

Book Reviews

Noel Kissane, **THE IRISH FACE**, The National Library of Ireland, Dublin 1986; pp. 64; ISBN 0-907328-12-1. Price: £4.95.

Is there such a thing as a distinct Irish face? Is there a discernible difference between the features of a Greek and a Corkman, or has the intermingling of all those European peoples, who from prehistoric times, came and went, married and intermarried with our ancestors, made it difficult if not impossible to identify the various ethnic strains of our people? It is, of course, easy to see the difference between the Nordic and the Spanish face, but all the in-betweens are not so easily pigeon-holed. Even from a cursory glance at the illustrations in this booklet, it appears that we are indeed a mixed lot.

I know I am nit-picking, but the one quibble I have with this well illustrated, easy-to-handle booklet, is with its title. While it is sharp and simple, would not "Irish Faces" be more accurate?

The imposing list of well over one hundred acknowledgements from both institutions and individuals is an assurance of its significance and its accuracy. To obtain his information the author has indeed cast wide his net. He has sifted through his catch judiciously, and the illustrations of Irish men and women down through the ages, selected with care from Prehistoric Stone Carvings, Early Manuscripts, Portrait Busts, Modern Photography, and many more, are delightful, instructive, occasionally poignant, and in a few instances humorous. From the text we get curious little vignettes into the byways of Irish history. For instance: the wig was one of the features most characteristic of the eighteenth century, being worn not only to conceal baldness but, "welcomed by men to counterfeit the elaborate hair styles then in vogue", and naturalistic portrayals of the human face did not appear 'till the fifteenth century—just two instances, and there are many, many more.

There are two extraordinary portraits depicting the Irish face: one of the coloured and probably well-known image of James Joyce by Louis le Brocquy, the other a coloured photograph of the apparent face on a flint ceremonial macehead found at Knowth and dated between 3000 and 2500 B.C. They are all excellent in their own way—that bold pastel of Seán Keating by T. Ryan, that poignant group of Teelin fishermen, period 1880-1910, and above all that passport photograph of Eamonn de Valera taken probably in 1922, when he went to Paris to the Irish Race Congress disguised as a priest. It is a fruitless attempt at camouflage—even with a broad-rimmed black hat and a Roman collar, Dev's features cannot be disguised.

The book is broken up into twenty-seven sections, each consisting of a page of text and a page of photographs, many in colour. There is also a Foreward by Michael Hewson, Director of the National Library and a member of our Society. The whole production is excellent and a real credit to the author, publisher and printer.

P. B. LYSAGHT

Henry McDowell, **IRISH FAMILY TREASURES**, The Irish Heritage Series: 51, Eason & Son Ltd., Dublin 1985; pp. 25 (not paginated); ISBN 900346-67-1. Price: £2.50.

C. H. Holland, **IRISH SCENERY**, The Irish Heritage Series: 59, Eason & Son Ltd., Dublin 1987; pp. 25 (not paginated); ISBN 0-900346-79-5. Price: £2.50.

It was a disappointment to discover that the beautifully produced booklets of Eason's Irish Heritage Series are not all of the usual high standard. Textwise neither of these books fulfills the hopes engendered by their titles.

The first of these two publications deals with thirteen families, many of which are not of ancient Irish lineage but of relatively recent introduction to the country, e.g. Leeson and Somerville both late 17th century arrivals, and the Bagwells who are barely two hundred years here. While some may with reason quibble at their inclusion, the Leesons and the Bagwells did leave us a pair of fine mansions while the Somervilles produced the noted author Edith who, in conjunction with her cousin Martin Ross (really Violet Martin of Ross House, Galway), left us some minor treasures in literature.

However, the real complaint about the content of this booklet is that for all practical purposes it does not deal with Family Treasures, in the accepted sense of the term. The odd Big House is included and now and again one or two objects are briefly mentioned and sometimes illustrated—and some of those are unworthy of the ascription 'treasure'. Indeed, one gets the impression that the mention of some of the families was merely to gratify the author's desire to air his knowledge of some irrelevant anecdotes, generally of little interest. The O'Reilly entry is an example of this: no treasures are mentioned apart from a poor sketch by a not at all well-known caricaturist called Woodward, while the greater part of the entry consists of a rather unlikely episode recounted by Arthur Young (date not given, but 1776-79) about a different, unnamed, family altogether!

