

Editorial, 1983

Our President, J. W. Stokes (affectionately known to all his friends as 'Swig') has decided to bring to an end his term of office after a mere two years, just as did his predecessor in the office. It is surely to be hoped that such brief terms shall not become the norm: two years are hardly enough for a President to make his or her mark on the Society's affairs, and three or, perhaps more commonly, four years are generally usual elsewhere. Despite his brief presidency, however, 'Swig' quickly became recognised and appreciated by all the Society's members as a kind, dignified and excellent President, a gentleman and representative of all that is best in the tradition of the Thomond Archaeological Society. Once again we have much pleasure in acknowledging our gratitude and saying a very sincere "THANK YOU" to a retiring President.

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Just as in Corofin last year [see this *Journal*, 23(1982), 1], in Roscrea another member of our Society has seen his ambitions materialise and bear fruit. George Cunningham, continuing his unceasing work on the past of Roscrea and its surrounds, followed up his attractive publication on the area [see this *Journal*, 18(1976), 85-86] by founding the Roscrea Heritage Society and instigating the renovation/restoration of the fine early eighteenth century Damer House and adjoining buildings, within the walls of Roscrea Castle in the town's centre, for use as the Roscrea Heritage Centre. Work, including archaeological excavations within the castle walls, began in 1982, and the Centre opened early in 1983. The display in Damer House includes the largest collection of traditional furniture on public display in Ireland, and in the adjoining buildings are exhibitions which include material gathered locally augmented by changing exhibitions on loan from the National Museum and other institutions. Side-by-side with the displays is an on-going project, the meticulous building up of a detailed archive of the genealogical history of the region, with information abstracted from all the various sources being computerised and thus available at a moment's notice. Also started is a detailed archaeological field-survey of the barony of Ikerrin, *i.e.* of the immediate Roscrea region. This survey is under the direction of Mrs. Geraldine Stout, M.A., and will not only be of great interest and value to the people of the locality but also should fit into the scheme for the all-Ireland field-survey long ago started by the National Monuments Branch of the Office of Public Works.

George Cunningham must be congratulated for initiating and inspiring such work, to which we should also add a word of special congratulations for the new archaeological journal, *Éile*, which he successfully launched last year (see page 83 of this *Journal* for a review of it). We welcome this new journal not as a rival North Munster journal but as one complementary to ours, and we wish it every success and a long life.

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One of the oft-discussed questions among archaeologists is whether High Crosses and suchlike sculptured monuments should be left out in the open or brought inside, under cover. The general consensus among those who think seriously and realistically about the matter is that they should be protected from vandals and exposure to the weather, thus ensuring that posterity will be able to see, enjoy and study them in the same state as we

ourselves can see, enjoy and study them today. Of course, for a proper understanding and full appreciation it should be possible to view such monuments in their proper setting, in the surroundings with which they were always associated, but then it should be realised that fibre-glass replicas can nowadays be made to such a high standard that even the experts cannot easily distinguish the copy from the genuine. All of which means that the original monument can be satisfactorily preserved for posterity while an identical replica can be put in its original site. This has at long last been done in at least one instance in Ireland—at Cashel, where an excellent replica of St. Patrick's Cross has replaced the original which is now safely preserved under cover in the adjacent newly-roofed Vicars' Choral (as reported on page 11 of this *Journal*). But is this good enough? Perhaps, but it can be argued that after all the hundreds of years since such monuments were erected they are often nowadays to be seen as 'Romantic Ruins' rather than as originally envisaged by their sculptors. Surely with the genuine though often sadly worn and damaged monument safely under cover the replacement ought to be as close as is possible a reconstruction of the original, thus presenting something even more 'genuine' than the surviving original!

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At the request of the European Science Foundation and in order to conform with what is fast becoming widespread international practice, and also to facilitate our readers, we are beginning to more frequently introduce articles with a short abstract or summary. Our last volume contained one such, while in this volume there are two—we hope that all future articles published in our *Journal* will be so introduced.

Again following international practice, our *Journal* has now been allocated an International Standard Serial Number (ISSN 0332-0820). This will not only please and assist librarians but also book-sellers and others throughout the world; the new number can be seen printed in the top corner of our cover and of the fly-leaf.

Another innovation this year is the periodic production of a 'Newsletter', the first of which appeared in the Autumn of 1983. Written and compiled by Committee Member Liam Irwin, they provide a most useful method of keeping members up-to-date in the Society's viewpoints and activities. We all owe their author our gratitude for so successfully launching the project.

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The Society has much pleasure in gratefully acknowledging generous grants-in-aid from the National Parks and Monuments Branch of the Office of Public Works and from University College, Galway, towards the cost of publishing "Excavations at the Base of St. Patrick's Cross, Cashel" by Ann Lynch and "A Baptismal Font-Cover: *Caput Johannis in Disco?*" by Etienne Rynne, respectively.