



# 'Leathlobhair Line

From Laois, Ballarat & beyond

Edition 11 - December 2015

## MADI CARRIES THE LALOR STANDARD

Madison (Madi) Lalor has brought new honour to the Lalor name by winning a number of awards including national and state distinctions. Madi is the daughter of Fintan and Jane Lalor.

### **Madi takes up her story:**

My name is Madi Lalor, I live in Melbourne, Australia and am a direct descendant of Peter Lalor. I am 13 years old and attend year 7 at Mentone Girls Secondary College. This year my teacher asked me if I would be interested in entering the National History Challenge for 2015. 'The National History Challenge invites students to be historians - researching and interpreting the past'. The theme this year was 'leadership and legacy'. Students from year 5-12 were invited to research and create an entry that considered the legacy and leadership demonstrated by an individual or organisation. I felt Peter Lalor was perfect for this theme, especially with his legacy to democracy in Australia. I chose to do a short film about Peter and his role in the Eureka Rebellion. This theme gave me the opportunity to research a man who not only made a significant contribution to Australian history but to whom I am also related. While I had visited Sovereign Hill for grade four camp and heard family members talk of Peter, this history challenge gave me the opportunity to take a deeper look into Peter Lalor and the reasons he became such a great leader and the effect he had on democracy in

Australia. I was aware Victorian students might have studied Peter Lalor but I felt it was important for all Australian students to understand his legacy. I feel his leadership helped shape democracy not only in Victoria but in Australia as a whole.



Madi receives one of her awards

I chose to make a short film as I felt this would give people more information than I could give them with words only. I also wanted to make it a bit of fun so that it might be interesting to school age children. The format of my film changed a bit (as not everything went to plan). While I was always going to use the cartoon method, it featured a lot more in the film than I first anticipated. I also had trouble making it exactly 10 minutes, I kept going over. It was hard to know what to cut out of the film.

For this project I used a couple of different methods of research. I interviewed members of my family. I took a field trip to Ballarat which allowed me to visit many important sights. I spoke to people at the Museum of Democracy at Eureka, and read and interpreted information from many different web sites.

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## MADI CARRIES THE LALOR STANDARD

I first found out that I past the school based assessment. Then it went to regionals (which is up against other schools in my area). I won this and advanced to the state competition. They entered me in two categories best year 7 and democracy categories. I received a letter late September, explaining I had won both the year 7 and democracy category for the state of Victoria. I was also awarded the Victorian Young Historian of the year. I attended a ceremony for my prize and found out I had also won the National title for the year 7 category.

In late November I will be flying up to Canberra, Australia to attend another ceremony at Parliament House. During this ceremony I will find out if I have won the biggest prize of all, becoming the National young historian of 2015.



Another highly successful O'Leathlobhair Clan rally was celebrated in County Laois in July.

During the rally an historical tour was conducted to the Lalor Mills in Clonad, to the site of the Battle of Plumes in which the Lalors joined other families to fight the British outside Ballyroan. The tour went to the Timahoe Round Tower and Musuem and the Donaghmore Workhouse and Famine Museum. Guides told the interesting but tragic history of the Irish survival during the great famine. On Saturday members of the clan gathered at Abbeyleix Manor Hotel for the rally banquet. On Sunday the O'Leathlobhairs Clan celebrated at an ecumenical church service.

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## BRENDON DEACY EXHIBITATION

Brendon Deacy's James Fintan Lalor Exhibition is timed for July - August of next year (2016) at the Museum of Democracy at Eureka. While some grants for the exhibition have been made in Ireland, Brendon is still looking for additional sponsorship to make the trip a reality.



Margot Coogan and the President of the Republic of Ireland, Michael Higgins.

## MARGOT RE-ELECTED CHEIFTAIN

Margot Coogan has created Lalor history after being re-elected O'Leathlobhair Clan Cheiftain for the second successive year. It will be Margot's third time as cheiftain. The election took place at a banquet, the highpoint of the Lalor Clan Gathering in July. Margot was led into the ballroom of the Abbeyleix Manor hotel by piper Ned Dunne. Margot was presented with her Cheiftain Certificate by clan chairman, Kevin Lalor-Fitzpatrick who said that Margot was a great ambassador for the clan, especially during her recent trips to Australia.

"It is a great honour to represent Ireland's most active clan," Margot said. The cheiftain is looking forward to attending events in Ireland and Australia, where there are strong links to Laois and the Lalors of Tenakill.

