

Book Reviews

Anon, **Facts About Ireland**, Department of Foreign Affairs, 6th edition revised, Dublin 1985, pp. 255 + 2 maps; ISBN 0-906404-21-5. Price: £5.00.

This edition is much larger than that reviewed in vol. 20(1978), 85, and as such deserves to be brought to the notice of our members. Some of the criticisms mentioned in that review still are valid, as also are the complimentary comments made at that time. It is, of course, on general sale in Ireland and, we should all be pleased to learn, also available through Ireland's foreign missions and on commercial distribution abroad.

One can point out several minor errors and quibble with some comments in this book, but then who can disagree with any degree of certainty that St. Patrick died in A.D. 492 (p. 17 and repeated on p. 22), even when A.D. 461 is the generally accepted date and, furthermore, was that which the State celebrated in 1961 as the 1500th anniversary of the event. However, the Normans arrived in 1169 surely, not in 1167-69 as we are told on page 26, on which page we are also informed that Strongbow's real name was Earl Richard FitzGilbert—true, but most would recognise him better as Richard de Clare. More serious, perhaps, is on page 34 where reference to the War of Independence is given as "the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-21" and we are told that "26 counties of Ireland" are "now known as the Irish Free State"—one would think that since 1937 use of the present tense would no longer be correct.

Although since 1934 it is regrettably no longer possible to show the old Claddagh, with its thatched houses and crazy street-plan, almost every enquiring visitor to our shores has been told of the village-style city which is part of Galway's main charm—which makes nonsense of the photograph spread across pages 72 and 73 purporting to be an "aerial view of Galway city" and showing not so much as one square yard of old Galway, but instead present us with the linear geometry of the Industrial Estate and of the nearby modern Renmore housing estate—*sic transit gloria Galviae*! However, the visitor who really wants to see "examples of traditional Irish dwellings, authentically furnished" is told on page 91 that they "can be seen at the Bunratty Folk Park in Co. Clare and at the Ulster American Folk Park in Co. Tyrone"—while we must all deplore the continued failure of this state to provide us with the long-promised National Folk Park, surely it could be magnanimous enough to bring the visitors' attention to one of Europe's finest such places, the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, at Cultra, Holywood, Co. Down?

There are other minor errors and irritations to be found here and there, but nothing to seriously upset the potential user of this book, whether native or visitor. Copiously and intelligently illustrated with beautiful coloured photographs, it is however singularly devoid of relevant explanatory maps—it is hoped that the reason for this was not the mild criticisms made in 1978 when reviewing the earlier edition! Two maps are present on the endpapers. That at the beginning of the book shows a very plain map of Europe on which the various countries are outlined but (Ireland excepted) unnamed—and the Isle of Man is omitted altogether, surely a place of more relevance to Ireland than equally small islands such as Ibiza which are shown. The map of Ireland at the end of the book is adequate, though it can be criticised on the grounds that the counties are not clearly enough shown and that railway lines and canals no longer in use are indicated—and is Mts. the correct abbreviation for Mountains?

There are seven chapters in this book: Land and People; The Irish State; Culture and the Sciences; The Economy; Services; Northern Ireland; Ireland and the World, each of which is preceded by a totally blank and pointless map of the whole island in dark green on a darkish blue background. Each of these chapters is divided into several sections which are in turn sub-divided into several more sub-sections. Also included are useful Statistical Tables, a Bibliography, and an Index. This publication is undoubtedly a virtual mini encyclopaedia for Ireland, beautifully produced on quality art-paper, a credit to its publishers and printers (Wood-Printcraft Ltd., Dublin), and at the price a real bargain and, once again, to be strongly recommended to anyone at all interested in this little island of ours.

ETIENNE RYNNE

Frank Mitchell, **Shell Guide to Reading the Irish Landscape**, Country House, Dublin 1986, pp. xv + 228; ISBN 0-946172-06-4. Price: £15.00.

In the preface of this excellent book, Frank Mitchell stated that he hoped his work would interest the many rather than provide a treatise for the few. However, his book will capture the attention not only of the general reader, but also those interested in the singular disciplines of Irish geography, geology, meteorology, botany, zoology, archaeology or history, by showing how everything interacts to form our landscape as well as bringing into play some new or lesser-known theories. His expert knowledge in all of those disciplines, spurred on by an avid interest in the natural history of man in Ireland and augmented by fifty years work in the field and later

as professor of Quaternary Studies at Trinity College, allow him to impart the complete story of the changing face of the Irish landscape, combining all its different facets as no other can.

This he does with great aplomb and skill. Not for him the categorising of each of the aforementioned disciplines into homogeneous but sterile chapters. Instead, the story unfolds in easy-to-follow chronological sequences where the interaction of each area of activity is explained in clear text backed up by excellent illustrations.

Thus we learn that our oldest rocks were laid down some 2,400 million years ago near Rosslare, and that 600 million years ago a vast ocean, the proto-Atlantic, lay between the North American plate and the European plate. Strange as it may seem, the northern section of Ireland, the area above a line from the Shannon Estuary to Dundalk Bay, lay in the American plate and the rest of Ireland lay in the European one. When the two plates collided some 400 million years ago, the two halves of Ireland were welded together with such force that rock deformation took place. The attempts today to weld together the two peoples on this small island pale into insignificance by comparison.

About 375 million years ago more plate disturbances saw north-west Europe subside below sea level and the Carboniferous limestone, which covers so much of Ireland today, was eventually formed. New movements 75 million years later saw the end of the Carboniferous cycle and, coupled with atmospheric denudation, we learn that the Clare and Limerick Hills and the Galty and Ballyhoura Mountains, as well as the Knockmealdown Mountains, were formed.

One of the best sections in the book deals with the great Ice Age stretching from 1,700,000 years ago to its ending about 13,000 years ago. One of many surprising items of information for the general reader is the fact that there were a considerable number of warm periods during the Ice Age. One in particular lasted from 250,000 to 200,000 years ago, and is called the Gortian Warm Cycle after investigations of a peaty deposit near Gort in south County Galway revealed evidence of pine, spruce and hazel. Not to be outdone, Littleton, in County Tipperary, has given its name to the current warm period, the Littletonian Warm Stage, as a raised-bog there has given a continuous and complete pollen-record of the local vegetation from 10,000 years ago to the present day. The formation and evolution of such a raised bog and also of the blanket bog is covered in loving detail by the author, who rightly pleads for their preservation. Sadly, a third type of bog, the cut-away version, is now becoming the prevalent one on the Irish landscape.

