

TEXT OF THE INTRODUCTORY ADDRESS delivered by **PROFESSOR J.J. LEE**, in University College Cork on 8 June, 2007, on the occasion of the conferring of the Degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, on **TED MURPHY**

A Leas-Sheansailéir, a mhuintir na hOllscoile agus a dhaoine uaisle,

Cork enjoyed a prominent place in the wine trade long before the great scatterings after Kinsale in 1601, and even more after Limerick in 1691 and the broken Treaty that made the 18th century the classic period of Wild Geese and Winegeese alike. Except for four years, every Mayor of Cork between 1434 and 1644 was engaged in the wine trade, Ted Murphy tells us in *A Kingdom of Wine: A Celebration of Ireland's Winegeese*, handsomely edited and published in 2005 by Roz Crowley, and which would win the Gourmand World Cookbook Award for a wine history book, firstly in English and then in any language.

Needless to say, it is studded with Cork names that resonate down to the present, Roache, Morragh, Lawton, Galwey, and McCarthy – not forgetting Hennessy for a somewhat stronger beverage – and of course there are Murphys everywhere.

Although some Winegeese emigrated for purely commercial reasons, the association with the Wild Geese is not fanciful. For many of the families who made their names in Nantes, in Bordeaux, in Cognac, or in Spain, Portugal, and Madeira, left on religious or political grounds.

But Ted's work takes us far beyond 18th century Europe, especially to Australia and above all to the United States. It was actually through the French connection that the highest circles in the infant United States became impressed by the Irish role in the wine trade, when Thomas Jefferson acquired a taste for their products as American Ambassador in France, and responded accordingly to the demands of George Washington for good wines for the White House.

Little could Jefferson or Washington anticipate that two centuries later, Californian wines would be challenging French – of course California was a long, long way from Washington or Monticello, and not even part of the union then. One of the excitements of Ted Murphy's work is to discover how prominent a role Irish immigrants played in the development of the Californian wine trade, as indeed of the Australian, counting among the pioneers in the Napa Valley as early as the 1860's. It is only when one sees the array of names that Ted has marshalled that one realizes the magnitude of the achievement.

Ted's work also reminds us that, for all their similarities, there were important differences between the earlier and later Winegeese. It would have been hard to achieve commercial success in the stratified society of pre-revolutionary France if one had not come from a relatively patrician background in Ireland, however discriminated against on religious or political grounds. In contrast, the United States became the land of opportunity for those of less genteel background.

The history of the Irish diaspora is a complex one, at once sobering and inspiring. I don't want to oversimplify, but it is unusual in Western Europe in being primarily the diaspora of the defeated and the repressed. Repressed peoples can imagine something of their own potential from the performance of their emigrants if only they had enjoyed a fair field at home. The Winegeese, in all their diversity on different continents, provide a pointer to the talent lost to Ireland through historical circumstances. That diversity ranges from Richard Hennessy in Cognac to Dominic Lynch in New York to James Concannon in California.

Another striking aspect is the role of the women among the Winegeese – of course, in the strict order of nature, geese are female, but on reflection Wineganders doesn't somehow convey quite the same emollient image as Winegeese! Whatever about that, the women - and I'm not even thinking of a Stephanie O'Toole or a Diana Cullen in Australia - are central to the story, whether in terms of the intermarriages among the Winegeese families in the 18th century, at a time when family connections were indispensable to commercial success, or later as managers not only of families, but as often very active partners in running the family firms.

I mentioned James Concannon a moment ago. My curiosity was whetted by Ted's account, including a splendid full page photograph of Concannon and his family in 1908, that allowed

full benefit to be taken from a fascinating program on Teilifís na Gaeilge last Sunday about him. He was not only a pioneer of viticulture in the Livermore Valley, having gone to France to bring back Sauvignon Blanc and Semillon cuttings from the Chateau d'Yquem, owned by descendants of the MacMahon family from Limerick, but he also procured a massive contract from Porfirio Diaz, the President of Mexico, to restore Mexican wine production after the ravages of a civil war – until they were ravaged once again by the next civil war. It was a long way for the boy who arrived in the US in 1865, at the age of 18, an Irish speaker, born during the Famine in 1847, on Inis Meáin in the Aran Islands. A bottle of wine with which President Reagan presented the then Taoiseach, and now our Chancellor, on his visit here, came from the Concannon vineyard.

It is sometimes said that people like Concannon are between two worlds. They can be, but they needn't be. Concannon wasn't so much between two worlds as in two worlds. He came back to Inis Meáin several times, being extolled indeed by Patrick Pearse in *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the paper of the Gaelic League, for attending the Oireachtas competitions in Dublin.

Through the work of Ted and his friends in the Winegeese Society, including the path-breaking RTE series on the Winegeese in 1990, the International Museum of Wine in Desmond Castle in Kinsale, which they established in 1997, through their own missionary work on their travels, through newsletters and websites, more and more of the descendants of the original Winegeese, on whatever continent, are being made more conscious of their Irish heritage, with Winegeese societies sprouting in all directions.

That makes it highly appropriate that the work of the Winegeese should have attracted support from the Ireland Funds, and it is an especially felicitous conjuncture that brings together on the same platform, on so auspicious an occasion, Ted Murphy and Loretta Brennan Glucksman, Chair of the particularly supportive American Ireland Fund.

It is over 80 years since Daniel Corkery, of this city and this college, wrote a highly contested, but immortal pioneering work, *The Hidden Ireland*. We're discovering that there are more and more hidden Irelands. Ted Murphy has devoted indomitable energy to identifying and excavating the buried treasure of one of these, placing us all in his debt by enriching our understanding of what the Marquis de Goulaine in his introduction calls 'the cultural identity of the Irish diaspora'.

PRAEHONORABILIS VICE-CANCELLARIE, TOTAQUE UNIVERSITAS:

Praesento vobis, hunc meum filium quem scio tam moribus quam doctrina habilem et idoneum esse qui admittatur, honoris causa, ad gradum Doctoratus in utroque Jure, tam Civili quam Canonico, idque tibi fide mea testor ac spondeo totique Academiae.