

A monument 'where pilgrims may
worship and patriotism be renewed'
– the sacral nationalism of the
Australian '98 centenary

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On 9 January 1886, in the *Nation*, Katherine Tynan published a poem entitled 'The Grave of Michael Dwyer'. A sprig of fern inspired a vision of Dwyer's tomb, which in her mind's eye was set against the backdrop of the Wicklow Mountains:

I wish you slept where your kin are sleeping –
The dove-gray valley is sweet;
and the holy mountains their strange watch keeping
Would love you lying still at their feet,
The dewy grass for your winding sheet.

The poem had many admirers, including Yeats.¹ The grave of the 1798 'Wicklow Chief' Dwyer was not, however, in Wicklow, or even Ireland. He had died in New South Wales, far from his native mountains, and by 1886 his life was essentially outside living memory in Ireland and Australia – though some in Sydney would have remembered his widow Mary, who had died only in 1860.² His place of burial had not been lost; it lay clearly marked in the 'Sandhills' cemetery in Sydney and in the same year as the appearance of Tynan's poem pilgrims marched to Dwyer's tomb. This type of ritual of rebel 'decoration' was becoming increasingly common in Ireland and the leader of the pilgrimage made specific comparison of the event

1 W.B. Yeats to K. Tynan, May 1888, in J. Kelly with E. Domville (eds), *The Collected Letters of W.B. Yeats* (Oxford, 1986), vol. 1, pp. 65–6. Yeats wrote a short poem 'A Faery Song / Sung by "the Good People" over the outlaw Michael Dwyer and his bride, who had escaped into the mountains', *National Observer*, 12 September 1891. He later changed the subject of the poem to Diarmáid and Gráinne. 2 Dwyer died on 25 October 1825, not, as commonly cited, 1815 (see, for example, Kelly and Domville, *Collected Letters*, p. 354, fn. 1 and *Catholic Weekly* (Sydney), 9 September 1926 – in a centenary feature on the assumption that 1826 was the date of Dwyer's death!) John Thomas Campion, *Michael Dwyer, the Insurgent Captain of the Wicklow Mountains* (Dublin, c.1870), p. 128 ludicrously gives the date as 1805, despite describing the colonial career of Dwyer. The date is very commonly given as 1826 (for example S.J. Connolly (ed.), *The Oxford Companion to Irish History* (Oxford, 1998), p. 166), on account of Madden's, *Life of Robert Emmet*. Madden's source was Dwyer's brother in Dublin who probably did not learn of the death until the year following.

with the pilgrimage to the grave of Wolfe Tone in Bodenstown.³ This 'decoration' of 1886 drew the Dwyers into a new nationalism which was characterised, in the words of Pauric Travers, by 'the use of the dead as a weapon' and subsequent events would take the corporeal remains of Michael Dwyer to the centre of the Australian '98 centenary celebration.⁴ The latter was a uniquely successful event, with harmonious public displays and the laying of the foundation of a nationally-funded monument. That the Sydney '98 celebrations were successful in the completion of the latter, in contrast to national '98 events in Ireland, can be attributed to the role played by Michael Dwyer and his wife.

A pilgrimage to the 'Sandhills', the old burial ground in Devonshire Street just south of the city centre, might have identified the graves of several rebels of '98. William Davis, as founder of the Secret Council for the Protection of the Blessed Sacrament, had become a central figure in Australian Catholic history.⁵ James Meehan, another '98 man, had been the first surveyor in New South Wales.⁶ The pilgrims in 1886, however, were principally concerned with standard litanies of Irish rebels, in which Dwyer was included by virtue of being the subject of romantic ballads. W.P. Cawley of the Shamrock Club referred to the graves of Wolfe Tone, Peter O'Neill Crowley, Charles J. Kickham, and the other patriotic Irishmen, and 'hoped that their lives would be a lesson to Irishmen of the present generation and teach them to sacrifice a little for their country where such noble lives had been devoted to her service'. The Dwyers themselves had been notable Australians, but it was the romantic drama of their – fictionalised – lives that made them attractive for the rebel litanies of the late nineteenth century. Rebellion had by this time ceased to be a Jacobin, civic, tradition and had become an eschatology, in which poetic romance and sacrifice would inspire a new Ireland.

Not that the lives of the Dwyers needed to be entirely reinvented for pious mythmaking. Michael Dwyer had been a romantic figure even in his own time. A United Irishman from the Glen of Imaal, he had gone from the defeat at Vinegar Hill to become an outlaw in his native Wicklow mountains, not surrendering until Emmet's defeat in 1803. In the following year, he was transported to Australia as a political prisoner.⁷ He was celebrated by the media in the early 1800s as a Robin

3 *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 2 October 1886. 4 P. Travers, 'Our Fenian Dead: Glasnevin Cemetery and the Genesis of the Republican Funeral', in J. Kelly and U. Mac Gearailt (eds), *Dublin and Dubliners: Essays on the History and Literature of Dublin City* (Dublin, 1990), p. 52. 5 C.J. Duffy, 'The Leaving of the Consecrated Host by Father Jeremiah O'Flynn', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, 2 (1967), pp. 1-10. 6 B.T. Dowd, 'James Meehan', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 28 (1942), pp. 108-18; R. O'Donnell and B. Reece, *James Meehan*, forthcoming. 7 For Dwyer's life see R. O'Donnell, 'Michael Dwyer: the Wicklow Chief', in B. Reece (ed.), *Irish Convict Lives* (Sydney, 1993), pp. 13-50; R. O'Donnell, 'Michael Dwyer: Wicklow Chief and Irish-Australian Hero', in R. Pelan (ed.), *Irish-Australian Studies* (Sydney, 1994), pp. 206-17; K. Sheedy, *Upon the Mercy of the Government* (Dublin, 1988); K. Sheedy, *The Tellicherry Five* (Dublin, 1997); G. Cargeeg, *The Rebel of Glenmalur* (Perth, 1988).

Hood figure for his colourful escapades, perhaps as a deliberate attempt to play down public perception of the United Irishmen as a serious threat.⁸ Nonetheless, the tension between his Jacobin United Irishman status, on the one hand, and his local identity as a brilliant guerrilla fighter as well as a deeply pious Catholic, on the other, made him a complex figure who would appeal to rebels of a later era.⁹

Like many '98 rebels, however, and to the puzzlement of republicans of a later date, Dwyer would put his rebel past behind him and embark on a civic career of a type which was typical enough of eighteenth-century rebels. Though implicated in the Rum Rebellion, and accused of involvement in other planned insurgencies, Dwyer remained clear of all charges of insurrection and became Constable of the Liverpool district in 1813, before debt and alcoholism hastened him to bankruptcy and death from dysentery in 1825.¹⁰ It was only as a 'former police constable' that Dwyer was commemorated in the *Sydney Gazette* (25 October 1825) – though this is to be expected in an official publication. The grave in which he was buried bore an inscription of similar neutrality:

Gloria in excelsis Deo. | Sacred to the memory of Michael Dwyer | (Late of Liverpool, formerly of Emahel, County of Wicklow, Ireland) | who departed this life August the 23rd, 1825. | Aged 53 years. | Leaving a wife and 7 children to lament his loss. | Lord have mercy on his soul.¹¹

The sparseness of this inscription bemused the visitors of 1886 who, no doubt echoing Robert Emmet, concluded that Dwyer was 'awaiting the time when a regenerated country shall write his epitaph'.¹² This is not likely to have been the case. In the 1820s it was not fashionable to commemorate rebellion in inscriptions. '98 rebels might sing disaffected songs, as Dwyer was observed by government agents to have done on new year's day 1807, and would name hostleries after '98 engagements, as Dwyer did in 1822, but this was to join in a rural or proletarian discourse of nationalism.¹³ There was no romantic language of '98 for the middle-class United Irishmen such as Dwyer to use as an epitaph. This would seem, in the

8 I owe this suggestion to Michael Durey. 9 His family kept vigil on the Host when it was left behind by Fr O'Flynn. O'Donnell, 'Michael Dwyer: the Wicklow Chief', pp. 43-4; Sheedy, *The Tèllicherry Five*, pp. 129-37. Mary Dwyer entered the service of Fr Therry and she and her daughters and son-in-law remained his staunchest supporters in Therry's struggles with the Vicar Apostolic. C.J. Duffy, 'John O'Sullivan', *Journal of the Australian Catholic Historical Society*, 3 (1969), pp. 1-10; W. Ullathorne, *From Cabin Boy to Archbishop* (London, 1941), p. 60. 10 B.W. O'Dwyer, 'Michael Dwyer and the 1807 Plan of Insurrection', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 69 (1983), pp. 73-82. 11 C. Dickson, *The Life of Michael Dwyer* (Dublin, 1944), p. 278. Emahel is most likely a mason's interpretation of Mary Dwyer's (who was illiterate) pronunciation of Imaal. 12 *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 2 October 1886. This claim is a type of compensatory nationalism. R. Wynne, 'That Unfortunate Business of '98', *Australasian Catholic Record*, 42 (1965), p. 202, for example, claims that Hugh 'Vesty' Byrne's tomb at Campbelltown was left blank for this reason. The tomb is not blank. 13 Sheedy, *The Tèllicherry Five*, p. 128; *Sydney Gazette*, 22 March 1822. The hostelry was named 'The Harrow'.



The 1798 monument at Waverley Cemetery, Sydney (photo by the author)

words of Thomas Addis Emmet, to 'grace the triumph of the victor'.¹⁴ Romantics of a later date, fuelled by the literary vision of Young Ireland, saw rebellion in terms more often of noble sacrifice and elegant gesture.¹⁵

The historian R.R. Madden in his *Life and Times of Robert Emmet Esq.* had recorded details of Dwyer, but Dwyer's notoriety in 1886 was more the result of the work of a Young Irelander, John Thomas Campion, whose *Michael Dwyer, the Insurgent Captain of the Wicklow Mountains* (c.1870) had embellished Madden's detail to make a largely fictional but highly romantic portrait of Dwyer's deeds, as well as of 'Mary of the mountains', his 'saintly' wife.¹⁶ What Dwyer's own family had

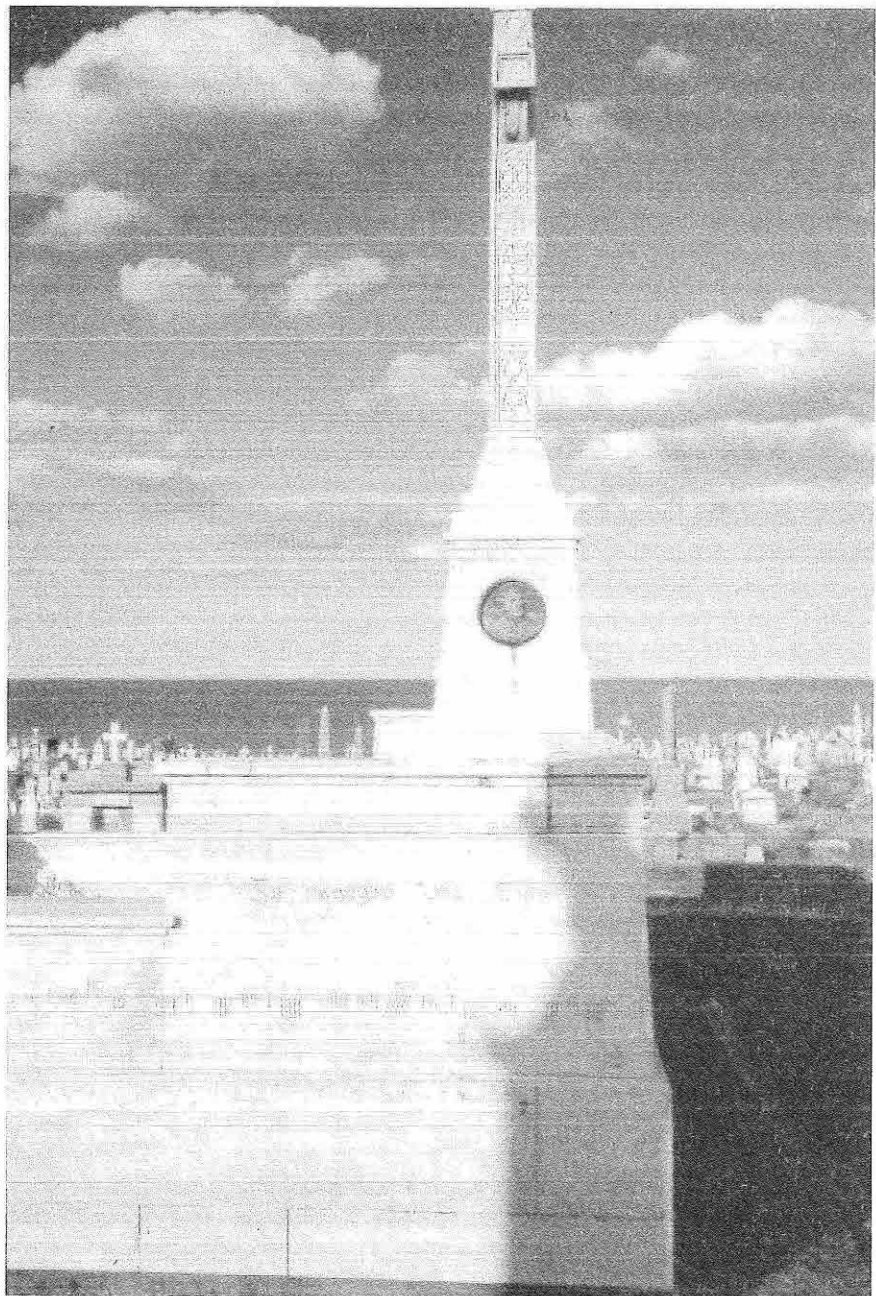
14 Cited in K. Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty* (Cork, 1996), p. 167. **15** Sir Roger Therry, writing 'from memory' only three years after Mary Dwyer's death reported an inscription commemorating two other United Irishmen, buried by his namesake Archpriest Therry in Campbelltown, as reading: 'Here lie in one grave Patrick O'Connor and Dennis Bryan, shipmates in the 'Boyd' transport from Ireland in 1799, and compatriots in arms at the memorable battle of Vinegar Hill': *Reminiscences of Thirty Years' Residence in New South Wales* ([1863] Sydney, 1974). The *Boyd* was a real convict transport, but didn't arrive in the colony until 1809, ten years after Bryan and Connor were transported. The actual inscription refers simply to John Fowler, Thomas Connor and Nicholas Bryan 'all shipmates And Countrymen and all sent out over Charges of that unfortunate business of 1798 May the Lord have mercy on their souls'. **16** On Campion see *United Irishman*, 30 September 1899; also J.M. Wooding, 'The Body of Mary Dwyer: Literary and Lapidary Histories of the Women of '98', in P. James and J.M. Wooding (eds), *Literature and Politics in the Celtic World* (Sydney, forthcoming).