North Munster readers *ought* to find the O'Brien and Quin entries of particular interest, but should be forewarned

that the former is the shortest of them all and only mentions the Dromoland Armada Table (now in Bunratty Castle) as one of their treasures; lengthwise the Quins of Adare feature somewhat better though the comments on the will of Sir Edward O'Brien of Dromoland are totally irrelevant and only dragged in because Valentine Quin was its executor—the Quins have one treasure which gets passing mention: an interesting painting called “the Dunraven Dog” in the text and “The Black Dog of Adare” in the illustration’s caption.

No, this collection of inconsequential snippets of history and gossip just will not do and is not to be recommended, even for the many fine illustrations.

The second of these little booklets promises much and certainly contains most excellent and beautiful illustrations, though the relevance of the reproduction of a contemporary ‘modern art’ painting entitled “The bog after the wet summer” to “peat diggings [*recte* cuttings] and stacks in certain lights” stretches the credibility of a publication which, we are informed, “is intended to celebrate the rural scenery of Ireland”.

Celebrate the rural scenery the photographs surely do—13 of the pages are totally devoid of text *per se*, though the long captions to the illustrations somewhat compensate for the shorter than usual text. The text itself is mainly a quick “clockwise sweep around the island”, e.g. “There are various high roads which show the granite country of the Wicklow Mountains but let us move southwards now towards Tipperary”. We are rightly told on the first page that “what has happened to produce the scenery depends upon the nature of the solid rocks below”—and the text which follows tells us about those rocks below, not about the scenery. While it is interesting to learn that “Irish chalk [in Antrim] is cemented to a harder form than its equivalent in the white cliffs of Dover”, do we really, when discussing *scenery*, need to know that it is “made largely of the calcareous skeletons of planktonic organisms, especially the disc-shaped coccoliths which are single-celled algae invisible to the naked eye”?

And so it goes on—apart from one totally irrelevant sentence telling us, without further comment, that the author “first saw Cashel on a moonlit winter’s night with the splendid backcloth of the snow-capped Galtee Mountains beyond”.

One must query the purpose of this little book. For whom was it written? Hardly for the general reader or tourist, while the geologist, be he expert or amateur, will already be aware of the generalities expounded. It can be recommended for the illustrations (though we might seriously complain about the small and meaningless black-and-white one of the Burren).

It is hard to have to criticise any of the Irish Heritage Series, but hopefully such criticism might prevent similar comments regarding future numbers.

ETIENNE RYNNE

Victor M. Buckley (compiler), **ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY OF COUNTY LOUTH**, The Stationery Office, Dublin 1986; pp. x + 135; ISBN 0-7076-0028-6. Price: £16.50.

Anna L. Brindley (compiler), **ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY OF COUNTY MONAGHAN**, The Stationery Office, Dublin 1986; pp. x + 131; ISBN 0-7076-0029-4. Price: £19.50.

Michael J. Moore (compiler), **ARCHAEOLOGICAL INVENTORY OF COUNTY MEATH: FARDAL SEANDÁLAÍOCHTA CHONTAE NA MÍ**, The Stationery Office, Dublin 1987; pp. 230; ISBN 0-7076-0031-6. Price: £18.50.

These three volumes, well bound and handsomely presented, represent a new and very welcome undertaking on the part of the Archaeological Survey, Office of Public Works. Under their General Editor, Mr. P. David Sweetman, the team of field archaeologists and other specialists, and in particular the three compilers, have made available to the general public, as well as to the more specialised reader, a vast amount of information on the field monuments of the counties involved. The scope and purpose of these works is clearly spelled out in the introductions. They mark an intermediate stage between the SMR, or Sites and Monuments Records for each county, and what is envisaged as the third and final stage, when in addition to the sites and monuments lists and comprehensive reviews of all available documentation, the results of most recent field work, with full descriptions and plans, will be published. One must commend the decision to press ahead with the production of these county inventories to facilitate ‘rapid dissemination of primary information . . . in the face of increased rates of destruction’.

