



Queensland Irish Association

Newsletter

September 2025

Busy events calendar with festivals galore!



Brisbane Celtic Festival returns to Auchenflower on Sunday 12 October. See flyer on page 4 for full details.

Nominations are now open for all positions on the Board of Directors of the Queensland Irish Association.

The positions of the three office-bearers, President, Vice President and Treasurer, call for separate nomination, and there are six positions available as Directors of the QIA.

Under 28.1 of the Constitution, to be eligible to hold Office, you must:

- a: Be a Financial Member of the Association for at least 15 months prior to nomination, election or appointment;
- b: Be a National Member of the Association;
- c: Satisfy the age requirements of the

Corporations Law;

d: Not be disqualified from capital managing a capital corporation under part 2D.6 of the Corporations Law;

e: Not have any relation in the first degree with an existing member of the board at the time of nomination, election or appointment.

Further to the provisions of section 31 of the QIA's Constitution, candidates for election to the QIA Board of Directors are reminded of the following requirements:

2.1 Canvassing or circularising QIA members by, or on behalf of, candi-

dates is prohibited.

2.2 Candidate may submit with their nomination forms, passport-size black and white photographs and biographical data only of no more than 100 words which will be reproduced by the Returning Officer.

2.3 Each candidate may appoint a person who is a financial member of the Association as a Scrutineer at the counting of the votes. Written advice of such appointment shall be given to the returning officer.

2.4 A candidate for the election shall not be eligible for appointment as a

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Inspired by Brisbane's rich heritage and diverse community

BRISBANE

1925 100 2025

One City Together

Wednesday

1 October

CITY HALL

10am - 4pm

Explore 100 years of the Greater Brisbane
City Council in One Big Day Out

**Historic Photos
& Displays**

Kids' Activities

Guided Tours

Storytelling

**Free
Entry**

**All
Ages**



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Dedicated to a better Brisbane



greaterbrisbanecentenary.com.au

B100DayOut





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Scrutineer.

Nomination forms and other associated documents can be acquired from Claire Moore, Secretary of the QIA at phone number: 0419 673 126 or at enquiries@queenslandirish.com

Nominations close on October 18th.

I have appointed John Leahy, a former Treasure of the Association, as returning officer for the elections. Nomination forms and other associated documents must be received by the returning officer at:

Australia Post
Sherwood
PO Box 156
Brisbane

by 4pm on 16 October 2025.

Nominations close on Friday, 17 October 2025.

Other important dates

Members are reminded about the festival on 1 October to celebrate 100 years of Brisbane City Council at Brisbane City Hall from 10am to 4pm.

CelticFest Warwick will be held from 3 to 5 October.

The Brisbane Celtic Festival will be held at Moorlands Park on 12 October and there will be a full program of entertainment, sports events, including sports events for children, and best-dressed Celtic costumes. The festival will run from 9am to 4pm and members are welcome to drop in to the QIA tent which will be a part of the celebration of all things Celtic.

Nominations for membership of the board of directors close at 4pm on Friday 17 October 2025.

The annual general meeting of the association will be held at Wests Rugby

Club, Sylvan Road, Toowong, on Saturday 22 November at 11am. A formal notice of the Annual General Meeting, the minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting and the agenda for this year's Annual General Meeting will be published in the October Newsletter.

The QIA Christmas party will be held at Wests Rugby Union Club, Sylvan Road, Toowong on 6 December 2025, from 12 noon to 3pm. This promises to be a very festive occasion and entertainment will include the QIA Dancers, Queensland Irish Choir and the entertainer Greg Peatey from Murphy's Pigs.

All of these dates are important and Members can look forward to a very busy and productive period before Christmas.

Kind regards,

Jeff Spender,
President,

Queensland Irish Association.

Calendar

29 September to 3 October 2025

Australian National Irish Dancing Championships, RNA Showgrounds, Bowen Hills.

1 October

Brisbane 100 at Brisbane City Hall, 10am to 4pm. Irish talk by Robin and Rodney Sullivan at 11.20am.

3 to 5 October 2025

Australasia Gaelic Games Championships, Queensland Gaelic Football and Hurling Assoc, Willawong.

4 October 2025

CelticFest, Warwick, Queensland.

12 October 2025

Brisbane Celtic Festival, Auchenflower.

16 - 19 October 2025

Irish Film Festival Australia at Palace Barracks Cinema, Petrie Tce.

Thursday 16 October

Opening night party 6.30pm

Fran The Man - 7.45pm

Friday 17 October

Froggie - 6.15pm

Gerry Adams - 8.30pm

Saturday 18 October

Fidil Ghorm - 11.45am

Housewife of the Year - 1.55pm

Bring Them Down - 4pm

In Time, Donal Lunny - 6.30pm

Christy - 8.50pm

Sunday 19 October

A Want In Her - 1.45pm

Kathleen Is Here - 3.50pm

Mary Robinson - 6.10pm

Dead Man's Money - 8.50pm

9 November 2025

Gold Coast Annual Irish Community November Remembrance Mass, St Joseph The Worker Church, Imperial Parade, Labrador, 11am.

15 November 2025

Queensland Irish Choir Christmas Concert, 2pm, Hills Church Auditorium, 79 Queens Road, Everton Hills.

22 November 2025

QIA AGM, Wests Rugby Club, Sylvan Road, Toowong. 11am.

6 December 2025

QIA Christmas Party, Wests Rugby Club, Sylvan Road, Toowong. 12pm.

Celtic Council of Australia (Queensland) Inc
ABN 83 434 304 383



proudly presents

2025

BRISBANE CELTIC FESTIVAL

Moorlands Park, Auchenflower, Brisbane

Sunday 12 October 2025 9.00am to 4pm



WHAT'S ON

Celtic Music and Dance from the Eight

Celtic Nations, Massed Pipe Bands

Kids Celtic Games

Tartan Clothes, Kilts: please wear yours

Prizes: Best Celtic Dressed Man, Woman,
Boy & Girl

Australian Scottish Community Qld Inc

- International Tartan Day



WHAT TO BRING

Hats, Umbrellas, Chairs/Blanket, Water
and Picnic Lunch if desired.

Light Refreshments available from food
vans on site. Variety of vendor tents.