failed to state in his epitaph was more than made up for by Campion, whose work was widely quoted in accounts of Dwyer around the time of the '98 commemoration. If Campion's Dwyer has few features in common with his real counterpart, Campion's Mary has even less. The diminutive, stoical Mary Dwyer became a 'tall, blushing' rebel heroine who shared Dwyer's heroics in the mountains – unlikely behaviour for an eighteenth-century wife, who moreover bore four children between 1799 and 1804 – who retired peacefully to Goulburn on her husband's death. This is so far from the truth as to be comical.¹⁷

Such questions of historical detail were not at issue in the 1880s, when the Shamrock Club took up a subscription to build a new tomb for Dwyer. The depression of the 1890s put paid to further attempts to improve Dwyer's grave, however, and when the Shamrock Club folded in 1895 only £4 1s. had been raised.¹⁸ In 1897 a new nationalist association, the Irish National Foresters, took up the cause. In the 1890s the Foresters in Ireland had been responsible for the 'decoration days' in which rebel tombs were identified and garlanded. At a dinner in Sydney on 1 September 1897 it was proposed to start a fund to erect a monument to the rebels of '98 on the site of Dwyer's grave, as a commemoration of the centenary of the United Irishmen's rising.¹⁹

In Ireland, many '98 clubs had been formed by 1897, with plans for 'a monument in every parish'.²⁰ In the context of plans to commemorate the centenary, Australia's effort was somewhat belated. Ironically, for all its late start, Australia's would be virtually the only commemoration to complete a national monument to the centenary of '98. It was unveiled in April 1901, less than four years after the matter was first raised. The reason for this success lies in the fact that Australia's monument is a sepulchral structure rather than simply a street monument. It is axiomatic that the parading of the relics of people who have suffered in a cause will ensure that patriots will have a focal point for sentiment. Sacral funerary

¹⁷ Campion's description of her as 'tall' (*The Insurgent Captain*, p. 15) contrasts with measurements which were made in 1898, which showed her to be 5',1". Mary Dwyer in fact led a peripatetic life after Michael's death, following Therry to Campbelltown, then visiting him in Hobart and travelling frequently between Goulburn and Sydney, residing in Sydney at the end of her life. Mary Dwyer to Fr Therry, 15 December 1838 (Sydney); 26 Sept 1839 (Hobart); 7 June 1859; 22 February 1860; 25 May 1860, Therry Correspondence, Mitchell Library, Sydney. Campion and various later works record Mary Dwyer as having died in Goulburn, New South Wales, in 1861. The Births and Deaths register shows that she died at 368 Castlereagh St, Sydney, near the corner of Liverpool St., on 12 July 1860. Her funeral was in Sydney, *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 16 July 1860. I would like to thank Maureen Tucker for much assistance with this matter. ¹⁸ A trustee of the Shamrock Club, William Walsh, later made over this sum to the Centenary Committee, *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 6 November 1897. ¹⁹ The *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney) contains weekly reports of the committee throughout the period September 1897 to April 1901. Also see [M.] Daly and [W.B.] McDowell, *The Men of '98 – a '98 Souvenir* (Sydney, 1898), pp. 36–8. ²⁰ N. Johnston, 'Sculpting Heroic Pictures: Celebrating the Centenary of the 1798 Rebellion in Ireland', *Transactions of the British Institute of Geography*, 19 (1994), pp. 78–93.



Inscriptions in Irish, in the Latin and Ogham alphabets, on the western wall of the 1798 monument at Waverley (photo by the author)

rituals allow participants to appeal to established tradition which may substitute for critical debate. Declamations become a closed language in which the meanings of the words are secondary to their perceived authority.²¹ In Australia the '98 committee were able to exhume, elevate and translate the bodies of Michael and Mary Dwyer to the site of a new monument. The sentiment embodied in this ritual event silenced critics and provided a focal point which displaced disharmonious factors. By contrast, in Dublin the grand display that led to the foundation of a monument to Wolfe Tone being laid in St Stephen's Green inevitably competed with an established ritual focusing on Tone's grave at Bodenstown and was unsuccessful in achieving its aim of a national monument.²²

The initiator of the Sydney commemoration was a Mr John Sheehy, though the direction of the commemoration was rapidly taken over by a committee led by an Irish-Australian doctor, poet, musician and linguist, Charles William MacCarthy. MacCarthy was a complex character. Conciliatory, yet strong-willed, he had served with the Franco-Irish Ambulance in the Franco-Prussian war. He was a nationalist, but also patriotic enough to the crown to write the 1915 song, 'The Toast is Anzac, Gentlemen!'²³ He was in many ways the most diverse figure on the committee, apposite to his chairmanship of men of many political and religious persuasions. His line on '98 was that it was 'a union of Protestants and Catholics . . . The lesson of '98 was that taught by Theobald Wolfe Tone – unite'.²⁴

Nicholas O'Donnell, a Victorian delegate, was a staunch parliamentary home ruler.²⁵ A South Australian delegate, the Federal parliamentarian Patrick McMahon Glynn, was a member whose views were even more moderate:

I plainly told the meeting at Waverley Cemetery that repeal of the Union was, in my opinion, out of the question. To give Ireland autonomy greater than that let an Australian state in respect of the Commonwealth of Australia (sic.), would not be conducive to the interests of either Ireland or the Empire.²⁶

However, there were some nationalists on the committee who had extreme associations. Fr T.A. 'Tom' Fitzgerald, a Franciscan priest who was later to become a noted Gaelic revivalist, was a member of the Ancient Order of Hibernians, a militant group opposed to the covert Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) but in