The most interesting section of the book deals with the coming of man to these shores. One of the earliest pieces of evidence relating to the human activity discovered in this country was actually found by the author near Drogheda. This was a flint flake used by Palaeolithic hunters as they roamed what is now the basin of the Irish Sea. This stone blade was eventually deposited by ice movement over 100,000 years ago on what is now the east coast of Ireland. Later still, subsequent Mesolithic hunters probably wandered across to this country over a land bridge, composed of a high morainic ridge joining County Louth with the Cheshire plains, which the author firmly states was still in existence 7,500 years ago, as, he contends, freshwater molluscs still reached Ireland across it up to that time.

Subsequent sections dealing with Neolithic, Bronze and Iron Ages are also covered in graphic detail, as are the gradual changes to the landscape as new technologies were adopted and populations increased. We see the logistical problems facing Neolithic folk when they worry about the build-up of gas in the rumen of their cattle, trussed-up to make the sea-crossing to Ireland. We marvel with them as the elm woods die from the same disease that plagues the landscape today, thus ensuring easier forest clearance with polished stone axes. We gasp for air with the Bronze-age miners in tiny tunnels on Mount Gabriel in County Cork, or despair over soil depletion during Iron-age times as our story turns into the A.D. period. We cringe in fear with women and children at the end of a souterrain as they pray that warriors from neighbouring raths will come soon to ward off the attack on their own ringfort. We marvel at Clonmacnoise. We run at first from the Vikings, but then wonder at and gradually take to their trading-ports. We see our land finally taken over by the Anglo-Norman invaders who, according to the author, "cut through the country smelling out the better lands like well-trained truffle hounds".

Wars, sieges, plantations, woodlands destruction and soil exhaustion, famines, evictions and emigrations, are all vividly but concisely described in this great book, and at its end we know why the landscape appears as it does today. The author even looks to the future and what is in store for the Irish landscape. Stating that "the soil of a country is its most important single resource", he nevertheless doubts that agriculture alone, even if efficiently practised, will give an adequate return for investment. His comments alone regarding the drainage of the Shannon should be read by every 'concerned' politician. With tillage concentrated in the drier south-east, dairy herds on the good grassland, and forests where they can form profitable wood, he considers what is to become of the rest of the landscape and of its people.

Not for this author either is the addition of a glossary at the end of the book to explain the multiplicity of 'technical' words and processes that occur as his story of the Irish landscape unfolds. He explains them as they occur in the text and so ensures that the reader stays with him all the way. "Plate tectonics", "nunataks", "landnam", "ards", "lazy-beds", "spotted hyenas", "fen-peat", "Mooghaun Hoard", and "William III" are but a minute few that sweep before our eyes, all playing their part in the story of our landscape.

His story is obviously a long one, but one that never fails to fascinate as he expertly integrates the myriad of processes which shaped the present landscape of Ireland. Thirty-three colour plates, 49 black-and-white photographs and 68 other illustrations blend beautifully with 228 pages of text, and make this book a pleasure to read and to own. It should find its place on every bookshelf in the country, especially those of the politician, the public administrator, the tourist official and last, but by no means least, that of the farmer in whose hands the future of the Irish landscape really rests.

PEADAR O'DOWD

Brian Lacy, *et. al.*, *Archaeological Survey of County Donegal*, Donegal County Council, Lifford 1983, pp. 401; ISBN 0-9508407-0-X. Price: £15.00.

Judith Cuppage, *et. al.*, *Archaeological Survey of the Dingle Peninsula: Suirbhé Seandálaíochta Chorca Dhuibhne, Oidhreacht Chorca Dhuibhne*, Ballyferriter 1986, pp. 462; ISBN 0-906096-06-5. Price: £15.00.

The publication of the *Archaeological Survey of County Donegal* represents a significant breakthrough in terms of field survey in Ireland. Not since the publication twenty years ago of *An Archaeological Survey of County Down* by Jope, Waterman and Collins has anything on this scale been attempted, always of course excepting the more specialised volumes of the *Megalithic Survey* by de Valera and Ó Nualláin.

The format of this book is attractive and the general approach and lay-out have already been accepted as the standard patterns for such surveys, with a logical, chronologically ordered classification of sites from the Mesolithic Period to the 17th century A.D. The introduction, covering twelve pages, provides a concise summary of the geology, topography, prehistory and history of the county, together with a brief account of previous surveys. It adequately covers the background to the survey upon which this book is based, and indicates the archival and other reference material which has been accumulated in the course of the work and which thus becomes readily accessible. Each chapter commences with a short introductory discussion of the monument-type being dealt with, taking into account the results of the most recent research.

The volume deals with about 2,500 sites from a total of 4,000 or so potential sites examined, and these have been consolidated into 1,954 separate entries. It includes 200 figures, plans and drawings, together with 77 black-and-white photographs and 18 colour plates, as well as an Architectural Glossary, a comprehensive Bibliography, a Placenames Index and a Subject Index.

It is easy to recognise the positive influence of the *Megalithic Surveys* in the reports and drawings of the tombs of the Neolithic and Early Bronze Age, which are accompanied by separate distribution maps for each tomb-type. Mesolithic, pre-bog and coastal habitation sites each has a section to itself with location maps and photographs. Cashels, earthen ringforts and destroyed enclosures, though frequently having many features in common, are also separately dealt with, and adequate use is made of aerial photographs, particularly in the case of the latter.

In the case of Ecclesiastical Sites there are three separate sections, one each for Early Ecclesiastical Sites, Sites of Churches and Old Burial Grounds, as well as individual sections dealing with Holy Wells and Bullaun Stones. The section on Early Ecclesiastical Sites includes a number of aerial photographs, but these are on such a tiny scale as to be virtually useless, and are not enhanced by the quality of reproduction. One hopes that this does not reflect the estimate of the value of air photography in archaeological survey. Indeed, the same point could be made with regard to the aerial photographs contained in the section dealing with Castles and Defensive Buildings, where again the poor quality and tiny scale negate any useful purpose which might have been served by their inclusion. These, however, are small deficiencies in an otherwise splendid work, one which by any standard must be acknowledged as a monumental achievement.