HOW TO GET THERE

Train: Auchenflower Train Station

Bus: Coronation Drive, such as routes
444 or 445. Get off at a stop near
Land St or Wesley Hospital

CityCat Ferry: Get off at Regatta Hotel



**Standing Stones
Celtic Nations Monument**

Information contact

<https://www.ccaq.org.au/brisbane-celtic-festival-2025>

CCAQ President Mavis Williams CyC

email: mkw.pinklady.dua@hotmail.com

Phone: 07 3849 8271

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QIA puts Irish legends up in print at City Hall

Queensland Irish Association has designed a series of posters to illustrate noted Irish Queenslanders as part of QIA's display at Brisbane 100 celebrations.

The posters will go on display at Brisbane City Hall on 1 October to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the formation of Brisbane City Council.

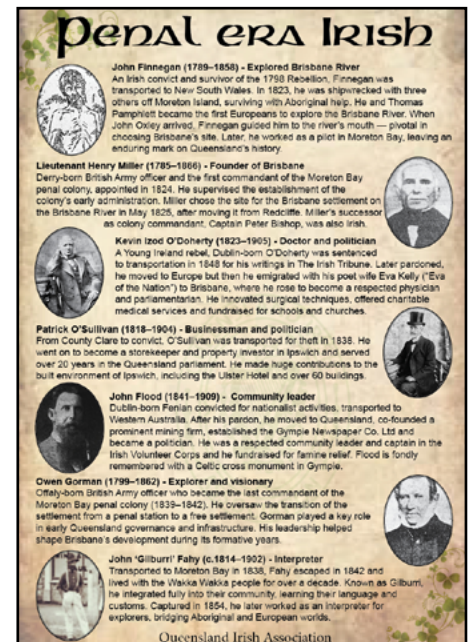
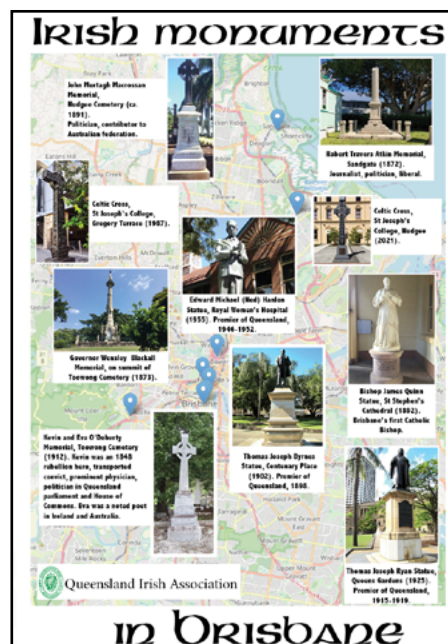
The posters, created by Mary Allen, tell the story of the Irish in Brisbane from convict times through to the present day.

One poster lists noted Irish convicts and commandants at Moreton Bay Penal Colony. From escaped convict John Finegan, who guided John Oxley to the Brisbane River, to Derry-born Lieutenant Henry Miller who was the first commandant at the colony, and indeed to the last commandant Owen Gorman from County Offaly, the Irish were integral to the founding of Brisbane. Others featured are former convicts who went on to become community leaders and politicians. Covering Irish convict history was requested by the organisers.

Another poster highlights famous Irish Queenslanders, from the poet Eva of the Nation to architect Richard Gailey, who invented the Queensland style of architecture with wide verandahs, to Nicholas Fitzgerald, who set up Castlemaine Brewery and developed XXXX beer. Cheers to him!

There's a poster with the timeline of the Irish community in Brisbane, from colonial times to the setting up of Queensland Irish Association in 1898, to the work of the Catholic Church establishing schools and hospitals, and the importance of Archbishop James Duhig, to the work of Irish Queenslanders in political life.

A fourth poster features Irish monuments in Brisbane and was made with



the assistance of historians Rod and Robin Sullivan.

Brisbane 100 - One City Together will fill City Hall with activities, displays, and a community focus on how far the city has come.

Volunteers from Queensland Irish Association will be there to talk to visitors about the Association and the Irish history of Brisbane, and to share aspects of Irish culture, including

traditional Irish clothing. We have also arranged an Irish history talk by historians Robin and Rodney Sullivan of University of Queensland at 11.20am.

Our friends from the Celtic Council of Australia Queensland Inc. will also be there on the day.

Full details of all Brisbane 100 events are available at greaterbrisbanecentenary.com.au.

Virtuosic Irish fiddler Martin Hayes returns



Martin Hayes, virtuosic Irish fiddler, and one of the most significant talents in Irish traditional music will return to Australia February 2026.

Martin's special sound, his mastery of his chosen instrument – the violin – his acknowledgement of the past and his shaping of the future of the music, combine to create a formidable artistic intelligence. He has drawn inspiration from many musical genres, but remains grounded in the music he grew up with in East County Clare. He has the ability to place the tradition within a wider contemporary context, creating an exquisite and insightful interpretation of Irish music.

Martin Hayes' soulful interpretations of traditional Irish music are recognized the world over for their exquisite musicality and irresistible rhythm. Praised by the Irish Times as a musician with an "insatiable appetite for adventure", Martin is the founder of the musical supergroup The Gloaming, (with whom he tours

internationally and with whom he shared the prestigious Meteor Prize in 2014 for their debut album), The Common Ground Ensemble, and The Martin Hayes Quartet. Martin toured and recorded with the late guitarist Dennis Cahill for over twenty years. They performed for President Obama at The White House in 2011.

Martin has created collaborations with extraordinary musicians in the classical, folk and contemporary music worlds with the likes of Bill Frisell, Ricky Skaggs, Jordi Savall, Brooklyn Rider and the RTE Concert Orchestra, as well as many of the greatest traditional Irish musicians over the past forty years. Martin has contributed music, both original and traditional arrangements to modern dance, theatre, film and television.

He has performed on stage with musicians such as Sting and Paul Simon, and has recorded with Yo-Yo Ma's Silk Road Project.

On this forthcoming Australian tour Martin will be accompanied by

Kyle Sanna. Hailed as a "first rate" and "versatile" musician by The New Yorker, guitarist and composer Sanna performs traditional Irish music as well as jazz and improvised music, composing for ensembles, and producing recordings for many artists.

Kyle Sanna has collaborated with and performed alongside modern virtuosos like Yo-Yo Ma and Edgar Meyer, and with some of the greatest living interpreters of the Irish tradition.

Together Hayes and Sanna will transform long-revered melodies into pathways for profound emotional experiences. Fostering connection between melody and human spirit, Hayes strips away musical pretence, revealing how traditional tunes can become vehicles for personal revelation.

