

## BOOK REVIEWS

T. F. Finch and Pierce Ryan, *SOILS OF CO. LIMERICK*, An Foras Talúntais, Dublin 1971. Price £1.50.

In this publication is presented the findings of the soil survey of County Limerick. It is the second report in the county series prepared by the National Soil Survey of Ireland. The aim of the series is to develop an inventory of our soil resources; the particular hope for this volume as stated in the foreword is "that the survey will be of value to Limerick farmers and to those involved in planning the use of the land resources of that county in the years to come."

The introductory chapters describe adequately the natural environment; an excellent section is that on glacial geology and the coloured glacial drift map which provides a detailed classification of deposits, on a scale of two miles to one inch, enhances this section considerably. In contrast, chapter 3 is somewhat disappointing; its treatment of the factors of soil formation is sketchy and the discussion on the relationships between the environmental factors and the various soil series could be more effective. Chapters 4 and 5 describe the Great Soil Groups and Soil Series while the agricultural pattern in County Limerick and the analytical data are discussed in the two remaining chapters. The approach here is thoroughly scientific, yet the text is written in a simple and clear style which should go a long way towards ensuring the value of the report to the non-specialist. The soil map of County Limerick shows the distribution of 48 soil series which are easily identified by number and colour. Two other useful maps illustrate soil drainage and soil suitability, and help underline the primary object of the report—to be of value to those interested in agriculture and land-use planning; carefully chosen photographs of the soil landscape and a variety of figures supplement the maps. An array of tables setting out the results of the mechanical and chemical analysis completes the report.

This publication, with four fold-in maps, a soil series index, and attractively bound in hard covers, is a most useful contribution to environmental research and deserves a wide public.

MÍCHEÁL S. Ó RIAGÁIN

T. F. Finch, *SOILS OF COUNTY CLARE*, An Foras Talúntais, Dublin 1971. Price £1.50.

This publication represents another major step forward in the programme of the National Soil Survey. It presents the report of the soil survey of County Clare. A brief introduction to soil survey methodology and terminology prepares the reader for the second chapter which describes forty soil series recognised and mapped in the county. On a broader scale, the soils are classified into ten major soil groups and the relative extent of each group is given as a percentage of the total area.

The practical concern of the publication becomes particularly evident in the third chapter where soil suitability for tillage, grassland, forestry and the major limitations of the soils are discussed. A brief survey of agriculture in the area is given in chapter 4. Chapter 5 deals with the most important factors influencing soil formation. While the sections on geology and climate are satisfactory, something more might be expected in the way of highlighting relationships between relief, drainage, parent materials, vegetation and the various soil series. The final chapter discusses the chemical and physical properties of certain soils and, together with the appendices, provides useful data; but this section appeals rather to the specialist than the general reader.

Two excellent fold-in maps reproduced in colour on a scale of two miles to one inch accompany the publication. Additional illustration is provided by thirteen figures and seventeen plates; the use of overprinting to illustrate the various soil series is to be commended.

Those responsible for the preparation and presentation are to be complimented on producing a valuable work which should appeal not only to the pedologist but equally to the non-specialist. At its price the volume is outstanding value.

MÍCHEÁL S. Ó RIAGÁIN

William Smith, *FROM CAVES TO CASTLES*, Fallons, Dublin 1970; *FROM NORMANS TO PENAL TIMES*, Fallons, Dublin 1972; *FROM PENAL TIMES TO MODERN TIMES*, Fallons, Dublin 1973. Price 80-85p each.

The new broader and better approach to Ireland's past at first and second education levels has led to a profusion of publications aimed at that market. Mr. Smith has produced three such works which, at first glance (and as stated in the Introduction to the third book, appear to form a series.

The major movements of Irish Prehistory and History are considered in sufficient detail to satisfy the average ten to twelve year old. This rather patchwork approach at times suggests a lack of continuity of settlement and human activity in Ireland, but this is something which any well-versed teacher can rectify. The author has avoided the trap of foreshortening his story by starting right back in the seventh millenium before Christ. The generally clear and concise text is supplemented by several ground and aerial photographs and by line-drawings. Indeed, having worked with all three books the young pupil might, hopefully, end with a good general idea of Ireland's story and maybe even be encouraged to search out for himself the relics of the past in his own locality. However, as he grows in knowledge he will resort to other books on the subject where he will soon discover that Mr. Smith has betimes got somewhat lost in the mists of the distant past.

The author appears to be an historian (from Northern Ireland?) who has read some books on archaeology. Since archaeologists do not seem to write text-books aimed at the young student, Mr. Smith cannot be really blamed for venturing into this field, though it was less than wise to have done so without asking an archaeologist to edit the text of his first volume. Does he really believe that it is possible to see flint shining in the sun on the Antrim chalk cliffs while standing on the other side of the North Channel? Or that Mesolithic people had to resort to using signs and grunts when they wanted to communicate with one another? Of the four major classes of megalithic tombs, two—Portal-tombs and Wedge-tombs—are not mentioned even though all four classes are illustrated. The plan of a Horned Cairn (*recte* Court Cairn or Court-tomb) used should show a continuous kerb demarkating a trapezoidal cairn, not a Y-shaped one. It is correctly stated in the text that Bronze Age cist-graves were built *into* the ground, yet the accompanying photograph, captioned "Bronze Age cist", is clearly *above* the ground—it is, in fact, not a cist-grave at all but the fine Wedge-tomb at Shrahwee, in County Mayo! Perhaps most disturbing of all is the suggestion on page 15 that if one wants to see "finds" one should "go to a place where there is a megalith or . . . to your local museum"—the mind boggles at the comparison! And one could go on. Errors of fact occur in the other chapters too, though not always as seriously.

The second book, *From Normans to Penal Times*, begins at 1169, although the first book ended at 1547. The material for the overlapping 378 years is approached differently in both books, however, but neither book refers to the other though in many ways they usually complement one another. The same can be said for the third book, *From Penal Times to Modern Times*, which begins at 1782, even though its precursor ended at 1800. Furthermore, the format, and the size of the very print, differs in all three books. All are interestingly and copiously illustrated, though the quality of some of the reproductions of photographs is often rather poor.

Apart from these and other less important blemishes, however, these three books help provide an outline version of the story of Ireland for very young children. They are one of the initial attempts in this field, and as such deserve to be so regarded and not too severely criticised.

MARTIN A. TIMONEY

A. T. Lucas, *TREASURES OF IRELAND—Irish Pagan and Early Christian Art*, Gill and Macmillan Ltd., Dublin 1973. Price £6.75.

This handsome book, published in agreement with UNESCO, would be a welcome event in itself; representing a chance for us to learn the mature thoughts of Dr. Lucas on the most spectacular aspects of Ireland's visual past, the reader may regard it as almost certainly doubly to be welcomed, and he will not be disappointed.

Dr. Lucas has divided his text into three sections—the Neolithic and Bronze Age period, the Iron Age (in the sense of pre-Christian, post-L.B.A., Ireland), and the Early Christian period. The



third section is some three times the length of the first two together, and is sub-divided by classe (e.g., "Brooches, Croziers, Book Shrines") and such special topics as the Moylough belt-shrine, sensibly avoiding any century-by-century treatment; as the author points out (p. 22) "To have treated the very disparate material of the Early Christian period chronologically would have been very confusing for the general reader". There is a select 'Bibliography', falling partway between the popular and the specialist, and, thanks be, separate Indexes for places and for subjects, sensibly and clearly keyed to the text and illustrations. It goes without saying that criticism of detailed points is confined to matters of interpretation and not, as is alarmingly often the case in works on the Irish past, to questions of onomastic or topographical accuracy.

