

Not Just Ned: A true history of the Irish in Australia
An exhibition developed and presented by the
National Museum of Australia

OBJECT BIOGRAPHY

Territory Irish

A small well loved monstrance that was once placed on the bar of the O'Shea Railway Hotel in Katherine for Catholic masses will feature in an exhibition *Not Just Ned: A true history of the Irish in Australia* at the National Museum of Australia in Canberra.

Timothy O'Shea from County Kerry was a big barrel-chested fellow with plenty of energy who didn't mind hard work. Arriving in Brisbane to seek his fortune in 1900, Tim worked his way north until he settled in the mineral fields at Irvinebank, North Queensland where he established his own mineral lease.

Tim returned to Ireland in 1907 to marry Catherine O'Keeffe, the woman whom he had asked to wait for him; but only after receiving a letter from his brother John who urged 'if you want to marry Kitty you better come now, she's planning to go to America'. Tim and Catherine married on 12 February 1907; Tim hired a suit, hat and gloves for the occasion.

The newlyweds returned to Queensland including many of their extended families in 1907. With the prospect of gold, Tim and Catherine arrived in Port Darwin in 1909 and found their way to Pine Creek where they built a home and pegged down the rights to the Enterprise Mine. O'Shea then went on to establish a billiard saloon, hotel, blacksmith and boarding house. They also ran hotels in Borroloola, Birdum, Larrimah, and Pine Creek.

Together Tim and Catherine raised six daughters; Kathleen, Johanna, May, Eileen, Noreen and Shelia. In 1928 they took their six daughters to visit friends and relatives in Ireland for six months. The O'Shea family were one of the pioneer families of the Katherine region. In 2009, the O'Shea family celebrated 100 years of living in the Territory.



Monstrance (receptacle for the consecrated Host) 1928 is on display at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra in the exhibition *Not Just Ned: A history of the Irish in Australia*. The Monstrance is on loan from Peter and Maureen Dunham.

The exhibition *Not Just Ned* will also feature, along with the monstrance, a small prayer book from Ireland and the licensee sign from their Borroloola Hotel.

Not Just Ned: A true history of the Irish in Australia is on show at the National Museum of Australia, Canberra from 17 March-31 July 2011. Admission charges apply.

For more information about the exhibition visit www.nma.gov.au/exhibitions/irish_in_australia

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