Martin Hayes plays on Thursday, 26 February at Powerhouse Brisbane.

Tickets now on sale, click [here](#).

QIA Pipe Band to perform monthly Brisbane pub gigs



Queensland Irish Association Pipe Band performing their first in a series of monthly pub gigs at Gilhooley's in September. Picture: QIA Pipe Band

Our friends at Gilhooley's Irish Pub are hosting monthly Irish Fridays on the first Friday of each month. As well as live music and Irish dancing, you get treated to a wonderful performance by Queensland Irish Association Pipe Band.

The first Irish Friday, held on 5th September, was a huge success and the band is rearing to go in the months ahead. Be sure to catch the action on Friday next, 3rd October, and then on 7th November and 5th December, from 4.30pm. Note it in your diary!

To reserve a table for dinner at Gilhooley's, go to their website by clicking [here](#).

If you would like to contact the band or make a request for booking the band, you can do so via their website www.qldirish.com.



We are proud to announce that the Australian Irish Dancing Championships is coming to Brisbane. Competitors and spectators alike will be immersed in a week-long festival of Ireland's dance, music and culture.

With over 1,200 dancers from all states of Australia, competing in solo and team events, renewing friendships, socialising and above all enjoying the spectacle of these Championships, we invite YOU to be part of what is truly a unique and memorable event.

Benefits of Partnership & Advertising

- Deep appreciation and engagement with the Irish dance community in Australia.
- Enhancement of corporate image through linking your company with a healthy and active lifestyle.
- Increased business potential.
- Direct access to an audience made up of your clients, current and potential.
- Opportunity to display products and offer sampling.
- Creation of brand awareness and acceptance.
- Promotion on the Association website and exposure at the Championships through signage and announcements.
- Enhanced company profile.
- Support of youth activity.



For further information visit:
www.irishdancing.org.au/nationals

or contact
Clare McNeill-Arnall: qld@aidainc.com
or sponsorship@aidainc.com



BÍ LINN ANOIS (Gaelic) JOIN WITH US NOW!

The Forgotten Explorer

John Finnegan

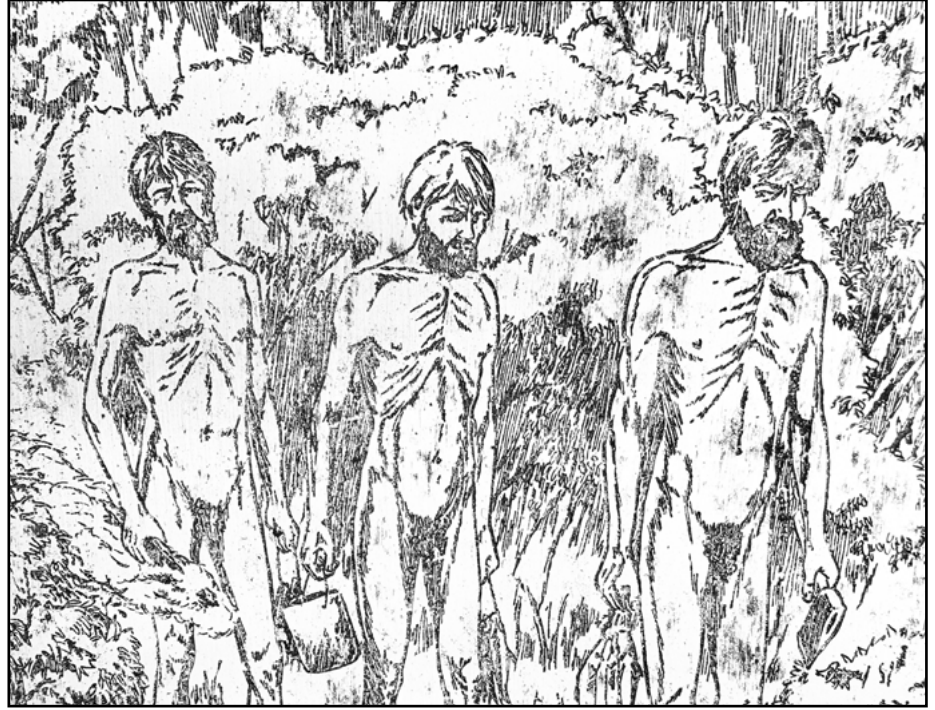
John Finnegan (1789-1853), survivor of the traumatic Irish Rebellion of 1798, charged with larceny and transported to the horrors of the convict life in NSW, he defied all the odds of incarceration, shipwreck and betrayal, and life among the Aborigines of Moreton Bay to become one of the great characters that influenced the birth of Brisbane. Vastly underestimated for his contribution to the exploration and settlement of Brisbane, John Finnegan was ignored by John Oxley who took credit for the discovery of Brisbane River and the choice of the original settlement site of Brisbane city. This book provides an exciting story of survival and redemption from poverty to respect of one for the great forgotten heroes of Australia - John Finnegan.

The following is an extract from the book *The Forgotten Explorer John Finnegan*. It tells of Finnegan's life in Ireland before he was sent as a convict to Australia. It is written by Al Finegan from Bribie Island.

John/James Who?

Finegan/Finnegan/Finigan/Fineghan/Finigin/Finnigan/Finighan

The spelling of the name of the key character in this book varies in different reports. It mostly appears as Finnegan, but also Finegan, Finigan, Finigan and Fineghan. Finnegan was illiterate and simply told the various authorities and investigators, when asked, that his name was "Finnegan", and the scribe just wrote it down as he wanted. Occasionally his Christian name appeared as James. I spell my name Finegan but throughout life just as my kin,



John Finnegan, Thomas Pamphlett and Richard Parsons were convicts who became castaways in 1823 after being shipwrecked off Moreton Island. They survived with the help of local Aboriginal people. When explorer John Oxley arrived, they guided him up the Brisbane River. Their knowledge directly influenced the decision to establish a settlement at Brisbane. Together, they are remembered as pioneers of Queensland's European history.

we often find our name recorded as Finnegan. I have used the spelling Finnegan in this book but would like to think that just maybe it is Finegan, and he is one of my ancestors. Oh well...

