BOOK REVIEWS


This attractively produced book was published to accompany an exhibition of photographs, but can stand firmly on its own as a useful, academic publication. The book is plentifully illustrated with first-class photographs, each with a detailed descriptive caption, but its real value is in the main text providing the scholarly commentary. Although the book specifically deals with the "Figure Sculpture of the Lough Erne Basin" (its sub-title), such is the quantity and quality of the material from the area that the text provides a most useful discussion of related sculptural work throughout Ireland.

Apart from the Introduction, Maps, and References, there are five chapters. These are:
1. Idols of the Celtic Religion: 3rd century B.C. to 5th century A.D.;
2. Christianity: Statues and High Crosses 9th to 11th century A.D.;
3. Romanesque Figure Carving: 12th century A.D.;
4. The Medieval Period: 13th to 16th century A.D.;
5. Post-Medieval Folk-art: 17th to 20th century A.D.

If one wanted to quibble at all about these chapter-titles it would be to state that they are not numbered in either the list of Contents or as chapter-headings, but are numbered (but not titled) in the References, something which does not assist when checking the footnotes.

The text is full of excellent bits, but one can also find minor points with which to disagree. The good bits include the clear, concise account of the cult of the human head in the Celtic world on pages 14-15, the really first-class general account of the change-over from paganism to Christianity on page 33, undoubtedly the best available discussion on the White Island sculptures on pages 34-38 and 44-50, the truism on page 55 that "Irish Romanesque is more a decorative than an architectural style", and the interesting few comments on Sheela-na-Gigs (she spells the first part as "Sheila") on pages 56-58 and 70.

The White Island "grinning lewd woman" points up one of the less good bits—on page 36 we are told that "it too can be demonstrated as fitting into the overall Christian framework", but we have to wait until page 44 for the demonstration, and even then it is not clearly given—it is better presented on pages 56-58!

One could quibble also with her suggestion on page 57 that male exhibitionist figures should be termed "Seamus-na-Mogairle" (James of the testicles), as one could readily argue that more than "na mogairle" are required, indeed normal, to indicate a male figure. The author provides us with two such specimens, one on the well-known window top from Berrymount (more generally referred to as being from Tomregan), Co. Cavan (no. 19 in the book), which appears to be male but which has a rather doubtful set of testicles—below/behind the buttocks if at all! The other is a corbel-like sculpture from Aghalurcher, Co. Fermanagh (no. 20), which from the illustrations appears more likely to be a caryatid than a male exhibitionist figure—the so-called testicles (below the chin!) are surely at least equally likely to be the terminals of a collar, while the allegedly upturned legs appear more likely to be raised arms.

On page 39 it is suggested that the well-known "Bishop's Stone" at Killadeas, Co. Fermanagh (no. 16), "may have served for a time as a caryatid", something which would seem rather unlikely to this reviewer. In fact, she rejects this reviewer's suggestion that the carved stone head on it is probably pre-Christian and opts for "a 9th, 10th or possibly 11th century" dating for it. If a pagan date is accepted, something which would agree with the presence in the same graveyard of a phallic pillar-stone (mentioned on page 52) and the large holed stone nearby (not mentioned, but surely the "female" accompaniment to the pillar-stone), then the peculiar ridge running from the side of its mouth could represent whatever was held in the hole-in-the-mouth of some known pagan heads, a feature (mentioned on page 19) which was identified as indicative of the pagan period by this reviewer in 1966.

On page 33 we are told that "several centuries may have elapsed between the carving of the latest pagan idols and the earliest Christian figures in the 7th and 8th century", but one wonders why—surely it is quite on the cards that pagan idols continued to be carved up to the end of paganism in the area, something which could easily have lasted until the 7th or 8th centuries in places? Why the author
suggests such a gap in the continuity is not at all clear, especially as one of the strengths of this book is the clear evidence she has collected for such continuity, and not just from pagan to Christian times but right down to modern times.

Other minor points of disagreement include the suggestion on pages 70 and 78 that the two heads from Cleenish, Co. Fermanagh (nos. 30 and 31), are more likely to be from effigial tombs than to be pagan, and that head no. 23, on Devenish, wears a high mitre with broken top—it is surely the end of a columnar moulding, indicating that the head served as a “stop”. One should also point out that the numbers 22 and 23 given for the two heads in the relevant illustration (on page 71) should be transposed, as should the two location maps (but not their captions) on pages 112 and 114—this is a cartographical (not a printer’s) error.

