

## Book Reviews

C. E. O' Riordan, *Extinct Terrestrial Mammals in the National Museum*, The Stationery Office, Dublin 1980. Price: 75p.

This booklet, besides being exactly what the title indicates, is, at the same time, rather more. It is an informative, accurate, slightly simplified account of extinct Irish mammals in its own right and will be of interest to both the outright beginner and the professional zoologist.

It begins with a brief sketch of the sequence of events in the Irish Pleistocene (the 'Ice Age') followed by a list of the relevant exhibits in the Natural History Museum in Dublin. However, the bulk of the text is devoted to a species by species treatment of our extinct mammals. While this is obviously intended for the layman, the author's manifest personal knowledge of the subject and his concise style make this booklet a useful item for the serious mammalogist, not least because of the care taken to distinguish between what is actually known and what has been surmised. Indeed, several species are gathered together at the end under the heading 'animals of doubtful Irish provenance'.

The only criticism that might be levelled is the absence of a list of primary sources to the literature. But, because the booklet is intended as an introduction to the beginner, this is perhaps irrelevant.

JAMES FAIRLEY

Maryangela Keane, *The Burren*, The Irish Heritage Series, no. 30, Eason and Son Ltd., Dublin 1980. Price: £1.50.

This attractive little booklet, beautifully illustrated with finest quality coloured photographs, is a commendable effort to encapsulate within a few short pages the magic of that marvellous region of northwest Clare popularly known as 'The Burren' (the use of the definite article is generally considered incorrect by the more pedantic). Indeed, the author has extended the scope of her book beyond the accepted limits of the region, bringing in such interesting places adjacent to but not actually part of the Burren as Dysert O'Dea, near Ennis, and Kilmacduagh, Coole Park and Tulira Castle, all near Gort in Co. Galway. But those places are so closely linked with the Burren proper that such licence is not only justified but adds greatly to the value of the book.

The author starts with a brief outline of the topography of the region, following this with an account of the archaeology, the latter section unfortunately marred by some minor inaccuracies and not helped by poor editorial work. These lapses, however, are soon redeemed by the longer section on the flora which follows, the author's acknowledged speciality and main interest. The book then finishes with brief glances at the mineral resources, the birds, the fishing, the goats of the Burren, the major literary figures associated with the general and surrounding region, the caves, and at the internationally famous spa at Lisdoonvarna, concluding with a few well-chosen and most necessary words on a Code of Conduct, e.g. "DO NOT DIG UP, OR PICK PLANTS . . . Leave nothing but footprints, take nothing but photographs".

Taken all-in-all, the Burren has been well served by this little publication. Indeed, if only for the marvellous evocative view of the rocky Burren hills across reed-edged Lough Bunny (not named in the text and the only lake not named on the map inside the front cover), the book is well worth having—oh to have a poster of that photograph in one's home!

ETIENNE RYNNE

George Cunningham, *Burren Journey West*, Shannonside Mid-Western Tourism Organisation, Limerick 1980. Price: £2.50.

This publication is not so much the booklet it appears to be as a real book. Running to almost a hundred pages, it is packed with interesting, useful and valuable information, and must surely take its place at, or at least near, the head of the list of best guidebooks ever produced in Ireland. Of convenient size to carry around easily, being neither too large nor bulky, it fulfills all the essentials for a guidebook as well as providing much more in the form of many fine illustrations and a wealth of fascinating information, detailed yet never boring.

As will be realised from the above, I am very impressed by this publication—welcome and all as George Cunningham's *Burren Journey* was [reviewed in this *Journal*, 20(1978), 86-87], this one is much more so. It is more ambitious than that first guide, wandering well off the main circuits (there are two, insofar as the route outlined is a figure-of-eight one), and thus offering the traveller much more for his money than he is likely to need in any one visit to the area.

The area covered is the whole western part of the Burren region, *i.e.* that west of a line from Ballyvaughan to Lisdoonvarna to Lahinch, apart, that is, from the initial run from Kilfenora and a slight detour to Ailwee Cave. This is an area never before covered in such detail in any guidebook, even though with its Cliffs of Moher, Lisdoonvarna spa-wells, Black Head's marvellous views across Galway Bay and to the Aran Islands, and all its archaeological attractions, one would have thought the region would by now be so well dealt with that a new publication would be unnecessary.