²¹ See, for example, M. Bloch, *From Blessing to Violence* (Cambridge, 1986). ²² G. Owens, 'Nationalist Monuments in Ireland c.1870-1914', in R. Gillespie and B. Kennedy (eds), *Ireland Art into History* (Dublin, 1994), pp. 109-113; T. O'Keefe, 'The 1898 Efforts to Celebrate the United Irishmen: the '98 Centennial', *Éire-Ireland*, 23 (1988), p. 67. ²³ G.P. Walsh, 'MacCarthy, Charles William', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. x (Melbourne, 1986), pp. 217-18; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 May 1979. ²⁴ *Advocate* (Melbourne), 28 May 1898. ²⁵ C. McConville, 'O'Donnell, Nicholas Michael', in *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 11 (Melbourne, 1988), pp. 60-61. ²⁶ Diary of P. McMahon Glynn, 18 April 1898, National Library of Australia, p. 533.

favour of armed rebellion. His was to be the fieriest speech at the unveiling. Another member, John Flood, who represented the Queensland Irish Association on the committee, was a Fenian rebel of 1867. However, he had renounced militant separatism by this time.²⁷ Finally there was at least one genuine member of the IRB closely involved with the committee, Edmund McSweeney, who would be interned for IRB membership in 1918.²⁸ It is probably typical of the IRB's covert approach that McSweeney was closely involved with the work of the committee, but did not accept a formal position.

Dr MacCarthy outlined the plan for the event at a meeting in the Oddfellows' Hall on 1 November 1897.

It was proposed that a suitable monument to all the patriots of '98 should be erected, that a Requiem Mass should be celebrated, and the remains of Michael Dwyer exhumed, publicly conveyed to the Waverley Cemetery, and interred on the spot over which the monument was to be erected.²⁹

On 18 December 'it was decided that the appeal be advertised in the Catholic papers in the colonies and in New Zealand. It was also decided that circulars be forwarded to some of the principal inhabitants in each town and district in New South Wales, inviting them to form local committees'.³⁰ A women's committee was formed and one of the first women to write in support was 'Eva', the Young Ireland poet and wife of the 1848 rebel Kevin Izod O'Doherty, now living in Queensland.³¹

Lectures by P.J. Dorahy, 'the accredited agent of the '98 commemoration', were given in Goulburn, Yass, Murrumburrah, Cootamundra, Young, Junee, Wagga, Albury, Burrows and Marengo.³² Indefatigable, Dorahy returned from this tour ready to 'shortly set out for the Western and Northern districts'.³³ The contribution of small donations to the fund was crucial. Donations from these lectures averaged £10-20. A great-grandson of the Dwyers gave £25. Events were also organised and local fundraising committees are recorded in Hillgrove, Broken Hill, and Sydney city parishes such as Waverley and St Patrick's Church Hill. The United Irish League in Victoria chartered the steamers 'Flinders' and 'Casino' on 12 February 1898, raising £400.³⁴ A recital was given in Sydney by an actress, Augusta Dargan, and a banquet was held.³⁵

²⁷ *Brisbane Age*, 21 April 1900. ²⁸ P. O'Farrell, 'Dreaming of Distant Revolution: A. T. Dryer and the Irish National Association, Sydney, 1915-16', *Journal of the Royal Australian Historical Society*, 69 (1983), pp. 155ff. ²⁹ Daly and McDowell, *Men of '98*, p. 37. ³⁰ *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 18 December 1897. ³¹ *Advocate* (Melbourne), 5 February 1898. ³² *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 19 March 1898. ³³ *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 19 February 1898; 26 February 1898; 19 March 1898; 9 April 1898; 16 April 1898; 14 May 1898. ³⁴ *Connradh Aontuighthe na nGaedheal (UIL) to the Members of the Fourth Convention of Victorian Irishmen* (Melbourne, 1918). ³⁵ *W.A. Record*, 12 March, 1898; *Sydney Morning Herald*, 4 December 1898.

