

Clongowes Wood College Archives

Martin Bradley outlines the recent preservation work carried out on the archives of Clongowes Wood College



The Cricket Pavilion at Clongowes Wood College, Summer 1912.

Work on the archives of Clongowes Wood College has

entailed listing material in a basic manner, repacking and reboxing for preservation and entering items on a database for quick reference. Part of this work involved basic conservation and cleaning work including removal of paperclips and treasury tags and repacking in acid-free boxes and folders. The archives are now held in a dedicated storage room that was fitted out with environmental monitoring equipment and archival-standard shelving as part of the general refit of the Castle, which took place in 2003, and there are exhibition facilities as part of the renovated Serpentine Gallery.

Clongowes Wood College was founded by the Jesuits in 1814 following the purchase of Castle Browne for the sum of £16,000 from the Wogan-Browne family. The purchase caused something of a stir at the time. John Gillard, writing in the *Hibernian Magazine* commented "*The magnificent edifice of Castle Browne in the county of Kildare, which cost over £26,000 in building, has been purchased by a party of Jesuits for £16,000. Ireland now stands in imminent danger. If Popery succeeds, our fairest plains will once more witness days worthy to rank with those of bloody Mary, and the walls of Dublin shall again become the lamentable bulwarks against popish treachery and massacre.*"

The Clongowes Archives holds a complete set of title deeds for the Castle and surrounding lands, the earliest of which is a lease dated 1st January 1605 (John Wogan Esq. and Judith Wogan to Lord Viscount Gormanstowne; lands at Rathcoffy, Kildare), and includes the important Conveyance of 4th March 1814, by which Reverend Peter Kenney S.J. took possession of the castle on behalf of the Jesuits.

Archives relating to the foundation, upkeep and administration of the school form the greater part of the collection and include:

student registers 1814 to present, and files for more recent pupils; accounts since

1814; journals of Prefects of Studies giving insights into the day-to-day running of the school, mainly 1818-1865; photographic albums of pupils / material relating to Clongowes' past pupils at war, including 'Clongowes Wood College War List' revised to January 1918, giving full details of all past pupils of Clongowes who served during World War I (approximately 800); and Clongowes Union (The Clongowes Wood College Old Boys Association) material, including complete runs of the annual publication *The Clongownian* from 1895 and material relating to the 1914 Centenary Celebrations.

The collection also contains considerable material of general historic interest including: autograph collections of prominent 19th/20th century figures; militaria from World War I and World War II; correspondence relating to famous past pupils, including James Joyce; and collections of Dublin newspapers from the 17th Century onwards.

In all, the collection is one of enormous social and historical significance: indeed, Professor Eunan O'Halpin, of Trinity College, has identified it as one of the most important collections of Jesuit Archives in Ireland.

The work carried out to date has ensured the physical conservation of the archives. However, plenty remains to be done. As the next step it is anticipated that the photographic collections, comprising glass plates, negatives and prints from the late 19th Century will be properly catalogued, scanned and made available as a research resource.

Martin Bradley is a professional archivist and freelance Archives and Museums Consultant. For more information see www.archives.ie/consult.html