What makes this book, then, any different from the score of books which have appeared during the present century on the broad theme of early Irish art? I sensed, on a first reading, and was confirmed in that view on subsequent readings, three strands, apart from the purely narrative and technical descriptions, which lift the treatment out of the ordinary, and which other admirers of Dr. Lucas will recognise as among his hallmarks. In the first place, his entire approach to the material remains of Irish history could be called 'archival' (for want of some better term), and has been powerfully defended in such essays as *The Role of the National Museum in the Study of Irish Social History* (1965). Of course the objects described, notably those in precious metals, multichrome, or master-craftsmanship, are "treasures of Ireland", but first and foremost they are documents, capable in the right hands of shedding light on otherwise undocumented periods of Ireland's past; and light in the socio-economic and historic sense, as well as technological. I see no departure here from Lucas's correct assertion that these objects, the majority under his care in the national repository, have a primary role as documents because, given the course of Irish history (and relatively recent erosions of conventional medieval records), they are in many cases the *only* documents. Secondly, there is the question of context. In the twentieth century, thanks to the gradual spread of further education and the spate of popular literature, a very large number of people, faced with such terms as "book-shrine" or "bell-shrine" or "escutcheon" or "monastery", will not immediately respond, "What?"; they have a sort of mental picture or pigeon-hole for these terms, and may even know something of why these objects were created, and for what end. This familiarity does not extend very far, however. Moreover, it does not extend all that much farther in the minds of a good many archaeologists, real or self-styled. It is surely axiomatic that a full appreciation (which must underlie correct exposition) of any notable historic artifact derives, and can only derive, from the mastery of the whole field of knowledge that surrounds its context. A tall order, perhaps; yet—and nowhere is this more evident than in the Early Christian Period—in so many objects, the embellishment, the constructional technique, the tell-tale marks of use, the repairs, and the possibility of longevity and distorted dating, cannot be explained unless one knows what the object is *for*, and who is most likely to have used it, and where, and when, and why.

Who, then, is better suited to tackle such a task than the author of innumerable papers on byways of Ireland's past (random samples: cloth finishing, turf, furze, straw mat doors, hair hurling-balls, wooden bowls, block-wheels, dugout canoes, sand-eels, ploughing, churches, souterrains, etc. etc.), and the man who, in defiance of all probabilities, appears to have set out to catalogue and to classify all the references to the Irish material past to be found in the whole body of Irish literature? But this is folk-like, not archaeology, I seem to hear a reader complain. Not a bit of it; folk-life *is* archaeology, as Sir Arthur Mitchell saw a century ago, when he rightly wrote a book called *The Past in the Present*. The strength, the basis of authority, from which Dr. Lucas writes came to my mind in his general description of the illuminated manuscripts (pp. 68 ff.) and his cautious treatment of that awful labyrinth, the Iron Age.

The third strand that I would isolate is perhaps surprising to the less percipient, who may know the author primarily as the executive head of a great European museum, or as a dry taxonomist of the past. It is a quite remarkable measure of sensitivity and psychological insight, reminding us in many a vivid and telling phrase that—given the factors I have already described—we are dealing with art forms, created by artists, under the stresses, challenges, and tensions of events, and within the confines of their material and their technical resources. Read the 'Introduction' (pp. 57 ff.) to the Early Christian Period, in particular, to enjoy this.

*Treasures of Ireland*, then, is a book in which (paradoxically) an author who customarily suppresses his own personality in his writings has, to this reviewer, managed on the contrary to impress most of his personal characteristics and attainments on the text, the treatment, even the selection of illustrated views and details. It is eminently readable; it is not, by current standards, over-priced; and it should be read several times. I do not propose to niggle about certain views with which I, and probably others, disagree; these are views, not inspired truths, and will always provoke counter-views. Dr. Lucas, historian, archaeologist, and interpreter, has given us his own account of Ireland's artistic past. We can express our gratitude by buying, and digesting, this account.

CHARLES THOMAS



Ruaidhrí de Valera and Seán Ó Nualláin, *SURVEY OF THE MEGALITHIC TOMBS OF IRELAND, Volume III: Counties Galway-Roscommon-Leitrim-Longford-Westmeath-Laoighis-Offaly-Kildare-Cavan*. The Stationery Office, Dublin 1972. Price £7.00.

The first two volumes of the *Survey* have been reviewed in the 1964 and 1966 issues of this *Journal*, so our members will already be familiar with the arrangement of the series as to text and the very generous illustrations. As the title indicates, in contrast to volumes I and II, each of which treated of a single county, volume III covers nine counties. The extent of the published coverage so far achieved in the three volumes is shown pictorially as a map on figure 74: roughly one-third of all Ireland. Of the nine counties treated in this volume, three—Laoighis, Offaly and Kildare—have no certain megalithic tombs, and Co. Westmeath has only one Wedge-tomb. In this context, it is useful to have some mention of structures and other features which in some cases have previously been thought to have been megalithic tombs and which the authors now reject. It is also good to have for the first time distribution maps, covering the whole country, of Portal-tombs and Wedge-tombs.

An important difference between this and previous volumes lies in the terminology used. The authors have adapted that first proposed by Professor Estyn Evans in his *Prehistoric and Early Christian Ireland—A Guide* (London 1966), and now suggest Court-tomb, Portal-tomb, Wedge-tomb and Passage-tomb as descriptive names for the types of megalithic tombs known in Ireland. With such an *imprimatur*, it would seem that this terminology will now become standard, for Ireland at least. In such a large area as that covered by this volume, it is not surprising that several varieties of tomb are represented. The one main class, however, which is not dealt with in this volume, though occurring in counties Roscommon and Leitrim, is the Passage-tomb, a type more commonly found elsewhere in Ireland and often grouped in cemeteries; lists of the Roscommon and Leitrim examples are given on pages 141-142, but full treatment of them is being withheld until all the Passage-tombs have been surveyed and then published in a separate volume of the *Survey*.

This is the first volume of the *Survey* to include tombs from which finds are known, but it is most unfortunate that these finds are neither fully described nor illustrated, particularly as they are so few. The authors explain their absence by reference to a forthcoming *corpus* of the finds from Irish megalithic tombs which is at present being undertaken by Dr. Michael Herity, saying that inclusion of full treatment of the finds in the *Survey* would thus be a wasteful duplication. There is surely room for both. It is a pity that the policy of including finds, established by the Leisners in Iberia and followed by Miss Henshall in Scotland, and also in the French Inventories, has not been continued in Ireland.

In the discussion, particularly that devoted to the place of the tombs in the area covered by the volume in relation to Irish tombs generally, greatest attention is given to Portal-tombs. The Portal-tomb, or Portal Dolmen as it has to date generally been called, is something of a Cinderella among tombs of these islands: Portal-tombs are not uncommon in England and Wales, and any attempt to determine their origins and development ought to embrace the tombs of both sides of the Irish Sea. There can be little doubt, as de Valera and Ó Nualláin suggest, but that there is some kinship between the Court-tomb and the Portal-tomb. There may well have been derivation one from the other—but in which direction? The authors accept the derivation of the Portal-tomb from the Court-tomb, particularly from the lateral chambers found in some of the latter class. It could, however, perhaps more plausibly be argued that any derivation might have been in the opposite direction. The authors' arguments for the origins of the Portal-tomb in north-western and central Ulster are interesting, but not entirely convincing.

These problems will, no doubt, receive further attention in other publications in the future. It is obvious that excavation of a good sample of the tombs of the west is urgently needed. The authors have each, individually and together, made an excellent beginning in Co. Mayo, but for the rest of the area covered by the three available volumes of the *Survey* only two or three have been excavated. This contrasts strongly with the situation in the north-east of Ireland, and clearly creates an imbalance when any interpretation of the megalithic tombs of the country as a whole is attempted.

This is not intended as a criticism of Professor de Valera and Mr. Ó Nualláin, for their contribution to Irish archaeology is already massive in these three volumes. They would surely agree, however, that their task would have been made a little easier had there been more excavation in the centre and west.