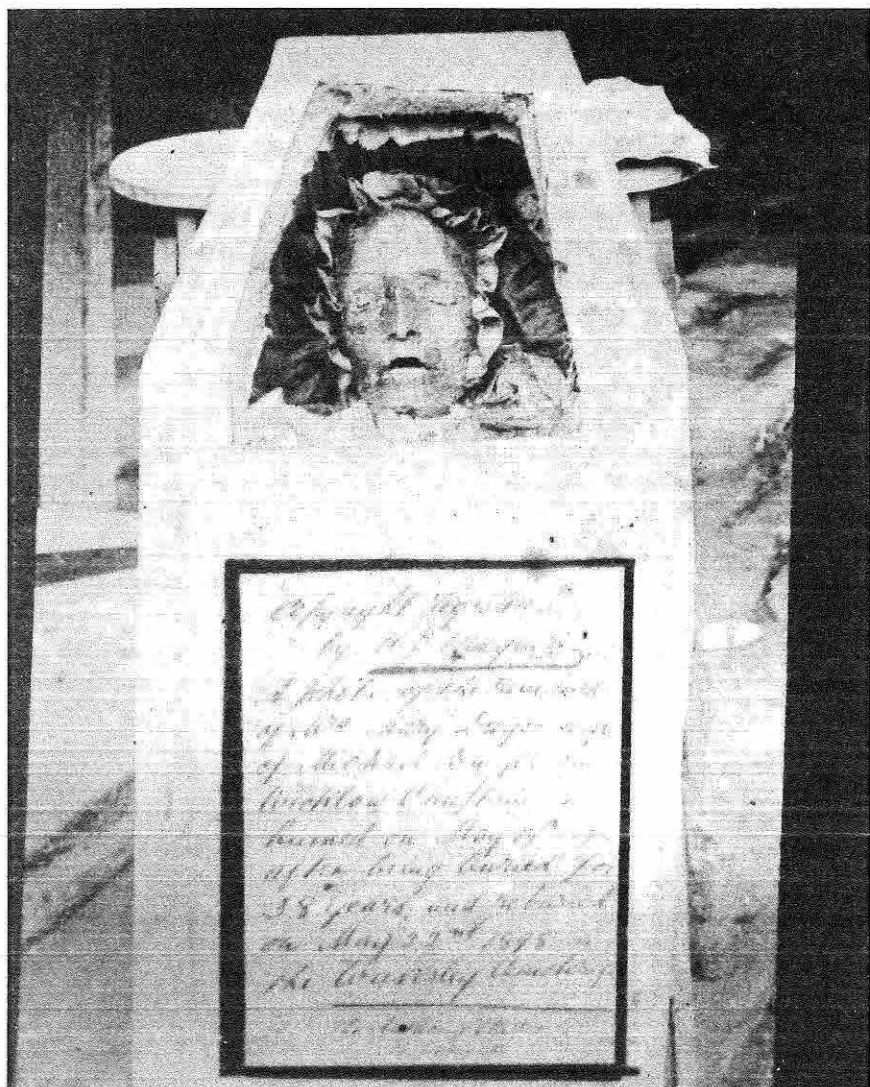
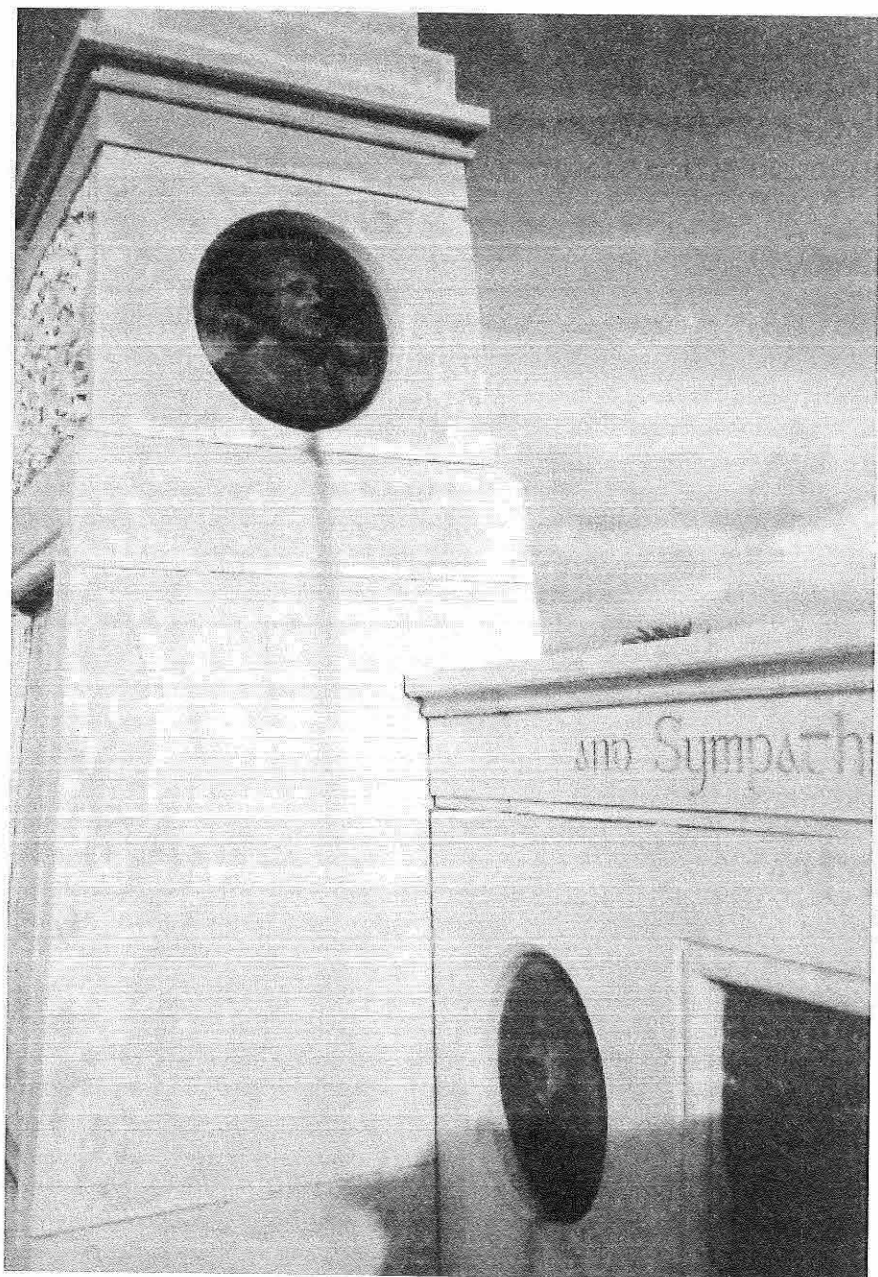


Photo of Mary Dwyer, taken in May 1890 (photo H.J. Maguire).

The contribution of these committees was an essential part of the unitary vision of MacCarthy, who in his Guildhall address had emphasised the contribution of the ordinary Irish-Australians:

They certainly would welcome men of means for their purses; but none of their movements had ever been successful without the purses of the poor. Their movement was distinctly national.³⁶

³⁶ *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 6 November 1897.



'Wicklow – Wexford' group of reliefs, showing Fr John Murphy (top) and Michael Dwyer (centre). 1798 monument at Waverley (photo by the author)

What is remarkable is that the other cities so assiduously participated in funding the estimated £2,600 cost of the monument. Patrick McMahon Glynn declared at a fundraising event that if he were permitted to 'help place one stone, to carve one letter on the immortal monument to Ireland's heroes his only feeling would be one of honest gratitude for the privilege'.³⁷ Predictably, some remote regions saw less benefit than those closer to Sydney. The 'Irishmen on the Goldfields' were exhorted by the licensees of hotels in Boulder and Kalgoorlie to contribute to 'the erection of a monument to Michael Dwyer, William Davis, in Sydney, who are buried there . . . and any other appropriate way that may be decided on of paying a tribute to their motives and valour'. With mining mythology and the ideals of Eureka in mind, the advertisement appeals to a sense of egalité: 'some may perhaps differ as to the means of action of those days, but yet approve of their final aim – the establishment of equal justice.'³⁸ But nothing else was heard from Kalgoorlie. Presumably, the miners in this remote town saw little benefit in a commemoration thousands of miles away. The appeal to Western Australians of sharing a continent with the remains of United Irish rebels was a remote one and whereas South Australia, under the leadership of a Federal politician, was driven in its contribution by its strong commitment to Federation, there was no corresponding commitment in the west, which was seriously contemplating not joining the other states in Federation. While the committee formed in Perth expressed its intent to support the erection of the monument to the rebels who 'found their last resting place in Australia' it also sought to raise money for 'any other object that may be decided upon by a future meeting'.³⁹ This 'other object' was soon announced as a '98 Centenary Hall for Perth.⁴⁰

Raising the required money was far less of an obstacle than the opposition of the archdiocese. Cardinal Moran spoke out against support for the '98 centenary, describing the rebellion as 'a crime and a blunder'. Moran may have suspected the involvement of the IRB – who were indeed involved with the event. Moran's uncle, Cardinal Cullen, had opposed the funeral of Terence Bellew McManus in Dublin in 1861, on suspicion of Fenian agency and ordered that no church should shelter the remains.⁴¹ Moran was most likely following this precedent when he refused permission for a funeral mass for the Dwyers. Yet Moran's opposition may easily be misinterpreted. His family were 'out' in '98, as he was not slow to observe and, though he was on cordial terms with the government, Moran was essentially more an opportunist than a loyalist. His principal opposition must have stemmed from his desire to be the leader of all things Irish and Catholic. Having taken over the running of St Patrick's Day and other Irish-Australian celebrations, he was hardly likely to allow a new event to enter on the scene of which he was not the

37 *Fáinne an Lae*, 26 Lúnasa 1899. 38 *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 26 February 1898. 39 *W.A. Record*, 23 April 1898. 40 *W.A. Record*, 14 May 1898. 41 L. Bisceglia, 'The Fenian Funeral of Terence Bellew MacManus', *Éire-Ireland*, 14 (1979), pp. 45–64; Travers, 'Our Fenian Dead', pp. 57–9.