But despite the above critical comments, might I emphatically repeat that this is a most useful and worthwhile publication. Helen Hickey has produced a most valuable and interesting collection of material, and in doing so has demonstrated the lingering on through the centuries of an artistic tradition in a way which forces acceptance—the photographic record and accompanying text prove the point beyond doubt. The book is recommended to all, and all can afford it at the extremely reasonable price.

Etienne Rynne


In this well written account of the barony of Kenney attention is concentrated on the historical events which have affected its inhabitants down the centuries and on the lives of persons who played a prominent role in local movements and episodes. It lists the early ecclesiastical foundations and castles with notes on the historical associations of the individual sites. There are chapters on the Norman settlement, the Desmond rising, the 17th century plantation of the district, the schools of different types and times, the graveyards and their memorials, the names of fields and other topographical features, and on the succession of parish clergy. Of particular interest is an enumeration of all the townlands of the barony, with the Irish name and area of each, accompanied by notes on the historical personages and events connected with it. The material has been well researched and, although references to the sources are somewhat capriciously given, the book is to be welcomed as a substantial contribution to local history. Proverbial wisdom cautions us against judging a book by the cover, but it is a pity that the cover of this publication has been disfigured by reproducing on it, in red, a map of the parishes of the barony (repeated within, on page 192), the drawing and lettering of which are painfully amateurish. Not the least deplorable feature of this “adornment” is that it almost obscures the author’s name.

A. T. Lucas


In any of the general histories of Ireland that I have read or dipped into, the Knights of Glin, though they have been lords and masters of this West Limerick territory since about 1260, have never, as far as I can recall, merited a paragraph. A footnote perhaps or a mention in an appendix or index, but that is all. One would have thought that sometime during this seven hundred years some member of the family would have secured for himself a niche, even if only an infamous one, in the history of our country. But no; somehow they never quite made the first division, but Father Gaughan’s book, though it makes no attempt to exalt them into this top bracket, will insure that they are not relegated. It belongs to that imposing list of Anglo-Irish family histories, too numerous to mention; and on reading it one wonders how the family has escaped the historian’s pen for so long.

Undoubtedly, it is one of the best books produced in Ireland this year. Well printed, well illustrated, and with neat and apposite vignettes ornamenting the heads of each chapter it is a pleasure to hold or flick through. The most fastidious of book dilettantes will find it difficult to pick holes in the Genealogy of the Knights of Glin (a five-fold pull-out appendix), in the several other appendices, in its imposing bibliography, and in its full index. Even its end papers showing the parish of Kilfurgus of Glin in 1841 are informative as well as clearly and pleasantly drawn.

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As we know, especially from his Listowel and Its Vicinity (Cork 1973), reviewed in this Journal, 16 (1973–74), 91–92, Father Anthony does his homework very well—possibly almost too well. All through the book is a genealogist’s paradise, certainly one that The Irish Genealogical Society will write rave notices about. However, as many of its readers may not be that genealogically inclined, they may tire of his endless “tracing”. It is one thing to know to whom any particular knight was married, but giving her pedigree through several degrees of kindred, as sometimes happens, can be a little tiring and, I submit, unnecessary.

The Knights of Glin were, for the most part, rather thriftless, often practical jokers and rarely with enough money to pay their way, or to live up to the Jones’ of their time. Though very few of them were absentee landlords, many of those who remained at home playing billiards, hunting, gambling, or sailing on the Shannon, while they managed perhaps through their humanity to ingratiate themselves with the affections of their tenants, did little one way or the other to earn canunization. They usually backed the wrong horse as well: naturally on the Desmond side in the Desmond uprising, they supported the House of York in the Wars of the Roses, were losers in the internecine fighting between the Desmonds and the Earls of Thomond in the middle of the sixteenth century, and they put their money on James I. But all praise to them: they had a sort of patriarchal interest in their tenants—and while it cannot be denied that there were a few decayed apples in the basket, the wonder is that there were not many more.

The author enlivens the book with vivid pen-pictures of some of his characters, especially the more earthy ones. But is he too concerned with fact? Has he missed something we ordinary readers would expect in such a book? Perhaps it lacks atmosphere? I think the defect I have in mind is something which Gilbert K. Chesterton has put much better than ever I could: what I would like to see is, as he put it, “A larger outlook and a larger perspective of the whole story”.

Patrick B. Lysaght


James Napper Tandy is a name known to many Irish people because of a ballad called “The Wearing of the Green” but, beyond his propensity for taking people by the hand, they know little or nothing of the man. Now, in a full-length biography, Rupert J. Coughlan has brought together what information he could uncover about this remarkable eighteenth century figure.