To conclude, this reviewer can only reiterate some of the comments from reviews of the first two volumes of the *Survey*. Hypotheses embodied in discussion are bound to be modified; the basic facts as recorded in text and illustration will endure. The quality of production of this volume remains as high as that of its predecessors, and the cost is very reasonable. But could one hope for a shorter gap in time between the publication of volumes?

JOHN X. W. P. CORCORAN



Lloyd Laing, *THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF LATE CELTIC BRITAIN AND IRELAND c. A.D. 400-1200*, Methuen & Co. Ltd., London 1975. Price £4.50 (paperback).

This book sets out to cover the Celtic archaeology of these islands from about A.D. 400 to 1200 and, as noted in the preface, is based on material prepared for a course of lectures in Liverpool University where the author is a Lecturer in Medieval Archaeology. Although some personal fieldwork on the monuments and in museums is included, the book relies heavily upon the published works relating to this period, the archaeology of which undoubtedly requires re-assessment. If the book was intended to provide such a revision it cannot be said to have achieved its purpose, particularly in its treatment of the Irish evidence. The author has clearly drawn upon a wealth of data abstracted from many sources but his unfamiliarity with the actual objects and field-monuments of Ireland has led him into errors which must surely take from the work in the eyes of all serious students of the period.

The book is divided into two main divisions: the first treating of the field archaeology on a regional basis, ranging from Northern Scotland through Ireland and Wales to Southwestern England. The second part deals with the material culture (crafts, art, etc.) as we know it from finds and excavations. The tenuous links that can be forged with the fragmentary historical documentation are dealt with in Part I. The short appendix on manuscript art could well have been included in the main body of the book. However, the select bibliography and notes are very comprehensive providing, as they do, an up-to-date list of the sources and basic references for the period.

Chapter 6 of Part I is devoted to Ireland and considerable space is given over to the habitation and settlement sites, *viz.* the ringforts and crannogs. It is good to see that the evidence for pre-ringfort features is stressed as recent excavations have added to our knowledge of this phenomenon. Attention is also drawn to the evidence for the occupation of ringforts in medieval times, a topic which has aroused a certain amount of current debate and controversy.

The book best serves its readers when providing a critical and concise picture of the available published evidence. Statements, however, as on p. 153 that "the Grianan of Aileach almost certainly attained its maximum importance in the 5th century" followed a few lines later by the reference to its destruction in A.D. 1104 must surely leave the student rather puzzled. This type of statement, bereft of any supporting evidence, crops up all too frequently and reduces the value of the book. Another example is in the section dealing with the introduction of Christianity where, on p. 176, we are told that the most elaborate Round Towers are probably the earliest. Such a statement must be qualified or expanded for, indeed, if elaboration refers to external features, *e.g.* Romanesque doorways, then the opposite is probably closer to the truth. In the same section a reasonable attempt at summing-up the known information on the cross-slabs and pillars is spoiled by over-classification, something quite unnecessary in a book of this nature. The author includes, on p. 166, a group called grave-markers amongst the early cross-slabs. As a class in Ireland they would be extremely doubtful, to say the least, since the visible examples *in situ* are more likely to be *calluragh* markers dating from relatively modern times when many early sites were re-used for the burial of unbaptised infants.

The chapter on subsistence equipment is useful and comprehensive, particular attention being paid to the pottery—both the imported and native wares. The iron objects are dealt with in detail, but again the total reliance on secondary sources has led to further errors. A number of identifications and comments on the finds from Lagore Crannog are quite puzzling, *e.g.* the reference on p. 286 to a non-existent "unique bronze sword" from that site.

In the chapter on personal adornment the author tries to condense the great variety of material provided by the museum collections and excavations. The temptation to add to already published typologies, for no good reason, should have been resisted and the book would have benefited accordingly. An example of this can be seen on p. 321 where a type called "double-ringed pin" is invented and referred to as "a relatively rare type": there are no ringed pins with double rings as described by the author, and the pin from Lagore with three rings attached illustrated in Fig. 121, 8 is a unique specimen which certainly does not warrant a class all to itself. Likewise, his so-called "ringed pin with secondary ring" type is non-existent, and the example shown in Fig. 121, 9 contains two tiny rings or links probably part of a small chain. The author also includes (as a ringed pin) in Fig. 121, 7 a pin with a developed form of pseudo-penannular ring related to a group of brooches and quite removed from the ringed pin series as such. This chapter also contains attempts at a classification of the stick-pins (of which he gives forty types—including "domical headed" [*sic*] pins) and glass beads. These are difficult tasks at any time and dangerously misleading if the actual material has not been seen and thoroughly analysed. Taken on the whole, this is a very poor section containing far too many errors and pitfalls for the unwary reader.

The sections of the book dealing with Scotland, Wales and the other Celtic areas appear quite comprehensive, and here one hopes that the author's firsthand knowledge of the evidence, and especially his fieldwork in Scotland, is reflected in the particular and general conclusions arrived at.



The book is profusely illustrated, with a number of photographic plates and an abundance of line drawings of varying quality. Some of the figures, such as Fig. 125, have suffered from over-reduction, and the absence of scales is very noticeable. The plans of some of the Irish sites are unclear and inaccurate, *e.g.* that of Skellig Mhichíl in Fig. 57 which is particularly bad—and unpardonable, as the site is used as a frontispiece and a good published plan is available. Likewise, the Irish location maps, *viz.* Fig. 53 which places Lagore and Tara in Co. Dublin and Fig. 54 where one finds Cashel has travelled south into Co. Waterford, betray the author's unfamiliarity with the basic geography of this country. The latter figure purports to show the key ecclesiastical sites yet omits monasteries like Clonard and Tallaght.

Although some of the criticisms made here refer to minor faults and matters of detail, the fact remains that these errors are all too frequent throughout the work and indicate that the author did not check his Irish sources. Two statements made in the preface clearly call for some comment. If, as the author says "the book is for students for whom the minutiae can come later" then why the inaccurate minutiae which clutters Chapter 6, amongst others? Secondly, the statement that some workers were reluctant to permit him to make use of their research prior to definitive publication is probably quite true. The point must be made, however, that his treatment of published works leaves so much to be desired that these workers must now be quite relieved that the hard-won results of their researches did not first appear in print in this book. Let us hope, however, that this book will encourage, perhaps even force, much of this research on the Irish material to be published soon in a full and proper manner.

In conclusion, one cannot feel fully justified, for the reasons stated above, in recommending the book (especially to Irish students), though it undoubtedly contains a very useful and comprehensive collection of data and basic references.

THOMAS FANNING

Rev. Senan Hedderman, O.F.M., *LIFE OF ST. SENAN, BISHOP, PATRON SAINT OF WEST CLARE*, Ennis 1974. Price 10p.

This unpretentious little pamphlet attempts to give an outline sketch of the life of St. Senan and the history of Iniscathaigh (also called Scatterry Island) after his death. In this it succeeds as well as might be expected, though within the scope of only twenty pages this was not an easy task.

The saint's life, as outlined here, is largely based on that compiled from ancient manuscripts in 1645 by the Franciscan hagiographer Fr. John Colgan, then living and working in Louvain, Belgium. Senan was born about 488, at Moylougha, about four miles east of Kilrush. Miracles are reported as having been of common occurrence during his life, the first happening before he was even born: a branch his mother grasped as she was seized with the pangs of childbirth when walking through a wood immediately blossomed! As a young man Senan journeyed on pilgrimage to Rome, and on his return founded several island monasteries before finally settling on Iniscathaigh—where he had first to drive out a fearful monster known as the "Cathach" (after which the island is called) . . . a sign of the cross followed by a command to depart worked the trick, and the monster fled to Lough Dou, near Mount Callan.

St. Senan has, like St. Kevin, been misjudged a misogynist, in his case because of the story about Cannera, a holy but persistent female who wanted to die on the island even though she well knew that according to the rule of St. Senan's monastery no female was allowed land there. St. Senan, in fact, established what was probably the first nunnery in West Clare, at Killeochaille, near Querrin. He died there on the 8th of March (now his feastday) in 544 (date nowhere mentioned in this account), and his body was later conveyed to Iniscathaigh for burial there after eight days of obsequies.