These books are attractive and their general approach and lay-out have already been accepted as the standard pattern for such publications. They follow a logical, chronologically ordered classification of sites from the Mesolithic Period to the beginning of the 18th century. All categories are listed alphabetically according to townland name, with each entry having a unique number as well as its Ordnance Survey Sheet/Plan/Trace, Eastings and Northings and a 10-figure National Grid identification number. A brief, sometimes, as in the case of earthworks,

very brief description of each site is included, and entries can be cross-referenced to the Sites and Monuments Record by means of the SMR number which follows each description.

It must be admitted, however, that there are certain anomalies and lacunae evident in these publications. For example there is a great discrepancy in the quantity as well as in the quality of illustrations as between the different volumes. In all cases the dust jackets are decorated with excellent colour prints of sites of major interest but these prints are not reproduced elsewhere in the text, and in the normal course of events are therefore unlikely to be of permanent illustrative or aesthetic value. Likewise, the magnificent full-page print of Castle Roche on the Louth volume contrasts markedly with the relatively small print of Kilcorran Crannog on the dust-cover of the Monaghan volume, despite which in the matter of colour prints Co. Monaghan is by far the best served of the three, being allowed a total of five such plates, each one strikingly beautiful, while the other two volumes, apart from the plates on the dust-jackets already referred to, are devoid of colour photographs. It seems somewhat wasteful to have consigned these marvellous prints to the outer covers. This is, however, a relatively trivial matter, even though the unevenness is sustained in the case of black and white plates. Here, Monaghan has the somewhat miserly total of a single, slightly out-of-focus (aerial) photograph; Louth does slightly better with six prints of rather uneven quality, while Meath runs away with the jackpot, having no less than thirty prints. One trusts that the overall level of use of aerial photography in these inventories does not too accurately reflect the estimate of the value of air photography in archaeological survey.

In two instances, Louth and Meath, the sections on megalithic tombs have been contributed by Ó Nualláin and Walsh of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, Archaeological Division, while the equivalent section in the Monaghan volume is based on information supplied from the same source. Yet the descriptive details of these sites in the Meath and Monaghan volumes tend to be markedly brief as compared with the much more detailed descriptions given in the Louth volume, which are by far the most detailed and comprehensive descriptions allowed for any group of monuments or sites in any of the three books.

A more puzzling discrepancy appears in the manner in which churches and cemeteries are dealt with. Monaghan is noted as having 45 sites identified as Ecclesiastical Remains, Caldrags, Cemeteries and Killeens, with an additional 10 listed as possible sites. Louth however is credited with 116 Ecclesiastical Remains, 12 Killeens and Cemeteries as well as 45 possible sites in these categories, while Meath has no less than 204 churches and 9 cemeteries. Meath too has separate listings for crosses, fonts, and sculptured and inscribed stones, but these categories do not appear to include Early Christian carved crosses or slabs, which are included under churches. Extrapolating from these figures and from the data available, a task which incidentally presents its own difficulties, the numbers which emerge for Early Christian Sites in Co. Monaghan appear remarkably low when compared with the averages identified throughout the rest of the country. Those for Meath and Louth appear to be much more in line with the numbers found elsewhere.

Louth, universally acknowledged to be the smallest county in Ireland, is not afforded the luxury of a map identifying its location in relation to the other counties, an omission rectified in the Monaghan and Meath volumes, where the county outlines are shown and counties are identified in accordance with the two-letter system used in the Megalithic Survey, except, that is, for the six counties of North-East Ulster. Here the Monaghan volume shows a blank area, while the Meath volume indicates the county boundary outlines but eccentrically leaves out the identifying letters. There is no agreement between the three as to the manner of portraying topography, and truth to tell, none is entirely satisfactory. The Louth map is perhaps visually the clearest, and the inclusion of the key to the location maps here does not create any difficulty, but the omission of any key to the conventions used to indicate (what is presumably) height above sea level could cause a problem. A most welcome feature of all three is the series of location maps which portrays road systems, towns and villages, as well as the townland boundaries, thereby establishing a pattern which it is hoped will be emulated elsewhere, and which must have added greatly to the demands on the compilers. Many, and especially the general readers, will be eternally grateful for this, but why did not the compilers complete the task by including distribution maps for each category of site? They have already done practically all the necessary work, and have left the way open for others to pick up the credit at little cost to themselves.