Foreword

To be a Protestant in Ireland towards the end of the Eighteenth Century was to be, and to feel undoubtedly a superior person, indeed greatly superior to the great mass of native Catholics who did not exist in the eyes of the law. Most were impoverished and uneducated, forbidden to acquire knowledge and skills. They spoke Irish Gaelic, considered by the English to be an inferior language. And indeed, the Catholics were for the most part inferior. I do

not refer to their capacity or ability. I do not know how far that is to be judged. That it took 900 years of frequent attempts to conquer them, from the coming of the Vikings until they were finally subdued by the horrific invasion by Oliver Cromwell in 1653, may suggest their true capacity. But if a people is disabled by total suppression of all means whereby they might exist above the lowest level of peasantry, and maintain that suppression for a century or more, you will have created a temporarily disabled people inevitably inferior to the favoured section of the community who command and exclusively enjoy all the facilities for self-betterment. That is what the Protestants and the Whitehall government set

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The Forgotten Explorer John Finnegan

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out to do, and they succeeded in doing it. They were sufficiently fearful of Irish potential to damage England to be determined to destroy it.

By the late 18th century Ireland had been indoctrinated with hundreds of years of old social conventions in which attitudes of mind played so large a part in determining a place in society. To be a Protestant was to be, and to feel yourself to be, and to see it as an absolute birthright, to be a member of a superior cast.

To be a Catholic was to feel to be the exact opposite. The Irish Catholic people experienced the fact that they were born inferior, and it was clearly a destiny and that of their children to remain so.

To be a member of one of the thousand ruling and landowning families of Protestant Gentry was to believe themselves to have been born above all the other Protestants, as well as greatly superior to the Catholic natives. That belief contained the essential ingredients of the aristocratic cast of mind. Their birth alone gave them an unassailable social position. They had been born superior. Nothing could deprive them of that, and no one of lesser birth could acquire that magical status. God was an Englishman. Not just an Englishman, but a Protestant Englishman. Apart from the Angels, they were next to God. Theirs was a God given superior status conferred at birth, and denied to everyone not born into their class, and they believed that absolutely.

Then as Australia began a rapid population explosion in the Nineteenth Century, with convicts, settlers, miners and soldiers from every background and religion being forced to work together to simply survive their new country, the great social



A memorial at Shire Clerk's Cottage in Wynnum marks the 170th anniversary of Finnegan, Pamphlett and Parsons journey through the district in 1823. Pictures: Mary Allen

divides were eroded and by the end of the century the strict beliefs of birthright had all but disappeared, but a little survived into the entire twentieth century.

Chapter 1 – A World in Turmoil

If ever there was a time and place in history for a Catholic Irishman not to be born it was 1789 in Wicklow, Ireland. Nevertheless, one unlucky soul was born into that very place and year to face a life of terrible hardships. But despite all that life threw at him, his courage and determination to survive it all would have an everlasting effect on a land at the other end of the earth. His name was John Finnegan. At his birth, the world was already in turmoil and the next ten years were to be terrifying.

The American Revolution had

been a colonial revolt which occurred between 1765 and 1783 watched on by monarchies all over Europe with ever increasing alarm. The American Patriots in the Thirteen Colonies with the assistance of France had defeated the British in the American Revolutionary War, winning independence from Great Britain and establishing the United States of America. The catholic population in Ireland who had been suffering under English rule for centuries lapped up the news that stirred their simmering demands for independence. Prisons throughout the UK were overflowing at an even faster rate as unrest in Ireland increased. This problem was further exacerbated by the subsequent loss of Britain's American colonies effectively excluding America as a destination for their convicts.

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The Forgotten Explorer John Finnegan

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In the 1770s Captain James Cook returned to England after mapping, among other lands, the East Coast of New Holland, now Australia. Cook's return generated interest in the concept of relieving overcrowded prisons by transporting convicts to Australia. This led to the "First Fleet" under command of Admiral Arthur Phillip sailing off to Botany Bay in New South Wales with seven hundred and fifty convicts and six hundred and fifty troops, sailors and civilian staff. They arrived in January 1788 and after finding Botany Bay unsuitable, moved to Port Jackson, now Sydney.

As John Finnegan entered the world the long-suffering French who had assisted in the successful American revolution saw that rebellion could be successful. The people's grievances against their regency grew and manifested itself in the "Terror" - The French Revolution.

It began a period of far-reaching social and political upheaval in France and its colonies. The Revolution overthrew the monarchy, established a republic, catalysed violent periods of political turmoil, and finally culminated in a new political system. Inspired by liberal and radical ideas, the Revolution profoundly altered the course of modern history, triggering the global decline of absolute monarchies while replacing them with republics and liberal democracies. The Revolutionary Wars unleashed a wave of global conflicts that extended from the Caribbean to the Middle East. Historians widely regard the Revolution as one of the most important events in human history.

The English aristocracy watched in abject fear as over 40,000 French Lords and Ladies were carted to the



The 1798 Rebellion monument in Waverley Cemetery, Sydney. Many Irish rebels captured during or after the rebellion were transported to New South Wales as convicts Picture: Mary Allen

Place de la Revolution and beheaded. The English increased their military presence throughout British lands and executed anyone they suspected of entertaining rebellion. But it was their fear of an Irish uprising that kept them awake at night.

The Irish Catholics, now utterly inspired by the Americans and the French, began to plot. They too could revolt and gain their independence. Thus the United Irishmen was born. All over Ireland Catholic men plotted in secrecy forming groups culminating in the creation of the Society of United Irishmen in Belfast in October 1791. Citing the success of the French Revolution, and with great admiration for the new democracy of the United States, the United Irishmen were led by Theobald Wolfe Tone, Thomas Russell, Henry Joy McCracken and William Drennan. They came together to secure a reform of the Irish parliament; and they sought to achieve this goal by uniting Protes-

tant, Catholic and Dissenter groups in Ireland into a single movement.