In chapter 3 the author discusses the use of the term "saint"—an interesting digression—while in chapter 4 he provides a short list of some of the main events on the island from 540, when St. Senan was alive, to 1188 when Aodh Ó Beacháin, the last bishop of Iniscathaigh, died.

Some time after the death of the last bishop in 1188, the monastery was made collegiate, twelve priests being assigned to work in the Diocese of Killaloe, on the northern side of the river, and twelve to work in the Dioceses of Limerick and Ardfert, on the southern side of the river. About 1576 this collegiate church was suppressed, and one Nicholas Cahane took over the island—he is perhaps best known for having disgraced himself in 1588 when he refused water to two shiploads of Spaniards from the ill-fated Armada who had dropped anchor off the island.

Chapter 8 attempts to briefly describe the remains yet to be seen on the island. It is, unfortunately, neither accurate nor detailed enough to usefully serve the visiting antiquarian.

All in all, for its price this little pamphlet is excellent value, although one sometimes feels that



it was written more as an act of pious devotion to the saint than as a serious historical effort. Indeed, with just a little bit more effort it might have been greatly improved, not only in content but also editorially—in this latter regard one must once again quibble with the absence of a title-page and of a publisher; in fact, to discover the author's name and the date of publication one has to look at the inside of the front cover!

ETIENNE RYNNE

George Galster, Michael Dolley and Jorgen Stean Jensen, *ROYAL COLLECTION OF COINS AND MEDALS, NATIONAL MUSEUM, COPENHAGEN: PART V, HIBERNO-NORSE AND ANGLO-IRISH COINS*, British Academy, London 1975. Price £8.00.

This, the twenty-second volume in the Sylloge of Coins of the British Isles series, catalogues the Hiberno-Norse and Anglo-Irish coins now in the Royal Collection, Copenhagen. However, the book is much more than merely a catalogue.

The first part of the book contains the introduction and lists of coin-hoards, and of the donors and dealers who have contributed to the Museum's collection, and it further outlines the pedigree of all but a few of the coins in the cabinet. This section further sketches the growth in the study of Irish numismatics in Scandinavia and the corresponding growth in the "Irish" sphere of the Royal Collection. A number of leading Irish numismatists of the nineteenth century are mentioned, pride of place naturally going to Dr. Aquilla Smith. A brief outline of the Dunbrody Abbey hoard, concealed about 1050 and found in 1836, coins from which found their way into the Royal Collection, is also given.

A summary listing of thirty-three coin-hoards, many of which have all or some of their coins in the Royal Collection, is given. All but two of these hoards, the Dunbrody Abbey hoard and a hoard from northern Italy, are from Denmark, and a map showing the findspots of the Danish hoards is included. Those interested in the study of Hiberno-Danish links will find a number of useful references here which are worthy of further attention.

The catalogue proper lists and illustrates 473 coins. There are 22 photographic plates, all of the coins shown on them carefully numbered for easy reference to the preceding text. Thirteen of the plates are devoted to the Hiberno-Norse series, covering from c. A.D. 1000 to the mid-twelfth century and 9 of them to the Anglo-Irish series, covering issues from John, as Lord of Ireland, to George IV's halfpenny of 1823. The illustrations are extremely good, considering the quality of some of the coins. Indeed, for the illustrations alone this book commends itself as a pictorial guide to many of the varieties existing in the "Irish" coin series, and in particular in the Hiberno-Norse issues.

There are some very minor errors in the book, e.g. there are two differing dates given for the finding of the Dunbrody Abbey hoard, 1836 and 1837. However, such are of no real importance and do not detract unduly from the value of the publication.

All-in-all, this is a book to be recommended for any serious student of Irish numismatics, and also as a useful asset to those interested in the study of Hiberno-Danish contacts. It is, certainly, a most welcome addition to my reference library!

PAUL DUFFY

Robert Wyse Jackson, *ARCHBISHOP MAGRATH, The Scoundrel of Cashel*, The Mercier Press, Cork 1974. Price 85p.

"That evil Archbishop", "a notorious manipulator", "a man you love to hate", are phrases which seem to go hand-in-hand with the mere mention of Miler Magrath. So, when I took up Robert Wyse Jackson's, *Archbishop Magrath* with its subtitle, *The Scoundrel of Cashel*, I thought that the long-lived medieval rascal was in for another roasting. However, what emerges is a fresh look at one of the most castigated and neglected of Irish historical figures, one who sat on an episcopal fence for so long that, inevitably, "the hand of every scribe on each side was against him".

Dr. Wyse Jackson is a Past-President of the Thomond Archaeological Society and his prolific pen has brought to life many aspects of our past, both its antiquities and its personnel. His studied portrait of Miler is sympathetically told, avoiding a twentieth-century judgment of a "medieval native bishop", who was not "of the stuff of which martyrs are made". It will prove useful to students



of our past as it seems to be the first attempt to piece together what was, to say the least, an eventful life. To the general reader it is every bit as compelling as a good novel, though even as a novel it might sound too far-fetched.

Miler, the son of an Ulster chieftain, was born in 1522. By the time he died, one hundred years later, he had held six dioceses and thirty livings at a time, excluding what he provided for his family. In 1565 he became Bishop of Down and Connor by papal appointment. The year 1570 saw him as the Protestant Bishop of Clogher and in 1571 he was invested as Archbishop of Cashel. He was financially successful in holding these opposing positions until 1580 when the Pope deprived him of Down and Connor "for heresy and many other crimes". His wife, Annie O'Meara, of Lissiniskey, Toomevara, whom he married in 1575, provided him with nine offspring but never entered a Protestant church and continued to surround herself with Franciscan friars.

Miler antagonised both his fellow Irishmen and his English neighbours so much that he was forced to wear armour and maintain a bodyguard. The foreign, 'card-index mentality' bishops almost succeeded in deposing him in 1612, but he played his trump card of defence by writing to the Pope and obtaining a letter of forgiveness. Had this become known, it would of course have been political, not to mention religious, dynamite. Miler remained as Archbishop. The epitaph on his wall-tomb in the cathedral at Cashel seems as enigmatic as his life and is thought by Dr. Wyse Jackson to be an intentional puzzle. This epitaph and other compositions show Miler to be an exceptionally gifted writer, a point well brought out in the book.

The work is well padded with quotations and comments from Miler's contemporaries setting the sixteenth century scene, but which could be used in any comparable, coeval study. There is no index but a selection of reference books is included.

The slim volume of ninety-one pages is slightly marred by sloppy proof-reading, unattractive typograph and low quality paper—the latter two criticisms, unfortunately, being applicable to many recent publications. Mercier is doing a great service to Irish heritage study in bringing important works to the general public in a popular, relatively inexpensive manner, but books that will have honoured places on our bookshelves deserve better treatment than their other ephemera.

Bishop Wyse Jackson has made another figure from Irish history live. Cashel might be of the Kings, but for me, after reading and studying this commendable work, Miler Magrath will always live there.

GEORGE CUNNINGHAM

Laurence Flanagan, *GIRONA*, The Ulster Museum, Belfast 1974. Price 50p.

The discovery of the *Girona* must rate as one of the most important discoveries in Irish archaeology. It is entitled to this position not because of its outstanding treasure or because of the importance of its finds to social historians and to advocates of applied arts, but primarily because its excavation imposed a completely new vista on Irish archaeology: the study of underwater archaeology.