Each of the volumes has a comprehensive and easily followed index, but only the Meath volume includes a subject index, while all three have limited but useful bibliographies. These, like the inventories themselves, perhaps, 'rather than being a full statement... are intended to stimulate, direct and facilitate further research'. One major source of irritation, common to all, is the apparently random manner in which excavations are or are not credited to the archaeologists who directed the digging. It is surely not any part of the task of the compilers or the editor to determine which names should be included and which should be omitted. There should be one rule, applied indiscriminately to all; all names included or none included.

These observations by and large, can be considered as being *de minima*, when set against the achievements represented in these works. Taken together with the specialised surveys, such as the *Archaeological Survey of County Donegal*, the *Archaeological Survey of the Dingle Peninsula*, the *Archaeological Survey of the Barony of Ikerrin* and of course the ongoing *Megalithic Survey* (all of which Surveys have been reviewed in our *Journal*), and not forgetting the County Sites and Monuments Records, the three volumes under consideration mark a

period of more than six years of spectacular accomplishments. When results of the Regional Surveys undertaken by the Departments of Archaeology of University College, Cork, and University College, Galway, as well as the Urban Archaeological Survey are included, one might be forgiven for claiming that monumental progress can be reported. It is right and proper that the Archaeological Survey should be in the forefront of this progress.

D. L. SWAN

Steve MacDonogh, **A VISITOR'S GUIDE TO THE DINGLE PENINSULA**, Brandon Book Publishers Ltd., Dingle, Co. Kerry 1985; pp. 104; ISBN 0-86322-076-2. Price: £3.50.

A popular tourist guide to any region in Ireland is always welcome, but one to this famous peninsula, with its wealth of scenic beauty and archaeological remains, is particularly so. The text displays not only an excellent knowledge of the topography of the Dingle region but a love for and a keen interest in the chosen subject.

There is a short introduction covering the geography and archaeology of the peninsula—the latter section providing headings and dating brackets, some of which, *e.g.* 800 B.C. to A.D. 400 for the Iron Age, are certainly not the accepted brackets for Ireland. Following this, one has the guide proper which takes us, firstly, through that portion of the peninsula lying to the east of Dingle town and features places like Inch, Anascaul, and Lispole, including on page 11, a short account of the famous Tralee and Dingle Railway closed in 1953. Over thirty pages of the booklet are devoted to the town of Dingle itself. Here the author is at his best, providing the reader with a very graphic and detailed account of its history, both ancient and modern. The major tourist attractions such as the Races and the Regatta are naturally included. A feature of this section which the visitor will appreciate is a street by street account of the town and a selection of walks and short car journeys within easy reach of one's hotel or guesthouse.

The remainder of the guide, fully half of its complement of 104 pages, deals with that portion of the peninsula to the west and north of Dingle, from Ventry to the Blaskets and around by Ballyferriter northwards to Brandon to finish up at Castlegregory. This area, encompassing the Gaeltacht of Corca Dhuibhne, is renowned not alone for its natural scenic routes but for its wealth of archaeological remains recently surveyed by Judith Cuppage and her team, and published by Comharchumann Forbartha Chorca Dhuibhne.

Steve MacDonogh, in this booklet, guides us through the various tourist locations, rightly concentrating on certain monuments such as the ecclesiastical remains of the Early Christian Period for which the area is justifiably famous. Sites like Gallarus, Kilmalkedar, Reask, Dunbeg, and Fahan, are almost household names and, indeed, merit booklets in themselves. The Blasket Island and Dunquin, famed far and wide for its heritage of Irish writing, receives special mention. Brandon Mountain and the surrounding countryside are afforded special treatment, and it is clear in this section that the author, in giving us a guide to the various climbs, natural features and field monuments, has drawn on his personal and detailed knowledge of the area.

The very readable text is interspersed throughout by a variety of black-and-white photographs, maps and, here and there, pages of advertisements—the latter presumably inserted to help defray the printing costs. Quite a number of the photographic plates by Pat Langan are, unfortunately, not very clear. In certain instances, notably on pages 58, 59 and 89, one can barely identify the features referred to in the caption. This may be largely due to the quality of the chosen paper but, if so, should have been checked out before printing. Two of the photographs are repeated—those portraying the stones at Miltown and Reask. However, some are very picturesque, and one small but highly imaginative shot (on page 99) was taken through the tiny east window of Gallarus Oratory showing a man framed in the west doorway.