instigator. The Hibernian Australian Catholic Benefit Society (HACBS), a rival organisation which also expressed opposition to the committee in Perth, were suspicious of the, less respectable, Foresters and supported the cardinal. MacCarthy was content to see the opposition as residing in this rivalry. He denounced a 'mean and contemptible plot, to injure the Foresters . . . [which] would bring into our midst the curse of Irish affairs – disunion'.⁴²

Public sympathy clearly lay with MacCarthy. In the event the HACBS voted its support and Moran soon expressed his support for the movement.⁴³ He claimed he had been misquoted. The rebellion was 'a crime and a blunder. . .', but 'by the British'.⁴⁴ The building of a new railway station in Sydney, timed to coincide with Federation, ensured that the Dwyers would have to be moved anyway, so Moran could not reasonably oppose exhumation, though he initially resisted the request for a stay in the cathedral. In any event Moran found the terms in which to couch support for the '98 commemoration. This was evidently due to the influence of Patrick F. Kavanagh, a Franciscan priest, who was closely identified with Australia, having lived there for some years before returning to his native Wexford.⁴⁵ A ship-board encounter with J.A. Froude inspired him to write a short narrative of the events of '98. This work eschewed the prosopographical approach of Madden and Crofton Croker in favour of a storytelling approach, instantly making it a best-seller, despite its extraordinarily eccentric thesis.⁴⁶ This was that the rebels of Wexford were driven to rebellion not by the conspiracies of the United Irishmen but by the oppressive tyranny of the British backlash against them, which caused the loyal men of Wexford to take up arms under the leadership of Fr John Murphy. It was the best-selling history of '98 in 1898, in which year a special edition was produced and Kavanagh himself toured Ireland unceasingly unveiling monuments and lecturing on his vision of '98. Moran knew Kavanagh personally and had supported him in publicly criticising the IRB. Kavanagh's dominant vision of 1798 in 1898 in turn fitted Moran's own view of clerical leadership.

All possible opposition was, in any event, swept away upon the opening of the Dwyers' tomb. The initial plan had been to relocate several United Irishmen to Waverley: Dwyer and William Davis from Devonshire Street, as well as other rebels buried at Campbelltown.⁴⁷ The report of the meeting of the '98 committee for 14 May 1898 stated that 'The remains of Michael Dwyer and his wife (from the Devonshire Cemetery), John Fowler, Nicholas Bryan and Thomas Connor, (from

42 *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 11 December 1897. 43 *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 26 February 1898. 44 P. Mac Suibhne, *Paul Cullen and His Contemporaries*, vol. 3 (Naas, 1965), pp. 388–94. 45 See *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 30 November 1897; 12 March 1898; 19 March 1898. 46 L. Ó Broin, 'R. R. Madden, Historian of the United Irishmen', *Irish University Review*, 3 (1972), pp. 20–33. D. Breathnach and M. Ní Mhurchú, 'Caomhánach, Patrick Fidelis (1838–1918)', in idem, *Beathaisnéis a Cúig* (Báile Átha Cliath, 1986–1996), pp. 29–30; A. Kinsella, '1798 Claimed for Catholics: Fr Kavanagh, Fenians and the Centenary Celebrations', in D. Keogh and N. Furlong (eds), *The Mighty Wave* (Dublin, 1996), pp. 139–56. 47 *Advocate* (Melbourne), 19 February 1898; *Kalgoorlie Miner*, 26 February 1898.

Campbelltown cemetery) will be borne in procession from the city to Waverley, and there re-interred'.⁴⁸ By the following week, 'unforeseen legal complications' meant that 'the remains of the three '98 patriots interred in the Campbelltown cemetery cannot be exhumed at present'.⁴⁹ These legal complications have defied identification and Wynne's belief that the council opposed the reburial cannot be substantiated.⁵⁰

The excuses given seem rather lame and the committee may simply have lost interest in the face of more compelling discoveries. MacCarthy, on opening Davis's grave, discovered that his remains 'were so hopelessly intermingled with other relatives that it would be impossible to separate his from theirs'.⁵¹ The Dwyers' remains were more promising:

On Friday 20th last, the remains of Michael Dwyer were exhumed in the presence of Mrs Cheevers [Chivers] (his granddaughter), Dr MacCarthy, and the members of the Sydney '98 committee. In an interview with the press respecting the exhumation, Dr MacCarthy said: - 'At present only the remains of Michael Dwyer and his wife have been exhumed. . . ? There were two small coffins in the vault, one that of a child and the other that of Michael Dwyer. The latter had been placed there by Father John Dwyer, a grandson, about 20 years ago - 53 years after death at Liverpool. . .

Of the two coffins containing female remains (Dr MacCarthy explained) one was that of a very tall woman, daughter of Michael Dwyer, the other that of a very small woman, Mary Doyle, Dwyer's wife. The man who placed the tall woman in the coffin identified it by the position and the peculiar soldering of the lead.

'I ordered the smaller coffin to be opened', continued the doctor, 'and it was shown to contain the remains of a very small woman in a remarkable state of preservation (after 38 years). The features and hair were perfectly recognisable. There was a white frill cap at the head, and a white shroud, with gathers at the neck. This body, Mrs Cheevers was perfectly satisfied was that of her grandmother. She and others recollected distinctly that it was interred with a white shroud, and the other body had a brown shroud of the Carmelite order. By permission of the relatives a photograph was taken of the face. Particular interest attaches to the name of Mrs Dwyer, owing to her romantic marriage. Dwyer, when under arms on Wicklow Hills, went by stealth and carried her off on horseback. . . They were married, by a priest, after which Mary Doyle shared his perils on the hills and his exile afterwards'.⁵²

⁴⁸ *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 14 May 1898. ⁴⁹ *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 31 May 1898.

⁵⁰ Wynne, 'That Unfortunate Business', p. 202. M. O'Sullivan, *The 1798 Monument at Waverley* (Mascot, 1988), p. 3, describes the council as 'bigoted'. The event does not appear in the minutes. ⁵¹ *Advocate* (Melbourne), 28 May 1898. ⁵² *Ibid.* Also *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 28 February 1898.

