Brian O'Connor served as Vice President of Queensland Irish Association from 2002 to 2003.**

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We have lost Pauline Donegan DUa. Pauline was a trailblazer within the QIA, becoming the first female Vice President of the Association in 2013.

Born in Dublin, Pauline joined QIA in 1982. She worked on various committees over the years, including the St Brigid's Day Committee and the Tigh Gaelach Ladies Gourmet Club, as well as being the founder of the Association's Bloomsday celebrations.

Pauline became a Life Member in 2012.

Our sympathies go out to all her family and many friends.

Pauline's funeral Mass will take place on Wednesday, 31st January at 11am in Holy Spirit Church, Villiers Street, New Farm. No flowers please, donation in lieu to Queensland Children's Hospital.

Burial at Mount Gravatt Cemetery. Wake details to be confirmed.

We have also lost Life Member Brian O'Connor DUa.

Brian joined the Association in 1956 and became a Life Member in 2001.

Brian was QIA Vice President from 2002 to 2003.

He was also Drum Major of the Queensland Irish Association Pipe

Band, as well as a Life Member of the band.

A retired Fire Officer, Brian had also served on the board of Norths Apsley Leagues Club, he was President of The Fire Brigades Recreation and Sports Club, and Foundation President and Life Member of the Fire Brigades Historical Society Inc.

Brian's Irish heritage was through his grandfather John O'Connor and grandmother Mary Jane Feeherley, from Sligo and Longford.

Our thoughts are with Brian's family and Queensland Irish Association Pipe Band at this difficult time.

A Celebration of Life for Brian is scheduled to be held at the Victoria Park Function Venue The Ballroom, 309 Herston Road, Herston at 12 noon on Thursday, 25th January 2024. Should you wish to forward a sympathy card to the family, please address the envelope to Brian's daughter Kathleen Kirkwood, PO Box 468, Red Hill, QLD 4059.

The loss of five distinguished members during such a short period of time has been a terrible blow to the QIA and we very much regret their passing.

We will have a screening of Finding

Brigid, a documentary on the Matron Saint of Ireland, Saint Brigid, in February.

The documentary, presented by actor Siobhán McSweeney of Derry Girls Sister Michael fame, Finding Brigid unfolds on the eve of St Brigid's Day 2023, the first time the day would be designated a public holiday in Ireland. Siobhán goes on a quest to uncover the real Brigid, unravelling the tangled threads of fact and folklore.

Join this cinematic exploration of St Brigid at The Brigid Centre, Brigidine College, Indooroopilly, on Saturday, 10th February at 2pm.

Attendees will have the opportunity to delve into the documentary's rich narrative and indulge in a light afternoon tea. The cost is \$10 per person.

For details and RSVP, contact Michele Bourke on 0438 763 439.

As part of our St Patrick's Day celebrations, we have collaborated with Friends of Toowong Cemetery to organise an Irish History Tour.

This will be a guided walk and talk on the lives of the prominent Irish people buried in the cemetery as you

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# Spectacular new venue for Saint Patrick's Eve Dinner

*Continued from page 2*

visit their grave sites, among them founding members of the Queensland Irish Association.

Be ready for fascinating stories on this two-hour walk. Bring comfortable, enclosed shoes and clothing suitable for the weather.

The tour will take place on Sunday, 10th March at 10am. Meet at the flagpole at the Frederick Street/main entrance to the cemetery. There is parking within the cemetery, as well as bus stops outside.

You may make a cash donation to Friends of Toowong Cemetery on the day to help them with their work preserving monuments.

This year's St Patrick's Day Parade will take place on Saturday, 16th March at 10.30am.

We are looking for walkers to take part and represent the Association in the parade. You will walk behind the QIA float that carries Saint Patrick. Everyone is welcome!

Turn up on the day and assemble at the gates of the City Botanical Gardens on Alice Street from 10am.