The Leader of 'Lalors Australia' Peter Lalor Philp congratulated Margot on her re-election emphasizing the honour and importance that she has brought to the clan. "Margot has exceptional passion for Lalor culture and tradition, an essential life blood for any clan or institution to remain alive and relevant. More than anyone else in the last century she has rekindled the inseparable ties between Laois and Australia. Without leaders like Margot the most respected bodies begin to fade away because they are no longer relevant to a younger generation."

Margot Coogan is also Lalor Ambassador to Australia.

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## FATHER JACK WALSH

In June, Fr. Jack Walsh celebrated the Diamond Jubilee of his ordination to the priesthood. His special jubilee Mass, brought a huge crowd of friends and family and officials from both the Catholic Church and the Church of Ireland.

Fr Jack has had a long association with the Lalor Clan Gatherings and is related to the wider Lalor family. In times of great international uncertainty, Fr Jack brings to this clan great wisdom and spiritual guidance.

# LALORS OF RAVENS GROVE

Last year members of 'Lalors Australia' walked the historic routes of the family through parts of East St. Kilda to mark the 120th anniversary of the birth of one of our great women, Eileen Mary 'lee' Lalor. Sadly the old Lalor home is no longer standing and the younger set of the family asked the three oldest members what the old house was like. It was rented, very humble, rather shabby but was home to many notable events, celebrations and love. For the Lalor line from Eureka's Peter, there is no other residence that has the long history and importance of 7 Ravens Grove, East St. Kilda not even the prestigious Lalor House in Richmond which was owned by the family for a very short period. We promised to publish some photos of Ravens Grove.

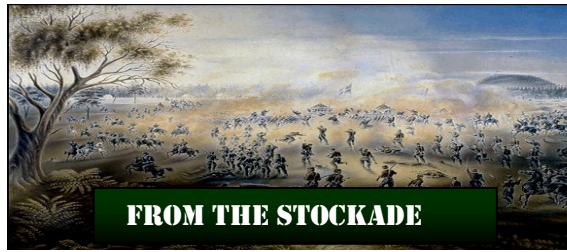


The Lalor home at Ravens Grove in 1930s and 40s



Ravens Grove in the 1950s after renovations

The life of lee Lalor has once again been brought to attention in an article in the leading Australian/Irish cultural magazine Tintean. It tells the story of lee's long commitment to the Lalor family after marrying Dr Peter Lalor and her ongoing love and leadership of the family until her death in 1975. lee is buried in the Lalor Grave at the Melbourne General Cemetery, Melbourne with her sister Nano and husband Peter Lalor.



What a proud moment for all of us Lalors to hear about the achievements of Madi Lalor. 'History charts the future' is an insightful line. So is 'the road to Heaven is paved with good intentions.' Every year that passes somewhere among this clan, young people are doing things that matter – that even in a small way help to make this troubled world a better place. People and their actions will pass with the setting sun and be forgotten unless someone takes the time to record these endeavours. And that is what Madi has done. In fact her research has achieved two important ingredients in the Lalor story. She has provided addition information about the life and achievements of Peter Lalor and because of publicity her awards will generate, hopefully others are challenged to continue this valuable story.

Historians will from time to time, revive the story of Eureka, its leadership and Lalor's career as a parliamentarian. All very helpful but so too is the experience of individual Lalors who have lived the tradition. Better still when the continuing story is examined and told by a member of the younger Lalor generation.

## **Congratulations Madi.**

I'm sure you will all join me in congratulating Margot Coogan on her election and installation as International Lalor Clan Cheiftain. She has broken down the tyranny of distance between Laois and Eureka which for so long was a barrier that helped create vague legends about the activities of the scattered clan. Hopefully during her latest term as Chieftain, Margot will help us gain a greater appreciation of our Irish heritage and culture and also she will continue to share at home her passion for the history of the land of the Southern Cross.

Let's move forward with pride.

*Peter L.P*

## LALOR BOWIE KNIFE???

There has been age old research and debate about a sword Peter Lalor might have carried at Eureka and the sword that his grandson, Captain Joseph Peter Lalor did carry at Gallipoli. Now there is research underway to authenticate a Bowie Knife that is believed to have been presented to Peter Lalor.

The knife carries an inscription on its blade *'presented to Peter Lalor by the people and miners of Ballarat for his leadership during the stand for democracy at Eureka Stockade'* dated 23-12-55.

The current owner of the Bowie is Doug Dark who has contacted 'Lalors Australia' to find out if there is any additional information about the knife. The touch mark on the blade under the handle is engraved Swynner. This is the name of a town near Sheffield, UK and also the name of a British knife maker, Fredrick Swynner. Also on the blade is the touch mark, John Tynan. He came to Australia from Liverpool in 1853 and worked as a blacksmith at Ballarat.