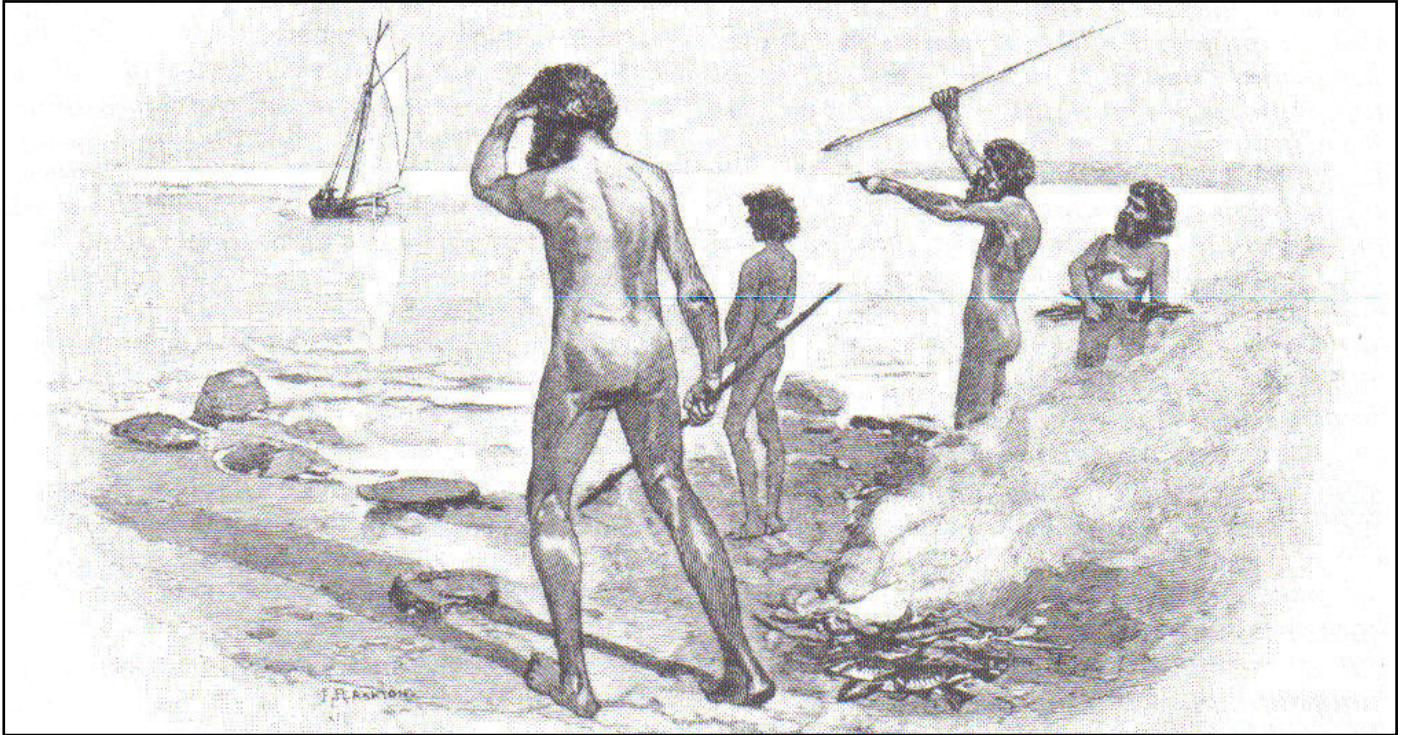
To the English, the unabashed admiration of the United Irishmen for the French seemed akin to treason.

From the beginning, Dublin Castle, the seat of government in Ireland, viewed the new organisation with the gravest suspicion, and with the outbreak of war between Great Britain and France in February 1793, suspicion hardened to naked hostility. The discovery of negotiations between certain United Irishmen, notably Theobald Wolfe Tone, and the French government confirmed suspicions and led to the suppression of the society in May 1794.

And from that time on, terror, torture and atrocities began with increasing horrors for both Catholic and Protestant alike as they attacked each other with uncontrolled mad-

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The Forgotten Explorer John Finnegan



Picture depicts 'The Finding of Pamphlet'. It shows Finnegan and his fellow convicts being rescued by John Oxley.

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ness.

Wicklow is the main town of County Wicklow in Ireland located 50 km south of Dublin on the east coast of the island. Lovingly known as the Garden of Ireland, County Wicklow was and is one of its most beautiful areas, comprised of rolling mountains and pristine beaches. It's also home to the country's highest waterfall and the supposed landing site of Saint Patrick.

Wicklow's economy had been growing steadily in the 1790s. Industries contributing to this growth were mining, textiles, wool and forestry. Much to the anger of the local Catholics, Protestant labour was imported to work the mines and manufacture flax and linen. The fishing industry was a booming industry, feeding the increasing population. It remained with the local Catholics.

John's first memories of his childhood were happy loving and carefree days with his large family. He re-

called how they all gathered around in their two roomed house near the fishing wharves on Wicklow each night to discuss the day's events always followed by family dancing and singing songs both sad and joyful. The memories of his dad stayed with him forever. His mental picture was of a tall, broad shouldered athletic man who always had a strong smell of fish hanging like a cloud around him. His dad would happily lift him on his shoulders as he sang and danced a jig with their whole family. Despite being the youngest of eight children his dad always had time to talk to him and fool around with him leaving his aroma lingering on him for hours. That smell stayed with John all his life, triggering happy memories.

As a family of ten, they all slept on mattresses side by side in the one room. He loved all his siblings but especially his oldest sister Aoife who he called "Effie". John would snuggle each night into the comfort of his loving big sister who daily nurtured and fed him.

Then one night in 1796, a night John would never forget, his father gathered his family about him. He wasn't his usual happy smiling self. John recalled his father's worried face and ominous predictions of things to come as the family sat in silent despair hearing his passionate talk on the growing conflict between Catholics and the cursed English. John sat clinging more and more to Effie as his dad forecast the horrors that may come to the people of Wicklow.

Increasingly as the days passed, English and Protestant armies began to march through their town, many remaining to establish a policing force. And as they set up shop, so the atrocities began. They suspected all Irishmen of being a rebel. Women were not safe, and the rape of Catholic girls and women occurred daily. Men who were arrested or men who intervened or fought for their women were beaten, half hanged and tortured. Flogging, pitchcapping¹, burning and public executions be-

The Forgotten Explorer John Finnegan

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came commonplace. Maltreatment of suspects, however flimsy the charge, was the norm, provoking terror and rage among his townsfolk. Reprisal attacks on Protestants only provoked even more atrocities on Catholics.

When John turned eight, his father took him to the docks. On stopping beside a large trawler, his dad squatted down and looking John in the eye told him that he needed him to be safe. And to a somewhat devastated young John, his father then told him that he now belonged to the ship's master to work as an apprentice fisherman and that he was indentured till the age of twenty-one. He said his life would now be different, but this was the only way he knew to keep him safe. He was to live on the boat under the care of the skipper. He solemnly handed him a multi-bladed fisherman's knife that had a sharp blade and a spike for splicing ropes. He told John that he should keep it with him always. "Be brave, work hard and always remember your family," were his dad's last words. Then he walked John up the gang plank and with a nod he handed John over to the fishing boat master.