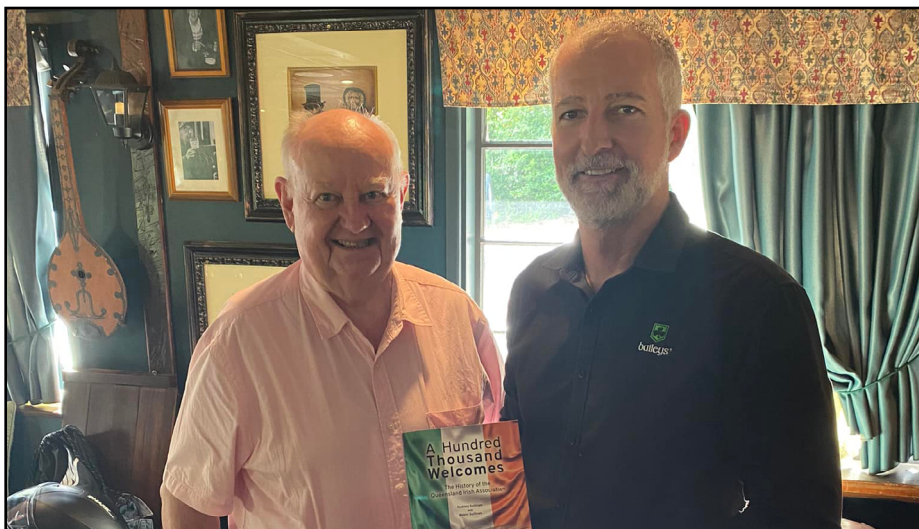
Finally, huge congratulations to Thomas Dooley who has made the Ireland skiing team for the 2024 Youth Olympic Games in Gangwon.

*Jeff Spender,  
President,*

*Queensland Irish Association.*



Queensland Irish Association Christmas Party 2023, which was held at Wests Rugby Club, Toowong. Guests enjoyed Christmas carols and entertainment.



## Calendar

**Saturday, 3rd February**

*Saint Brigid's Dinner*

*Royal in the Park, Brisbane.*

**Saturday, 10th February**

*Finding Brigid screening*

*The Brigid Centre, Brigidine College, Indooroopilly.*

**Sunday, 10th March**

*QIA/Friends of Toowong Cemetery*

*Historical talk and tour of Irish graves  
Toowong Cemetery, Brisbane.*

**Saturday, 16th March**

*Brisbane Saint Patrick's Day Parade  
Begins on Alice Street, Brisbane.*

**Saturday, 16th March**

*Saint Patrick's Eve Dinner*

*Main Auditorium, Brisbane City Hall,  
Brisbane.*

## Contact us

We welcome content from members and friends in this newsletter.

If you have news or an article you would like to see included, email the editor, our public relations officer Mary Allen, at [mary@queenslandirish.com.au](mailto:mary@queenslandirish.com.au)

You can also reach us through our website, [www.queenslandirish.com.au](http://www.queenslandirish.com.au), and on our social media pages.

Another great way to interact with QIA is by joining our Facebook group, Queensland Irish Association Friends and Supporters.

Editor and designer: Mary Allen.

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Our President Jeff Spender presenting Nathan Bailey of Baileys Irish pub in Mount Tamborine with a copy of our book *A Hundred Thousand Welcomes - The History of Queensland Irish Association*. Jeff and a contingent from our board visited the pub for a delicious lunch with a view to hosting an event for our members at the pub in the near future.