Mr. Coughlan is to be congratulated on the diligence with which he pursued his research. He has had access to family papers as well as to the principal state records in Dublin, London and Paris, and has also drawn on a wide range of contemporary and secondary printed sources. The result is therefore a well-informed book, filled with new information delineating the shadowy figure of the ballad in the firmer lines made possible by solid research.

Professor Sile Ni Chinnéide some years ago wrote of Tandy: “He was no nation builder. He was, indeed, probably the ugliest, most conceited and most bombastic Irishman who ever ranted about the rights of man and the sacred duty of tyrannicide. But nobody could doubt his sincerity or that there was a hard core of courage in the man that nothing could break.” Mr. Coughlan’s portrait is more flattering. For him “Tandy was ahead of his time in political thinking and not, therefore, always understood. He embraced republicanism from the outset of the French revolution and strove to give effect to its principles in the face of insurmountable opposition. He was an orator of the Jim Larkin and Ian Paisley brand—forceful and able to get through to the man in the street on his level”.

Can these descriptions be reconciled? To my mind they can. An orator like Larkin and Paisley could be described as a bombast. Being ahead of his time in accepting French ideas does not make Tandy an original thinker or prophet of nationhood. This book adds greatly to our knowledge but its conclusion fails to change fundamentally the role in history of James Napper Tandy. It makes the subject clearer and is valuable for that. It stresses the heroic in Tandy, yet it does never hide his faults. The man that emerges, however, is no political philosopher. He came to prominence as a Volunteer in the Duke of Leinster’s regiment which he joined in 1779. He was secretary of the Dublin Society of United Irishmen and participated in a French descent on the Donegal coast in 1798. He died in 1803 as a General of a Division in Napoleon’s army at Bordeaux. But was the erstwhile Dublin iron-monger a soldier? Certainly we get no evidence to suggest that he had any military talents.
This book is a worthwhile one, but it is a pity that greater care was not taken with proof reading. The errors are minor but they occur far too frequently. Finally, the eighth plate of the twenty-five pictures in the book is not a photograph of Newgate but of Kilmainham Jail.

THOMAS P. O'NEILL

Donal Moore (editor), **WALES IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY**. Christopher Davies, Swansea 1916. Price £3.95.

This beautifully produced collection of essays is a model of what can be done in a well planned co-operative venture. True, some of the contributors make a more narrowly local contribution than do others. For example, Mr. Bernard Morris confines his study of farm-houses and cottages to the Gower peninsula just west of Swansea, an area no more than fourteen miles long by eight miles wide. This essay is balanced by the account by Patricia Moore of the building of a landlord's mansion and orangery in Glamorgan, but while class balance is maintained one would wish for comparative information from other regions of Wales.

Professor Harold Carter's essay, "The Growth and Decline of Welsh Towns", is a model of clear thinking and of wide reading. In particular, he recognises the forces at work in the growth of villages and towns, the changing patterns of settlement depending on improved transport, the economic forces accounting for changes, the sometime significant contribution of landlord initiative, and so on. One has but to read Professor L. M. Cullen's *Irish Towns and Villages* (Dublin 1978) just to see how the same topic can, in other hands, be treated in deadly dull, uninspiring, and superficial fashion.

Each essay in this collection has its own charm and in almost every instance the reader is driven to ask himself "why not a similar study for Ireland?". One of the essays has an even more direct association with this country, namely Mervyn Hughes's "Thomas Telford in North Wales, 1815-1830". While it is true that this essay seems to fall outside the strict limits which the title of the volume appears to impose, its omission would have been a loss, for it was the road-building of Telford in north Wales that opened up that area to commercial development in the nineteenth century. But, for Wales this happened almost by accident. It was Irish M.P.s, especially Sir Henry Parnell (later Lord Congleton), who provided the political drive to influence the construction of the Holyhead road which came to be called the Great Irish Road. Telford's engineering skill as a bridge and road builder was to help in the centralisation of administrative power in Whitehall and to reduce Ireland's position under the Act of Union all the more clearly to being that of a subservient province.

This book is well worth reading. One can linger over many parts of it. It is excellently illustrated and a credit to its editor, Mr. Donald Moore of the National Museum of Wales.

