



Queensland Irish Association

# Newsletter

November 2023

## Vale Mark Morrissey, a driving force of the QIA

It was with great sadness that we share the news of the recent passing of former Queensland Irish Association Director and Life Member Mark Morrissey. He passed away after a long and hard health battle, on 2nd November.

Mark was a proud Irish Australian who worked tirelessly for the Association right up until his passing.

Mark was brought up in a family who were at the centre of the Irish community in Brisbane. Many legendary Irish get-togethers were held at the Morrissey household over the years.

Mark thoroughly enjoyed playing the role of St Patrick at Brisbane's St Patrick's Day parade.

Mark was a gifted and visionary man, who was talented in many areas. Engines were his passion, whether cars or bikes. For many years, he ran a motorbike repair shop where his innovation shone through.

He worked in banking and in the car industry too, and he was also heavily involved in the rejuvenation of The Woolshed at Jondaryan.

He organised the vintage vehicles that took part in the St Patrick's Day parade every year, including the vintage truck used by the QIA.

Mark was the driving force behind the acquisition of QIA's property on Baxter Street, Fortitude Valley.

He also was working right through



Vale Mark Morrissey, Queensland Irish Association Director and Life Member.

his recent health issues on securing a new clubhouse premises for QIA to base itself. His wish was to leave the QIA on a firm financial footing.

Mark had boundless energy and enthusiasm, a knack for business, sharp intellect, was a legendary storyteller and he was also the kindest, most helpful person you could hope to meet. The void he leaves in the community will be hard to fill.

Mark's brother Rory also passed

away just weeks before Mark, on 23rd September, and the funeral service was also in honour of Rory.

A big contingent from the QIA attended the funeral service on Tuesday, 14th November at Holy Cross, Kippa Ring.

There was a large number of motorcyclists at the funeral, who formed a convoy as the funeral cortege left the church.

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# Vale Mark Morrissey, a driving force of the Association

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Our sympathies go to Mark's wife Narelle, his parents Jim and Kit, his children, grandchildren and his wider family and friends.

In what has been a difficult time for the QIA, we also lost two other Life Members this year, Noela McCormick and Leo Moloney.

Noela was the first woman to become Director of the QIA. She was a pioneer of the annual St Brigid's Dinner and of the Queensland Rose of Tralee quest. She was a foremost champion for women to become Members of the QIA.

Leo Moloney was not only a Director of the QIA for many years, he was also the Association's Librarian. Leo was responsible for many of the historical events organised by the QIA over the years.

May they all rest in peace.

Members are invited to attend our Christmas party and we would appreciate a large turn-out.

As well as food and beverages available for sale, including Guinness on tap, we have organised significant Irish entertainment. This includes Christmas carols.

There will be a huge array of prizes for raffle on the day. There will also be QIA merchandise (t-shirts, caps, stubby holders, silver mugs, keyrings and ties) available for sale, as well as copies of our book, *A Hundred Thousand Welcomes, The History of the Queensland Irish Association*. These would all make ideal Christmas presents.

Membership cards will also be made available at the Christmas party.

Membership cards can also be emailed, which you can arrange by contacting Claire Moore at [claire\\_moore@bigpond.com](mailto:claire_moore@bigpond.com). If you would prefer, membership cards can also be posted, email Claire also to arrange this. We suggest that you make a con-



**QIA Director Mark Morrissey, RIP, with Mary Allen at the QIA St Patrick's Eve Dinner 2023, where Mark was made a Life Member.**

tribution to the Queensland Irish Heritage Fund to cover the postage cost.

If you wish to make a tax-deductible donation, please do so by Bank Transfer to BSB 084009 Account 686131442 or cheque made out to the Queensland Irish Heritage Trust Fund and mailed to Queensland Irish Association, PO Box 12745, George St, QLD 4000.

We congratulate our Vice President Seamus Sullivan, who will travel to Ireland soon to receive Ireland's Presidential Distinguished Service Award from the hands of the President himself at his official residence, Áras an Uachtaráin, in Phoenix Park, Dublin.

This award recognises Seamus's service and support for the Irish community in Australia.

The ceremony will take place on Tuesday, 16th January, 2024. Seamus is looking forward to his trip to Ireland to receive the award in person.