Few guidebooks are ever likely to be free of minor faults, and one can point to a few in this book too, though nothing serious enough to bother the visitor. Misprints are few (*e.g.* Dr. Mount on page 7 for Dr. Mant, and Doonagore for Doonnagore on pages 81-83) and not worth emphasizing here, but there are a few small errors of an archaeological nature which might be mentioned for correction in subsequent editions.

There is nothing "unfinished" about the high cross in the NW corner of Kilfenora churchyard, for instance, while the ring-barrow described as being the nearest excavated example to those in the region is that at Grannagh, near Ardahan, not at Oran Beg (p. 14); nor, on the basis of the three or four excavated to date, is it justified to say that the central mounds of some ring-barrows are in the nature of monuments "or to foil grave robbers". The sentence following that statement might have been better off omitted altogether—why should the burial be dedicatory, and what are "earth circle ritual sites"? This reviewer's excavation in Fanore Sandhills also receives honourable mention, but to say that I was unable to find dating evidence for it is a trifle unfair—readers of the 1968 number of this *Journal* will find on page 11 that a date "within the first twelve centuries after Christ" was suggested for it. Whatever about that, however, it is surely rash to suggest that the middens in Fanore Sandhills are of Mesolithic date—there is, as yet, no evidence for Mesolithic man anywhere in Munster, much less along the west coast of Ireland; the Fanore middens may be Neolithic but are probably even later.

It would, however, be churlish for even the most fastidious archaeologist to be put off by any such minor, easily correctable, errors. Indeed, he will be more than adequately compensated by many of the other useful comments on the numerous archaeological monuments of all periods described by the author. An added bonus is that some archaeological sites are described and illustrated here for the first time, *e.g.* the Court Tomb at Teergonean, near Doolin, discovered by Professor M. V. Duignan and Dr. John Waddell, of University College, Galway, in the late 1960s which is briefly discussed and illustrated on pages 89-90. What a pity that the author did not mention the interesting cashel not far from it, and likewise within a hundred or so metres from the shore, in which is a most unusual souterrain—a straight natural crevice in the rock roofed with transverse lintels.

One surely need say no more. This little book is a real treasure, and a credit, first and foremost, to its energetic and enthusiastic author, but also to its printer, the Wellbrook Press, Kilkenny, and to 'Shannonside', its publishers. To them all, the grateful thanks of everyone are due.

ETIENNE RYNNE

T. J. Barrington, **Discovering Kerry Its History, Heritage and Topography**, Blackwater Press, Dublin 1976.  
Price: £10.00.

Since convention has it that a book should be reviewed shortly after publication, the present review of a book published almost five years ago is unusual. Why it was not reviewed previously is another story, but since it is a large and impressive book, its review, even at this late stage, can, I think, be justified.

The work is divided into three main sections. The first, entitled appropriately "Memories", is a 120 page resumé of Irish history from legendary times to the present, in which the author brings in Kerry's not inconsiderable part in that story at every opportunity. It is history not for the specialist but for the average man, though some professional historians might benefit from the author's talent for simplification and clarity. Nowhere are we overburdened with confusion genealogical pedigrees, unnecessary discussions as to the causes and effects of events, or the dull enumeration of petty feuds, of which Kerry possessed its share. Amateur history if you will, but the author has an eye for the interesting detail and a facility of phrase which brings whatever he is writing about into sharp focus. For instance, when speaking about Killagha Priory, he writes: "...it was laid down that no Irishman could be a member of the community... Notwithstanding the special emmollience of life in Kerry this rule was long adhered to... These monasteries were not unique in their apartheid. There is reason to believe that monasteries staffed by Irishmen applied the same rule in reverse". Or when, writing about the Old Countess of Desmond, he inserts the not-too-well-known bit of hearsay that "she is reputed to have renewed her teeth twice", which somehow fixes her in our mind more than her celebrated fall from a cherry tree at the age of 140.

The second section, of 58 pages, entitled "Things" dwells on certain places and objects to be seen or that were originally found in Kerry, and is, in a sense, an elaboration of the previous section. Beginning with a geophysical account of the county, it endeavours to give a bird's eye view of the scenery and of Kerry's flora and fauna.



