

KIRBY PAPERS IN THE IRISH COLLEGE ROME (1831-1895)

(KIR/ , KIR/NC)



Aims of this guide

This is a guide to the main collection of papers pertaining to Rector Tobias Kirby held in the archives of the Pontifical Irish College, Rome. Kirby material in this archive has undergone rearrangements and a number of major separations during the last century- these separations have not been reversed.

This guide aims to put the papers into **context** by providing some **biographical history** on Kirby. It explains how these papers came to exist in the Irish College (**provenance**) and it aims to explain the separations and the resulting collections to researchers (**archival history**). The **content** and **arrangement** of the material is explained and finally **access conditions** and **finding aids** are identified.

Kirby Papers in the Irish College Rome

Covering Dates: 1831-1895

Collection Codes: The 'core' Kirby Collection is coded KIR/. Kirby material in the 'The New Collection' is coded KIR/NC.

Finding Aids: Electronic catalogue for the Kirby Collection. The New Collection catalogue is currently being compiled.

Context

Biographical history

Tobias Kirby was born in Tallow, County Waterford, on 1 January 1804 to David Kirby and Elizabeth Caplice. He grew up in Waterford city where his father was in the chandler business. While he may have attended one of the newly established Christian Brothers schools he certainly enrolled at the recently founded seminary of St. John's College, Waterford. Bishop Patrick Kelly nominated Kirby student for the diocese of Waterford and Lismore and arranged for Kirby to complete his clerical studies in Rome. In 1827 Kirby began his studies at the Seminario Romano- one of his fellow students was Vincenzo Gioacchino Pecci, the future Leo XIII (1878-1903). Kirby was ordained in 1833 at St. John Lateran. It is not known how Kirby spent the intervening three years after his ordination.

The Irish College, which had been re-established after the revolutionary period, was then situated in the Umbrian College, in the Via delle Botteghe. In 1832 it came under the rectorship of Paul Cullen who was then also rector of the Propaganda College. Kirby was appointed his vice-rector in August 1836. The following year was marked by the College's move to St Agata dei Goti; a convent and church granted to the College by Gregory XVI where it remained until 1926.

Kirby's papers at the Irish College archives are mostly coextensive with his periods as vice-rector (1836-1850) and rector (1850-1891) with a smaller amount of documents from his time as student (1831-1835) and as rector emeritus (1891-1895). Kirby meticulously retained letters during his lifetime and never permanently moved from Rome. This has resulted in a substantial, complete and multi-faceted collection.

His papers become correspondingly weightier from 1850 onwards when he took over the role of Rector of the Irish College from Cullen. As rector he acted as the Irish bishops' agent in Rome. Letters ostensibly concerned with agency activities usually contain insights into the situation at home, whether political or private. Important events in College life surface in the papers, such as the funeral for the heart of Daniel O'Connell in June 1847; the visit of the Irish hierarchy for Vatican I in 1869 and 1870; the often dramatic historical developments during the Italian 'Risorgimento'; consecrations such as that of Archbishop Walsh of Dublin in 1885. The geographical spread is very wide with Irish clergy writing from British colonies and missionary fields, but particularly from North America, Australia and New Zealand.

However, the papers contain most historic potential in the references to socio-economics and politics in Ireland. The Famine, agricultural unrest and subsequent Land War, the development of Fenianism, Catholic Education and the re-definition of the Catholic church all feature. One of Kirby's main correspondents was Archbishop Cullen who wrote several letters a week during the 1850s. In these letters he candidly discusses the issues that preoccupy him, often seeking Kirby's assistance in personally liaising with Propaganda Fide officials such as Cardinal Fransoni and Mon. Barnabo. Also included in these letters are Cullen's letters to Dr Smith, the vice rector, who also held the confidence of the Archbishop.

It has been posed that, as an administrator, Kirby cannot be compared to the organisational brilliance of Cullen. However, in personal and particularly devotional matters, correspondents often confided and sought spiritual advice from him. The New Collection (KIR/NC) contains lecture notes, spiritual and devotional material, pastoral letters. Two of Kirby's works were published; his dissertation *De Iure Romani Pontificis Appelationis excipiendi* (for which he had received second prize at his seminary to the first prize of Pecci), and his *Meditations on the Principal Truths of Religion and on the Hidden and Public Life of Our Lord Jesus Christ* (1891). The latter was culled from discourses delivered to students at the Irish College as part of their priestly formation and based on the spiritual exercises of St. Ignatius of Loyola and was printed on the instigation of Cardinal Logue of Armagh.

Kirby's friendship with Leo XIII brought him honours; he was made Titular Bishop of Lita in 1881 and Titular Archbishop of Ephesus in 1885. Kirby returned to Ireland only twice- in 1841 and 1851-1852. He died on 20 January 1895 and was buried in Rome.

Provenance and archival history

Kirby papers in the Irish College Archives mainly consist of incoming mail, received and kept by Tobias Kirby during his period as Rector of the Irish College (1850-1891) with a smaller amount of documents from his time as vice-rector (1836-1850), student (1831-1835) and as rector emeritus (1891-1895). Also includes draft letters, lecture notes, spiritual and devotional material, pastoral letters, photographs created or received and kept by Kirby.