If imitation is accepted as the most sincere form of flattery, then the *Donegal Survey* indeed deserves that accolade, most handsomely acknowledged in the case of the recently published *Archaeological Survey of the Dingle Peninsula* (see following review). Here are acknowledged the debts owed to the recording methods and archive organisation of the survey under consideration, while, to quote its editor, "the format of the book is modelled closely on the publication of that [Donegal] Survey". We look forward to seeing such a volume for each of the thirty-two counties of Ireland.

If the publication of *An Archaeological Survey of County Donegal* in 1983 represents a breakthrough in terms of field survey in Ireland, the *Archaeological Survey of the Dingle Peninsula* will be seen as the culmination of a process then begun. Here, in almost 500 pages, splendidly produced and appropriately illustrated, is the result of five years of carefully co-ordinated survey and research.

The basic statistics of this work are impressive. A total of about 2,200 sites was examined, of which 1,680 were selected for inclusion, later compiled into 1,572 separate entries for final publication. Accompanying these

are 242 illustrations of plans, maps and diagrams, 54 black-and-white plates and no less than 42 colour plates. The total number of illustrations quoted is somewhat misleading since a single page of diagrams may contain drawings of as many as eight or nine separate features or objects, and does not adequately reflect the commendably high level of illustration.

The Introduction, containing a brief resumé of the geology and geography of the region, indicates the scope of the survey and outlines the background in terms of its prehistory and history, from the earliest period to the beginning of the 18th century. It also details the documentary and other material accumulated in the course of the work, and provides for ready access to this unique archive. Included too is a particularly good diagram showing the drawing conventions used throughout the book, which will undoubtedly be of considerable assistance to the general reader, particularly in interpreting the plans of some of the more complex sites dealt with.

The layout and sequence of the text adheres closely to the model provided in the *Donegal Survey*, with most of the variations or departures from this model reflecting the differences in the archaeological remains of the two areas. The plans and drawings which accompany the text are of unvaryingly excellent quality, as we have now come to expect in such productions, and the colour photographs are strikingly beautiful and entirely apposite. Here, however, they differ from the majority of the black-and-white plates, most of which are barely, if at all, adequate for their presumably intended purpose. One reason for this is the minute scale on which many of these are reproduced, particularly in the case of the aerial photographs, most of which would have been better omitted. What a contrast they provide with, say, the stylishly brilliant black-and-white plates in Françoise Henry's *Irish Art* or H. G. Leask's *Irish Churches and Monastic Buildings*. One would have wished for additional distribution maps like that on page 98 of *Raths and Cashels*, or of *Castles* on page 378. The lack of any distribution map of early Ecclesiastical Sites or remains, which are a uniquely significant feature of the peninsula, must be considered a serious omission. Such deficiencies, however, are more than compensated for in the clarity and superb quality of the plans and drawings as well as in the succinct lucidity of the site descriptions.

The volume concludes with a useful Architectural Glossary (why not an Archaeological one too?), a very comprehensive and well ordered Bibliography running to four and a half pages, a Placename Index which appears to have a somewhat complicated system of referencing, and finally an extremely detailed and most useful Subject Index.

This work owes much to its exemplar, in organisation, in format and in style, and the indebtedness is handsomely acknowledged in the Introduction. It accomplishes for Dingle what the earlier work has done for Donegal, and establishes a high standard of excellence against which all future regional surveys will be measured. We are all much in the debt of Judith Cuppage and her team, and will so remain for a considerable time to come.

D. L. SWAN

George Eogan, *Knowth and the Passage Tombs of Ireland*, Thames and Hudson Ltd., London 1986, pp. 247; ISBN 0-500-39023-1. Price: £18.00 stg.

In this work Professor Eogan sets down a detailed account of the excavations at the passage-tomb cemetery at Knowth, and by comparing the findings from that excavation with other passage-tombs (until recently all termed and perhaps better-known as passage-graves) and associated phenomena he provides us with an interesting overview of passage-grave society (culture?) in the third millennium B.C. in Ireland.

The early chapters provide details of the topography of the 'Bend of the Boyne' with its three passage-tomb cemeteries, Knowth, Dowth and Newgrange, together with some interesting notes on early research into Irish passage-tombs. The mythology and origin legends attached to *Brúgh na Bóinne* in the early historic period are also mentioned. Descriptions (based on the classification by R. de Valera) of Irish megalithic tombs are given on pages 24-29. The discovery in the large mound at Knowth of the western passage in 1967 and the eastern passage with its cruciform chamber in 1968 are described in such graphic detail that one can sense the mounting excitement of the excavators as their investigations proceeded. This mound (Site 1) was built as a single operation, with features such as the large decorated sandstone basin, which was found in the right recess of the eastern tomb, being placed in position prior to the erection of the recess jambs. It is interesting to note that, as at Newgrange, the area in front of the entrance to both passages at Knowth had, among other features, a spread of quartz and granite stones which may have slipped from the mound but equally may have been a deliberately laid feature. Of the seventeen smaller tombs surrounding the large mound, five were cruciform, ten undifferentiated and two destroyed. Detailed descriptions of the excavations of each are included and it is noted that two of the undifferentiated tombs, nos. 13 and 16, pre-date the building of the main mound. Of interest to North Munster readers will be the similarity of the ground-plans of cruciform tombs nos. 6 and 9 (figs. 27, 28) to the passage-tomb at Duntryleague, Co. Limerick, which itself forms part of a possible dispersed hill-top passage-tomb cemetery.

At Knowth the undifferentiated tombs are all orientated towards the main mound, but as at least two of these tombs are earlier than the main mound the excavator suggests that there may lie buried under the main mound

some undiscovered hilltop feature such as a small 'founders tomb' or a house. The cruciform tombs are aimed at an area to the southeast of the main mound, an area which might once have held a focal feature of importance for the tomb-builders, but this area has been excavated and nothing significant was found. A similar orientation phenomenon is observable at other passage-tomb cemeteries. *e.g.* Loughcrew, Carrowkeel, etc. Regarding the orientation of the two passages in the main mound at Knowth, it is noted that while the tomb orientation at Newgrange suggests that sunrise on 21st December, *i.e.* on the midwinter solstice, was the important factor, at Knowth the orientations suggest that the important times were the vernal equinox on 20/21st March and the autumnal equinox on 22/23rd September. "... At these times the sun rises and sets directly in the east and west, while day and night have equal lengths. The spring equinox represents the beginning of the growing season, and the harvest would have been gathered at the autumnal equinox..." (p. 178).