Doug Dark said that he was given the knife by a Phillip Russell which was passed down to him by his grandfather. The Russells were landowners in the Ballarat district. In the mid 1800s a number of Russell brothers were Members of Parliament, one of them Thomas was a Member for Granville in the Legislative Assembly from 1868 to 1873. Peter Lalor was the Member for Granville from 1877 to 1889. Another Russell brother Phillip was a member of the Ballarat Old Colonialists Association: So too was Peter Lalor. These connections might explain how the knife, presented to Peter Lalor, was passed to the Russell family.

This year the Bowie Knife has been on display at the Museum of Australian Democracy, Old Parliament House, Canberra. Senior Historian, Libby Stewart, has been carrying out research into the authenticity of the knife and has made contact with 'Lalors Australia.' Libby can find no mention of the knife in any newspapers or documents and says that because of its rarity and value she is surprised that there is no written confirmation of its presentation. There is no mention of the knife in the old Lalor Family Scrapbook (now housed at the State Library of Victoria). Therefore Libby has some doubts about it belonging to Peter Lalor.

If any Lalors have information about a Lalor Bowie Knife they should contact Libby at: [libby.stewart@moadoph.gov.au](mailto:libby.stewart@moadoph.gov.au)



## PETER LALOR M.P

Peter Fintan Lalor lived up to his word. Before landing in Australia, he predicted that he would be part of the colonial government within a year. In December 1854 he was a hunted rebel who had taken up arms against the Crown. In less than 12 months he was member of the Victorian Government.



This year we celebrate the 160<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Peter Lalor's election to Parliament as the member for Ballarat in the old Legislative Council. Over the next 32 years, Peter held a number of senior ministerial posts in the Victorian Parliament including Speaker of the Legislative Assembly for seven years. This painting of Peter in his Speaker's robes hangs today in the State Library of Victoria.

Watch  
Madi Lalor's Film

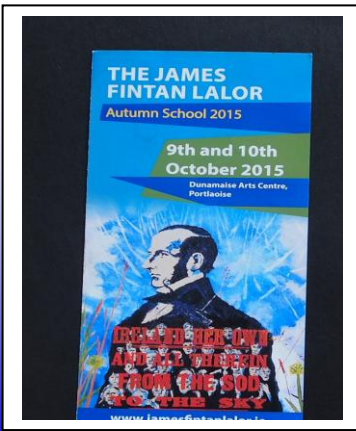
<https://vimeo.com/141749229>

### **O'Leathlobhair Line**

is the official newsletter of  
'Lalors Australia'

*A Gathering of Lalors linked to the  
O'Leathlobhair Clan*

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# THE THIRD JAMES FINTAN LALOR AUTUMN SCHOOL COUNTRY LAOIS



Another successful James Fintan Lalor Autumn School has been held at the Dunamaisie Art Centre, County Laois, Ireland. This year's important cultural and political festival highlighted the achievements of Peter Fintan Lalor, leader of the miners at Eureka. It also brought together a panel of experts to debate the events and lead up to the '1916 Easter Uprising' in Ireland.' The debates and discussions linked the writings of James Fintan Lalor with the revolutionary ideals of those who planned and took part in the Easter Uprising. There was a special debate on the 1916 Proclamation, the wording of which was influenced by James Fintan. Next year Ireland will commemorate the centenary of this highly significant uprising.

The weekend's opening address was given by Michael Parson's from the Laois Heritage Society. His paper was titled 'The Life and Times of Peter Lalor'. A response to this address was given by the Irish Ambassador to Australia, Ruth Adler.

The leader of 'Lalors Australia' Peter Lalor Philp was invited to deliver a paper via video link. Peter's address was 'Who was Peter Fintan Lalor?'

The production of the video was by Leslie and Peter Falkiner-Rose of Melbourne, who gladly gave their professional time for this project. Leslie was responsible for the production of interviews and final visuals at the Australian Museum for Democracy at Eureka. As part of this project a number of Lalors were interviewed at Ballarat. We thank both Leslie and Peter.

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## WHO WAS PETER FINTAN LALOR?

By Peter Lalor Philp

There is a renewed interest in the history of democracy in Australia. The former Federal Parliament House in Canberra is now the Australian Museum of Democracy and in Ballarat there is the new Museum of Australian Democracy at Eureka. A number of organizations with special interest in the Eureka Stockade are now concentrating their attention not on the uprising but rather the important role that that event played in advancing Australia's democratic system, which we will always boast – is the finest in the world.

