

## **Saint Patrick's Cathedral Past Choristers' & Past Pupils' Association**

The oldest records for the society date from 1897. The minute books from those early days record the details of those who didn't pay their subscriptions, those who had their membership terminated and those who on payment of the subscription and the fine of a shilling [26 Oct 1869] had their membership re-instated. Lectures on edifying subjects seem to have been popular, including 'The Human Voice' by Dr White in January 1898. The secretary noted that Dr White's lecture was extremely interesting and as 'at times amusing to the audience' [18 Jan 1898] Other lectures included 'The North West Mounted Police' given by Mr Morgan who read his lecture in costume [29 March 1898] November 1903 saw a lecture on the 'Fiscal Problem' and in February 1903 Dr White returned to give a lecture on 'X-Rays' and amused the members by passing round the room a piece of Radium.

In May 1898 the Association members adjourned their meeting to play games in the school playground. In October 1898 the Association discussed the feasibility of holding an Annual Dinner at which all past choristers and the boys of the school could attend. The Association also debated the desirability of requesting the Dean that the members should have the sole use of an Association Pew in the cathedral but decided not to pursue the matter as the Dean and Cathedral Board gave the Association the use of the schoolroom for their meetings.

Charity concerts were also given on occasion and one entitled the 'Charity Minstrel Entertainment' was held in the early years the proceeds been given to the Cathedral Coal Fund. Meetings included song singing in the early 1900's and the game Ping Pong was procured by the Hon Secretary November 1901. Indeed for a number of years singing and ping pong was a regular occurrence.

A male voice society was formed in 1904 for the members of the Association and a series of devotional addresses took place at regular intervals interspersed with medical appearances by Dr White, including a lecture on the 'Art of Breathing' where he was assisted by Sergeant Major White of the Army Gymnastic Corps and 7 boys from the Masonic School all used to illustrate the lecture. [20 Feb 1906] The early minute book ends with a reference to a lecture given by Dr Malone of Carlow who regaled the members with a paper entitled 'Our Advertisement Columns of the Daily Press' The mind boggles and one hopes our secretary has taken careful note for future Association events.

In 1982 the St Patrick's Cathedral Past Choristers' and Past Pupils' Association celebrated its centenary and published a booklet, edited by Rex Cathcart on the history of the association or rather on the reminiscences of people associated with the Association from its early years to 1982. Rex Cathcart noted that the association was founded by a group of men with a common experience of choral training and of service in the cathedral. A group who wished to maintain a fellowship not simply based on nostalgia but on an adult interest in the purposes of the Cathedral and in the practice of singing with trained voices.

In recent years the Association has continued to be a place where the past choristers' and pupils have met and socialised. Certainly it is a far more inclusive organisation in terms of its membership and more social in ethos rather than educational as before. No we don't drink copious amounts of tea or partake in refreshments courtesy of the ladies, we alas don't have devotional talks nor do we have a modern day Dr White appearing with army volunteers and pupils from the Masonic schools handing out pieces of radium. However the principals of fellowship, social interaction, and good fun are still at the centre of the Association as much now as they were in 1882.

*Edited extract from a speech given by the then President of the Association, Revd Roy H Byrne at the Annual Dinner on 3 March 2007.*