On page 90 we read that as the distribution of passage-tombs is concentrated north of the Wicklow-Sligo line, the sites at Duntryleague (Co. Limerick) and Shrogh (Co. Tipperary) prove to be exceptions. The group of tombs in the Tramore area, which are typologically close to tombs in the Isles of Scilly and western Cornwall, are felt to reflect a different, possibly later, tradition of tomb-building.

The complex construction of the large mound at Knowth is detailed in chapter 5, and can be summed up admirably by reference to plates 25 and 26 which demonstrate the stratified layers used in the construction. An interesting insight into one type of tool used by the builders was gained when an example of a shovel made from the shoulder-blade of an ox, with wear along the edge, was found in the eastern tomb.

The burial rite and artifact deposits at Knowth reflect the practices found at other Irish passage-tombs, but one exceptional artifact must be mentioned: the beautifully carved flint mace-head recovered from the old ground level at the entrance to the right-hand recess of the eastern tomb (p. 141, fig. 57, plates 34-37, and colour plate X).

Art at Knowth and other passage-tombs is dealt with in detail in chapters 7 and 8, and it is interesting to note that Knowth possesses Europe's greatest concentration of megalithic art. While of the art-forms the rectilinear style and opposed C-motif seems to be unique to Knowth, the remainder of the art has much in common with that of other Irish passage-tombs, including those at Newgrange, Fourknocks, Loughcrew, Baltinglass, and Sess Kilgreen. While the precise function of the art is not known, it is deemed likely that the designs were a form of religious symbolism, connected with a cult of the dead and having significance in that context. Iberia and Brittany are postulated as being the areas where passage-tomb art originated but with the final Irish product being the result of "... external borrowing, coupled with native pooling and reorganization..." (p. 171).

Houses and settlements are discussed in chapter 9. At Knowth evidence has come to light for several structures which pre-date five of the tombs, but which may be contemporary with or pre-date the passage-tomb complex. The structures concerned include a sub-rectangular (probable) house, measuring 10.70m. x 9.19m. internally, and curved palisade trenches with a gap or causeway. It is possible that the palisade trenches are portion of the arc of an enclosure around the site. The sub-rectangular structure can be roughly paralleled at Ballyglass, Co. Mayo, Ballynagilly, Co. Tyrone, and Knockadoon, Co. Limerick.

The question as to where the earliest passage-tombs are to be found, whether in Iberia or Brittany (passage-tombs were being constructed in both areas in the fourth millennium B.C.), is still being debated. The chronology given for Ireland suggests that court-tombs were being built before passage-tombs, and that the settlement evidence recovered at Knowth may perhaps belong to people of the court-tomb tradition.

Comparisons with Irish and other tombs are covered on pp. 208-211, with special reference to the art which is a common factor in Ireland, Brittany and Iberia. Pages 225 and 226 consist of a list of (uncalibrated) radiocarbon dates from Irish passage-tombs and related structures.

This book which is lavishly endowed with 11 colour plates, 77 monochrome plates and 92 figures, must now be regarded as the standard monograph on Knowth, Irish passage-tombs, and their place in the wider context of western Europe.

ELIZABETH O'BRIEN

Anne Ross, *The Pagan Celts*, B. T. Batsford Ltd., London 1986, pp. 160; ISBN 0-7134-5527-6 (cased), ISBN 0-7134-5528-4 (limp). Price: £17.50 stg. (hardback), £9.95 stg. (paperback).

This publication, while new, is not quite as new as one might at first believe on seeing its title and attractive cover—it was first published in 1970 under the title *Everyday Life of the Pagan Celts* [reviewed in our *Journal*, 13(1970), 61-62, to which the reader is referred]. However, this is a revised version which has been "updated, expanded and reillustrated" and, as such, is deserving of being once again brought to the attention of our members.

Basically, the book contains the same lively and well-written text and the same photographs and beautiful line-drawings (by the author's husband, Richard Feacham), but the format has been somewhat expanded in places

and occasionally altered while the latter have been increased and occasionally re-arranged—both editions have 100 illustrations but many of those in the present volume have been added to. It also has 19 attractive coloured photographs of no little interest—the first is of the ritual bog burial found recently in Lindow Moss, near Wilmslow, Cheshire, who at the time of his discovery became popularly known, particularly in the British tabloid press, as ‘Pete Moss’, a clever if somewhat tautological play on two alternative words for what we, in Ireland, would generally call ‘turf’ and ‘bog’. Whether the victim of this sacrificial killing (strangled by a noose, having his throat cut and then being deposited in a watery morass) would have been amused by this rather vulgar nickname is doubtful—he was “clearly of gentle birth, his finger-nails were nicely rounded and he wore a band of fox fur round his arm”, though otherwise naked. The book is full of such fascinating detailed information.

There are, of course, some minor details with which one can disagree or feel should have been corrected in the revision. These mainly seem to concern the Irish material, although the author is clearly very knowledgeable about and sympathetic to this ancient Celtic country. However, it is slightly disconcerting to discover on page 141 that only three sword-scabbards were found at Lisnacrogher, Co. Antrim, during the last century, and further down the same page to be given to understand that only one survives—four were found and all survive.

There is also the Turoe Stone which once stood, we are told on page 143, “outside the rath of Feermore [*recte* Feerwore], in the township [*recte* townland] of Turoe, in Galway”. One of the few inadequate and poorly-drawn illustrations (Fig. 78) in the book is all that is offered to depict the art on the stone, an illustration based on Pádraig Ó hÉailidhe’s wonderful illustration published in 1976 with Professor Michael Duignan’s rather revolutionary description and discussion of the Stone. While I, personally, would tend to agree with a date close enough to that suggested by the author (third century B.C.), I would cavil with her statement that “until more evidence comes to light, this is as far as we can reasonably go”—though she knows of Duignan’s work she apparently has not read it.