The *Girona* was not the first Armada vessel scientifically excavated in Irish waters, but the treasure from this galleass re-awakened the Irish interest in the Armada and indulged the human lust for Spanish gold. An aid to its fame and influence has been the publicity which surrounded the vessel almost since it was first discovered by Robert Sténuit in April 1967. Sténuit an underwater archaeologist interested in the post-medieval period, told the story of the *Girona* recovery in his *Treasures of the Armada* (Newton Abbot 1972), a book which was first published in French. The *National Geographic* also published an article on the excavation. But the greatest influence on the Irish public came when the Ulster Museum appealed to the people of all Ireland for contributions to enable them to buy the finds. To pay for the excavation the material salvaged by Sténuit from the *Girona* was sold to the Ulster Museum for £132,000. The Northern Ireland Government contributed £88,000, and a major appeal was launched by the Museum for the balance. Attractively illustrated appeal leaflets were distributed, and Mr. Flanagan wrote articles on the galleass, including a finely illustrated piece in *Ireland of the Welcomes* (January/February 1973). The money poured in, and now the *Girona* treasure is displayed in a specially designed room in the Ulster Museum. The present publication by Laurence Flanagan, Keeper of Antiquities in the Ulster Museum, could probably be viewed as a background report for the exhibition, a report which can be doubly enjoyed because of its many fine illustrations by both visitor and non-visitor alike.

Mr. Flanagan does not re-tell the story of the Armada but confines his account to the *Girona* crew's attempt to reach the protection of James VI of Scotland in the hope of their later return to Spain. This explains why the ship was sailing in a north-easterly direction when it hit Lacada Point, near the Giant's Causeway, in Co. Antrim. Mr. Flanagan writes about each of the important pieces retrieved, especially the Renaissance jewellery, coins, and the domestic furnishings for the Spanish officers and nobility. The booklet is lavishly illustrated with twenty-three plates, eighteen of which



are in colour. There are two maps, one illustrating the general position of some of the other known Armada wrecks around Irish coasts, and the other showing the route of three vessels mentioned in the text. There is also a plan showing the find-spots of the more important objects. Many of the colour plates are now published by the Museum as colour postcards and transparencies and in a teaching kit. A list of reproductions available in gold, silver and base metal, of the coins and jewellery is given on page 27—its need for money for this project has forced the Ulster Museum to use every opportunity offered by the *Girona* treasure in publications, postcards, display and reproductions.

The booklet has a preface by Alan Warhurst, Director of the Museum, explaining the financial background, and a foreword by Robert Sténuit who stresses that underwater archaeology has now developed into a science. His work, and the scientific excavations since carried out by Colin Martin and Sydney Wignall on other Armada ships in Irish waters, has now established a standard for underwater excavation in this country. Mr. Flanagan's booklet is probably the first popular work published on an excavated wreck off the Irish coast. All point to the beginning of a new era in Irish archaeology.

MAIREAD REYNOLDS

Kevin Danaher, *IRELAND'S VERNACULAR ARCHITECTURE*. Published for Cultural Relations Relations Committee of Ireland by the Mercier Press Ltd., Cork 1975. Price £1.50.

This little book is one of a series on Irish life and culture written by the general editor of the series, Kevin Danaher. However, this publication is important in another sense, for while there have been scores of articles published on Irish vernacular architecture, this is the first book to appear completely devoted to the subject. Perhaps for this reason it is disappointing to the student of Irish traditional housing that it is not an up-to-date account of the most recent research on vernacular architecture but rather is a small, successfully well-illustrated, handbook for the curious. The author has indeed published elsewhere numerous important articles on the Irish house in the course of some forty years of professional research, and, incidentally, is a distinguished member of the Thomond Archaeological Society.

In the introductory text a distinction is made between domestic, agricultural, and industrial buildings, the emphasis throughout the book being on the dwelling. Building materials are described thoroughly, and an historical outline is given of the development of the Irish traditional house in its European context, and within the different geographic regions of Ireland.

Of the sixty-eight plates, around which the bulk of the text is written, fifty-five are concerned directly with the Irish dwelling. There are eight photographs of house interiors, and seventeen illustrating constructional details of the walls and roof.

Although certain house types, especially those with a central hearth and jamb wall, are under-represented, regional differences in the layout of features such as hearths, doors, rooms, and outshots are highlighted by the inclusion of five floor-plans so that the reader is left in no doubt that these variations occur within particular geographic areas.

The reference in the introduction to all Irish dwellings being of one basic European type with certain diagnostic characteristics (such as height usually restricted to one storey) is intended to describe the "proto-types" of the dwellings in most areas.

This would have been open to mis-interpretation were it not for the most welcome inclusion of eight plates to illustrate the developed tradition in two-storey houses, and traditional features incorporated in small terrace houses. This serves to emphasise that vernacular architecture in Ireland was not a static feature of the landscape, but has continuously responded throughout history to the changing level of technology and the various building materials and social conditions prevalent in the locality.

PHILIP ROBINSON

Breandán Ó Madagáin, *AN GHAELIGE I LUIMNEACH 1700-1900*, An Clóchomhar Tta., Baile Átha Cliath 1974. Luach £1.50.

In *An Ghaeilge i Luimneach 1700-1900*, the author, Limerick man Breandán Ó Madagáin (now Professor of Irish in U.C.G.), tells us that what he set out to do when writing the book was to show up to what period Limerick could be considered (a) Gaeltacht, (b) breac-Ghaeltacht. He also aimed to give a brief account of the Gaelic culture, at literary and folk level, that was part and parcel of the life of Irish-speaking Limerick. In both aims he succeeded admirably.



The census returns for 1851 show that at that time there were 77,982 native Irish speakers in Co. Limerick, 37.4 per cent of the population, and that in the city there were 4,204 native Irish speakers, 7.9 per cent of the population. Looking at the relevant map, reproduced in the work, we find that the greatest density of Irish speakers was in the southern half of the county, from the Galtee region right across by Kilmallock, Croom, and Rathkeale, to Abbeyfeale and Mountcollins. By 1891 the total number of Irish speakers in the county had dropped to 16,000, with the highest concentration in the barony of Glenquin, in the south-west.

The author quotes various references to the continued widespread use of Irish in Limerick in the first half of the nineteenth century, and mentions that as late as the 1860s interpreters were still being employed in the courts there. He traces briefly the learned, or literary, tradition of the language in Limerick that survived through the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and continued into the nineteenth century, a tradition that expressed itself in the work of the poets, Ó Bruadair, Mac Criath, Ó Tuama, Caomhánach, etc., and also expressed itself in the eighteenth century *Cúirteanna Éigse*, or Courts of Poetry, that flourished in Bruree, and later in Croom.

Irish manuscripts were continually being copied, and new ones compiled, in both county and city, where they circulated among those who could read the language. They included manuscripts of Céitinn's *Foras Feasa* and *Trí Bior-Ghaoithe an Bháis* (in some of the loveliest and most graceful Irish prose ever written), as well as collections of poetry and tales.

Other aspects of the Gaelic culture of Limerick treated of in the work include the music and song of Co. Limerick (with special reference to the collections of Co. Limerick man, P. W. Joyce), printing in Limerick, 'keening' in Limerick, and folktales of Limerick. From various manuscript collections, at home and abroad—in the National Library, R.H.A., in Aberystwyth, etc.—Dr. Ó Madagáin has compiled a list of manuscripts written in Limerick, or that were found in Limerick. As well, he gives an accompanying list of the Limerick scribes who wrote, or owned, the manuscripts. There is scarcely an area in the county that is not represented, as we see from the map which indicates the locations—approximately sixty in all—from which the manuscripts came. There can be very few surviving Limerick manuscripts which are not noted in Dr. Ó Madagáin's excellent book, though I came into the possession of one a few weeks ago which has not yet been recorded.

The change in recent historical time by a people from one language to another, as happened in Ireland, has no parallel in Europe. Yet historians can write about nineteenth-century Ireland and never mention this most extraordinary occurrence. One wonders why. *An Ghaeilge i Luimneach 1700-1900* shows how tenaciously the old language held out in Limerick down to the early years of this century. That the story of the Irish language in Limerick during the period 1700-1900 is recounted in Irish surely shows that something has been accomplished in the revival of the language.