THOMAS P. O'NEILL


The recording of monumental and tombstone inscriptions is of importance particularly to the genealogist and much work of this nature is being done in Ireland. The result can be found in such journals as *The Irish Genealogist* and *The Irish Ancestor* as well as occasionally in antiquarian journals, notably R. Henchion's work as published in the *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*. The Thomond Archaeological Society encourages the compilation of such lists and would gladly provide space in its journal for their publication. There is a certain urgency about the matter in that many Church of Ireland churches for instance—and these churches are the richest in monuments—have been deconsecrated and put to other uses and consequently the information contained on their monuments may well be lost. Coupled with this is the fact that information from graveyards may also be lost as many are overgrown and their tombstones damaged or indecipherable. The author of this notice is aware of only a few instances at the time of writing, apart from the booklet under review, where lists of tombstone inscriptions in County Limerick have been recently compiled and published: Mainchin Seoighe lists inscriptions at Bruree and Tankardstown in his book *Bruree* (1972) and M. J. Dore lists Ardcanne in *The Irish Ancestor*, Vol. IX No. 1 (1977); Grange, near Newcastle West, and Ardpattern are to be published in due course.
In the meantime the Dean Emeritus of St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick, the Very Rev. M. J. Talbot, has produced an important list of such inscriptions. It is a substantial booklet of 111 pages, including 8 pages of photographs, and is a complete list of the monumental inscriptions in the Cathedral. The inscriptions are listed alphabetically under surnames with notes on the person or family commemorated. Many of the monuments are described and their location in the Cathedral given. All the inscriptions are fully transcribed and where necessary translated. This work will be of interest and use not only to the genealogist and local historian but also to even the casual visitor to the Cathedral. One can only hope that where Dean Talbot has led the way others will be encouraged to follow and that soon we shall have a list of the vast number of monuments in the grounds of St. Mary's, not to mention the many other Limerick churches and graveyards.

J.D.L.


To this reviewer, at least, silver is not the Prince of metals, it is the King. This little booklet has done nothing to dissuade me from that view—in fact it has only reinforced me in my opinion. It is a gem of a booklet, if one can be permitted such an expression in this context, in being both readable and informative, and full of delightful illustrations.

The author obviously knows and loves his chosen subject. After a brief introduction, he gets down to the main topic—Irish silver manufactured in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Stating early on that the history of silver reflects the social changes in Irish life during this period, Mr. Bennett then proceeds to illustrate many of these changes through various items of silverware which were popular at one time or another. Indeed, the book is full of fascinating insights into the social history of the period—from the special design of candlesticks to the rise and fall of chocolate as a drink. We are all familiar with the silver cups awarded as prizes for various events, but how many know that they evolved from the two-handed cups introduced into Ireland by Huguenot silversmiths towards the end of the seventeenth century? Queen Anne's passion for horse-racing was responsible for the evolution of the sporting cup, as she presented cups for races in which her own horses ran "so that a toast could be drunk to her and her winning horse". Mr. Bennett does not, unfortunately, inform us of what happened when the good Queen's horse lost!

The various styles are each described and their rise and fall in public taste are charted in—rococo, repoussé, neo-classical. All styles are profusely illustrated. The author gives us a fascinating comparison between the "bright cut engraving" of the neo-classical period of the late eighteenth century and the third century methods used by an unknown Roman artist who made the four gilt horses of San Marco, in Venice.

Before concluding with a brief note on present-day silver manufacture in this country, Mr. Bennett regales us with the interesting anecdote about the finding of the Tara Brooch and the revival of interest in Celtic Art; a subject dear to our learned Editor's heart—the illustration on the back cover, showing a late nineteenth century Irish cup with interlacing, demonstrates why our Editor is so enthusiastic about this art form. Indeed, Professor Rynne's informed and infectious enthusiasm seems to have sparked off another revival of interest in Celtic Art!

As I have said earlier, this is a gem of a booklet. Mr. Bennett is enthusiastic without being overpowering, knowledgeable without being pedantic. He has the light sure touch of a master in his subject. This publication is indeed a joy to have, is immensely good value at the price, and is to be highly recommended.

PAUL DUFFY


This tribute to Sister Mary Concepta Lynch is of interest both regarding her work and as an introduction to the "Celtic Art revival". It includes a brief biographical note (excerpted from an earlier article by the late Dr. George A. Little), introductory remarks by Professor Etienne Rynne,
and photographs of Sr. Concepta's creations; the oratory whose walls she covered in her adaptation of "Celtic Art", several paintings on linen, and examples of the stencils she used for applying her designs to the oratory walls.