# Queensland Irish Association

since 1898

announces a move to an Exciting New Venue at  
**Brisbane City Hall Main Auditorium**

for

## *St Patrick's Eve Dinner* **2024**

**Saturday**

**16 March 2024**

**6.00 for 6.45 pm**

**Join Distinguished Guests, Irish and  
Queensland representatives to continue a  
126 year old tradition of celebrating Irish  
heritage & culture in Queensland.**

**\$1,600.00 per table**

**(\$160 per person)**

***Booking enquiries to:***

***[stpatricksevedinner@hotmail.com](mailto:stpatricksevedinner@hotmail.com)***

**Dress Code: Black Tie or Lounge Suit/After-Five Wear**



*Terms and conditions and Government health directives apply. Please do not  
attend if you are unwell. You may nominate a replacement to attend in your place.*



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# Séamus Sullivan receives Distinguished Service Award



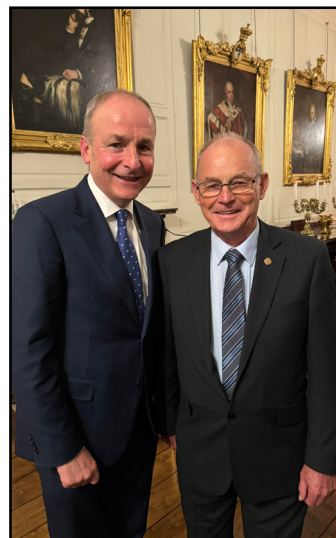
The President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins and his wife Sabina, front centre, along with An Tánaiste, Micheál Martin, T.D. and Sean Fleming, T.D, Minister of State for International Development and Diaspora, with all 13 of this year's Irish Presidential Distinguished Service Award recipients at Áras an Uachtaráin.



Séamus Sullivan with his daughter Marie Sullivan, son-in-law Alan Stocker and nephew Ciaran Murrihy, and President Michael D Higgins.



Senator Jerry Buttimer with Séamus Sullivan and HE Tim Mawe, Ambassador of Ireland to Australia.



Tánaiste Micheál Martin with Séamus Sullivan.  
Pictures: Marie Sullivan







# Queensland Irish Association

## *Finding Brigid screening*



Oil on canvas by Barry Maguire, Ireland

*Supported by Margaret Stacey D.Ua and Michelle Fitzpatrick D.Ua,  
St Brigid's Dinner Committee*

Join us on Saturday, 10th February at 2pm at  
**The Brigid Centre, Brigidine College, Indooroopilly**

Documentary film screening  
& light afternoon tea  
Cost: \$10 per person

*RSVP and further information:*

*Michele Bourke on 0438 763 439 or [mtcbourke@bigpond.com](mailto:mtcbourke@bigpond.com)*

*Claire Moore on 0419 673 126 or [claire\\_moore@bigpond.com](mailto:claire_moore@bigpond.com)*

*Entrance at Cecil St, Indooroopilly - Disability accessible - Parking in Central Ave, Indooroopilly*



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# ENTERTAINMENT

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## Derry Girls star lifts the cloak of mystery around St Brigid



Siobhán McSweeney features in the documentary Finding Brigid, which will be screened in Brigidine College by QIA.

Actor Siobhán McSweeney has form in telling the story of formidable Catholic teachers - she played no-nonsense, cynical school principal Sister Michael in *Derry Girls*. So she had no hesitation in taking part in a documentary investigating the story of Irish educator St Brigid, who she said she had seen portrayed in Celtic fantasy books as “a warrior poet and goddess”.

The documentary, *Finding Brigid*, unfolds on the eve of St Brigid’s Day 2023, the first time the day would be designated a public holiday in Ireland. Siobhán goes on a quest to uncover the real Brigid, unraveling the tangled threads of fact and folklore.

Now, on its first anniversary, Queensland Irish Association is set to screen *Finding Brigid* at a school named after the Saint in Brisbane.

St Brigid founded Kildare Monastery, a centre of religion and learning for both men and woman. Throughout her life, St Brigid became synonymous with acts of charity, hospitality, and the protection of women in need. Recognised for miracles and acts of healing, she holds a significant place in Irish Christian tradition.

The documentary takes viewers on a journey from the sacred wells of Ireland to the hallowed grounds of Glastonbury in England, exploring legends, myths, and the legacy of St Brigid.