The maps by Paula Nolan, whilst of a large format, are not as helpful as they should be. In many instances the roads as marked do not include the vital and final access routes, be it breen or laneway, thus not really helping the visitor to get to the relevant site. Strangest omission of all is a map of the Ballyferriter area containing the greatest density of famous sites, whilst the maps on pages 72 and 82 showing the Brandon Mountain region are identical. One wonders, too, why Belfast is omitted from the map of Ireland on page 5.

As a visitor's guide this booklet will undoubtedly be a major seller with tourists, though its large size may prove unattractive to some. Hopefully a second edition will resolve the deficiencies referred to above and include a colour element—the quality of the colour photographs on the front and back covers are in sharp contrast to the dullness of the pictures inside.

THOMAS FANNING

Paddy Lysaght, **THE FEALE FROM ITS SOURCE TO THE SEA**, Treaty Publishers, Limerick 1987; pp. 69.
Price: £3.00.

In his foreword to this delightful book, the author lays his cards on the table. This is not a book for the specialist for it contains no footnotes, bibliography or even an index, because the author intends it for the general reader who may wish to see things at a glance and not be worried by specialities.

This urgency to see things for ourselves is reflected in the very first paragraph for he has us immediately struggling up the side of Mullaghareirk mountain (1,341 ft.), trudging through heather and sphagnum moss until we finally arrive at the source of infant Feale—all in a few lines. Here the author awaits us and tells us (one suspects with tongue in cheek) that if we were a member of the crow family, we would have only 27 miles to fly to reach the estuary of this fascinating river. Thankfully, we are not, and for the next 63 pages or so, he conducts us through 46 wonderful miles of wonderful waterways, crossed it seems by many fine bridges (the builders of which he seems to know at first hand), joined by many meandering tributaries delighting under such fine Kerry names as, for example, Glashaconcore, until, finally, both we and the river arrive exhausted at the sea by the little village of Cashen. While the river may recharge her batteries in the surging tides of the sea, we for our part cannot, for one of the gems of information contained in this book is the fact that Cashen village contains no pub, which, according to the author is “almost unique in an Irish context”!

On our journey, however, the author regales us with tales of the district we are passing through, such as Thomas Moore's lovely poem about the romance of the sixth Earl of Desmond, the smugglers who became Whiteboys, faction fights and, perhaps most revealing of all, the shameful way, according to legend, of how the Feale got its name. Of interest also, is the account of the work done by a young civil engineer named Richard Griffiths, who, between 1823 and 1828, built a total of 142 miles of roads in this wild district, and as a result brought so much prosperity to the place. We will know him later for his *Valuations of Ireland*.

Yet this book does not just deal with the past for it also concerns itself with the present, and even the future as the author worries over the ever-growing dangers of pollution, both from sewage and industrial waste. A surprising fact to emerge is the number of industries (four in Abbeyfeale with 356 employees and four in Listowel with 630) operating in the two main towns on the Feale—T.D.s from other areas might copy! The author also decries the demise of the salmon-netting industry at the mouth of the Feale because of illegal drift-netting by foreign trawlers. His chapter on the Cashen fishermen and their strange Gandeloe netting boats makes sad reading as we see the salmon stocks dwindle before our eyes. Surely, this book should make everyone aware of the value a river such as the Feale is to a district and, but not for that alone, our thanks are due to the author.

PEADAR O'DOWD

Tarlach Ó Raifeartaigh, **NAOMH PÁDRAIG, SCÉAL A BHEATHA ÓNA BHÉAL FÉIN**, Monograif Staire agus Cultúir, An Gúm, Baile Átha Cliath 1984; Il. 62. Luach: £1.80.

Tá an saothar so ar cheann dosna scríobhinní is déanaí dá dtáinig ó pheann Tharlaigh Uí Raifeartaigh agus nochtann sé an tsuim a bhí i gcónaí riamh aige i scéal Phádraig. Tá an leabhrán dírithe ar an aos óg agus is mór an moladh atá ag dul don bhfoillsitheoir agus don údar, a chur turas fada aistearach de i mbeagán aimsire.