In the earlier edition we were told of “a magnificent head, carved from oak heart-wood, which has recently come to light in County Tipperary, Ireland, and which is at present being studied by Celtic Art experts”. On page 138 of this new edition, full sixteen years later, we are given exactly the same information, word for word except that it is “currently being studied by the present writer”. No-one in Ireland has, to my knowledge, ever seen this head, though Dr. Ross sent photographs of it to the National Museum authorities almost twenty years ago—who, I believe, pronounced it more likely to be a Maori carving, from New Zealand rather than from North Munster! It is very unfair to fellow-archaeologists for such an acknowledged expert as Dr. Ross to persist in mentioning this head as Irish and Celtic without providing the evidence—and it could be very important.

But no matter about such details: *The Pagan Celts* is not only informative and useful but also a real pleasure to read. The Introduction (pp. 7-11) is not only a clear, succinct discussion of several important aspects relevant to the Celts, but provides an excellent example of the author’s style and command of English, as the following extract will reveal:

The *Táin*, that masterpiece of early Irish narrative, has been compared unfavourably with the *Iliad*. With this value judgment the writer cannot agree. The themes of both epics are heroic; the warriors fight from two-wheeled chariots; individual courage is awarded due honour, and the battles are fought over the possession of a coveted treasure—a girl in the *Iliad*, a divine bull in the *Táin*. Women figure in chief roles in the *Táin*, but not in an amorous light. Sexuality is the dominant characteristic of the great war-queen *Medb* ‘drunk woman’, while her poor daughter, the lovely *Fionnabair*, is merely a pawn in the shameful game, a decoy to attract warriors to their doom in single combat against the god-gotten hero, *Cú Chulainn* ‘Culand’s Hound’.

This book will be useful to the archaeologist as well as to the historian, with its emphasis on the literature and religion of the ancient Celts as much as on the archaeology. A relatively complete picture of the life, customs, beliefs, dress, houses, games, entertainments, laws, art, etc., etc., of the pagan Celts is presented with style and clarity.

Many tend to regard Irish history as beginning with St. Patrick’s missionary arrival in A.D. 432, while the English often think their story began in 55 B.C. with the hit-and-run raid by Julius Caesar. This book will show both peoples that those who were around before those dates were interesting and important. Having read this book, the Irish will be doubly proud of their Celtic ancestry while the English will probably begin to ask themselves whether the much-vaunted conquest of Britain by the Romans—and later by the Anglo-Saxons—was such a good thing after all!

A book to be strongly recommended to students of archaeology and also to the general reader.

ETIENNE RYNNE

Egon Wamers, *Archäologische Reihe: Schmuck des frühen Mittelalters in Frankfurter Museum für Vor- und Frühgeschichte*, Frankfurt am Main 1986, pp. 84; ISBN 3-88270-307-5. Price: DM 15.

This attractive, beautifully produced catalogue of selected personal ornaments of the early middle ages (late 3rd—10th centuries) is the seventh in a series of archaeological publications by the Frankfurt Museum of Prehistory and Early History, with a further four in preparation, which cover aspects of the Museum's collections and the archaeology and early history of the region. A ten-page introduction summarises the period of Germanic migrations and christianisation, the museum's collection of personal ornaments, techniques of manufacture, the rôle and status of the goldsmith, the importance of personal ornaments to archaeology, and the manner in which the ornaments were worn. Then follows the catalogue of 61 objects or groups of objects, arranged chronologically by period, each with photograph, 12 in colour, and some with line-drawings to illustrate the ornamental patterns. The objects catalogued include brooches of various forms, belt-buckles and mounts, necklaces and neckrings, earrings, finger- and arm-rings, pendants and amulets, pins, ornaments worn hanging from the waistband, and various disc-shaped ornaments. The catalogue entries are comprehensive, giving the history of the finding of the object, a detailed description of it and a general discussion, with, at the end, a summary giving date, materials of manufacture, dimensions, findplace, museum register number and previous published accounts. Few of the objects catalogued have parallels in Ireland, but the techniques of manufacture and the ornamental motifs used had an important influence on Irish craftsmen, both directly and filtered through Anglo-Saxon England.

LARRY WALSH

Averil Swinfen, *Kilfenora Cathedral*, privately published, Kilfenora 1986, pp. 12 (not paginated). Price: £1.00.

This neat, if short, little booklet will be welcomed by visitors to Kilfenora Cathedral, in the heart of The Burren, especially as it is the only one available dealing specifically with the site. It provides a concise account of the history and some remarks on the archaeology of the ecclesiastical remains, and there are four admirable illustrations drawn by Eileen Whittle.

Kilfenora Cathedral was built on the site of an Early Christian monastery founded in the 6th century by St. Fachtna whose festival is celebrated on the 14th of August. In 1152 Kilfenora was of sufficient importance to be granted diocesan status, albeit as the centre of the smallest and poorest diocese in Ireland. Since the Reformation the diocese, whether Catholic or Protestant, has been united to various other Sees and, we are told, the Pope is the present Catholic bishop—true, but only insofar as the Bishop of Galway is strictly speaking the Administrator rather than the Bishop of Kilfenora. Some brief notes and comments on the various Protestant bishops and on notables who are buried within its precincts are given. The Transitional Style cathedral of c. 1200 A.D. is briefly described, special mention being made of the fine three-light east window and the 13th and 14th century effigies of ecclesiastics and other sculptures in its now roofless chancel. During the last century the cathedral's nave was converted into a parish church which is still in use by the Church of Ireland community. A stone font, with sculpture similar to that on the east window and therefore probably of the same date is housed inside. The answer as to why there are "three pulpits" is given. The most recent piece of church furniture is the bishop's throne which was installed as recently as 1981. The various high crosses, ranging from the mid-12th century 'Doorty Cross' to the plain Post-Reformation one, and including of course the one in the field outside the graveyard, are all mentioned and commented upon.

MIRIAM CLYNE

Thomas Morris, *Holycross Abbey*, The Irish Heritage Series no. 55, Eason & Son Ltd., Dublin 1986, pp. 24 (not paginated); ISBN 0-900346-75-2. Price: £2.50.

Patrick K. Egan, *St. Brendan's Cathedral, Loughrea*, The Irish Heritage Series, no. 56, Eason & Son Ltd., Dublin 1986, pp. 24 (not paginated); ISBN 0-900346-76-0. Price: £2.50.

It is always nice to see some new additions to The Irish Heritage Series and the two titles reviewed below are, indeed, worthy compilations with a common theme of an ecclesiastical setting but far removed in time from one another.