Desperately missing his mother, brothers and sisters, especially Effie, John slowly adapted to life on the boat. The Captain was a kindly man and his small crew treated John as one of their own. As well as fishing and boating skills he learnt how to count and estimate distances and how to read the weather patterns.

As the months passed, John began to hear and understand more and more of the terrifying events taking place in Wicklow, Wexford and Dublin, just 50 km up the road. All this while John was instructed on the skills and arts of sailing a boat in all



The bridge at Enniscorthy, County Wexford, with Vinegar Hill visible in background. The Battle of Vinegar Hill was a military engagement during the Irish Rebellion of 1798 on 21 June 1798 between a force of approximately 13,000 government troops and 16,000 United Irishmen rebels. The battle, a major rebel defeat, took place on a large rebel camp on Vinegar Hill and in the streets of Enniscorthy, and marked the last major attempt by the rebels to hold and control territory taken in Wexford. Picture: Ponox at English Wikipedia

weather. His young hands hardened as did his muscles. He learned quickly and as time passed became a useful and reliable crew member.

When John turned nine in early 1798 the word spread that extra militia units from Antrim and North Cork were posted to Wicklow to boost existing militia and yeomen forces in the county. By April, John listened in horror as each time they returned from fishing he could hear the distant screams from flogging, tortures and executions echoing about the small village. The skipper told his crew that maltreatment of suspects, however flimsy the charge was the norm. Indeed, these measures provoked terror and rage among the people and combined with already existing tensions, pushed the county into organised rebellion. Each time John would go with the skipper to the fish markets he begged anyone who would listen for news of his family but to no avail. One afternoon in late 1798 he stood on deck with his fellow crew-

men while they watched in horror as the town of Wicklow burned and burned until one observer said, "... there can't be a good house left standing in the county".

The English forces continued their atrocities. One day in early 1799 a section of soldiers arrived on the wharf next to John's Master's boat with a horse towing a cart full of bodies. The shocked sailors looked on in horror. The sergeant ordered the crew from John's boat to the wharf, then to load the bodies onto their deck. The crew started their grisly task having no alternative but to obey. As they carried each body down the gangplank and onto the deck they looked on in shock and disgust at the state of the bodies. Some had no scalp from pitchcapping, others burned almost beyond recognition, while others had been beaten all over their bodies, while still more had rope burns around their necks from

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The Forgotten Explorer John Finnegan

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hanging. The lucky ones appeared to have been shot. The soldiers watched on impassively until all bodies were stacked on the deck. The sergeant then ordered the Captain to take them a long way out to sea and toss them overboard. This became a daily task for weeks. Day after day John now almost ten, helped with the gruesome task, desperately hoping he wouldn't see any of his family among the bodies.

County Wicklow had experienced some of the most ferocious fighting of the Rebellion. It was to remain disturbed long after the Rebellion had ended in the rest of the country. There continued to be enormous loss of life, destruction of property and business and large-scale transportation of rebels to NSW. The county of Wicklow stood apart from the rest of the country in terms of systematic house burning.

John had no idea if any of his family was alive or dead or where they could be. He constantly thought of his mother and father and craved their presence that they might rescue him from his nightmare. He desperately prayed that his loving big sister



First settlement re-enactment of John Oxley and Lt Miller landing at Redcliffe in a long boat the Brig Amity.

Aoife had survived this terror.

In late December 1799 the terrible noise, billowing smoke and mayhem emanating from the town ceased and an ominous silence pervaded. Looking out at the town from the dock, the sailors could see no movement and there were no more visits from the gruesome carts. John sought permission to go into the town to look for his home and hopefully his family. The skipper assigned a fellow crewman as guardian and he and John ventured into the town. The smell of burnt houses, some still smoking, shocked young John. It was difficult to find his street as there was nothing left of the old

landmarks. Despite the destruction and drifting smoke he eventually found where his family home had been. It was nothing but a burnt-out shell among a street of burnt shells. In despair he wandered through the destruction that was once a happy vibrant neighbourhood hoping to spot any member of his family or anyone he recognized, without success. The town was practically deserted apart from the odd glassy eyed person staring mindlessly back at him. A shattered young John returned to the boat and collapsed onto his bunk.

The new century was welcomed in with subdued celebration.

If you would like a copy of The Forgotten Explorer John Finnegan by Al Finegan, email a.finegan@bigpond.com with an address to send a book by postal mail. Al will include a BSB and account number for you to send him \$25 plus postage.

The Forgotten Explorer

John Finnegan



True Story of the Discovery of Moreton Bay and the Brisbane River

Alan John Finegan

John Finnegan (1789-1853), survivor of the traumatic Irish Rebellion of 1798, charged with larceny and transported to the horrors of the convict life in NSW, he defied all the odds of incarceration, shipwreck and betrayal, and life among the Aborigines of Moreton Bay to become one of the great characters that influenced the birth of Brisbane.

Vastly underestimated for his contribution to the exploration and settlement of Brisbane, John Finnegan was deliberately ignored by John Oxley who shamelessly stole the credit for the discovery of Brisbane River and the choice of the original settlement site of Brisbane city. His selfish acts have echoed through the last two hundred years leading to many erroneous reports on the events of the time.

This book presents an accurate account of the discovery of the Brisbane River and clears the many misconceptions and inaccurate reports of the 'Castaways' adventures and provides an exciting story of survival and redemption from poverty to respect of one for the great forgotten heroes of Australia - John Finnegan.



Written by Alan John Finegan

Irish Film Festival unveils diverse line-up



Molly playing with Dad in *Fidil Ghorm*.

Iconic leaders, brilliant musicians, resilient women, urban voices and more...

This year's program offers a vibrant line-up of award-winning dramas and documentaries, showcasing the richness and diversity of contemporary Irish cinema. Among the 2025 highlights are *Christy* — winner of Best Irish Film at the Galway Film Fleadh and Grand Prix of the International Jury for the Best Film in Generation 14plus, Berlinale 2025 and Christopher Andrews' *Bring Them Down*, which earned him Best Debut Director at the 2024 BIFAs.

Festival Director Dr Enda Murray said: "We're proud to present one of our strongest and most diverse programs yet, with stories ranging from laugh-out-loud comedies and gripping psychological thrillers to intimate portraits of musicians, artists and change-makers. The Irish Film Festival

continues to grow its audiences in five Australian cities and nationally via our online festival, ensuring Irish cinema connects with people across this vast country."

The 2025 Festival will showcase 16 films and documentaries from Ireland, including 14 Australian premieres. Screenings will take place in Sydney, Brisbane, Melbourne, Canberra and Perth, alongside a nationwide online program from 9 October – 9 November.