What can be gleaned of Kerry during the Stone, Bronze and Iron Ages, and of its many pre-Christian remains, is then explained. Following this, the Christian period with its churches and other artifacts is brought to our attention, followed by an account of the county's Medieval castles, Big Houses, and even the humble dwellings of the poor. This is possibly the least satisfactory section of the book, as the author, from the abundance of his material, endeavours to cram too much into his pages.

The third section, "Places", is the best and most practical section, a must for the tourist interested in Kerry's history and topography. The author seems to have traversed every breen in the county, and his practical instructions as to how to find a particular spot are models of clarity and accuracy, *e.g.* "Drive to Gallwey's Bridge and walk up along the road, past the sheep-pen, and through a ford. Here, on the left, is a very good 'rocking stone'". One suspects, however, that his knowledge of North Kerry is rather thin. Not that he loves North Kerry less but South Kerry more.

The book, a handsome and well designed quarto or 336 pages, with double column print, contains over 200 half-page and quarter-page illustrations—reproduction of photographs, prints, drawings and old maps. These, inserted on almost every page, add greatly to its attractiveness. It neither is or looks stuffy, for the author is entertaining as well as informative.

If other counties should find a Barrington it would add greatly to our enjoyment and knowledge of our island's story.

PATRICK B. LYSAGHT

Joan and Ray Stagles, *The Blasket Islands*, O'Brien Press, Dublin 1980. Price: £8.80.

What, another book on the Blaskets? Tomás Ó Crohan, Maurice O'Sullivan and Peig Sayers, have they not told us all one would wish to know about the social and cultural life of those people who clung like barnacles to their primitive life-style on those windswept islands, until their final exodus to the mainland in 1953? These talented writers have certainly sieved most of the gold from the Blaskets, yet modern outsiders like Joan and Ray Stagles can, I believe, still unearth little nuggets of knowledge from there, not perhaps from those on the mainland who once lived on the islands, but from various untapped records and manuscripts.

While the native writers, writing from the inside but with a certain critical aloofness, have given us a unique account of the legends, the sayings, and the wealth of folklore connected with the islands, they are too close to their subject to fill in those gaps in our knowledge which we, the curious onlookers, are wont to ask—when were the islands first inhabited, how did they fare during the Famine, did the islanders avoid the Land War because of their remoteness?—and so on.

It might be said that J. M. Synge and especially Robin Flower who, during a number of intermittent holiday visits to the islands over twenty years, described sympathetically island life from the outside. They did; but they were not all that concerned with filling in the historical background, preferring to describe life as they found it on the islands.

This is without doubt the value of the present book; it is a well researched historical account of the islands and their inhabitants, which fills in these gaps in areas that have not been very well explored by others. There is a revealing chapter on the field system, another on the island village and its houses, and the efforts of the Protestant missionaries to proselytise by means of food distributed to the island's children during the Famine is very well told.

Above all, this is a well illustrated practical book, one which will lead those who have but a vague knowledge of the islands to a reading of these classics of the Blaskets, and eventually, I would surmise, to a pilgrimage to these now near-deserted islands where somehow, amid the desolation and the silence of the sea, amid the ruins and the rabbit-burrows, one can still sense the charm and the primitive grandeur that once was there and is now no more.

The authors' suggestion that the Great Blasket be made a National Park or Trust will be welcomed by everyone who knows the islands. Unfortunately, while proposals along these lines have often been made, nothing has been done. And in these times of recession it would take a super optimist to expect anything to be done. A Great Blasket National Park? No way in the foreseeable future, I fear.

PATRICK B. LYSAGHT

D. Newman Johnson, *Irish Castles*, The Irish Environmental Library Series, no. 61, Folens Press, Dublin 1980. Price: £1.00.

Authoritative publications on Irish castles are rather scarce and students and scholars alike have relied for many years on H. Leask's *Irish Castles and Castellated Houses* first published by Dundalgan Press in 1941 and, to a lesser extent, the recent *Castles of Ireland* by Brian de Breffny. One welcomes, therefore, this new booklet from Folens Press which, although written in simple language for the benefit of its younger readers, nevertheless contains much of the recent research undertaken by its author. Mr. David Newman Johnson, as Inspector for National Monuments in the Office of Public Works, has drawn on his wide experience in the supervision of conservation and restoration works on all forms of Irish castle. The many detailed and colourful drawings are not only an enhancement of this publication but reflect, in the care and attention bestowed on them, the professional approach of the trained architect.