In 1898 the tomb contained three bodies: Michael Dwyer, who had been buried in 1825, Mary Dwyer, in 1860 and Bridget Dwyer (d. 1878 aged 70, but here described as a 'child', that is, of the Dwyers).⁵³ A fourth, Bridget's husband John O'Sullivan, was buried in a grave alongside the mausoleum.⁵⁴

The fact that Mary Dwyer's body was uncorrupted is unusual but not inexplicable. She had been dead some 38 years, buried in a sandy soil and in a soldered lead coffin which excluded all moisture. Some newspapers picked up on the rational explanation but others simply spoke of the wonderful, miraculous preservation of the body. Life, or at least its remains, had imitated art and Mary Dwyer exhibited one of the signs of saintliness in death – absence of corruption, becoming in the process Campion's 'saintly' Mary.⁵⁵ The committee do not seem to have hesitated to take the opportunity for publicity. One of the '98 committee (H.J. Maguire) owned a photographic studio and the macabre portrait of Mary Dwyer, 38 years dead, graced a number of publications.⁵⁶

After a stay in the morgue at the premises of W.J. Dixon, the Dwyers' casket was brought to St Mary's Cathedral on the night of 21 May where it was displayed after 11 am Mass on Sunday, 22 May. The cathedral was packed to capacity to hear the cardinal praise Dwyer as a patriot 'good man and true'. Some 50,000 people crowded Hyde Park and College Street outside.⁵⁷ The entire route of the cortege was lined with onlookers.

The Sydney celebration demonstrated a degree of sureness in execution that showed its origins in established Irish nationalist rituals. In no case is this clearer than in the Waverley monument, where the language of the '98 ritual is inscribed on a permanent structure. The '98 commemoration in Dublin failed in its plan to build a monument – the final indignity being the removal of its foundation stone and the building of a Boer War monument in its stead! The Sydney committee rode a wave of adulation to raise over £2,600 in the space of only three years to erect the sepulchre which still stands over the Dwyers' tomb.

The monument at Waverley was completed in April 1901. Its basic design was

53 This report has been evidently taken to imply that Michael Dwyer was buried elsewhere in 1825, and only added to the family vault by Dean Dwyer in 1878. O'Sullivan, *The 1798 Monument at Waverley*, p. 3, says that he was buried in Liverpool and relocated 20 years later to Devonshire Street. The evidence of the tomb in Devonshire Street, however, all points to it being the original tomb of 1825. A different report makes the matter clearer, 'Michael Dwyer died in 1825, but about 20 years ago, when a relative was being buried in the family vault, it was discovered that the coffin in which he had been encased had completely rotted away, leaving the bare bones exposed. The remains were encased in a new coffin by direction of the then Rev. [Dean] John Dwyer', *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 28 May 1898. As the Dwyers were bankrupt in 1825 it is arguable who might have paid for a tomb, but probably it was Therry, who certainly commissioned similar ones at Campbelltown, C. Liston, *Campbelltown* (Sydney, 1987), p. 38. 54 The O'Sullivan's remains were relocated to Mortis Street in Goulburn in 1901. 55 See, for example, *Brisbane Courier*, 22 April 1900; *Catholic Weekly* (Sydney), 5 January 1926. 56 For example, Daly and McDowell, *Men of '98*, p. 42. 57 *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 28 May 1898.

the work of John Francis Hennessy, an Englishman of Irish descent who, along with Joseph Sheerin and later, his own son Jack, designed, among many other buildings, the archbishop's house and St Patrick's College, Manly, as well as completing William Wardell's designs for St Mary's Cathedral and St John's College, University of Sydney.⁵⁸

The 1898 announcement described the aspect and shape of the monument:

A fine site has been secured in the new Catholic portion of the Waverley Cemetery. Those who know anything of the cemetery will understand that the ground purchased is on the hill on the southern side. The monument will face north, standing at the corner of two pathways . . . From the site of the monument one may look out on the ocean. It is a calm and peaceful spot. Standing as it will over 30 feet high, the monument should be a conspicuous and commanding object in the cemetery. Roughly estimated, the monument will cost £2000. The tall Celtic cross and the principal inscription panel are to be of pure Carrara marble. The rest is to be of polished trachyte. The monument is to cover 30 feet, by 24 feet. The flat portion immediately over the vault is to be in Mosaic, and will serve as a place for those to kneel who visit the tomb in a spirit of patriotism and reverence.⁵⁹

The sacral character of the language shows its origins in the discourse of a Gaelic revival that was increasingly focused on veneration of those who sacrificed themselves for Ireland.

How the committee immersed themselves in this discourse is a complex process. Hennessy's work was mostly English Gothic revival, but he made use of Celtic revival ornament in a number of mosaic pavements which occupied foreground space in the sanctuaries of chapels at the cathedral and St John's College as well as the Waverley Monument. His design undoubtedly continues a sequence of nationalist shrines with mosaic floors exhibiting Celtic ornament, starting with the O'Connell monument at Glasnevin.⁶⁰

Dorahy, in his lectures, had described the celebration as 'the keynote of a great Celtic revival, and would serve as an object lesson to the sneering statesmen of the Chamberlain and Balfour school'.⁶¹ There was nothing especially 'Celtic' about the United Irishmen and though a very few United Irishmen chose to express their rebellion through Gaelic eschatology as an alternative to Jacobin slogans, the

58 R. Howard, 'Hennessy, John Francis (1853-1924)', *Australian Dictionary of Biography*, vol. 9 (Melbourne, 1983), pp. 263-4. 59 *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 9 April 1898. 60 J.M. Wooding, 'Enshrining Pilgrim Priests and Cardinal Virtues – the Irish-Australian Mosaics of the Melocco Brothers', in T. Foley and F. Bateman (eds), *Irish-Australian Studies* (Sydney, 2000). The addition of a bronze railing in 1926, closing in the open front of the monument, and of steps up to the front in the 1960s, only serves to heighten this 'sanctuary' effect of the Waverley Monument. 61 See Travers, 'Our Fenian Dead'; T. O'Keefe, 'Who Fears to Speak of '98? The Rhetoric and Rituals of the United Irishmen Centennial', *Éire-Ireland*, 27 (1992), pp. 67-91.

Wicklow rebels were generally not among them.⁶² The nationalism of the 1890s in Ireland was, however, becoming increasingly dominated by the cultural interests of the Gaelic League and the IRB, with their emphasis on medieval symbols and the language as a symbol of sovereignty. Fr Kavanagh, a recent convert to speaking Irish, also made 'the tongue of St Patrick' synonymous with the declamation and inscription of the '98 movement.⁶³ Fr Fitzgerald, on the Sydney committee, was a close friend of Kavanagh and his influence may have been central to the 'Gaelic' flavour of the commemoration.⁶⁴

The Sydney '98 committee certainly was well-placed to understand developments in the symbolism of 'Gaelic revival' nationalism. Eugene Ryan, who is credited with the Irish inscription of the monument, ran a college at which Irish was taught.⁶⁵ Nicholas O'Donnell, who founded the Australian Gaelic League in 1901, became Australia's most noted Irish scholar. When it came to inscribing the ritual of '98 on the monument the language was used to express the strongest of sentiments:

East wall:

A mhuíntir na h-Eireann |
measuighid an meamhair na | gaiseadhaighe a-bhur Sinsir.
Fagaid na laocra bás acht | maireann an chúis cóir go déo
[People of Ireland | treasure the memory | of the heroes of your race.
The warriors die but | the just cause is immortal].

