

Grand President's Visit to Ireland 2009

Grand President David Taylor's Official Visit to Ireland in March and April 2009 as part of the Association's Centenary Celebrations was a full, highly enjoyable and extremely successful visit. David, accompanied by his wife Kathleen, herself from Co Galway, was joined for the whole visit by Paddy and Anne Mimmagh (Liverpool and St Helens circles), and Tony and Kelly Godden, Director for International Development. At various stages of the visit many brothers and wives joined Grand President at the meetings and dinners including Mike and Kathleen Kavanagh, President of Joondalup Circle in Australia who attended the Dublin Circle Meeting and Dinner.



Pictured (l to r): Kelly Godden; John Redmond, Vice President of Dublin Circle; President Mary McAleese; Grand President David and Kathleen Taylor; Director Tony Godden

of Dublin Circle and the Visiting Party. Following the Mass David and Kathleen together with Dublin Circle President Tony and Philomena O'Reilly and Tony and Kelly Godden were entertained to dinner and a most enjoyable evening at the home of John and Frances Redmond, Vice President of Dublin Circle. Thus the Grand President checked into his Dublin hotel at midnight.

Monday started with Mass at St Mary's Pro Cathedral in Dublin and we spent a relaxing day which saw more people arrive to join the group. In the evening we had a well attended meeting of Dublin Circle whilst the

ladies were entertained to a reception. At the meeting Rob McIndoe of Bulawayo Circle joined Dublin Circle as a Joint Member. At the dinner Dublin Circle President Tony O'Reilly presented Grand President with a cheque for £3,250 for the Water for Life Appeal (see picture on p82). Responding to a toast by Tony

O'Reilly, David said how happy he was to be in Ireland and to witness the growth of the Association in Belfast and Kilkenny. Garry Gavigan, the President of the Irish Liaison Council, proposed the toast to the visitors and Tony Godden responded and included the usual jokes about his kilt.

Tuesday morning saw David and Kathleen, Tony and Kelly Godden and John Redmond of Dublin Circle pay a courtesy visit to President Mary McAleese at Aras An Uachtarain, her Official Residence. President McAleese posed for photographs and invited the group to tea and scones. The conversation ranged from the pilot scheme the President supports to lower the suicide rate among men in Ireland, to the Centenary Charity, the establishment of the Association in Belfast and, of course, the Irish rugby team's recent Grand Slam. Grand President David presented the President with a signed copy of the History of the Association.

Straight from our meeting with President McAleese we drove to Belfast for the Inauguration of the Belfast Group where we were joined by brothers from 11 British Provinces, Dublin Circle, and the Bishop of Down and Connor for what was



Director Tony Godden is pictured meeting President Mary McAleese at her official residence in Dublin with Kelly Godden and Kathleen Taylor looking on

David and Kathleen's flight from Birmingham arrived late on the Sunday afternoon giving them and their driver a hair raising journey to the south of Dublin to attend a specially arranged Mass at the Orlagh Retreat Centre, an Augustinian House where Fr Kieran O'Mahoney celebrated a most wonderful Mass for members

a unique and truly wonderful evening. This event is the subject of a separate article.

The following morning we headed off south to Kilkenny for a meeting with the Bishop of Ossory, the Most Rev Seamus Freeman, to inform him of the nature of the Association and to ask for his blessing on the Southern Counties Group which was holding its Foundation Meeting that evening in Kilkenny. The Bishop thanked us for the Masses we had said for Vocations and asked us to continue our support for vocations. As a new Bishop he was able to tell us there had not been an ordination in his Diocese for 16 years although there was a recent growth in the number of Seminarians in Ireland.

In the evening Garry Gavigan chaired the Foundation Meeting of the Southern Counties Group at which Frank O'Mahony was elected Chair of the Group. The Foundation Group consists of existing brothers who have moved from England to Ireland and gentlemen new to the Association. During the meeting a reception for the ladies was held and afterwards all attended a celebratory dinner where Grand President David congratulated the new Group on its start and Frank O'Mahony laid out his plans for the development of the Group up to a formal Inauguration and ultimately onto Circle status. Tony Godden spoke of the development of the Group and paid tribute to Frank O'Mahony and Michael McCabe for their tireless work and enthusiasm and to the Brothers of Cork Circle for their support.

Thursday morning saw the Taylors set out for Bagenalstown in Co Carlow to search for information on David's maternal ancestors. A visit to the parish church, a chat with parishioners with the same maternal surname and a visit to the parish office led to success and David was able to further trace back his Irish ancestry. Then the drive to Cork where Grand President David and Kathleen were hosted and entertained by their friends of many years Denis and Dawn Healy.

At the Cork Circle meeting Pat Collins installed John Hussey as Circle



GP David Taylor and President Mary McAleese relax over a cup of tea at the President's Official Residence in Dublin



Pictured (l to r) Frank O'Mahony, GP David Taylor, Bishop Seamus Freeman, Pat O'Shea and Michael McCabe at a meeting at the Bishop's Palace in Kilkenny

President and Grand President David congratulated John on his appointment and thanked Pat for his hard work and leadership over the past year. After a wonderful dinner (the Cork Catenians really do dine well) we were entertained to a display of Irish dancing by the daughter of proud parents John and Catherine Hussey. Thus ended the formal part of the Grand President's visit and a number of us went off to visit relatives and friends before returning home.

We were privileged to be part of a successful visit to Ireland with four meetings and dinners in as many nights at Dublin Circle, the inaugural meeting of the Belfast Group, the Foundation Meeting of the Group in

Kilkenny and then at Cork Circle. We were honoured to meet with President Mary McAleese, to enjoy the company and blessing of two Irish Bishops, and appreciated the outstanding hospitality of our Irish hosts. Our thanks go to all those brothers and their wives in Ireland who worked so hard to ensure the success of our visit. A big thank you to all the brothers and wives from Australia, England and Scotland for their company and support on this enjoyable visit. And finally, sincere thanks to David and Kathleen Taylor for their leadership and friendship and for the many happy memories we have of our visit to the Emerald Isle.

Tony Godden
Director for International Development