In the latter decades of the last century the interest in and significance of the Eureka Stockade was rapidly dying. It appeared to have little or no consequence in the lives of modern day Australians and for some it was relegated to nothing more than a violent demonstration by greedy business people against a legitimate tax.

Today people understand Eureka as a critical moment in their history when a democratic and just system was not only demanded but those rights were very quickly introduced into law for the young nation. Within the space of one year the status of the leader of the Eureka Stockade dramatically changed from that of a hunted criminal with a price on his head to a freely elected member of parliament.

We might be telling a very different Eureka story had not a young man from County Laois in Ireland not listened to the cries of a ruthlessly suppressed people and accepted their demands to become their leader. There were examples of other armed uprisings on Australia's gold fields which became meaningless acts of brutality and disturbing racial discrimination. But not Eureka.

Who was this man whom some claimed to be a middleman, escaping the woes of his homeland? A reluctant hero? An agitator protecting his own wealth? A follower with a grudge against British authority? A non-committed individual passing through?

There are Australian commentators who claim Peter Fintan Lalor was a man for the moment who gained power and used it against the very mates who elected him to parliament. In a recently published article in Australia's leading Irish cultural journal *Tintean*, Irish writer, Sean Ua Cearnaigh claimed that Peter Lalor was hemispheres apart from his brother James Fintan in political and social justice thinking. In this paper I will argue strongly that these brothers were much closer in their political attitudes than a few superficial histories of Peter Lalor portray. Rather, what was diverse was their mode of operation and the environment in which they found themselves.

To appreciate Peter Fintan Lalor, we can draw on a number of valuable sources – on going histories of the event and the man (which are still being published), eye witnesses who were either at Eureka or knew Lalor, and Lalor tradition.

Australian historians and even the Australian Lalor family have captured little about the young Peter Lalor in Ireland – his temperament, ambitions and political passion. James Fintan's ethos and characteristics are better chronicled. The first valuable eye witness account of Lalor comes from a Scot – William Craig who travelled from Britain with Peter, his brother Richard, Richard's wife Margaret and another family member – maybe Alicia Dunne or Peter's sister Margaret.

In his book *My Adventures on the Goldfields*, Craig records: "During my maiden voyage to the Antipodes, one man attracted my attention and excited my curiosity above the rest. He was a picture of robust manhood, and from his demeanour I surmised he was a man who thought for himself and something would be heard of him later." While still at sea, Craig took every opportunity to speak with Lalor. Craig said that he was given the impression that Peter was involved in the Young Ireland Revolution in 1848 and its collapse was one of the reasons why Lalor was now making his way to Australia. These discussions with Craig appear to conflict with even family assumptions that Lalor was a quiet person without political aspirations. Craig writes: "Lalor never tired of decanting upon the wrongs of Ireland and his characteristics were patriotic. He was a strong believer in physical force for redressing the wrongs in his native country." According to Craig, Lalor had no real intention of acquiring wealth on the goldfield but told Craig: "We shall see if a better state of things cannot be worked out in Australia. I (Lalor) intend to have a voice in its government before two years are over. The Lalors have a weakness for politics."

Once on the gold fields Peter Lalor gained the attention of the Ballarat Reformed League and quickly became acquainted with the injustice and institutional violence practiced there and immediately identified with the ideals of the Ballarat Reform League. However Lalor had options. He had money, education and opportunity. He could have walked away. He could have supported the aspirations of the diggers but from the security of the crowd. Lalor's involvement would still have been valuable as a silent committeeman or joining the active pacifist movement that was strong amongst the reformers and which was calling for change through continued negotiations.

Irishman, John Lynch, who was one of Lalor's captains said: "It was a critical time. Discontent was spreading and some members of the Ballarat Reform League were deficient in discretion. Lalor's appearance amongst them had a tranquillizing effect. For tall talk and bluster he brought moderation and common sense." Lynch was highly critical of what he termed the 'old plan', comprised of soft flattery and hard words which the pacifists were offering and which the governing regime curtly repulsed. Lynch wrote in his records: "The stout hearted Lalor could not brook this beggarly refuse. Coming fresh from a country where humbug and constitutional agitation had nearly emasculated its manhood, he (Lalor) felt no desire to countenance it here. He knew from experience that nothing good could come from it...and to command attention, their action must be reflected from the gleaming steel behind them."

