

Editorial, 1985

Two issues of the *Journal* in one year is certainly the exception rather than the rule, but it is in this way that we have started to make a really determined effort to catch up on the backlog. If we can do the same next year we should be up to date in our annual publication and, hopefully, members will no longer feel aggrieved and hard done by—nor will they have the pleasure of a *cúis gearáin* in this regard!—at what superficially might seem to be unnecessarily long delays in the *Journal's* production. Despite our well-justified ambition to once again be on target, may we assure our members that standards will not be sacrificed at the call of expediency.

The contents of the present *Journal* will show this, we believe. Some of the articles, not necessarily the longer ones, are of no little interest and importance, while the longest, the travel-account, despite its being of more recent date than most such accounts published in this as in the previous couple of *Journals* grown to a meritorious size. Such short notes independently of its specialist botanical interest, the acute observations and percipient comments of the diarist make it a document containing information of value to the social and local historians of all Ireland, never mind those of Munster and South Galway, the areas of Joseph Woods' journey.

It is with renewed satisfaction and pride that we note that our Miscellanea section has in this as in the previous couple of *Journals*, grown to a meritorious size. Such short notes are easily the most popular part of our *Journal* among our readers, providing a wide selection of interesting items as opposed to the longer articles which often have an interest limited to the specialist. Their brevity, however, does not reduce their importance: for example, in some ways Fergus O'Farrell's note in this *Journal*, reconstructing the slab-fragment at Athassel, Co. Tipperary, is of similar type to his article in last year's number on the Kilfenora High Cross—both are significant contributions to a better understanding of our past, and both are *sine qua non* for all visitors to Athassel and Kilfenora respectively. Indeed, because by their very nature the notes in Miscellanea tend to be records rather than discussions it is often through them that better knowledge of lesser known local sites gets brought to permanent and wider notice. Let us hope that the flow of such notes will continue, and once again we would point out that such contributions should be well within the scope of all our members, especially those who not merely 'look' but also 'see'.

Our Book Review section has also grown, and will probably continue to do so. This is because of the wide recognition of our *Journal* at home and abroad, and also because publishers appreciate the standard of our reviewers and, *ipso facto*, their reviews. It, too, is very popular with our members, and we like to think that with it we are helping to keep them up-to-date with the latest publications of local and other relevant matters of interest to our Society.

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This year saw the end of a decade in the Society's history. During that period the Society's affairs have continued to run reasonably smoothly and progress can be reported. As we all know, the welfare of all voluntary learned Societies depends to an enormous extent on the Honorary Secretary, a post which is best filled by someone who is not only well-versed in the Society's needs, aims and interests, but who is also as tactful as a diplomat,

one who can devote considerable time to the job on hand and who is also a willing epistolary scrivener! The Thomond Archaeological Society has, for the past decade, been so blest—but with this year's close we are losing the genial, helpful, general factotum: Fr. John D. Leonard. Losing him as our Secretary that is, but fortunately not as a member who is willing to help where necessary and, hopefully, to continue as a Committee member. Let us put on record our most sincere and grateful thanks to Fr. Leonard: *míle buíochas, a chara, as ucht an méid chabhair a thug tú dúinn uile i rith na deich mbliana atá thart.*

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Writing in the *Irish Independent* (10/7/1985), Dick Roche commented that "Museums are, in fact, the Nation's memory banks and are probably more necessary today than ever before". He is of course right in his views, as all our members will no doubt agree. However, can we hope that the authorities will likewise perceive and appreciate the necessity for museums? And if so, will they endeavour to encourage their growth and development? This is queried *vis-à-vis* the proposed 25% cutback in the Limerick Museum's annual allocation, a retrograde step which we must all deplore—what a pity there are no votes in culture!

Museums, however, may be important as treasuries of our archaeological and historical heritage, but they can only deal with the portable artifacts associated with that heritage. In the field are many monuments, all of which may be of vital importance to the same heritage, but many of these are being destroyed, often wantonly and deliberately, at an increasing pace every year. In 1967, our late Vice-President, Professor M. J. O'Kelly, wrote in *North Munster Studies*, our publication in memory of Monsignor Michael Moloney, with reference to the excavation of a ringfort at Knockea, Co. Limerick: "That so much information could be gained from a single trial trench cut across a severely destroyed site is an indication of what is being lost every time an earthwork of this kind is bull-dozed away . . .". Should we not take this to heart and try to stop any such destruction? Education is probably the only real way to halt the thoughtless destroyer, and the public lectures and outings, and the publication of our *Journal*, are, we hope, helping in that regard. But would it not be an idea to keep on at the National Monuments Branch or even the various County Councils, to get them to engage forthwith on a proper archaeological survey of the North Munster region? Only by listing and publishing *all* the ancient field-monuments, the earthworks as well as the castles, the insignificant fulachta fiadh as well as the more obvious megaliths and abbeys, can we hope to know what to protect and save for ourselves and for posterity. Other parts of Ireland have already got involved in such schemes and, while North Munster has for long been ahead of most areas in promulgating an interest and knowledge of its field-monuments, it is falling behind in their full survey—maybe T. J. Westropp and others did their work so well that the authorities feel that they should concentrate on other areas? Let us hope that such is not the case.

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Once again the Society has much pleasure in most gratefully acknowledging generous financial assistance received from University College, Galway, towards publishing material by members of its staff, in the present case "A Scientific Tour through Munster: The Travels of Joseph Woods, Architect and Botanist, in 1809", co-authored by Michael Mitchell, and "Face Carved on a Boulder at Clonroad More, Ennis" by Etienne Rynne; it also wishes to acknowledge a grant-in-aid from University College, Cork, towards the publication of "Archaeological Investigation of a Ringfort at Ballyduff, Co. Limerick" by R. M. Cleary.