Beginning with a brief glance at earlier stone fortifications the booklet then treats of the great earth mounds or, more correctly, the mottes-and-baileys erected by the Normans from 1169 onwards. There is an elaborate reconstruction drawing of one of these campaign castles on page 4. Whilst mention is made on page 5 of the re-use by the Normans of earlier prehistoric burial-mounds, it should also be explained that they clearly made even more frequent use of abandoned ringforts or raths. These latter earthworks provided ready-made 'foundations' for the mottes and must have considerably reduced the time and labour involved in this type of castle building.

In subsequent sections of the booklet the author traces the development of the medieval castle, from the great stone towers or *donjons* of the thirteenth century—using Trim castle as a model—to the emergence in the latter half of that century of the 'great stone walls', where the strength of the defences lay in the emphasis on the outer fortifications. The booklet then goes on to describe and illustrate in some detail the various parts of a castle and their function, together with an interesting account of the methods and weapons used in a siege, including a brief note on early types of cannon. Both these sections and that on the life and people in castles are illustrated by the skilful use of figured scenes based on medieval drawings.

The author also devotes some pages to the most common type of Irish castle (though he does not mention this fact), namely the tower house and its allied forms. There are over three thousand examples of the tower house or fortified residence in the country, the majority built between 1450 and 1650. One small criticism of this section concerns the reference on page 20 to the towers at Kells, Co. Kilkenny, where the author neglects to state that these towers formed part of the great Augustinian Priory, the best example of a fortified medieval monastery in Ireland.

This brief survey of Irish castle-types concludes with an account of the later seventeenth century plantation castles and a look at some fortifications closer in date to our own time, such as the star-shaped forts, the Napoleonic forts (Martello towers, etc.), and a final page on the pseudo-castles of the nineteenth century Gothic revival.

All-in-all, this booklet forms a very useful and informative introduction to the story of castles and fortified residences in Ireland and, in my opinion, is clearly the best illustrated volume in this excellent series. I, for one, am eagerly awaiting a definitive work on Irish castles, now overdue, which I have no doubt will be forthcoming from the pen of its author.

T. FANNING

G. A. Hayes-McCoy, *A History of Irish Flags from Earliest Times*, Academy Press, Dublin 1979. Price: £25.00.

'Flag-waving', a synonym for chauvinism and belligerence, in Ireland tends to be local and factional. The star-spangled banner not only waves over the land of the free and the home of the brave but symbolises its continental unity. The union flag, as its name implies, binds together England, Scotland and Wales under a single emblem. Irish flags (including the same union flag), which attempt a similar unifying office here, end up as the banners of sect or party. For almost every Irish flag there is a bull to whom it is a red rag.

This undoubtedly lends a special interest to a history of these emblems. It makes somewhat difficult the task of dealing with the subject. The late Professor Hayes-McCoy was better qualified than most to undertake the enterprise, with his learning in Irish military history and his long experience in the National Museum. His book was almost but not quite ready for the press at the time of his sadly early death. It was then prepared for posthumous publication by Pádraig Ó Snodaigh.

The author explains that he has attempted in this work 'to trace a development of ideas' and he addresses the problem of factionalism. "To my way of looking at it, any flag which was carried by Irishmen to mark them as such, including flags of Irish regiments in the British army, is an Irish flag. I have not been selective of Irishmen, nor have I taken sides; I have merely tried to work all of their flags into a single narration". In this commend-



ably ecumenical purpose he succeeds. He also attempts, with fair success, to be comprehensive.

