



**In Memoriam - Mr Patrick J. O'Flanagan
(1934-1995)
Taught at Wah Yan College, Kowloon, 1961-1963, 1966-1972**

A. Photographs, 1961-1972 (a selection)



FORM 5D

1961-1962, F5D

1961-1962



TEACHERS OF ENGLISH

Fr. Mallin, Mr. O'Flanagan, Mr. Pun Yau Pang, Fr. Finneran, Fr. Toner, Mr. John Lam, Rev. B. James.
Miss Lee Tun Yung, Mr. Li Yiu Bor, Very Rev. Fr. Farren, Mr. Ho Ping Ki, Fr. Moran.

1961-1962, Teachers of English



1961-1962, Sports Day, with Fr Finneran



The Mikado pays honour to his Master: Mr. P. J. O'Flanagan.

1962-1963

1962-1963, honoured for his production of The Mikado



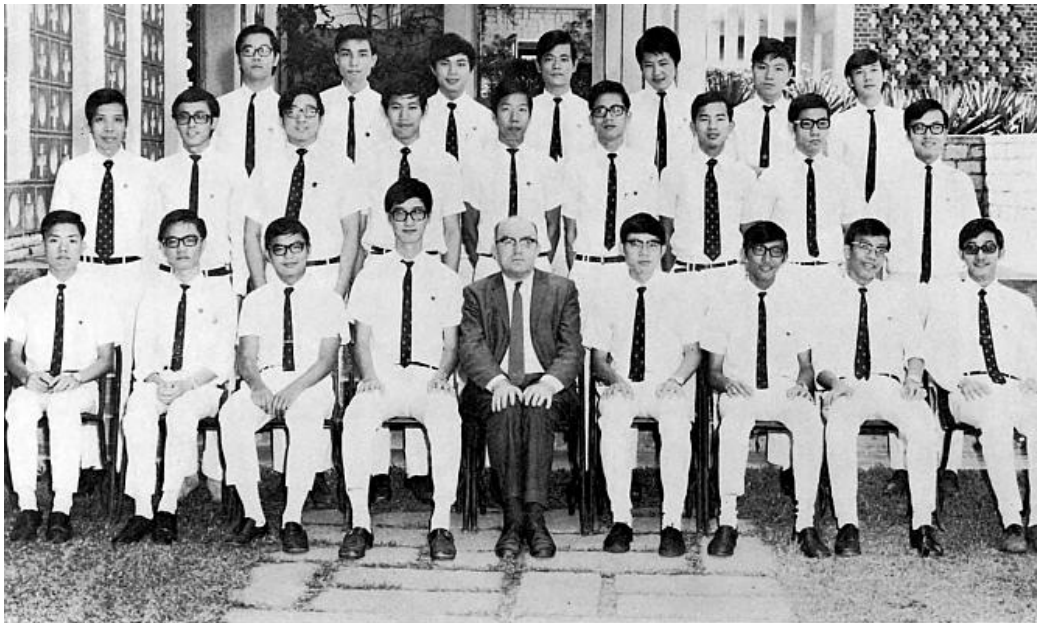
"So well remembered"
Mr. P. J. O'Flanagan.

1963-1964, lecturing in Sophia University

COLLEGE STAFF



1970-1971, Staff – top row – 3rd right



		21	12	23	17	8	2	22	
9	5	7	15	4	16	13	19	1	
24	10	18	20	Mr. P. O'Flanagan	6	14	3	11	

FORM 7 ARTS (1971/72)

1971-1972, F7A – last year in Wah Yan

B. Memories

From an Email Written by Fr Harold Naylor to Yu Fong-ying ('61), July 20, 1999

I knew Patrick O'Flanagan as PADRIG. I first met him when I studied Science at the National University of Ireland in Dublin, in 1953.

He was very distinctive, always formally dressed as a clerical student of philosophy, with his umbrella, and immaculate black suit. Fr. Sean Coghlan who was with me, knew him as they both came from the same small city of Limerick, where he was known as a serious student. At University Fr. Coghlan met him often, but since I was in the College of Science, I hardly ever met him.