The booklet on Holy Cross Abbey was written by Dr. Thomas Morris, Archbishop of Cashel, who was, from the beginning, the main inspiration behind the restoration work undertaken at this famous Cistercian monastery. The story of the abbey and its monks is unfolded before us by Dr. Morris, with the author, from the outset, placing the emphasis on the monks and their way of life. The inclusion of anecdotes, such as those associated

with the *Triumphalia* of the 17th century and the relic of the True Cross, is a feature of the text. Whilst achieving this easy style the essential facts are nonetheless highlighted as the story proceeds from that of the early Cistercian foundation in the 1180s to the troubled times of the Dissolution and its aftermath. The importance of Holy Cross and the pilgrimages associated with the relic during the eventful decades from 1590 to 1650 are vividly recalled.

The booklet concludes with a brief account of the modern restoration work which saw the abbey ruins conserved and transformed for use as the parish church of Holycross. This task, supervised by Percy le Clerc and utilizing dedicated local craftsmen, highlighted many of the beautiful 15th century features which had survived the ravages of time. The author has, however, concentrated on the historical aspects, and the building history and architecture of this abbey, regarded by many scholars as the highpoint of 15th century craftsmanship in stone in Ireland, are described elsewhere. It is sad to note that this fine work of restoration has been rather spoiled by the addition of some of the more recent internal and external features.

The author refers to the fact that an archaeological investigation preceded the restoration work in 1971. This investigation was, in fact, a large-scale excavation which yielded many important artifacts. After twenty years we still await publication of these findings.

As usual with the Irish Heritage Series the booklet is liberally adorned with photographic plates—in colour and black-and-white—highlighting the decorative features of the abbey and its surroundings. A ground plan of the abbey and its extensive domestic buildings completes this very commendable booklet.

In contrast to the historical picture outlined in the first booklet the second title provides us with a factual account of the decorative features which adorn the modern Catholic Cathedral of St. Brendan's in Loughrea, Co. Galway. The author, Rev. Fr. Patrick K. Egan, the renowned historian of the diocese of Clonfert, has approached his task with enthusiasm and sensitivity, coupled with a keen awareness of the rich heritage in the Cathedral which drew so much of its inspiration from Christian art and sculpture of earlier periods.

The booklet sketches briefly the background to the building of the Cathedral in 1897 and the fortunate coincidence whereby the enlightened clerics and the patronage of Edward Martyn utilized the decorative techniques and artistry of the Celtic Revival. As a result we have, today, within the simple lines of the Neo-Gothic fabric, as Fr. Egan aptly puts it, "a veritable treasure-house" in sculptured stonework, stained glass and metalwork embodying what was best in Irish religious craftsmanship over almost half a century. The association, in particular, with *An Túr Gloine*—the Irish stained glass co-operative—initiated by Lady Gregory's neighbour and friend Edward Martyn, led to the commissions for the beautiful windows which now adorn the various chapels etc., within the cathedral. All the artists of that school are represented—A. E. Child, Sarah Purser, Michael Healy, Evie Hone and others. These works are succinctly described in the guide, accompanied by textual references to the colour plates illustrating the windows and their details. The sculpted works of Michael Shorthall, both in stone and bronze, are also treated of, as is the statue of the Virgin and Child by John Hughes, rightly regarded as a masterpiece of its kind and featured on the Irish Christmas stamps in 1971. Furnishings in other media, such as the very tasteful stations in *opus sectile* by Mary Rhind, are mentioned, as also the banners made by the famous Dun Emer Guild. The nearby diocesan museum houses a fine array of altar plate and a famous collection of medieval wooden statues, including the 13th century Kilcorban Madonna.

In tracing the history of these artistic achievements housed within a 'living' building, the author deserves our fulsome praise and congratulations. The array of photographs—both in colour and black-and-white—are tastefully arranged in an order which highlights the various scenes and motifs depicted on the stained glass and sculpted work. The booklet concludes with an inventory of the carvings displaying incidents in the life of St. Brendan and episodes in the history of the diocese, together with a list of the stained glass windows, giving the artist, theme and date of completion in each case. A plan of the church, indicating the position and layout of the various works and furnishings, would have been a welcome addition—otherwise one cannot fault this very worthwhile production.

THOMAS FANNING

Alan Gailey, *Rural Houses of the North of Ireland*, John Donald Publishers Ltd., Edinburgh 1984, pp. x + 289, 269 illus.; ISBN 0-85976-098-7. Price: £25.00 stg.

At first glance this monumental work on rural houses of the North of Ireland, as opposed to Northern Ireland, would seem to have little bearing on the Thomond Region. However, there are over twenty references to the housing stock of this area contained within the covers of this book. This should give some idea of the range searched out by Dr. Gailey in compiling it, a book which can undoubtedly be regarded as an essential reference work on Irish rural housing. I use the word 'Irish' advisedly, because even though the title refers to the North of Ireland many of the house-types discussed relate in some measure to the rest of the country. Dr. Gailey has

researched every major available source of information, and has utilized them to the full to produce a comprehensive picture of building techniques and finishes, and of the social and economic factors which influenced them. The text is copiously illustrated with numerous photographs and drawings, most of which come from the archives of the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum where the author is Keeper of Buildings. Indeed, the illustrations prompt the thought that a similar archive could well be set up as part of the Bunratty Folk Park, one which could house not only plans and photographs of surviving houses but plans of such structures as the "Thady's Fort" house excavated by our editor, Etienne Rynne, in 1959, one of the few seventeenth century peasant houses to be excavated in the country. Needless to say Dr. Gailey has made full use of that excavation report in so far as it relates to his text.

The author expresses the hope that his work will be superseded "sooner rather than later" by further endeavours in this field. Unfortunately, many historical journals seem to follow traditional well-trodden paths and ignore all else. Regular readers of this *Journal* will know that this does not hold true for the *North Munster Antiquarian Journal* as recent volumes contain an article on wattle ceilings from Co. Waterford and a note on a bed outshot in Co. Clare, both important publications in relation to rural housing in Ireland. Long may the *Journal* continue to be edited on such lines.

Dr. Gailey's book will long remain a standard reference work for all interested in the study of Irish building history. Not alone should every County Library have a copy in its reference section, but every County Planning Office should likewise have a working copy on its shelves. Definitely a publication to be recommended.