The story hardly begins before the Late Middle Ages, although there are a few references—not very clear—to earlier emblems of Ireland. Three golden crowns on a blue field (nowadays figuring on the flag of Munster) appear to have represented Ireland in medieval times, but Henry VIII, for reasons which have not been ascertained, changed to the harp, which he placed on his Irish coinage. Since his time the harp, at first displayed on a blue field but later on a green, has been the most consistently used symbol of Ireland. Henry VIII introduced it when he was still Lord of Ireland, before he assumed the title of King, but from its very earliest appearance the harp is crowned. The crown first depicted is a jewelled gold band with trefoil fillets. In the eighteenth century there sometimes appears a similar crown with very plain triangular fillets, and this seems to have been taken as representing the 'ancient crown of Ireland.' While the golden harp on a blue field continued until the present day in the arms of Ireland, the harp on a green flag first appears in the seventeenth century (the flag of Owen Roe O'Neill) and then reappears in the late eighteenth century as the most commonly accepted national flag. In the Repeal years and later it tended more and more to be the *nationalist* rather than the national flag. From the days of Young Ireland onwards, the tricolour of green, white and orange makes occasional appearances. It flew beside the green harp flag over the Dublin G.P.O. in 1916. In spite of its symbolism of the compact of orange and green, this too became the flag of a single tradition rather than of a united Ireland.

Dr. Hayes-McCoy's book traces these developments in great detail and provides much interesting and out-of-the-way information, illustrating how people expressed in symbols the way they saw themselves, their country and the politics of the day. There is enquiry also into the union flag, which in one or other of its forms has floated as a state emblem over places in Ireland from the reign of James I until the present. The red 'saltire of St. Patrick,' which came to form part of the flag after the Act of Union, is, like much in the background history of flags, something of a puzzle, the resolution of which is addressed without complete success in the book.

This is an amply illustrated work, with many black-and-white pictures, backed up by a generous number of colour plates. It abounds in political and military symbols—banners of regiments, clubs, unions, associations, in Ireland and abroad. It is a very good browsing book: every banner illustrated has a meaning and attempts to convey a message, so that there is constant stimulus, aided by the author's commentary, to pursue by-ways of history, many of which lead unexpectedly back to highways.

LIAM DE PAOR

John Teahan, *Irish Silver*, National Museum of Ireland; The Stationery Office, Dublin 1979. Price: £1.60.

Sub-titled "A Guide to the Exhibition" (of silver from the National Collection), it is, as exhibition catalogues go, a good one.

Having read it through, my first reaction was to visit the exhibition. It was a rewarding visit. While I must confess that over the past few years my visits to the National Museum were for the sole purpose of viewing the contents of their numismatic display cases, this time I confined my visit to viewing the silver exhibition. Catalogue in hand, I spent two very enjoyable hours perusing the display; the catalogue was an invaluable asset, one may almost say an essential one. The publication, however, is much more than a mere catalogue—it is, in its own right, a good reference work.

The introductory pages provide a brief outline of the development of Irish silver, the Dublin Goldsmiths' Company and their hallmarks, and also an account of the various styles of Irish silverware with the approximate dates and main features.

The main body of the text is given over to a commentary on the twelve cases in the exhibition: Church Silver, Drinking Vessels, Vessels used for serving Alcohol, Tea, Liquid Foods, Solid Foods, and Condiments (covering five cases), Stands, Lighting (both ceremonial and personal), and Provincial Silver (covering three cases). Of particular interest to readers of this *Journal* is Case 11, exhibiting several items of Limerick manufacture; unfortunately, none of the items are illustrated in the text. However, plate 48 illustrates the Limerick Marks. It is a pity that the Joseph Johns' sauceboat from c. 1750 is not illustrated; in the reviewer's eyes it is as worthy of illustration as some of the other pieces illustrated.

There are forty-nine plates published in this guide, illustrating some ninety-four pieces of silver ware. Included is an eleven-piece toilet-set by John Phillips (1680), a particularly beautiful set. Unfortunately the scale is so reduced that the detail on the smaller pieces is not clear. Some of the pieces deserved colour illustration to show them off to their best advantage, particularly the 'bright cut' silver. It is also a pity that some of the pieces were not shown enlarged, in particular the sugar tongs by John Egan (Plate 36, 4).

Each section commences with a note about the particular types of ware in the particular case. Each item in the case is listed, catalogue style, with occasional notes on individual pieces. The uses to which various pieces were put is also explained. As well as the explanatory text, the book contains a very useful Glossary and a brief but

comprehensive Bibliography. Also included are two blank leaves, at the front and back, for private notes, a most welcome addition.