Fr. Coghlan and I left the university in 1956, while Patrick left the seminary and studied English Literature. Then in 1960, Fr. Coghlan and I came to Hong Kong. We found Padrig* here, as Fr. Anthony Farren, still here employed Padrig as an English teacher. He was soon in the production of the Gilbert and Sullivan plays.

The Jesuit University of Sophia in Tokyo invited him to teach English Literature He went there, but after two years, returned to Wah Yan. By that time you had left. Padrig found the students at Sophia to be of the English standard of Form Four students here. He had lost his heart to Cantonese people and Hong Kong.

Returned, he was teaching English Literature at Form Six and Seven levels and producing plays and lived at the YMCA Salisbury road. Mr. Francis Kong Chi Kwan was his close friend and associate.

But Padrig began to fall apart... He became very scrupulous and was always late in giving in the examination scores. He could not make decisions. Finally we had to take him back to Ireland about 1972 in summer. Here he tried teaching in Irish schools, but he just could not.

His sister had a haberdashery-clothing shop for ladies. He helped her and did well. He became a respected citizen with the Irish conservative party. But his joy was helping the Chinese restaurants with their legal problems. He was really their protector and benefactor.

In 1974, I was in Limerick and I called on him. He was secretive and withdrawn, but warm-hearted and welcoming. He told me about his life, but at a distance.

I never heard or met him again, but presume he led a very ordinary good life with his sister. Both never married.

He probably died in 1998, but I have no details.

You have good memories of this dedicated teacher. Keep it up and live up to the ideals he had.

Best wishes from a retired teacher, as is always Mr. Francis Kong, but we continue teaching on a voluntary basis.

Yours sincerely, Fr. Harold Naylor, S.J. 20th July. 1999
Wah Yan College, 56 Waterloo Road, Kowloon

(*According to Fr Coghlan, Padrig came to HK in 1959.)

(I am very grateful to Fr Naylor for his permission to quote from the email. – Fong-ying)

秋風 Autumn Wind

余晃英 Yu Fong-ying

仿雪萊〈西風頌〉一節詩意，並記念1961-63 教我這首詩的英國文學老師

Patrick O’Flanagan (fr. Limerick, Ireland)

(These Chinese lines were modelled on Shelley’s Ode to the West Wind, first stanza, and composed to commemorate Mr. Patrick O’Flanagan, who taught me English Literature. ‘61-’63.)

寒風驟起天地陰
紅葉滾滾撲我身
滾地葫蘆四竄走
彷彿後有驅魔人
敗葉紛紛墮塵土
斑駁遍地散東西
榦枝禿瘦隨風舞
一樹猶似一游魂

P.B. Shelley: Ode to the West Wind (lines 2 to 8)

“Thou, from whose unseen presence the leaves dead
Are driven, like ghosts from an enchanter fleeing,
Yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red,
Pestilence-stricken multitudes: O thou
Who chariotest to their wintry bed
The winged seeds, where they lie cold and low,
Each like a corpse within its grave ...”

2006/10/20

Introduction to “18 Letters from Mr. Patrick O’Flanagan”

Mr. Patrick O’Flanagan joined Wah Yan College Kowloon as an English teacher in the 1960-61 school year. He came from Limerick, Ireland, like Fr. McCarthy and Fr. Coghlan. From 1961 to 63, he taught English Literature at the Advanced Level to the second cohort of Form 6 Arts. That’s when he became my teacher. In 1963, he left for Japan to take up a lecturing post at Sophia University. The letters he wrote to me spanned a three-year period, 1963 to 1966, when he was a new lecturer and me a new student at university.

The purpose of publishing the letters is to pay tribute to a very kind and learned teacher and mentor, and to acknowledge the huge debt I owe him in his financial help, his imparting of the knowledge and love of literature, and his general and specific guidance. Because of him, I took up teaching English as my career, and have taught for 45 years up to now.