This little booklet is intended as the first in a series (if I understand the Irish on the back cover correctly: “Baineann Naomh Pádraig ceann den tsraith” is not how I'd like any of my own publications described!), and the publication is directed at school-goers. The choice of author was a good one, since the late Tarlach Ó Raifeartaigh devoted many years' research to the Patrick Problem, and published widely on the subject. The result is a brief survey, based on Patrick's own words, with additional commentary added from the author's own intensive study of his subject. The presentation is considerably enhanced by the addition of a series of black-and-white illustrations.

The picture presented here is basically much as we have come to know it since T. F. O'Rahilly's famous contribution in 1942, though some of the re-interpretations suggested by later writers do not seem to have found favour with our author. He still talks of the cargo of hounds which were once supposed to have accompanied Patrick on his escape from Ireland, though these best friends of man were put down thirty years ago in the most humane manner possible: textual emendation! He also firmly believes that Patrick paid an Easter visit to Laoghaire at Tara, and that he died in A.D. 493. He believes, too, that the words translated as “nigh by the western ocean” in reference to Patrick's period spent around the Wood of Foelut are a later addition by some unknown copyist, although no convincing reasons are presented here, at any rate, to support this theory.

On the other hand, the account has many deft touches, and Ó Raifeartaigh uses the detail of Patrick's words to good effect, as in his references to the honey-comb found in a tree, the use of *governor* as a term denoting the captain of a small ship, the time of year in which he wandered with the Irish crew deduced from his reference to oak-mast as pig-feed, and so on. There are also some interesting interpretations offered of Patrick's words: he proposes, for example, to distinguish the terms *Scotti* and *Hiberiones* (a thread worth pursuing), he sees the use of the word *sancta* in relation to the beautiful young woman who espoused the faith as indicating that she

was deceased at time of Patrick's writings, and he argues for Patrick's presence in Gaul during the first meeting of *seniores* in Britain who found him wanting. This last interpretation is, I believe, wrong, and I would quarrel, too, with the suggestion that Patrick's reference to his expenditure of the worth of 15 men meant that they were 15 men of his entourage condemned (to imprisonment?) by Brehon judges. These proposals of the author are, however, clear evidence for the originality of his approach, and proof that he was not content merely to rehash earlier views. He makes one think again, for example, about the fact that Patrick was held captive along with the Irish crew, when they encountered natives in Britain; why wasn't he released immediately?

However, some of the author's statements are difficult to understand: in Patrick's time, we are told, there were no such things as fields or walls, nor farms as we understand them (p. 29); the Romans, according to Ó Raifeartaigh, abandoned Britain in the fourth century (p. 8), though in fact they left early in the fifth. But these statements may simply have arisen from the necessity to condense a vast amount of secondary literature into a very small space. Some of the Irish expressions, it must be said, have suffered for the same reason: I encountered a number that were ambiguous, to say the least of it, starting with the tortuous sentence on p. 5, which almost has one thinking that P. *never* set foot in Ireland and "... ba ar éigean a bheadh an mhórchuid acu tar éis glacadh leis an gCríostaíocht taobh istigh de chúpla glúin, an rud a tharla" (pp. 29-30). Some statements are of the type once described by the great Whitley Stokes as "curiosities of official scholarship", written in an appropriately convoluted version of the first official language—though this is a language "nár labhair aon fhear ach Aesop"; the following examples are only the most awful: "Ach bhí mianach faoi leith ann mar Phádraig" (p. 10); "Cine a ndeachaigh sé rite liom éalú uaim" (p. 19); "Ar an taobh eile de ba ar shagairt as an mBreatain a bhí Pádraig ag braith ar fad imeasc págánach is mar tharla sé", and "ba ina 'ghualainn gan bhráthair' a tharla é" (p. 56). Patrick may have performed miracles, but the statement (p. 54) that "rinne sé talamh" amongst the Ulstermen is, alas, only one of many sorry signs that things have taken a turn for the worse in Irish since the saint learned the language: monstrosities like "Amach ó na huaisle", "Amach óna dhá scríbhinn féin", "amach óna n-ainmneacha", and the ghastly "nuair a bhí an t-am ann leis na mainistreacha a theacht" are likely to be revisited on unfortunate examiners in years to come, and should have been strangled at birth.