As noted the papers have undergone a number of major **separations**.

- **The Kirby Collection. (KIR/)** This is the 'core' Kirby Collection from which all the separations were made. It dates from 1836 to 1895 and consists of 19,803 catalogued items.
- **The New Collection** consists of papers taken from the archive by Cardinal Archbishop Francis Patrick Moran of Sydney whose intention was to write a biography of his uncle, Paul Cullen. Moran took papers from both Cullen and Kirby papers. **He appears to have focused on letters written by Archbishop Cullen to Kirby between 1850 and 1860 (KIR/NC)** as well as earlier 19th century letters and documents dating from the Rector Blake and Rector Boylan rectorships (PCUL/NC), Cullen's pre-Irish College days at Propaganda Fide (CUL/NC), material dating from Cullen's time as rector (CUL/NC). It also contains Kirby's draft letters, lecture notes, spiritual and devotional material and pastoral letters. The collection was returned from St Patrick's College, Manly in the mid-20th century. It has, therefore, been referred to in the past as the 'Manly Collection'.
- Letters from Archbishop Croke of Cashel to Kirby were also separated (for the years 1885-1893). It is uncertain when this separation occurred and at this time of writing, the original letters are missing. The catalogue, however, still remains in the Archives and some Croke letters were overlooked and remain in the core Kirby Collection (KIR/).

Content and Structure

Content

The collections consist mainly of correspondence received by Rector Kirby during his rectorship of the College (1850-1891).

While the bulk of incoming correspondence was addressed to Kirby, one also finds letters written to third parties which occasionally were sent to Kirby as enclosures. One also finds letters to students, staff (e.g. Vice-rector Bernard Smith) and visitors to the college which were lodged with Kirby's papers. The New Collection (KIR/NC) mainly consists of correspondence but also contains lecture notes, spiritual and devotional material, pastoral letters and some draft prose probably by Fanny Kirby. Printed enclosures like press cuttings, and very few outgoing draft letters also appear. There are also items from before and after his rectorship

Paul Cullen has to be regarded the foremost of Kirby's correspondents, writing to him almost daily whenever he was absent from the College, and later writing frequently from Armagh and Dublin. As already noted the New Collection contains many of the letters written by Archbishop Cullen to Kirby between 1850 and 1860.

Other important figures corresponding frequently with him are William Walsh, Archbishop of Halifax (1844-1858), Archbishop Thomas Croke of Cashel (1875-1896), Archbishop William Joseph Walsh of Dublin (1885-1921) and Dr. Miley Rector of the Irish College Paris. Kirby took an active part in Italian ecclesiastical life and was confessor to a number of religious. One of his correspondents was Don Giovanni Bosco, of whom there are fourteen letters dating between 1867 and 1887. He corresponded with his sister, Ellen Byrne, his brother William and members of the Waterford clergy such as James P. Cooke, Edward Barron, Nicholas Foran and Dominic O'Brien.

Arrangement

- **Kirby Collection (KIR/)**. Letters dating between 1836 and 1861 (KIR/1836-1861/ (item number)) are arranged chronologically and numbered continuously from 1 to 3101 with some duplicate numbers having –A and –B additions. Letters dating between 1861 and 1895 (KIR/(year)/(item number)) are also in chronological order, but are numbered separately by year.
- **The New Collection (PCUL/NC, CUL/NC and KIR/NC)** These documents were separated from the bulk of the papers by Cardinal Archbishop Francis Patrick Moran of Sydney. They have been divided into three periods
 - PreCullen New Collection material (PCUL/NC) 1759-1825. Divided into five sub-series dividing the material chronologically.
 - Cullen New Collection (CUL/NC) 1820-1851 Arranged for the first part thematically (Cullen Student of Propaganda, Cullen Office Holder Propaganda). Drafts were separated from incoming correspondence. Correspondence is then arranged by date when known.
 - **Kirby New Collection (KIR/NC)**. 1840-1895 Contains many letters from Archbishop Cullen to Kirby. It has been arranged into nine sub-series. The first four series contain incoming and draft outgoing correspondence. The first series contains dated correspondence arranged chronologically. The second series contains drafts of outgoing letters. The third series contain undated correspondence arranged alphabetically. The fourth series contains undated and unidentified correspondence. The remaining five series contain agency material and legal points, lecture notes, spiritual and devotional material, pastoral letters and encyclicals and finally prose.

Access and Use

Access conditions.

Physical: open access.

Virtual: open access subject to copyright. Material digitized to a resolution of 200 dpi and is being made available at <http://www.cflr.beniculturali.it/Patrimonio/IstitutiCulturali/CPI.php>. (Note- digitization project is ongoing- for further details please contact the archivist of the Irish College at archives@irishcollege.org)

Language:

English, Italian, Latin, French

Finding aids:

Electronic catalogues The Kirby catalogue has been copied with some slight amendments, from an earlier type-script paper catalogue. The catalogue for The New Collection is in the process of being written- for further details please contact the archivist of the Irish College at archives@irishcollege.org)

Related material:

Researchers should also consult the Cullen Collection (CUL/) for the small number of letters **from** Vice-rector Kirby to Rector Cullen written when Cullen was away from the college.

Archivist, Irish College Rome.