MAINCHÍN SHEOIGHE

Leo Daly, *OILEÁIN ÁRANN: THE ARAN ISLANDS*, Albertine Kennedy, Swinford 1975.  
Price £4.50 (Paperback £3.00).

Yet another book on Aran, those islands which are topographically, geologically, botanically, archaeologically, and almost every other way in Co. Clare but which are politically and administratively in Co. Galway. But this book is somewhat different from all the others. Not only is the format unusual in that it is much wider than it is high, but the text is brief and concise, if occasionally somewhat bitty, and the photographic illustrations are not only plentiful but really excellent—they are mostly the products of Source Photographic Archives. All-in-all the result is a most attractive book and one all amateurs of the Aran Islands should try to acquire, even if it at first sight appears a trifle expensive—it is not, really, in this day of pricy publications.

The book starts with a brief but rather engagingly written "Introduction", which is followed by a rather sketchy chapter of "History". This starts with the legendary background, followed by some comments giving the results of recent research on the origins and identity of the Firbolg and suchlike. All fascinating stuff, if not entirely relevant. However, the real historical matter follows in outline form, all fair enough and including some otherwise not easily obtainable information—though one objects to the use of the term "Danes" when "Norse" or "Vikings" is meant . . . thanks to the fact that we now speak a foreign tongue we nowadays tend to equate *Lochlannach* with *Dane* (the Vikings who raided England were from Denmark) rather than with *Norse* (the Vikings who raided Ireland were from Norway).

Two pages on the geophysical structure of the islands follow, and then, on page 20, a truly memorable, if uncaptioned, photograph of lazy-beds and an openwork stone wall—a very fitting



introduction to a two-page chapter on "The Land" which is followed by another short one on "Climate". The latter chapter incorporates a transcription from a headstone in Killeany graveyard, at the southern end of the largest island, erected over the grave of Michael Dirrane who died in 1817 in his 119th year (does this mean he was 'only' 118 years of age?). On the headstone are listed the average temperatures, rainfall, hours of sunlight, and other related facts! Was Michael Dirrane one of our first weathermen? Whatever the answer, this headstone illustrates not only the type of fascinating titbits of interesting if not necessarily useful information to be got from this book, but it also demonstrates the rewards which can be gained from investigating even relatively modern graveyards.

A percipient chapter on "The People" is next, one which includes two pages on their customs and traditions in which, incidentally, interesting and informative comments are made concerning the very obvious but rarely discussed *Leachta Cuimhne* or Cenotaphs found on Inishmore. Such monuments are a feature of Co. Galway; there are also a couple just across the county boundary with Mayo, near Cong, and a related monument at Toberpatrick, on Corker Hill (Rossallia townland), a few hundred yards outside the county boundary with north Co. Clare, but they are nonetheless clearly a Galway phenomenon.

Following on one-page chapters on "Wild Flowers" and "Birds of Aran", there come the three most important chapters in the book, those describing places and monuments on the three islands, Inishmore, Inishmaan, and Inisheer. Although there are some minor facts in these chapters which might usefully be corrected or augmented, the information provided is adequate for guide-book purposes and sometimes unusual enough to provide interesting speculation for the more expert reader. Sins of omission occur, such as the absence of mention of the cross-inscribed pillars at and not far from Teampall Chiaráin and the exceptionally fine recumbant cross about a hundred yards or so south of Na Seacht dTeampaill.

The book ends with short chapters on "The Currach", "Kelp", "The Life-Boat Service", a longer one on the "Fishing Industry", and a useful bibliography.

Perhaps the only serious complaint which purchasers of the book are likely to make concern the numerous misspellings (resulting mainly from misprints, one hopes!), and the oftentimes poor punctuation. However, such faults are of no great importance and can be easily corrected by the aggravated reader. This book can be safely recommended for all, foreign and native tourist alike—useful to take away either as a souvenir or as a record of interesting miscellaneous information.

ETIENNE RYNNE

Mainchín Seoighe (compiler), *SEAN CHILL MOCHEALLÓG: OLD KILMALLOCK*, Cummann na Máighe, Kilmallock 1975. Price 40p.

This little booklet of twenty-five pages is published in celebration of European Architectural Heritage Year. One of the unusual features it incorporates is that on pages 4 and 5 a short summary of the town's history is given in Irish, English, French, Spanish, German and Italian.

In the year 1571 James Mac Maurice took the town with the help of the warlike troops of the Clan Sweeny and Clan Sheehy, and they were consequently engaged for three days and nights in carrying away the several kinds of riches and precious goods, such as cups and ornamented goblets, to the woods and forests of Aherlow. "They then set fire to the town, and raised a dense, heavy cloud, and a black, thick, and gloomy shroud of smoke about it, after they had torn down and demolished its houses of stone and wood; so that Kilmallock became the receptacle and abode of wolves, in addition to all the other misfortunes up to that time." This account, which is given in the booklet, is taken from John O'Donovan's translation of the *Annals of the Four Masters*, and well illustrates the tragic history of much of Munster in that century of the Desmond Rebellion and also in later years. Kilmallock had been the beautiful capital town of the Desmond Geraldines, and its fate and that of Munster generally stand in stark contrast to that of Kilkenny and the lands of Ormond which were saved from devastation—so much so that Kilkenny today retains the character of a European town, unlike the ruins which have earned for Kilmallock the title of "The Baalbek of Ireland".

In 1775 Dr. Campbell, in *A Philosophical Survey of the South of Ireland*, stated that upon leaving Buttevant he had thought that the *ne plus ultra* of human wretchedness was then passed; but Kilmallock was before him—he turned through an arch under an old castle into a spacious street composed of houses which, though magnificent, were roofless and windowless. In 1826 a traveller referred to the town as being entirely composed of old castles joined to each other, the only inhabitants being a few country people living in the tops and bottoms of these buildings, like birds





and rabbits. Kilmallock seemed to him to be "the court of the Queen of Silence". An article in *The Dublin Penny Journal* for 1832 states that much of the ruined magnificence of the town was of a period subsequent to the fall of the Desmonds, and that the majority of the houses were of the reign of James I. Many of the castles, gates, and surrounding walls, however, were connected with the Geraldine power. This article, however, went on to state that Kilmallock had been in a state of desolation and decay since the time of Cromwell and that the recent return of population was fast hastening the devastations of time and, excepting its ecclesiastical remains, in a few years the town would have but little vestiges of its former splendour.

This little booklet not only gives the relevant extracts from such authors, but also provides a series of pictures of the town's historic ruins, notes in Irish and English on the history of the town, an annotated list of the surviving monuments and a sketch-map showing their topographical positions. The publication is a credit to all concerned and demonstrates the strength of the town's justifiable pride in its architectural heritage.

GERARD A. LEE

Patrick Shaffrey (editor), *IRISH ARCHITECTURE—A FUTURE FOR OUR HERITAGE*, National Committee for European Architectural Heritage Year, Dublin 1975. Price free.

In these inflationary days, something for nothing is a rarity and all too often not worth the picking up. But when that something for nothing is as well done and as attractively set out as this little booklet on Irish architecture, then it is well worth a deal of trouble to acquire a copy.

The format is pleasing, the illustrations well chosen and imaginatively arranged, and the text admirable as a condensation of a complex subject into a few pages. The various authors examine "The Meaning of the Heritage", "The Character of Our Towns", "Categories of Buildings", "The Protection of Buildings: the legal aspects", "Can We Afford Conservation?" and, finally, "Preserving Buildings". There are also invaluable appendices dealing with the types of structures to be found in Ireland and organisations concerned with their study and conservation.

On the threshold of vast industrial and commercial expansion as this country appears to be, with the obvious enormous pressures of material developments on our heritage, it is sad to have to read that there is no comprehensive national system of grants for conservation as such, but encouraging to note a spirited support for a national conservation policy.

Indeed, a little booklet to be treasured, and readily obtainable by simply taking the trouble to write to: National Committee—EAHY-75, St. Martin's House, Waterloo Road, Dublin 4. It is the best free "bob's worth" you're ever likely to get!