DÁIBHÍ Ó CRÓINÍN.

Timothy O'Neill, FSC, **THE IRISH HAND. Scribes and their manuscripts from the earliest times to the seventeenth century, with an exemplar of Irish scripts**, Dolmen Press, Mountrath, Portlaoise 1984; pp. xxviii + 100; ISBN 0-85105-411-0. Price: £17.50.

"Perhaps the unique feature of the Irish hand is its use, virtually unchanged, for over 1,000 years and the fact that today it remains for so many ordinary Irish people the only script for writing their native language". With these words Brother Timothy O'Neill closes the section of his book entitled "A Scribe's Reflections" and sets the seal on what has obviously been a labour of love. The author brings to his study an ideal combination of skills—being at once a trained historian and a practising calligrapher—and the fruits of his efforts is a book which should stand on the shelves of everyone who treasures our heritage of Irish manuscripts.

Where Tim O'Neill differs from most others that have gone before him is his interest in the script of Irish manuscripts, and not just their decoration. To this end he offers a set of plates which are intended to illustrate the evolution of the Irish hand from the beginning of the seventh century down to the end of the seventeenth. In addition, he offers in the second part of the book a selection of detailed reproductions from these manuscripts with sample transcriptions of their texts and a brief account of their distinctive palaeographical features. Readers who are not familiar with the intricacies of Irish scribal habits can thus get a flavour of what is in store for anyone who returns to the primary materials.

The most valuable part of the book is the series of large plates with accompanying account of each manuscript's history and contents. Although it must be said that the reproductions lack the crispness and clarity one might expect, the large format does convey a strong impression of what the originals are like. The same, however, cannot be said of the detailed plates and their transcriptions that form part 2 of the book: the prints are unacceptably coarse, and the transcriptions are not always faithful to the text—the transcription of pl. 35, the Life of St. Fintan from the Book of Lismore, is a case in point, and the reproduction of Eriugena's supposed autograph handwriting in pl. 13 is obviously a bad reproduction of a poor plate in another publication. The reader should have been told that the script of Eriugena's text is not Insular at all—a fact worth mentioning in the context of Irish scholars on the continent; Martin the Irishman, a contemporary of Eriugena's and a scholar at Laon, also adopted the continental minuscule in place of his native script because the *libri Scottice scripti* often posed problems to continental scribes and copyists.

The history of Irish script, significantly enough, begins not with a manuscript but with a set of wax tablets, the famous Springmount Tablets discovered in an Antrim bog in 1913 and sold to the National Museum the following year for £20. However, through an unfortunate oversight, the reproduction on p. 57 illustrates the

15th-century tablets from Maghera, not the Springmount ones. There is no doubt that the script of the Springmount Tablets represents a stage of evolution older than that which is to be seen in the Cathach. Although the author dates the Cathach early 7th-century, there are in fact no good grounds for denying a 6th-century date to the psalm-book ascribed to Colum Cille, since tradition and script combine to make such a date quite plausible (as eminent palaeographers like E. A. Lowe and W. M. Lindsay remarked). A mid- to late-6th century date for the wax tablets is therefore quite conceivable—though most modern palaeographers seem inexplicably reluctant to put any Irish script back beyond A.D. 600. By contrast, Prof. Francis John Byrne, in his introduction, proposes to see in the Inchagoill (Lough Corrib) inscription LIE LUGUAEDON MACCI MENUH the earliest extant example of an Irish inscription in Latin characters—a suggestion made before him by Ludwig Bieler and Rudolf Thurneysen on palaeographical and linguistic grounds. The combined evidence of wax tablets and memorial stone, therefore, attests to the use of a fully developed native script before A.D. 600.