PAUL DUFFY

John de Courcy Ireland, *Ireland and the Irish in Maritime History*, The Glendale Press, Dublin 1986, pp. xiv + 449; ISBN 0-907606-28-8. Price: £19.50.

As the title suggests this is not a maritime history of Ireland. However, when such a history is published Dr. de Courcy Ireland's latest offering will provide the backdrop against which it will be written. I suspect, though, that before a definitive history will be written there will be a definite need for a detailed psychological study as to why an island nation like ours has so resolutely turned its back on the sea. It is tempting to think that this particular book will prompt the need for such a study. Indeed, the stunning array of achievements of Irishmen in the maritime service of so many nations, as presented here by Dr. de Courcy Ireland, prompts the question: "Why haven't we developed our own maritime resources for the greater good of this country?"

Starting with the prehistoric period, the author, by a combination of informed comment and queries, opens up the question of links between Ireland and Wales, Scotland, the Baltic and the Danube basin. Little is known of the Neolithic inhabitants of this country except from the remains uncovered by excavation, so any informed exploration of their life-style or trading links is to be welcomed. Moving on to the early Christian era, the author's compilation and distillation of various international maritime historians' views on the Brendan saga is most welcome, as are the comments on its importance to the Venetians at the height of their sea-faring powers. In the medieval period the strategic importance of Ireland in relation to both commercial fishing and the defence of England should prompt some re-appraisal of the relationship between these islands in the Tudor Period. The post-medieval period and the great Irish diaspora is also covered through the contribution of so many Irishmen to the great navies of the world. One would indeed like to learn more of the Irish able seamen in the British navy who were involved in training the Japanese Imperial Navy in the 19th century. There are informative sections on John Philip Holland of Liscannor, of submarine fame; Parsons of Birr, of turbine fame; and also Beaufort and Halpin. There is also quite a lot on maritime O'Briens.

By judicious use of archival documents from many international sources, most of which are as yet untrawled by Irish historians, the author supplies a treasure house of information on the activities of Irishmen and their descendants abroad—just to prove that one finds Corkmen everywhere, there was a Michael Deasy in the Royal Siamese Navy! There is very useful information on maritime developments at home also. The "Sirius" gets honourable mention, of course, but there is useful information too on shipbuilding in the port of Dublin and also by the Malcolmsons of Waterford. One minor omission, however, is mention of the Drogheda Ironworks Company, which early on abandoned railway locomotive manufacture to concentrate on manufacturing boilers for steamships; at one period hulls of Clyde-built steamships were being towed to Drogheda to be fitted out with boilers. Dr. de Courcy Ireland's book, however, opens up many avenues for the local historian. Indeed, it is to be hoped that leading journals such as ours will explore many of these avenues in the future.

The main text concludes with an Epilogue simply entitled "The Demise of Irish Shipping Ltd.". In a very strange but sad way it is a fitting epilogue, because just as an Irish government seems determined that the Irish flag will no longer fly on a masthead in international shipping circles so too is Dr. de Courcy Ireland determined that it will, even if only on an historical masthead, something he has achieved with this publication. Perhaps the best compliment that can be paid to the author is to say that I look forward to reading his next book.

PAUL DUFFY

Seamus Deane, *Irish Writers, 1886-1986*, The Irish Heritage Series no. 57, Eason & Son Ltd., Dublin 1986, pp. 24 (not paginated); ISBN 0-900346-77-9. Price: £2.50.

Astutely written and tastefully illustrated, this brief but lucid study of Irish writing in this century is a credit to the beautifully designed Irish Heritage Series. Seamus Deane, Professor of Modern English and American Literature at University College, Dublin, has provided a comprehensive yet insightful summary of Irish literature from the publication of George Moore's so-called Dublin novel, *A Drama in Muslin* (1886) to the production of Tom Kilroy's paradoxical *Double Cross* (1986). He concludes that those 100 years of creativity underline the success of the efforts of the founders of the Irish Literary Revival "to create a literature which would be national without becoming provincial and would be international without suffering from the effects of rootlessness".

The choice of material examined reveals Deane's acute sensibility as a critic, a sensibility combined with a certain philosophical inclination which links so much of Irish writing to the land and to a sense of place. Whether he is discussing the significance of the Crescent in Limerick to the work of Kate O'Brien or showing the reader the importance of Dublin or Cork to James Joyce or Frank O'Connor, Deane manages to emphasise the variety and power of Irish fiction, drama and poetry that have so influenced modern literature. The booklet, 57th in a circumspect series covering various aspects of Irish culture, was fittingly produced to coincide with the centenary of the publishers.

CHRISTIAN D. STEVENS

C. M. Murphy, *Limerick—An Architectural Guide*, privately published, Shannon, Co. Clare, 1986, pp. 51. Price: £2.95.

The city of Limerick is fortunate to possess a rich architectural heritage. Like much inherited wealth, however, it has not always been sufficiently appreciated or cared for by those who benefitted from the legacy, particularly by its direct trustees. Fortunately attitudes have changed for the better in recent times and there is now a widespread general interest in the streets, houses, and public buildings. Both natives and visitors alike are keen to know more about the fabric of the city. Unfortunately, however, the published material to cater for this ever-growing public interest is rather sparse. The appearance of this guide is therefore to be particularly welcomed.