There are a few flaws in the catalogue however, albeit minor, but they do tend to spoil the overall effect. As well as the comments made above in relation to the illustrations, some large spaces are left that might usefully have been filled with either enlarged details of some of the pieces or, indeed, illustrations of some of the provincial silver. On some of the pages the print runs very nearly to the bottom of the page, something which could make things awkward for binding purposes.

All-in-all, though, this is very good value for money, and even if one failed to visit the exhibition it is worth acquiring by anyone interested in Irish Silver.

PAUL DUFFY

Muriel McCarthy, *All Graduates and Gentlemen: Marsh's Library*, O'Brien Press, Dublin 1980. Price: £8.80.

It could be argued that one with a penchant for antiquarian books, as I have, is probably the one person who should, on no account, be asked to review this book, as the temptation to praise it with superlatives galore may prove irresistible, thus giving a false impression to the general reader who cannot be expected to delight in, for example, the fact that Marsh's Library contains about eighty incunabula, or that (and I quote) "there is probably the most important Pynson printing in the Stillingfleet collection, the *Psalterium cum Hymnis*, printed by him in 1524 (STC 2nd ed. 16262)".

The book consists of four long chapters, two of which will only interest librarians and that increasingly large number of people interested in antiquarian books. In these chapters the author leads us on a leisurely conducted tour through the library, taking down many books from the shelves, and telling us a surprising amount about them—their importance, their rarity, their provenance, and so forth. This is where the author succeeds in imparting a great deal of semi-technical information in a readable way. Besides bringing home to us the value and uniqueness of Marsh's Library, what she has written is in another sense a history of printing from 1456 when the Gutenberg Bible appeared to circa 1750. A reading of these chapters with, for example, an easily procured Penguin, *Five Hundred Years of Printing* by S. H. Steinberg, would give anyone interested a very extensive knowledge of books and printing.

But it is the first two chapters, telling of Archbishop Marsh and of the Library which he founded, that will interest most readers.

Narcissus Marsh (1638-1713) Provost of Trinity, Archbishop of Dublin, and later, Primate of Armagh, was a man of many parts. Disliking worldly business, he found Trinity "very troublesome" and "the young scholars, rude and ignorant". Though very handsome he disliked matrimony, and had several narrow escapes from ladies with substantial dowries. A committed music lover, he was also deeply interested in mathematical problems, comets and scientific instruments. His knowledge of insects and particularly of caterpillars was second to none. He invented a new lamp to enlighten a large hall or church, and one evening he found a way to measure the moon's distance from the centre of the earth without the help of the parallax. He gave, at least, one new word to the English language, namely "microphone".

A man of learning, virtue and gravity, his zeal for the reformed religion made him intolerant of anyone not of his persuasion. In the parliament of 1697 it seems that he took a leading part in drafting the Banishment Act, one of the most severe of the Penal Laws enacted about this time.

He had, as well as many admirers, his quota of enemies, including Jonathan Swift, who in his *Character of Primate Marsh* wrote these biting sentences: "He is the first of human race, that with great advantages of learning, piety and station, ever escaped being a great man... He is so wise to value his own health more than other men's noses... No man will be either glad or sorry at his death, except his successor".

His lasting achievement is, of course, the library named after him. When, as provost of Trinity, he saw that students were allowed to study in the library only in the presence of the Provost or Fellows, he decided, "to build a library in some other place for public use". From there on fortune seemed to smile on him. He was able to purchase Stillingfleet's books, about 10,000 volumes, the finest private collection in England; his first librarian, Dr. Elias Bouhercau, who had to flee with his family from France because of his religious beliefs, brought his excellent library with him and donated it to Marsh's. In 1745 the Bishop of Clogher bequeathed his books to the library. And since the present librarian has written such a fascinating book on the library, fortune would appear to favour Marsh's still.

Handsomely produced, designed and printed, with notes to each chapter and with a bibliography and index, it is gratifying to see that it is printed and bound in Ireland.

PATRICK B. LYSAGHT



Rev. John Fleming (Editor), *The Pope in Limerick*, Diocesan Offices, Limerick 1980. Price: £2.50.

