

# Representative Church Body Library, Dublin

**MS 1008/**

Correspondence, papers, photographs, press-cuttings and  
printed material concerning Miss Geraldine Fitzgerald  
(1891-1967) Librarian, Representative Church Body  
Library, Dublin, 1932-66

1931-2012

The materials in this collection were assembled by Patricia H. Smyth (née Ledbetter), Cootehill, Co. Cavan, for a biographical study of Miss Fitzgerald, and document the latter's role as a mentor and "grinder" of students at Trinity College Dublin, as well as providing a detailed account of her life and in particular her dedicated role as Librarian of the RCB Library, 1932-1966.

It includes photographs, original correspondence, the recollections of some of her students about Miss Fitzgerald's life and a personal run of letters from Miss Fitzgerald to Patricia Ledbetter, as she tutored her young student through her history degree at Trinity. The collection covers the period 1931-2012, and is organized in three files as follows:

- 1/ Letters addressed to Geraldine Fitzgerald, 1943-1963, with odd press cuttings, a service sheet for Salisbury Cathedral dated Sunday 25 August 1932 [the year she became Librarian of the RCB Library], and travel itineraries for a trip to the Pitlochry Theatre Festival, Perthshire, in 1963.

The correspondents include Michael Sloan and Stanley Coates, as children and students who address their letters "Dear Aunt" (purely an affectionate term these young correspondents but who were no relation); the Revd Frederick Mitchell, rector of Ballymena 1936-50 [who later became the bishop of Kilmore, and remained a lifelong friend]; the Revd Gerry Murphy (1922-2014) who was ordained for the parish of Shankill in Dromore, and after his curacy there 1952-55 became an army chaplain [later became domestic chaplain to the queen and serving in the Falklands]; and Catherine Phillips, widow of Professor Walter Alison Phillips (1864–1950) the first holder of the Lecky chair of History in Trinity College, Dublin and author of the three-volume *History of the Church of Ireland: from the Earliest Times to the Present Day* (Oxford, 1933).  
1932; 1943-1963

- 2/ File of personal letters from Geraldine Fitzgerald to Patricia Ledbetter guiding her through her studies and with much sound advice about how to study and not become over-whelmed by the demands of examinations for her degree at Trinity College Dublin; with additional 16pp typescript of recollections by the latter written 'the week after Miss Fitzgerald's death' to record important biographical details.

The run of letters commences with a letter of thanks from Fitzgerald, dated 12 January 1963, for the loan of Ledbetter's journal giving her 'account of the pilgrimage so far' they both undertook in September 1962 to the Holy Land (RCB Library Ms 605); and ends a month before Miss Fitzgerald's death, dated September 1967 with further words of encouragement. The biographical account represents the start of a larger project, outlining Ledbetters' hope for a published biography of her mentor: 'I hope that some day someone will set down on paper a record of a life that was great and well spent'.

This file also includes the recollections of the Revd R.B. McCarthy, who was tutored by Miss Fitzgerald about her life and her influence, written in response to queries in 2012.  
1963-1967; 1967; 2012

- 3/ Further biographical file containing photographs, further recollections by Professor R.B. McDowell and Dr Kenneth Milne, both additionally tutored by Miss Fitzgerald, handwritten notes by Patricia Ledbetter about life in Trinity College Dublin during the 1960s, together with miscellaneous photographs of Miss Fitzgerald, including the

conferral of an honorary MA for her services as Librarian of the RCB, in 1962, and with the Ledbetter family. Various published obituaries of Miss Fitzgerald and additional notes about the evolution of the RCB Library after her death complete the file.  
1962-67; 2012; undated