Dr Murray continues, "From the rugged cliffs of West Cork in 'Chasing the Light' to the streets of New York in 'Never Stop the Action', Irish filmmakers are telling stories that are both connected to their heritage and universal in their appeal. That spirit of imagination and authenticity is what makes Irish cinema so special, and we're delighted to bring these voices to Australian audiences once

again."

The Opening Night features the Australian Premiere of *Fran the Man*, a hilarious Irish mockumentary about a small football club caught up in an international match-fixing scandal.

Documentaries play a central role this year, led by Mrs Robinson, a powerful portrait of Ireland's first female president and global human rights advocate. In her exclusive Q&A with the Irish Film Festival, she says, "I really hope that people will enjoy the film and take something away about making a difference themselves. Everybody matters and everybody can make a difference. You can bring a bit of light into the world, do your best."

Other documentary standouts include *Housewife of the Year*, exposing systemic misogyny behind a surreal TV spectacle, and

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Irish Film Festival unveils diverse line-up



Bring Them Down with Barry Keoghan and Christopher Abbott playing Michael and Jack. Pictures: Supplied

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Gerry Adams – A Ballymurphy Man, tracing the journey of one of Northern Ireland's most polarising political figures, winner of Best International Documentary at Galway 2025.

Music lovers will be drawn to In Time, Dónal Lunny and David Keenan – Focla ar Chanhás (Words on Canvas), offering intimate portraits of two iconic Irish musicians. For families, Fídil Ghorm (The Blue Fiddle) delivers a heartwarming Irish-language drama about the healing power of music.

For the first time in its history, the Irish Film Festival will present a dedicated session of Irish-Australian short films, screening in cinemas in Sydney and Melbourne, as well as online. This collection showcases 2 stories shaped by the interweaving of Irish and Australian culture, through their producers, direc-

tors, actors, or themes. Spanning comedy, LGBTQ documentary, experimental work, dance, and history, the program highlights a new generation of Irish-Australian filmmakers expressing their heritage in cinematic terms.

From revenge thrillers to heart-felt family dramas, and from powerful political portraits to the soccerfuelled comedy of Fran the Man, the 2025 program captures the extraordinary breadth and boldness of Irish storytelling today.

Audiences can also look forward to Gala Opening Nights in each city, complete with live Irish music and complimentary drinks, plus exclusive behind-the-scenes access through Q&As with Festival Director, Dr Enda Murray and select filmmakers and cast.

FESTIVAL DETAILS

Brisbane - 16 to 19 October at Palace Barracks, Petrie Terrace.

Thursday 16 October

Opening night party 6.30pm
Fran The Man - 7.45pm

Friday 17 October

Froggie - 6.15pm
Gerry Adams - 8.30pm

Saturday 18 October

Fídil Ghorm - 11.45am
Housewife of the Year - 1.55pm
Bring Them Down - 4pm
In Time, Donal Lunny - 6.30pm
Christy - 8.50pm

Sunday 19 October

A Want In Her - 1.45pm
Kathleen Is Here - 3.50pm
Mary Robinson - 6.10pm
Dead Man's Money - 8.50pm

Tickets are now on sale at www.irishfilmfestival.com.au

Cinema tickets from \$16. Online tickets from \$10.

Further info: www.irishfilmfestival.com.au



Talk to feature Irish icons

Following on from an Icons of Brisbane event in 2023, you're invited to the Brisbane History Group's October seminar, where you'll discover another six people who helped shape the life and landscape of Brisbane. Some names you may already know, while others might surprise you. This talk features two Irish-born people, Sister Angela Mary and TC Beirne, and one of Irish heritage, Cecelia McNally.

You'll meet Thomas Charles Beirne (1860–1949), remembered as a giant of Brisbane's mercantile history. Known as TCB, he was a shrewd businessman, confidante of archbishops, ally of politicians, a long-serving Legislative Councilor, and a generous benefactor.

You'll learn about Sir Zelman Cowen, Melbourne-born but central to Brisbane's story as Vice Chancellor of the University of Queensland from 1970 to 1977. He guided the university through turbulent years of Vietnam War protests and the Springbok Rugby tour demonstrations, before leaving in 1977 to take on the role of Governor-General of Australia. A distinguished constitutional lawyer, he gained an international reputation.

You'll also hear the remarkable story of Sister Angela Mary Doyle, who arrived in Australia in 1947 and soon found her calling at the Mater Misericordia Hospital in South Brisbane. From 1966, she led the hospital as Administrator and became a voice for health care and social justice — championing causes from women's health to HIV/AIDS treatment. In 2024, she celebrated her 100th birthday.

Architect Robin Gibson will be familiar to you through his landmark contributions to Brisbane's skyline — the Queensland Cultural Centre, the Art Gallery, the Performing Arts Centre, Queensland Museum and State Library. His touch is also seen in Mayne Hall, the Central Library at UQ, and Queen Street Mall.

You'll encounter Daphne Mayo, who studied in England after winning Queensland's first public travelling art scholarship. Returning home in the 1920s, she undertook major commissions, often carving in situ. With Vida Lahey, she founded the Queensland Art Fund in 1929 and helped establish the state's first art reference library. She later became the first

woman trustee of the Queensland Art Gallery.

And you'll be introduced to Cecilia McNally, affectionately known as The Duchess of Spring Hill. Famous for her expertise in antiques and tireless charity work, she organised the Spring Hill Fair for 22 years — one of Queensland's most successful fundraising events, with the Mater Children's Hospital as a key beneficiary.

Your presenters will be Jacqui Donegan, Lisa Jones, Robert Allen, Deborah van der Plaats, Richard Blundell and Paul Sayer.

It's all happening on Sunday October 26 at St Josephs Gregory Terrace.

When: Registration and the bookshop open at 12.30pm, with seminar beginning at 1.00pm. A cuppa will be served during mid-session break.

Where: GT125 Theatre (entrance to the right of the chapel when viewed from Gregory Terrace). Tickets cost \$15 for general admission, or \$10 for Brisbane History Group members at <https://events.humanitix.com/more-icons-of-brisbane/tickets> Website: brisbanehistorygroup.org.au. Email: bhg4000@brisbanehistorygroup.org.au

Queensland Irish Choir notes busy season ahead



The Queensland Irish Choir is gearing up for a busy season, bringing Irish song to Warwick, Brisbane and beyond.