L. B. MAYER-JONES

E. Estyn Evans (editor), *HARVEST HOME: THE LAST SHEAF—a Selection from the Writings of T. G. F. Paterson relating to County Armagh*, Armagh County Museum, Armagh 1975. Price £4.95.

This selection from the writings of T. G. F. Paterson is published from the Armagh County Museum for the origin and development of which he was very largely responsible and of which he was curator from 1935 to 1963. It contains twenty-seven articles, only four of which have been previously published. The others have been chosen from a huge corpus of articles, notes and lectures that he donated to the Museum and which includes twenty-five volumes of typescript, amounting to well over a million words, in addition to a large mass of unclassified material. The bibliography of his published writings, compiled by D. R. M. Weatherup, his successor in office, occupies eleven pages of the present volume and contains 184 entries, comprising four books, 114 contributions to learned periodicals and 66 newspaper articles. By far the greater part of this enormous output relates to County Armagh: its antiquities, history, architecture, natural history, folklore, folklife, institutions, place-names, families and personalities. It would, indeed, be difficult to name any aspect of human activity within the county in ancient or recent times to which Paterson has not made some contribution. There can have been few persons so alive to so many aspects of their environment and so assiduous in noting every iota of information which enlarged the understanding and appreciation of it.

This breadth of interest is reflected in the contents of this memorial volume which, in addition



to reproducing his excellent studies of harvest customs, St. Brigid's Crosses and the bowling game locally termed "Long Bullets", contains articles on Armagh outlaws of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries; the organs, organists and bells of St. Patrick's Cathedral; the county railway 1841-1957; the Presbyterian congregation of Loughgall; the Brontë family in the north of Ireland; coursing and apple-growing in the county; the sham fight at Scarva; a blind Tandragee clockmaker; a collection of folk beliefs and fairy lore; historical accounts of Lurgan, Portadown, Castledillon, Benburb and Richhill; together with a number of essays on other facets of county history. Although some fifteen of the items are the texts of lectures delivered at meetings of local societies, they are far from being the perfunctory recitals of jejune data so frequently inflicted on such audiences. They embody the fruits of much original research and the detailed references to the sources drawn upon compensates the reader for the lack of a formal apparatus of footnotes.

In its magnitude, quality and variety, Paterson's corpus of writings, published and unpublished, is a remarkable achievement. It is all the more remarkable in view of the fact that its author had received no more than the legal minimum of formal education and had worked as manager of an Armagh provision store until the age of forty-seven. This most exceptional, soft-spoken, self-effacing man is introduced to us by his old friend, Professor E. Estyn Evans, who has edited the volume. His account incorporates some reminiscences by Professor Oliver Davies, with whom Paterson collaborated in the publication of many field monuments and archaeological discoveries in Armagh and the neighbouring counties, and a biographical sketch by Paterson's nephew, Rev. John T. F. Paterson. Something of the elfish humour so characteristic of the man has been caught by the artist in the portrait which forms the frontispiece to this tribute to his memory.

A. T. LUCAS

Patrick O'Donnell, *THE IRISH FACTION FIGHTERS OF THE 19th CENTURY*, Anvil Books Ltd., Dublin 1975. Price £1.00.

The literature of faction fighting is extensive. Writers who wove the theme into their include stories William Carleton and Donncha Ó Céileachair. With the former it was a fact of social life, while for Ó Céileachair it was a folk memory. Yet his story of the funeral of Neil Chonchubhair Dhuibh carries the atmosphere of ancient feud and fierce combat from the end of the faction fighting era. As he says, "Bhí dlí mall fuar na cúirte ag teacht in ionad dlí fiáin teasaí an bhuaileáin".

It is difficult to diagnose the multiple loyalties and local animosities which made factions a feature of nineteenth-century Irish life. Patrick D. O'Donnell in his book, *The Irish Faction Fighters*, does not analyse the causes of the disturbances with which he deals. One witness in the first half of the last century said: "It is a remnant of the old barbarous Irish system of clanship". Another witness, before a parliamentary inquiry into disturbances and riots, observed a love of fighting as being "a very prominent feature in the character of the peasantry". This witness said that he, as a magistrate, had seen as many as five or six hundred, or even a thousand, involved in these affrays.

The weapons used by contestants could be lethal. Firearms were occasionally carried, but by far the most common weapon was an ashplant with a solid knob. This was sometimes weighted with iron spikes and was always held by the middle and thus used as much for defence as for attack—basically faction fighting was more a fencing competition than a deadly combat.

The rival factions fed on the bitterness of family and local rivalries. The Shanavests and Caravats of the Fethard region were similar to the Caffees and Ruskavallas of Abington, Co. Limerick, and to the Bootashees of Ballywilliam, and the Bogboys of Capparoo, near Nenagh. The Darrigs, who resided between Kilcommon and Borrisoleigh, found in the Cumminses, who resided on the Toomevara side of Borrisoleigh, their main opponents. In many ways the authorities followed for a long time what has been called a policy of despair—let the people fight it out. Medical men like Silvester O'Halloran could add to medical science by their experience of cracked skulls, but there seemed nothing positive which could be done to end the affrays.

It fell to Thomas Drummond in the 1830s, as Under-Secretary, to reorganize the police force and to use the constabulary in strength at points of expected conflict. While Drummond did not end faction fighting, certainly he succeeded in curtailing it. When Irish bishops, like Archbishop Leahy of Cashel, threw their weight against the custom, the force of public opinion was to effectively kill the traditional feuds. Perhaps, too, the floodgates of emigration being opened in the post-famine period helped to drain away many of the young men who might otherwise have kept the factions in being. Rivalries, too, found other outlets in the growth of organized sports before the end of the century.

Commandant O'Donnell's book presents a very full record of numerous faction fights (with





special chapters devoted to each of the North Munster counties) and is a useful reminder of a social phenomenon which was a marked feature of Irish life before the Great Famine.

TOMÁS P. Ó NÉILL

Patrick C. Power, *THE BOOK OF IRISH CURSES*, The Mercier Press, Dublin and Cork 1974. Price 90p.

At the time when far too many writers tend towards over-elaboration and repetition, this book comes as a refreshing surprise. Into a little less than one hundred pages Mr. Power has packed much information of interest both to the general reader and even to the academic. He sets out to give his readers a thorough understanding of the "Irish Curse" in all its many varied forms—the method of its invocation and its often disastrous effects. His descriptions are at all times concise and to the point, and his references are many and range over a wide area of Irish literature and folklore.

In the past, the formal curse differed greatly from the unpremeditated, unthinking utterances of the would-be curser of today. The uttering of a curse was often accompanied by a ritual or rituals, which could vary from place to place. However, certain rites, like the "turning of the stones" or the uttering of a curse from a high place, would appear to have been fairly widespread.

Much in Irish cursing would appear to be pre-Christian in origin—Mr. Power argues this by pointing out the presence of cursing-stones, etc., at many Early Christian monastic sites. This fact, coupled with the frequent mention of the "Saint's Curse", would seem to strengthen this belief. In fact, the "Saint's Curse" is seen by Mr. Power as an effort by the saint to prove himself the cursing equal of his pagan predecessors.

The author's catalogue of curses covers the whole of Ireland, from the frightening hereditary curse of the Beresford family in Co. Waterford, which has brought death by violence or suicide to seven generations of the family, to the vicious cursing of the Ulster poet Peadar Ó Doirnín who was disappointed in love and vented his frustration by cursing the one-time woman of his dreams. The examples given range in time from the Early Christian era right up to the curse of Lord Arran on the Irish people which appeared in a newspaper column in May 1974.

Towards the end of his book, the author provides a list of a number of curses used through the ages in Ireland. Many of these are accompanied by their original Irish versions and this shows the natural richness inherent in the Irish language, be it used for praying or cursing. The English translations appear flat and stunted beside their Irish originals, and it is only after reading this particular chapter that we get any idea of the power which must have emanated from the mouth of any Irish poet as he cursed those who were bringing about the destruction of the Gaelic system.