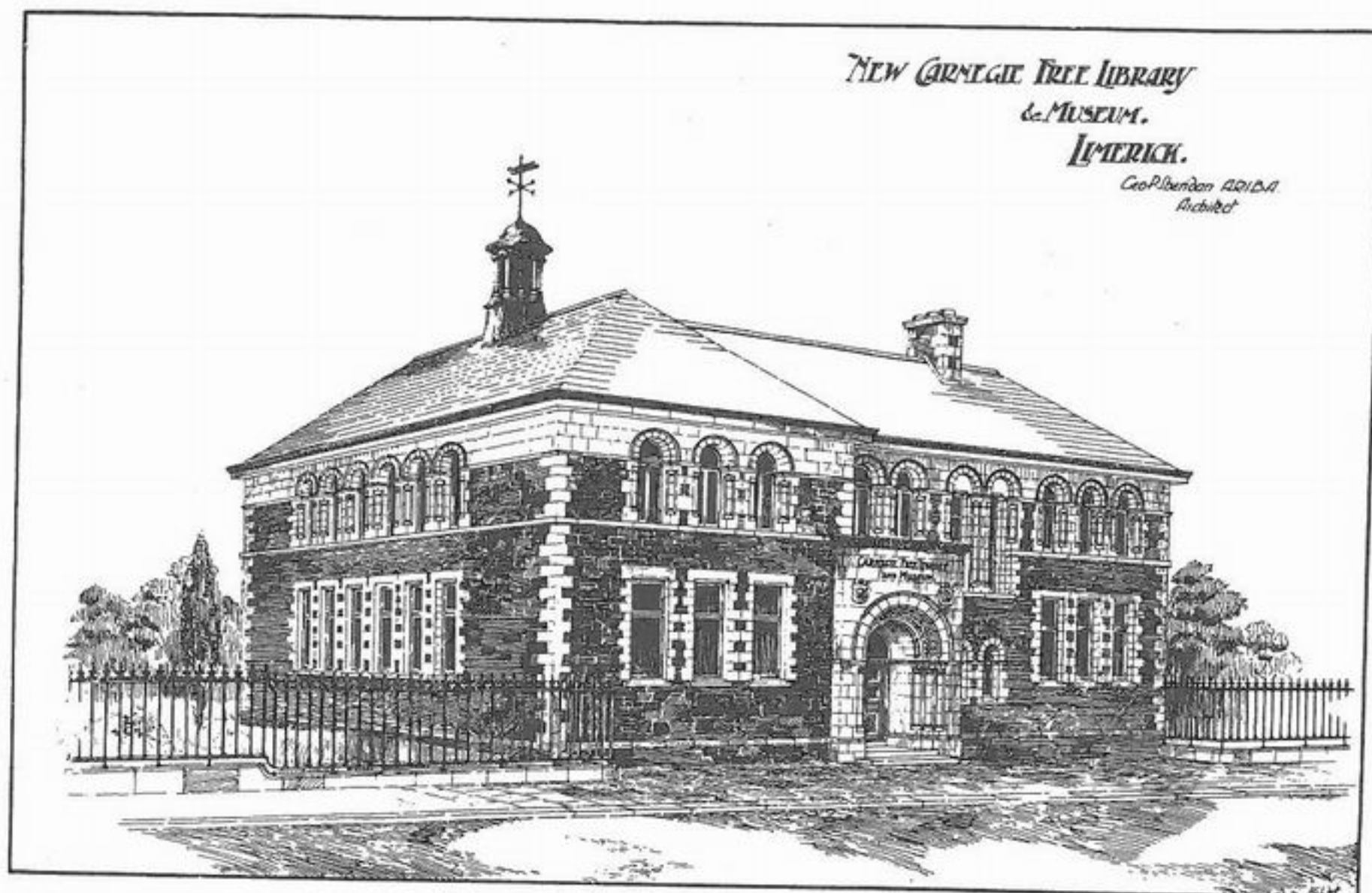
It is divided into four chronological sections. The entire mediaeval period and the seventeenth century are grouped in the first chapter. King John's Castle and the Dominican Priory are properly given pride of place, with Fanning's Castle and the Citadel briefly mentioned. There is some confusion in the account of what is termed 'Castle Friary', surely more recognisable to most Limerick people as 'Bourke's House'. It is listed with Fanning's Castle under the heading of Tower Houses but in the text it is stated, correctly, not to be "in the strict understanding of that term" a Tower House. The Exchange is included in this section, presumably because the original building was erected in 1673 though the existing remains are those of the second rebuilding in 1777-78.

In the eighteenth century section the buildings of Newtown Pery, St. John's Square and the Customs House are described in their historical context and the architectural features are explained clearly and authoritatively. There is also a brief description of the eighteenth century chapels of the Augustinians and Dominicans, fragmentary remains of which survive. The entry on the Old City Courthouse does not make it clear that the original 1764 building has been much altered, particularly in 1904 to mark the centenary of Gerald Griffin's birth, a bust of whom adorns, for want of a better word, the façade.

The nineteenth century section is by far the longest and most detailed. It covers the churches, courthouses, jails, banks, mills, bridges, statues, clocks, fountains, workhouses, railway station and the People's Park. The commission and erection of each item is outlined and a succinct description provided. The twentieth century architecture of Limerick is covered in two and a half pages, devoted to three churches and the Carnegie Library. The churches, St. Joseph's, St. Mary's and the Augustinian are excellently described, which clearly reflects the author's own particular research interest and for which the Thomond Archaeological Society is indebted for the very fine lectures she has delivered on this topic over the years. Perhaps St. Munchin's might also have been included, particularly to link its Hiberno-Romanesque design both with the Augustinian church and with its very interesting use on a secular building, the former City Library in Pery Square (see illus.). Given the decision to limit this section so drastically, a fuller treatment of this building, now the City Art Gallery and 'home' to this Society, would have been more appropriate.

Inevitably in a work of this kind much has to be omitted. Each reader will have a personal quibble about what is not there. This reviewer would have liked the Arthur Dower House, latterly St. Mary's Presbytery, and Roche's Hanging Gardens included. Such petty criticisms merely underline the need for works like this and the gratitude we owe the author for having initiated what will hopefully be further and more comprehensive such productions either by her or others.

A very laudable feature of the work is the willingness shown to speculate and suggest original views and interpretations. The architect of the Railway Station is plausibly argued to have been Sancton Wood, the John's



Drawing by Mr. Geo. Sheridan, A.R.I.B.A., Dublin, Architect.
(Taken from the Supplement to "The Irish Builder and Engineer," April 7, 1906.)

Square fountain might have been the work of W. E. Corbett, and the similarity in design between the Town Hall and a row of houses in Hartstonge Street with rusticated ground floors is highlighted.

The scholarly apparatus of the work is first class with brief but appropriate footnotes, a bibliography and a glossary of architectural terms. The numerous photographs complement the text and are of excellent quality, testifying to the photographic skill of the author. A map should have been included, however, particularly for those not familiar with the city.

Charlotte Murphy deserves the gratitude of all Limerick people for her initiative and hard work, not alone in researching and writing this Guide to the City but also for publishing and distributing it herself. Such endeavour deserves to be rewarded, not just by favourable reviews but also by substantial sales. No one, teacher, pupil, tourist, member of this Society, or plain citizen of Limerick, should be without it.

LIAM IRWIN