West wall:

Go saoraidh D'ia Éire [May God free Ireland].⁶⁶

The west wall also carries an ogham inscription in modern Irish. Ogham is the oldest Irish alphabet, dating from the beginning of the Christian era, and its use on the monument indicates the Gaelic revivalist connections of the monument as well as the closed nature of its ritual discourse. BEIDIDNADEASLAETENASEANEIRINNVOS [beidhidh na deas laete na sean Éirinn fós: 'the bright days of old Ireland will be

⁶² On the Gaelic tradition in 1798 see T. Dunne, 'Subaltern Voices? Poetry in Irish, Popular Insurgency and the 1798 Rebellion', in R. Maccubbin (ed.), *Eighteenth-Century Life: Ireland 1798-1998* (Baltimore, Maryland, 1998), pp. 31-44. ⁶³ *Fáinne an Lae*, 30 Meán Fomhair 1899 and 7 Iúil 1899. St Patrick of course was not an Irishman and would not have been a native Irish speaker. ⁶⁴ On Kavanagh and Irish see *United Irishman*, 6 January 1900. On Kavanagh and Fitzgerald see *Catholic Bulletin*, 20 (1930), p. 290; J.M. Wooding, "'Too Wide and Cold for the Tender Plant of the Irish Language to Thrive In'?: Teaching of Irish Language in Australia 1880-1960', in P. Kuch and J. Tapper (eds), *Irelands in the Asia-Pacific - Papers from the 1998 Conference for the International Association for the Study of Irish Literature* (Sydney, 2000). ⁶⁵ G.M. Tobin, 'The Sea-Divided Gael: a Study of the Home Rule Movement in Victoria and NSW, 1880-1916', MA thesis, Australian National University, 1970, pp. 47-9; Wooding, 'Too Wide and Cold'. ⁶⁶ D'ia should read Dia.

once more']⁶⁷. The phrase is probably from a poem which is cited by Thomas Davis.⁶⁸ But it may also be a veiled Fenian motif; it was rendered 'will dawn once more' by Dr MacCarthy in his speech at the opening, evoking the rising sun motif of the Fenians.⁶⁹ 'Go saoraidh Dia Éire' [literally 'God Free Ireland!'] more certainly has a Fenian connection as it is a common rendering of the name of the Fenian anthem 'God Save Ireland' into Irish, a fact which Fr Fitzgerald makes obvious play of in an essay of 1913, where he shows categorically that the two shades of meaning were evident to him.⁷⁰

The Irish inscriptions reflect a very militant vision of nationalism, in contrast to the more gentle phrases in English from John Kells Ingram's 'Memory of the Dead' ('Who Fears to Speak of '98'), which adorn the facing buttresses of the side walls. The sentiment of the Irish inscriptions was not O'Donnell's flavour of nationalism, but certainly Fitzgerald's and probably that of Ryan's language club.⁷¹ That such phrases exist on the monument in a language that was unreadable by most observers may be a matter of ignorance of their specific meaning by the majority of the committee, or perhaps a conscious decision. One suspects the latter. The promoters of the appeal had found that public lectures on the Celtic past were in general less provocative than lectures on rebellion.⁷² In the monument's inscription it would appear that the language of Old Ireland provided a safer place for nationalist sentiment, maybe because such sentiments seemed more 'historic' than immediate in Irish, or simply because few could understand the language.

The bas reliefs, the work of MacCarthy, espouse his ecumenical vision of '98:

Cross plinth, east side: Henry Joy McCracken

Left wall, left: Wolfe Tone

Left Panel: The arrest of Edward Fitzgerald

Left wall, right: Lord Edward Fitzgerald

Right wall, left: Michael Dwyer

Right Panel: The Battle of Oulart

Right wall, right: Robert Emmet

Cross plinth, west side: Father John Murphy

All of these are based upon the lithographs in Kavanagh's 1898 edition of his *History*. They divide neatly between, on the left, figures and scenes of general '98

⁶⁷ Accentuation and word-division are my own. ⁶⁸ 'No, oh! No! the "brighter days shall surely come" and the green flag wave on our towers, and the sweet old language be heard once more in college, mart and senate', 'Our National Language', in *Centenary Essays* (Dublin, 1915), p. 101. ⁶⁹ *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 9 April 1900. ⁷⁰ T.A. Fitzgerald, *Fits and Starts* (Dublin, 1913), pp. 94-102. Buttons were sold by the '98 committee with the legend 'God Save Ireland', *Freeman's Journal* (Sydney), 7 May 1898. ⁷¹ See Wooding, 'Too Wide and Cold'. ⁷² A lecture on 1798 by Fr John in Adelaide drew an angry denunciation of both his and the archbishop's involvement in the movement, *W.A. Record*, 9 July 1898, but a lecture by Fr Augustine in Adelaide on 'Celtic Art' was well received, *Fáinne an Lae*, 26 Lúnasa 1899.

interest and, on the right, Wicklow/Wexford figures and the Wexford battle of Oulart. Robert Emmet is probably included in this group because of his associations with Dwyer. This dichotomy between a United Irish '98 and a Wicklow/Wexford '98 is very much a Kavanagh vision. Also, in including images of Catholic, Church of Ireland and Presbyterian rebels the reliefs very much reinforce McCarthy's 'union of Catholic and Protestant'.

The mosaic panels in the foreground of the monument directly cover the graves and are more specifically associated with the Dwyers. They depict a round tower, standing alone, and a small cottage. One can only infer that the round tower is to indicate the free-standing round tower at Glendalough, in Wicklow and that the cottage is the Dwyer/Macallister cottage in the Glen of Imaal, from which Dwyer made his famous escape. That one would kneel on these images – the one of a heroic event, the other of a most holy monastery – 'to worship' is clearly an attempt to sanctify the Dwyers.⁷³

The Sydney commemoration is a profound example of how the graves of rebels, identified through the new nationalist rituals, provided a focal point for a romantic nationalism that transcended the potential disunity of the participating groups, though in the process it also transcended any historical detail of the rebels themselves. The corporeal remains of the Wicklow Chief and especially his 'saintly' wife, so easily able to be fitted into medieval discourses of sanctity, eclipsed those of their contemporaries buried in Australia. Bryan, Byrne, Conner, Davis and Fowler had been in the plans from the beginning. But by the time, in 1900, when seventy names of rebels were inscribed on the rear of the monument to form a martyrology of '98, apart from Dwyer only one other of those selected, Joseph Holt, had had any connection with Australia – and even he was not buried there. What had started out as a movement to commemorate the '98 rebels who were buried in Australia became a contemporary nationalist ritual of Irish inspiration, albeit a ritual of extraordinary colour which has left the most visually complex of all '98 monuments.⁷⁴

73 Masses have been said every year on this platform since at least the 1950s. **74** For advice and encouragement I would like to thank especially Ruán O'Donnell, Barry Doyle, Maureen Tucker, Bob Reece, George Cargeeg, Jennifer McMonnies, Robyn Doohan, Mike Durey, Carol Liston, Peter Moore, Michael O'Sullivan, Ann-Maree Whitaker and Karen Jankulak. All opinions expressed are my own.