In closing, Mr. Power must be complimented on his successful blending of his many sources—sources which maintain and strengthen the reader's interest from start to finish and which make this book, despite its superficial appearance of being lightweight, train-journey reading, a worthwhile addition to most libraries.

JAMES JOYCE

John G. Merne, *A HANDBOOK OF CELTIC ORNAMENT*, Mercier Educational, Cork and Dublin 1974 (reprint). Price 90p.

Originally published in 1931 (though this is nowhere mentioned in this reprint), Merne's *Handbook* in its present paperback form is probably the most readily available work on designing in the "Celtic style" today. As such, its influence is likely to be widespread among designers, both amateur and professional, who have recently become interested in the style. While their experiments are to be encouraged, Merne's book as a guide can be recommended only with reservations.

To the book's credit are its breakdown of complex patterns into simple units, its clear, step-by-step text and illustration of methods for constructing original patterns, examples of common faults in interlace and how to correct them, and examples of both ancient and modern Celtic-style work.

The title of the book is, however, somewhat misleading for two reasons. The treatment of any Celtic motif other than interlace is superficial and/or unsatisfactory and although students are encouraged to study ancient work, the examples presented for copying have whatever modifications Merne saw fit to make. Merne's style is not strictly traditional; what the student learns is not so much "pure" Celtic ornament as Merne's treatment of it.

The first two plates in the book are devoted to symbols or ideographs "found in primitive art



which are derived from a common origin". These plates are the key to Merne's approach. In his original introduction (not included in this reprint) Merne stated: "... the writer, after an exhaustive analysis of all types of Celtic Decoration, having assured himself that the principle underlying this Art depends on the use of the few Symbols or Ideographs from which he has evolved all the intricate designs in this book, now proposes to place the student in possession of his methods..."—Merne felt that he had discovered not only a method but an underlying principle. In the short Mercier Press introduction, Caoimhín Ó Marcaigh states that the book "takes a few basic symbols or ideographs and develops them into a systemised method of construction"—the enthusiasm in the original introduction is gone. Merne's thesis that Celtic ornament is based on simple ideographs is reiterated later in the text, but seems merely incidental there.

However, the rest of the book is devoted to very clear presentation of the method. Possibly its most beneficial feature for the beginner is the demystification of interlace: a systematic procedure replaces hopeless meandering. A plate showing common faults and how to correct them provides added encouragement. For designing symmetrical interlace in panels, two "new and original" techniques are presented, one involving the use of mirrors.

Spirals and fret-patterns are given cursory treatment with none of the depth or anticipation of problems and possibilities given interlace. Merne's frets, especially, do not really resemble "classical" Celtic fret patterns. His real strength is with interlace but, ironically, one of his most irritating weaknesses is found in his interlace-work as well. This is his repeated assertion of the superiority of squared corners: "by squaring out the ribbon to fill the space, a better and more restful design may be got"; "the squaring of the corners or outlines produces a sense of rest and stability in the ribbon-work, and at the same time gives a real decorative feature without in any way interfering with the original characteristics of the design", etc. What is meant by a "real" decorative feature is not explained. In this reviewer's humble opinion there is a great deal of interference with the original characteristics of Celtic design. It is not "restful" because it obtrudes so emphatically as being of a different time and spirit. Merne's own designs remind one more of Art Deco than of ancient Celtic art. He was inspired by old Irish design and it led him to a style of his own: there is nothing wrong with that, but his title should reflect more accurately the personal nature of the style in the book. "A Handbook of Celtic Ornament (Merne School)" would be clearer. To be sure, Merne never claims that his examples represent ancient Celtic ones, and he "reiterates the advantages of constantly sketching... the numerous examples to be found on crosses, metalwork, and other objects bearing Celtic ornament, so that the student will be enabled to learn the various phases of that work, and thereby produce original work of a high standard, and full of the spirit of the old craftsmen". But this exhortation and the one plate bearing examples of ancient work are more or less drowned by the verbal and visual reflections of Merne's own style.

The other major work on designing in the Celtic style, also recently reprinted, is George Bain's *Celtic Art: The Methods of Construction*, Glasgow 1951. Comparison between the two is inevitable. Bain's examples are all taken directly from ancient models. His own work and that of his students is presented but he does not suggest "improvements". He treats all aspects of the art with equal thoroughness, although his treatment of the calligraphy (with which Merne does not deal) leaves something to be desired. His method, like Merne's, grew out of long study of ancient work, but the findings of the two differ greatly. Merne found a few symbols or ideographs to be the basis of the designs, and presents his method as the combination of design units. Bain found a complex system of mitres, compass-work, careful measurement and numerical precision at the root of Celtic designs. While Merne presents his designs and shows how he constructed them, Bain presents designs from manuscripts and stones and shows how he thinks they were constructed by ancient craftsmen. Reference to original works is more direct with Bain.

The description of design construction methods in the Lindisfarne Gospels by R. L. S. Bruce-Mitford (published in the monograph accompanying the Urs-Graf facsimile, 1956-60) is based on evidence left on the vellum, such as compass-marks: "we see not what the artist *might* have done but (so far as the evidence stretches) what he *did*." An illuminating comparison is made with Bain's methods (Bruce-Mitford was apparently unaware of Merne's work). According to the study, "a highly sophisticated compass-style, expressed in rigid geometry, lies beneath the easy convolutions of the... designs... It was not just a question of the carrying over of metalwork designs from the pagan background into the monastic scriptoria. A whole system of mechanics was carried over and duly elaborated... Most of the methods worked out by Mr. Bain receive direct confirmation from the evidence that survives in the Lindisfarne Gospels... Interlace certainly was much less mechanical... On the other hand the Lindisfarne curvilinear ornament was far more bound by geometry than... Bain supposed."

Thus of the two most readily available works on methods of Celtic design, Bain's is both more thorough and more historically accurate. Merne's idea of basic symbols as units is inaccurate (at least as far as pattern construction goes) and is limited in its possibilities. His personal style is too overpowering for a work ostensibly dealing with an ancient style. But his book can be highly useful



in overcoming a student's reservations about attempting complex designs, and his basically freehand interlace is probably similar to the original method of making minor interlace or odd-shaped panel ornamentation.

Any designer intending to work in or from the Celtic style should use Merne's book only in conjunction with reproductions of ancient work. But it is by saturation in original Celtic art work, until able to think in Celtic designs, that the modern designer can even hope to catch the spirit of the ancient style: once that is achieved, any instruction book will be necessary only for reference. The work of Merne and Bain provides an introduction to grasping forms and motifs of ancient Celtic art, but with only form and not the spirit, modern Celtic-style work will emerge as but a lifeless parody of the original.

PAT MUSICK

C. Conor O'Malley, *WITH A FISHING ROD IN IRELAND*, Vantage Press, Inc., New York 1975. Price £3.00.

It may seem inappropriate for a journal devoted to past times to notice a book devoted to a pastime. Nevertheless, Conor O'Malley's *With a Fishing Rod in Ireland* is more than a guide to flies and fish. It contains the author's views on Ireland's historic remains and reflects the interest which he, a former President of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society, has long shown in these matters. Indeed, one contribution to the book, by the editor of this journal, is a rather original addition (pp. 146-155) to the literature of fishing—a guide to sites of prehistoric and historic interest near Ireland's major fishing rivers and lakes. Etienne Rynne's quick tour of Irish waterways is accompanied by a map showing the sites which he lists. If the fish are not biting, North Munster fishermen will not have to travel far to satisfy other interests as they wander along the banks of the Deel, the Maigue, the Fergus, or the Shannon and its tributaries. Indeed, the fishermen may themselves be hooked by archaeological bait so unobtrusively and expertly presented.

THOMÁS P. Ó NÉILL