The scope of this book is indicated by a curiously eighteenth century style title page: *The Pope in Limerick containing a brief conspectus of the History of the Diocese of Limerick together with the Homily of the Holy Father John Paul II delivered at the Mass in Greenpark, 1 October, 1979 also the Speeches on the Conferring of the Freedom of the City and a General Account of that Great Day*. The historical conspectus or, as the preface more prosaically puts it, "potted history of the Diocese", originally appeared as a series of five articles in the *Limerick Leader* immediately prior to the papal visit. The virtual impossibility of presenting an adequate treatment of each period in the space available placed severe and obvious strains on each contributor, and the occasion of the reprinting might have been used to allow them to expand their original articles. This would have enabled Fr. John Fleming in the first section, dealing with 'The Celtic Church in Limerick', to clarify his reference to "the long standing antagonism between the Declan and Patrick tradition in Munster", which remains tantalisingly unexplained, and to have avoided giving the impression that organisational reform in the Irish church was an eleventh rather than a twelfth century development. Within his self-imposed confines, Fr. Fleming, author of a highly praised history of his native parish of Ardpatrick [reviewed in this *Journal*, (1978)] and the general editor of this work, provides a sensitive and well balanced treatment of the period from the fifth to the twelfth century.

The section on 'The Mediaeval Church in Limerick' is written by another distinguished Limerick priest-historian Canon James Culhane. A lifetime of commitment to the study of Limerick history and archaeology is clearly evident in his superlative treatment of the diocese up to the Reformation. The establishment and development of the diocese, its notable personnel, the introduction of the new religious orders, are all integrated into a clear and coherent narrative. The material evidence, whether buildings, metalwork or manuscript, is not neglected, and the discussion of source material is a further valuable and very welcome bonus. The laity gets its chance in the next section, where Mainchín Seoighe, doyen of local historians in Limerick, deals with the emotive era of 'The Reformation and Penal Period'. Both the national and local scene are well integrated in his account which is based on a wide variety of source material, both original and secondary, which he commendably identifies. The necessity to condense so much material into a short circle creates the impression that the Reformation was consistently and relentlessly enforced, with martyrdom a common occurrence. Much persecution and suffering undoubtedly occurred, but there were also many periods of relative toleration and the consensus of historians now is that the failure of the Reformation in Ireland was due ultimately to a failure of implementation. It is interesting also to compare a layman's lament for the extinction of the monasteries with the comment of another Limerick priest-historian, Fr. Brendan Bradshaw, that "it is difficult to find any ill effects of the suppression of the religious houses" (B. Bradshaw, *The Dissolution of the Religious Orders in Ireland*, 1974, p. 229). He goes on to suggest that Henry VIII unwittingly helped the church in Ireland by his weeding out the secularised, corrupt, deadwood of Irish monasticism, leaving the field clear for the new vigorous Counter Reformation orders in the early seventeenth century. Different interpretations are, after all, the life blood and fascination of history.

Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh writes on 'The Emancipation Period', and the touch of the professional historian is clearly evident. In enviably crisp prose he expertly integrates the political, social and economic background with the outline of ecclesiastical developments. Fr. Edward O'Callaghan had the difficult task of writing on 'The Twentieth Century' diocese, and he takes us confidently from the controversial episcopate of Dr. O'Dwyer through the quieter reigns of Bishops Hallinan, Keane, O'Neill and Murphy to the era of Dr. Newman. He includes a prominent and well deserved mention of Monsignor Moloney, a former President of our Society and a notable figure in the modern history of the diocese.

The remainder of the book belongs to a future historical study. The homily of the Pope, Bishop Newman's paper on the meaning and implication of the Pope's words, and the conferring of the Freedom of Limerick on Cardinal Ó Fiaich, Dr. Alibrandi and Bishop Newman, as well as on Pope John Paul, will all call for analysis and comment by historians of the future. The speeches at the latter ceremony should provide excellent material for episcopologists, psychologists and social historians. One cannot help raising at least one eyebrow at the favourable recalling of two seventeenth century churchmen whose meddling in the domain of Caesar brought disastrous consequences for themselves and those who followed their advice. The other frequent examples from and appeals to history varied only in their inaccuracy, inappropriateness and insensitivity.

Both for providing an easily available summary of diocesan history for the present generation and valuable source material for future commentators, this publication is to be warmly welcomed and recommended. But why, oh why, was the Ardagh Chalice so incredibly misdated in the introduction.

LIAM IRWIN