The choir will appear at CelticFest (Warwick) on Sunday 5 October, performing both morning and afternoon and hosting a workshop for singers and festival-goers.

They'll return to Brisbane for the Brisbane Celtic Festival on Saturday 12 October (9:00 am–4:00 pm) at Auchenflower.

Then they will present a Christmas Celebration Concert on 15 November (2:00–4:00 pm) at Hills Church — an afternoon of yuletide music with a Celtic flavour.

Looking further ahead, the choir's St Patrick's Day Concert is set for 7 March 2026 (1:30–4:00 pm) at Hills Church in Everton Hills, promising a lively programme of Irish music, song and dance.

You can also catch members of the choir singing Christmas carols at the QIA Christmas Party on 6 December at Wests Rugby Club in Toowong.

The choir rehearses weekly in the old Toombul Shire Hall on Tuesday evenings at 7pm.

For full details and ticket info for all events, see the choir's events page on their website at www.qldirishchoir.org/events.


QUEENSLAND IRISH CHOIR

Christmas Celebration Concert

An afternoon of Christmas music and
song with a Celtic Flavour

Saturday 15 November 2025
2.00pm
Hills Church Auditorium
79 Queens Road, Everton Hills
Doors Open 1.30 pm

Tickets: <https://www.qldirishchoir.org/events>
\$25 Adults Children (under 15 years) Free
At the Door – if not previously sold out

Enquiries
0493 455 487



 Government of Ireland
Emigrant Support Programme
An Irish-United Kingdom
Department of Foreign Affairs
Department of Enterprise, Skills
and Innovation

Irish-Aussie boy Leo, age five, breaking records with kart-driving program

Parolin Australia is proud to announce that 5-year-old Irish-Australian kart racer Leo Melia has been announced as a Factory Development Driver for the 2026 season under a multi-year agreement, making him the youngest driver to join the program in Australia.

Leo, a third-generation racer from Beachmere, Queensland, has already displayed rapid progression in Cadet competition in regional Queensland, demonstrating smooth racecraft, technical feedback, and a calm, focused approach on and off the track. Leo will be supported by a dedicated training and development schedule designed in collaboration with Parolin Australia.

Under this development role, Leo will: Compete in regional rounds; Undertake testing; Take part in Parolin training camps and technical development sessions; Assist with chassis and component testing for Australian conditions; Represent Parolin Australia through on- and off-track appearances and a growing social media presence.

Parolin Australia Team Owner Kris Walton said: "Leo represents exactly the kind of talent and dedication we want to nurture at Parolin Australia. Our team is committed to help young drivers grow, improve and succeed on and off the track.

Leo's father, Paddy Melia, added: "This is such a special opportunity for Leo at this stage of his life. Parolin Australia's high-performance



Beachmere boy Leo Melia has become the youngest driver to join Parolin Australia's development program.

Picture: Anna Melia/Supplied

caring culture feels like the perfect place for him to grow both as a driver and as a young person. We look forward to building a lasting partnership where Leo can learn, develop and thrive with the team in the years ahead.

The program will see Leo equipped with the latest Parolin Cadet chassis and factory development components, while receiving technical support at key events.

For updates on Leo's progress, see website www.leomelia.racing, Facebook [Patrick.melia14](https://www.facebook.com/Patrick.melia14), and on Instagram at www.instagram.com/leomelia.racing.

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

You can also reach us through our website, 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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Irish remember those who have gone before

For the Irish, the turn from October into November has always carried a special weight. It begins with Halloween, or Oíche Shamhna. Long before pumpkins and lollies, the ancient Celts marked the end of harvest and the beginning of the dark half of the year with bonfires and disguises. They believed the veil between the living and the dead was at its thinnest, so people dressed up to confuse wandering spirits and left out food for them. Even when Christianity softened those older beliefs, the night stayed alive in Irish villages with games, storytelling, and just enough eeriness to remind everyone that this was no ordinary evening.

The next morning was All Saints' Day (1 November), when the Church honoured all the saints, named and unnamed. This was observed by Catholics, Anglicans, and other Protestant churches alike. In Ireland's Church of Ireland (Anglican) parishes, the day was marked by a special service of Holy Communion, hymns, and readings from scripture. For Catholics, it was a holy day of obligation, meaning everyone was expected at Mass.

Then came All Souls' Day (2 November), which was most strongly kept by Catholics. It was a day for

praying for the faithful departed — the ordinary people of every family, not just the saints. In Ireland, parishes held special Masses where long lists of the dead were read aloud, and families went to tend graves, light candles, and pray. Protestant and Anglican churches often held services of commemoration. In both traditions, November came to be a season of remembrance, when the names of the departed were called to mind.

When Irish emigrants came to Australia, they carried these practices with them. Catholic parishes held November Remembrance Masses, inviting parishioners to hand in names of their dead to be remembered at Masses all month. Anglicans and Protestants often marked the season with a solemn All Saints' service and sometimes a quiet gathering of remembrance in cemeteries or churches.

Halloween's bonfires, All Saints' solemnity, and the tender prayers of All Souls were all part of the rhythm of Irish life. And even here, under southern skies, the season still belongs to memory, prayer, and that fragile thread that links the living with those who have gone before.

November Irish Remembrance Mass to be held in Labrador



The Annual Irish Community November Remembrance Mass which will be celebrated this year on Sunday, 9th November at 11.30am in St Joseph the Worker Church, 44 Imperial Parade, Labrador. "As Catholics, we believe that in death life has not ended but has changed. The departed individual becomes a part of the Communion of Saints, as we eagerly anticipate the moment when we will all be reunited in the heavenly kingdom of God. Our annual Remembrance Mass provides then a poignant means of honouring and praying for the peaceful repose of departed family members and friends. "And what better prayer can we pray than the great prayer of the Church - our Mass.

"And so, please take this opportunity to pray for all those for whom you may be grieving and mourning."

You are also invited and encouraged to stay for the tea/coffee afterwards - where you can renew old acquaintances and meet new friends.

Please help with the catering for the tea/coffee etc., by letting the organisers know if you will be attending, by text to 0407410041.

Queensland Irish Association

Christmas Party 2025



QIA invites Members and Friends to an
Irish entertainment Christmas Luncheon

Sunday, 6th December from 12 noon at

Wests Rugby Club, Sylvan Rd, Toowong

Entertainment by Greg Peatey

Dancing by QIA Dancers

Carols by Queensland Irish Choir

Good food and beverages available

FREE entry and all are welcome!