As Siobhán encounters various figures, including Church of Ireland Bishop of Meath and Kildare, Pat Storey, and former President of Ireland Mary McAleese, the documentary navigates the complexities of Brigid’s existence as a historical figure, a Christian saint, and a goddess revered in pagan traditions.

Join this cinematic exploration of St Brigid at The Brigid Centre, Brigidine College, Indooroopilly, on Saturday, 10th February at 2pm.

Attendees will have the opportunity to delve into the documentary’s rich narrative and indulge in a light afternoon tea. For details and RSVP, contact Michele Bourke on 0438 763 439.



# Queensland Irish Association

## *Irish History Tour*



Queensland Irish Association  
&  
Friends of Toowong Cemetery  
invite you to

## *Irish History Tour at Toowong Cemetery*

on Sunday, 10th March at 10am

*Cash donation welcome to Friends of Toowong Cemetery on the day.  
More info: Friends of Toowong Cemetery - [inquiries@fotc.au](mailto:inquiries@fotc.au)*

*This tour will involve two hours of walking/standing.  
Bring comfortable, enclosed shoes and clothing suitable for the weather.  
Meet at the flag pole near the main entrance at Frederick Street, Toowong. Parking available in cemetery.*



# Ulster experts visit to help families trace their history

Two experts from Ulster Historical Foundation will help you unlock your Irish and Scots-Irish family history at Queensland Family History Society in February.

You can advance your knowledge of Irish research at this special morning. This event is your gateway to tracing your roots, connecting with your ancestors, and embracing your unique heritage.

The program looks at the importance of gravestone inscriptions and funerary monuments in Irish research, Irish education and school records, and getting the most out of Griffith's Valuation.

Visiting expert Fintan Mullan is the Executive Director of the Ulster Historical Foundation. A pioneer in the creation of online resources for Irish research, Fintan has maintained the Foundation's prominence in digital database developments for Irish genealogy.

He has also managed the production of over 100 publications, including the



**Fintan Mullan.**

popular Researching Scots-Irish Ancestors, and has lectured extensively on Irish history and genealogy in the UK, US, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand.

Also giving the talk will be Gillian Hunt, Research Officer with the Ulster Historical Foundation. Gillian is responsible for managing the Foundation's many genealogical activities. She also carries out research for clients and is a hugely experienced user of the Public Record Of-



**Gillian Hunt.**

fice of Northern Ireland and the General Register Office.

The event will take place at Kedron-Wavell Services Club, Chermside, on Friday, 16th February, from 9am to 1pm.

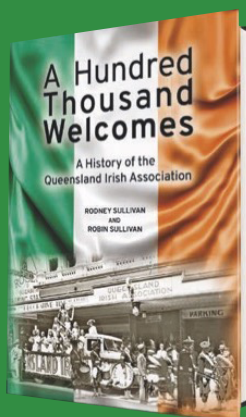
Ticket prices for Queensland Family History Society/Genealogical Society Queensland member are \$50 and \$60 for non members. Click [here](#) to purchase tickets.

Queensland Family History Society helps members

to find their family history by giving affordable access to worldwide resources, expert help with research and information, online and in-person participation and helps members form social connections with others who have common interests.

For enquiries, email [irish@qfhs.org.au](mailto:irish@qfhs.org.au).

You can visit the Family History Research Centre at 46 Delaware Street, Chermside/Geebung, Qld, or online at [qfhs.org.au](http://qfhs.org.au).



# qia125



To celebrate 125 years of Queensland Irish Association in 2023, we have released a book which traces the history of one of the most successful ethnic organisations in Australia. The paperback edition is \$39.99 (plus postage). The limited-edition hardback edition is \$100 (plus postage).

You can order a copy by contacting Michele Bourke, by phone on 0438 763 439, or by email to [sales@queenslandirish.com](mailto:sales@queenslandirish.com)



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