We send our immense congratulations to Seamus on this prestigious award and its recognition, to be presented in person by the President of Ireland, Michael D Higgins.

We have two dates for you to save. The first is the annual Saint Brigid's Dinner. It will be held on Saturday, 3rd

February, 2024 at Royal on the Park, Alice Street, Brisbane. It promises to be a great night.

The second is our annual Saint Patrick's Eve Dinner on Saturday, March 16th, 2024 at the Main Auditorium in Brisbane City Hall. This important function moves to a most impressive venue this year, and it will be extremely popular.

*Jeff Spender,  
President,  
Queensland Irish Association.*

## Calendar

**Saturday, 2nd December, 12 noon**  
*Queensland Irish Association  
Christmas Party, Wests Rugby Club,  
Toowong.*

**Saturday, 3rd February 2024.**  
*Saint Brigid's Dinner  
Royal in the Park, Brisbane.*

**Saturday, 16th March 2024.**  
*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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# Queensland Irish Association

## *Christmas Party 2023*



Join us on Saturday, 2nd December  
from 12 noon at

*West's Rugby Club, Sylvan Rd, Toowong*

Christmas carols and entertainment  
Food and beverages available to purchase  
Guinness on tap



*RSVP to Mavis Williams [mkw.pinklady.dua@hotmail.com](mailto:mkw.pinklady.dua@hotmail.com)*



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# Australia celebrates unsung hero of The Great Hunger

*by Mary Allen*

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Long celebrated here in Australia for his work mapping this country, Polish explorer Paul Strzelecki is now being honoured in Ireland for his heroic efforts during The Great Hunger (also known as the Irish potato famine), where he aided more than 200,000 children.

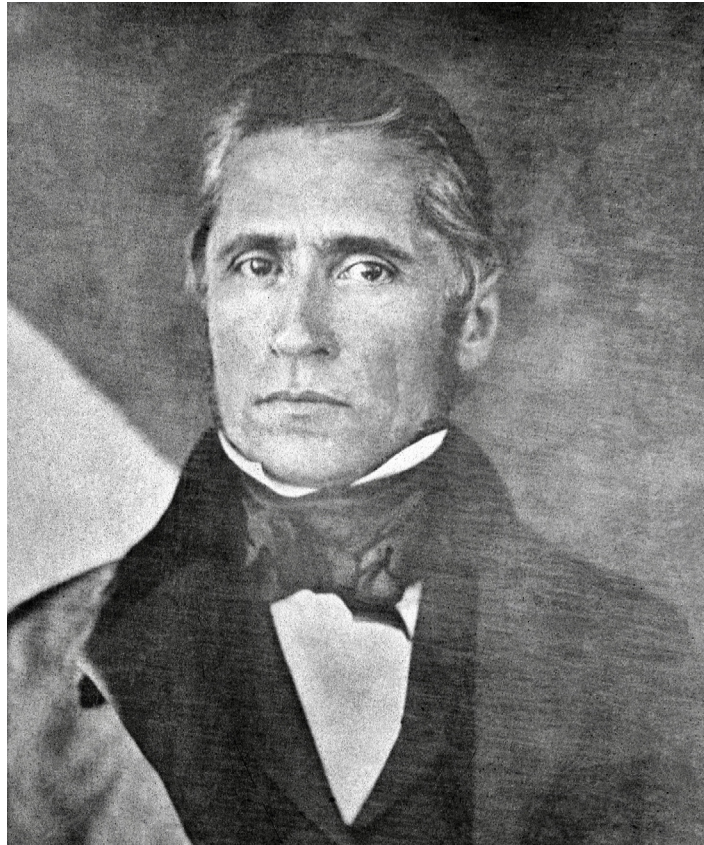
An exhibition in Dublin's National Museum of Ireland pays tribute to his extraordinary life and achievements.

The creators of the exhibition, commissioned by the Polish Embassy in Dublin, were two academics infatuated with Strzelecki: Professor Peter Gray of Queen's University Belfast and Professor Emily Mark-Fitzgerald of University College Dublin. The exhibition unveils the story of Strzelecki, whose contributions to famine relief remain lesser-known yet profound. It features seldom-seen images from major museums and libraries across Ireland, Britain and Australia.

Count Paul (Paweł) Strzelecki came from a noble family. He was educated in natural sciences and engineering.