The greater part of the book is devoted to the illumination of the Oratory of the Sacred Heart, in the Dominican Convent, Dún Laoghaire. Numerous photographs give an excellent idea of the riotous colour and complexity of the oratory's decoration. Professor Rynne's perceptive text points out a number of features that might otherwise be overlooked; for example, Sr. Concepta's method of harmonising her 'Celtic' designs with a non-Celtic statue and stained-glass windows. The photographs tend rather more to emphasize details than show an overall view of the work as a building's interior, although this is compensated to some extent by those that do show larger areas.

Limited in format though the book is, its general presentation in pictures and text is good; still, more complete treatment of some aspects could well have been made. The only dimensions given are those of the internal floor area; fortunately the door appears in several of the photographs, making it easier to visualize the size of the work. One of the most fascinating qualities of the oratory designs is that they are architectural: the visitor is practically standing within a manuscript carpet-page. This might have been emphasized by one photograph including a figure in the oratory. Appreciation of scale would also have been aided by indication of the stencils' measurements, and stencil illustrations could have been linked to the photographs showing their finished designs in the oratory. No description of Sr. Concepta's media is given, and the type of paint used and the nature of the wall surface (plaster? dry or wet when paint was applied?) are not mentioned. There is no indication of sources for Sr. Concepta's motifs other than early Irish illumination, although some creatures seem almost to have come out of a medieval bestiary. Further studies—perhaps by Professor Rynne or by someone introduced to the subject by this book—will no doubt fill in these gaps eventually.

Professor Rynne's introduction refers briefly to the late nineteenth century revival of Celtic Art. Although his earlier, longer article [TOPIK, 24 (Pennsylvania 1972), 29-36] on the subject is mentioned, it is relatively difficult to find, and a somewhat lengthier treatment of this revival might have been in order in this book. What is new, and important, however, in his division of the revived art-style into two Schools, a Traditional one and a Pan-European one. He names Sr. Concepta's oratory as the chief work of the Traditional School of 'modern Celtic Art', but it is a pity that space apparently did not allow of some discussion of the other works of the two Schools. Hopefully he will enlarge on all this in some future, more lengthy publication on the subject.

A Shrine of Celtic Art is an excellent introduction to Sr. Concepta's masterpiece and to the Celtic Art revival. The text, though brief and concise, is not only informative but contagiously enthusiastic, and, together with the photographs, will doubtless inspire greater interest in modern 'Celtic Art'. Certainly it is to be hoped that many readers will visit the oratory—the only way fully to appreciate Sr. Concepta's marvellous achievement.

PAT MUSICK


This little booklet is comprised of a title page, an excellent page-and-a-half headed "Reamhradh", and a list of 546 words (no. 153 is missing), almost all Irish or Irish-derived, which are, or until very recently were, in everyday use in the author's neighbourhood, the parish of Kilfarboy, in West Clare (for the local history of the area see his KILFARBOY—A History of a West Clare Parish, reviewed in this Journal, 18 (1976), 89).

Although one might quibble at the term "Gaelicisms" to describe all the words in this list—many of them might be better termed "Anglicisms"—one cannot quibble with the value of such a record. Twice within recent years we have seen similar local word-lists published in our Journal (in 1968 and 1975), and it makes an interesting linguistic study to compare the three. One is much hampered, however, by the total absence of accents in the present instance. This absence of the sine tada makes the correct pronunciation liable to misinterpretation, e.g. no. 34 of this list "Bán, Headlands in garden. Otherwise new ground filled in ridges for potatoes. I sowed a quarter of ban this spring". Other words merely look funny, e.g. Ath, Botun, Mam, Ron, Sno ("She made a sea of herself when she lost her temper"). I blame the laziness of the printer for this—no. 172, Crampán, proves that it was not due to printing technicalities that the accents were omitted elsewhere.
Many of the words listed ought to have been omitted, e.g. such as "Drar, A pair of drawers or under-pants. His wife made him a new flannel drars" (was it ever used in the singular anyway?); "Gaf, a hooked instrument for catching fish" (i.e. a gaff); "Hum, A word or title [sic]. There was not a hum nor a haw out of him"; "Rap, a blow on the head"; "Rascal, A rascal". Others such as "Rinneal, A rinsing or light wash" might be just about allowed make the grade, but what does one say to "Feic, A sight or dreadful spectacle. A mess. You made a feic of the whole job"? It's an interesting version!

Although open to such criticisms, this word-list should not be too readily dismissed, for despite its limitations it does add to our knowledge and will undoubtedly help the social and linguistic historians of the future.

Etienne Rynne