Peter Lalor was unanimously elected leader at Eureka, not by an angry irresponsible mob, rather by individuals representing a league of nations, many of whom had suffered under tyrannical regimes but had been part of the revolutionary struggle for democratic systems in their old countries. They were experienced in ways of revolution and the freedom gained through this struggle. Therefore they knew the caliber of leader they wanted.

Lalor stepped forward after the popular vote – his reluctance was not of fear or selfish ambition, rather, based on his inexperience in matters military. He was prepared to forgo this responsible honour if there was somebody better equipped to fill the military commanding role. The call of the people was defiance of the British Empire, its queen, standing army and ruthless corrupt police force – clearly

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demanding radical reform of this tyrannical political regime. Was Lalor's gentleness, education and public presence enough to carry though the expectations of desperate men: to stand bold against a highly professional army: to lead a crowd of incongruent gold diggers? Did Peter Fintan have within him the vigorous rebellious soul of James Fintan? In this situation reluctance, indecision, or shirking responsibility would be calamitous. Before the thousands crowding Bakery Hill, Ballarat, the man from Laois climbed onto a stump and announced: "If you appoint me as your commander-in-Chief, I shall not shirk; I mean to do my duty as a man. I tell you gentlemen, if once I pledge my hand to the diggers, I will neither defile it with treachery nor render it contemptible by cowardice." One of Lalor's key supporters was a veteran of Giuseppe Garibaldi brigade, Raffaello Carboni. In his written record of Eureka, the old Italian rebel said: "Brave Lalor, you gave us your hand on the Eureka and left your arm – incontestable evidence of Lalor's pledge."

If not already a profound leader how does a man instantly stand so confident before a monster crowd; create among his men a disciplined company, demand a code of conduct and threaten to shot anyone of them who abused their authority or the general population.

And on reflection after the military assault on the stockade, Carboni said: "Brave Lalor – was found all there – with dauntless dare – his men inspiring – to wolf or bear – he made us swear – Be faithful to the Standard – For victory or death."

Peter Lalor's political career has been intensely debated of the decades. His tenet in the Parliament is best illustrated when challenged about his belief in democracy. Lalor said: "Do you mean Charterism, or Communism or Republicism? If so, I never was, I am not now, nor do I ever intend to be a democrat. But if a democrat means opposition to a tyrannical press, tyrannical people or tyrannical government, then I have ever been, I am still and will ever remain a democrat. Throughout his parliamentary life he never became a slave is 'isms' – even fighting his own Catholic Church on the issue of state aid to church schools. Clearly he was an individual – always considering issues as his own man. While there was no real party system during his terms in parliament, Lalor would frequently vote against his own colleagues if he believed the legislation was not correct. After his distinguished eight year term Speaker in the Victoria Parliament, both friends and foes in the parliament had not hesitation in voting in legislation to provide him a pension in his frail years.

Lalor regretted the death and violence at Eureka but always believed in the principles fought for on that day. He said after the uprising "Why did not the government take steps to alter the land system, amend the mode of collecting the gold revenue and place the administration of justice in the hands of honest men before this bloody tragedy took place? Is it to prove to us that a British Government can never bring forth a measure of reform without having to first prepared a font of blood in which to baptize the offspring of their generous love? Or is it to convince the world that, where a large standing army exists, the demon of despotism will have frequently offered at his shrine the mangled bodies of murdered men."

My reading and research into the life of Peter Fintan Lalor convinces me that he carried a bloodline that was intolerant to injustice. As the tension was mounting at Eureka he wrote to his fiancée, Alicia Dunne from Monrath, stating that if the struggle for freedom meant giving his life he was prepared to die. Clearly from eye witness reports he had a political vision that had been framed probably within the walls of old Tenakill, County Laois. His stepping onto the stump at Bakery Hill brought confidence both calming yet buoyant with responsibility, inspiring all before him - the old revolutionaries, humble diggers and business community. And when the rewards were plastered up for his head, not a soul, be they honourable, needy or corrupt dared claim the silver of Judas.

I believe that like his brother James Fintan, he was a rebel. The line of divergence between the brothers was that Peter operated within institutions, - Ballarat Reform Committee, the armed company behind the stockade and parliament. James Fintan was always a free spirit. Contemporaries like Oscar Romero, Desmond Tutu and Nelson Mandela too worked within structured institutions and they sometimes disappointed the very people they came to liberate. Never-the less they never gave up their struggle for peace and justice.

Peter Lalor has left a powerful legacy with his friends and family. Today many of his great great grand children actively struggle daily against systems that are unjust and corrupt, and where appalling neglect is a fact of life. They too share the passion of the Lalors of old.