Strzelecki ventured from England to Australia, where he explored the continent and conducted significant scientific research. His expeditions and discoveries greatly enriched Australia's understanding of its geography and natural features.

Among the places named after the explorer in Australia are the Strzelecki Ranges, a mountain range in Victoria; Mount Strzelecki, a mountain on Flinders Island in Tasmania; Strzelecki National Park



in Victoria; Strzelecki Track, a famous outback road in South Australia, known for its challenging conditions; and Strzelecki Desert, which stretches from South Australia, into Queensland and New South Wales.

Strzelecki was the first European to climb Australia's tallest mountain, Mount Kosciuszko in New South Wales, in 1840 and he named it in honour of a Polish patriot.

Strzelecki dreamed of completing a geological survey of Australia.

While his work focused on geography, geology, and mapping, he also interacted with Indigenous people in Gippsland, Victoria. He observed and documented aspects of their culture, including

their customs, languages, and the use of local flora and fauna. His accounts added to the understanding of the Indigenous people's way of life in the Gippsland region.

Strzelecki returned to England and it was from there that he launched his humanitarian mission to Ireland during the famine.

He went to Ireland to provide aid, travelling extensively throughout the country as the main agent of the British Relief Association from 1847 to 1849. He developed an innovative approach to directly feed malnourished Irish children through schools, saving countless lives from hunger and disease. He also supported immigration from Ireland to Australia during the famine.

October 6th marked 150 years since the death of Strzelecki and in commemoration, the Polish government proclaimed 2023 as the Year of Strzelecki.

In celebrating the achievements of Strzelecki, activities and events are being hosted in various parts of the world where he left a lasting legacy.

Kosciuszko Heritage, a Polish non-profit volunteer group aiming to keep Strzelecki and Kosciuszko in living memory here in Australia, organised events throughout 2023 to honour his memory.

They invited Professors Gray and Mark-Fitzgerald to give a talk in Sydney about their Strzelecki exhibition earlier this year. The Professors also delivered the lecture at University of Melbourne.

Ernestyna Skurjat-Kozek, President of Kosciuszko Heritage, said: "Ten years ago, we never dreamed that Ireland would recognise Strzelecki as its national hero and that Irish professors would teach us here in Australia about the Good Samaritan.

"In August 2013, we took the first steps to convince Irish parliamentarians what a distinguished figure Paweł Edmund Strzelecki was in the history of their country. Then everything went quickly - like a breeze. A breakthrough moment was the premiere of the exhibition about Strzelecki's humanitarian action, opened personally by President Higgins at the Royal Academy in Dublin."

The exhibition has since been put online for all to see. You can access it at [www.strzelecki.ie](http://www.strzelecki.ie).

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# Entertainment

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## Irish road trip looks at legacy of Lady Gregory



In a captivating exploration of Ireland's rich tapestry, the documentary series, "Irish Road Trip with Miriam Margolyes," has become a must-watch on SBS On Demand.

Originally introduced as a two-part special under the title "Lady Gregory: Ireland's First Social Influencer," the series takes audiences on a mesmerizing journey through the Irish countryside.

The acclaimed British/Australian actress and activist, Miriam Margolyes, and the distinguished Irish Senator Lynn Ruane joined forces to delve into the often overlooked history of Lady Augusta Gregory. A patriot and influen-

tial figure in the 1920s, Lady Gregory's impact on Irish political and literary life is unveiled in this road trip, shedding light on a woman whose legacy deserves more recognition.

Miriam Margolyes, known for her magnetic on-screen presence, guides viewers through the picturesque landscapes of Ireland in the comfort of a camper van.

Together with Senator Lynn Ruane, they explore the multifaceted life of Lady Gregory against the backdrop of three pivotal historical events – the famine, the Easter Rising, and the War of Independence.

The series not only captures the

breathtaking scenery of Ireland but also weaves together the threads of history, illuminating the untold stories of Lady Gregory's era. As Margolyes and Ruane navigate the roads that Lady Gregory once traveled, viewers are treated to a unique blend of entertainment and education.

Now available on SBS On Demand, the series invites audiences to embark on a virtual journey, offering a deep dive into the hidden corners of Irish history.

Tune in to experience the charm of "Irish Road Trip with Miriam Margolyes" and discover the extraordinary legacy of Lady Augusta Gregory.