In this year, our Class of ’61 celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of our graduation from Wah Yan College from November 11th to 13th. I would like the publication of these letters to serve as one way of marking my profound gratitude to our Alma Mater (meaning in Latin “nourishing mother”) whose team of inspiring teachers taught us.

I would like to thank Fr. Naylor and Fr. Coghlan sincerely for telling me about Mr. O'Flanagan and supplying me with background information. Wong Hin Shing, our unofficial and ever-relied-upon archivist, has gone through past school numbers of The Shield for information; I am very grateful to him.

Lastly, a word on protocol: The letters and notes were about 45 years old, five years shy of the general 50-year rule. But Mr. O'Flanagan passed away more than 10 years ago, and nothing in the content (except in one case, which has been dealt with) could have any undesired effect on anyone.

Yu Fong-ying
1 November, 2011

(To read the 18 letters, please go to the website WYKAAO, Features Section)

Thank you for this information and for being generous in sharing your letters. I shall go through them in the web site when I have a chance. Patrick O'Flanagan was the head teacher of my class in Form 6. I learned a lot of English literature from him. He was also the one who set a high standing of writing for me---something I benefited for the rest of my career. Students at that time found him aloft and inapproachable. I think he tried very hard to get to know students, but his formality and stern appearance scared most of us away. I remember one of the things he did was to ask students in his class to have lunch with him on a one to one basis at the YMCA where he stayed. I had one of those lunches with him, and he was talking most of the time. Most of my classmates then found the lunching with him rather trying and uncomfortable. I walked by the crowded quarter where he stayed and even at that time, I thought it was very modest at best.

Later on in the year when I discovered a real interest in English literature, I found him very engaging on specific questions I had for him. I told him I was reading other titles of the syllabus not required in our class because I found them interesting, and he seemed surprised at first and then encouraged me to do so.

Patrick O'Flanagan remained a great teacher to me who was dedicated to teaching. Looking back now, I do not mind the formal and often esoteric way he conducted himself. I think he was a real character.

Peter Li ('66)
November 2011

Nov 8, 2011

It is great that you shared your reminiscences about Mr. O'Flanagan . He is one of my admired teachers in Wah Yan. I was a 64 graduate and I think he was my English literature teacher in F.4. I remember he was bald head and he gave me an impression that he was quite old. But later I knew that he was still a young man at that time. I collected stamps during my school time and I was frequently given stamps from him. He must have a lot of friends or relatives back home as he had a lot of stamps to give me from time to time. I would say he was a real gentleman and dedicated teacher. I think I had sent him Christmas cards once or twice but lost contact with him later. I was a little bit shocked when I heard the news about a decade ago at such a young age. Was he ever married and did he pass away in his own country?

Raymond Ng (in Toronto) ('64)

Nov 15, 2011

I was also taught by Mr, O'Flanagan in 1963 at which time he was the Form Master of Form 5D and I was appointed the class prefect. His pleasant personality and helpful disposition made him a mentor and a friend to keep. He will be remembered forever.

Denis Yin ('63)

If memory serves, he taught Eng Lit when I was in Lower VI, and we did Macbeth. When he came to the line, "What bloody man is that?" he started chuckling, explaining to us who were not familiar with English slang that Shakespeare was not cursing. It was a joke most of us didn't get until much later.

He taught Romantic poetry, and, with respect to Wordsworth, he pointed out that the poet could write very good stuff but sometimes would let a terrible line slip through, almost as if he'd run out of patience. The work used as an example was "Lucy", a very good poem that included the line, "...and oh, the difference to me." I remembered what he said, and when I turned in an essay during my college sophomore year, I made reference to this, without attribution of course. I think that was the only time during my university career when I got compliments for "my" insight into Wordsworth.

He was one of those teachers whom I wish I had spent more time with. I was not a particularly good student, and a lot of what he said went over my head. It would have been a great experience if I had had him later in my learning process.

Rodney Auyeung Siu Lee ('61), February 6, 2012

Compiled by Wong Hin-shing and Yu Fong-ying, February 6, 2012. Revised on April 17, 2013.