

THE GEOFFREY FERROW MEMORIAL LECTURE

Geoffrey Ferrow, in whose lasting memory the annual lecture is given, was a Sydney barrister who died young. His memory is strong and precious to many.

Geoffrey was of Celtic ancestry — Cornish as well as Scots. That ancient ancestry was strong in its effects on him. He was a romantic.

He did his law at the University of Sydney after schooling at, among other places, Sydney Grammar School. At the University he was active in student politics and a member of the Students' Representative Council. He was called to the Bar in 1974.

Subsequently, in practice his active sympathies were with the Right. Not, I think, because he wanted to have some sort of fascist-type regime, but because the call of the history of his forefathers was strong and needed to be defended. His loyalty to his Queen and country was basic.

His legal work was involved with others and their causes, who were similarly devoted to the preservation of ancient, and perhaps, lost causes.

In the Liberal Party he became notable as a leading light and numbers man of the far Right. He served on the Liberal State Executive for several years and also as a delegate to the Federal Council.

When the formation of the Scottish Australian Heritage Council was mooted to enliven the traditions and cultures of Scotland, as seen by Scottish-Australian eyes, Geoffrey was one of the founders and energisers. Not for political reasons but from the fact, I would believe, that Celtic memories remain strong for many generations — however far we may be from our European roots. Indeed, that “We in dreams behold the Hebrides”.

Geoffrey's was the suggestion that a prime object of the new Heritage Council should be promotion of University teaching in Celtic cultures. To record, to protect and to teach the cultures of the Celts. It became and remains an objective; and a remarkably successful one. The University of Sydney is teaching at undergraduate level in two years, at Honours, Master's and Doctoral levels of Celtic Studies. Other Universities are moving.

While the campaign for University teaching passed to other hands and involved all the Celtic communities, Geoffrey's interest and support remained with him.

Health and other worries pressed on him and on his very delicate constitution and he died suddenly in 1984.

His memory is best preserved by just such lectures as these, and the Celtic Council of Australia values the work and support of the Sydney Society for Scottish History.

Geoffrey was one of those of whom it is written by an Irish Celt (in part)

“We are the music-makers,
And we are the dreamers of dreams

World-losers and world-foresakers,

Yet we are the movers and shakers
Of the world for ever, it seems”.

Peter Alexander, CMG OBE OAM FCIS FCIM FCPA FCCA JP
Convenor of the Celtic Council of Australia