It is surprising, given the Inchagoill example, and the relative abundance of the material generally, that the corpus of inscribed stones was not drawn upon in O'Neill's account. The evidence of inscriptions has been used with very telling effect in the study of Roman scripts and their evolution, and the script of such stones as the CVMME/Ladcen inscription from Peakaun (which was the subject of a fine study in this *Journal* in 1964 by Mgr. Michael Moloney) could have been discussed with profit in this book. As it is, the volume steers clear of any systematic discussion of Irish manuscripts and their peculiarities: letter forms, alternative forms for certain letters, abbreviations, methods of preparing vellum and ruling it, the peculiar make-up of gatherings, and so on, are all passed over. Some of the abbreviations can be turned to linguistic use, e.g., in the way the scribe of Rawl. B 502 (No. XIV) uses D2 = De est, which shows, besides the Irish predilection for capricious abbreviations, how the scribe pronounced the fourth letter of the alphabet. Some of these things the readers can pick up for themselves when they make their way through the sample transcriptions (though they need to be on their guard for things in the plates that are not reproduced in the transcriptions, and vice versa).

The *Irish Hand*, however, is a fine introduction to the rich heritage of Irish culture that has been preserved in our manuscripts, both at home and abroad. The book offers the only extended survey, in pictorial form, of medieval Irish manuscripts since Eugene O'Curry's pioneering *Lectures on the Manuscript Materials of Ancient Irish History* (1861), which provided its inspiration, and it fills a long-felt gap. Dr. O'Neill deserves our thanks.

DÁIBHÍ Ó CRÓINÍN

Timothy O'Neill, **MERCHANTS AND MARINERS IN MEDIEVAL IRELAND**, Irish Academic Press, Blackrock, Co. Dublin 1987; pp. 164; ISBN 0-7165-2398-1 (hard covers) and ISBN 0-7165-2399-X (paperback). Price: £20.00 and £8.95 respectively.

Looking at certain aspects of Irish history it is often extremely difficult to see the trees for the wood. This is certainly true of the medieval maritime and merchantile history of this island. By concentrating on commodities rather than politics the author, a Limerickman, has produced a very readable economic history of Ireland in the period A.D. 1300-1500.

The interdependence of Gael and Anglo-Norman merchant, despite the anti-Irish element in many urban bye-laws, is clearly sketched in. Apparently, then as now, trade transcended all barriers. The growth in wealth and influence of many port towns, e.g. Limerick, Drogheda, Galway, Youghal is chronicled or inferred through the trading patterns established. Indeed, the siting of some of these ports and the volume of trade carried on from them prompts questions about early usage of inland navigations in Ireland as distribution routes long before the canal age.

After dealing with the merchants and their commodities, the author turns his attention to the various maritime problems that had to be overcome. These ranged from shipbuilding to shipwreck, from procuring accurate navigation charts to coping with piracy. With regard to this latter hazard it is worth noting that, in 1505, the citizens of Limerick had built a tri-oared galley to protect merchant shipping in the area.

The author has, in the main, confined his sources to material already in print. His bibliography is impressive: it runs to over ten pages. There is much food for thought in his book for local historians interested in maritime affairs, and this will, I believe, remain a standard reference work for a long time to come. Further research will, no doubt, add to the picture but will not seriously amend it.

PAUL DUFFY

C. T. Cairns, "Irish Tower Houses: A Co. Tipperary Case Study", *Irish Settlement Studies*, No. 2, Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement 1987; pp. 35. Price: £3.00.

I have always considered tower houses to be the most interesting of Irish field-monuments. Since the age of twelve I have spent many hours climbing slippery stairs, descending into dark, damp chambers or crawling on all fours around mossy parapets and wall-walks. What the strange attraction to these desolate ruins was I have never quite understood; perhaps it was their size—their gaunt, proud stance on a green hillside or in a noisy mucky farmyard. Like Mount Everest or Cervantes' windmills they were there! Yet tower houses are still greatly neglected in the realms of archaeology for many reasons, mostly financial, and while the stone alignment is recorded measured, excavated and researched, the nearby tower house stores bales of hay and garages the farmer's tractor! Such will be the case while these brave sentinals of Gaelic culture remain shrouded in a mist of ignorance. "Who built it?" you ask the farmer, more out of courtesy than curiosity because you know the obvious reply: "The Normans, Cromwell, or Fireball McNamara".

This booklet is a well researched study crammed with solid, relevant information on the evolution, development and function of the Irish Tower House—a monument seemingly almost as native and unique to Ireland as the round tower or high cross. As one who has been involved in a similar study on tower houses in the county of Clare since the mid-seventies, I can appreciate the years of painstaking research, late nights cataloguing notes and references, thousands of miles driving and walking over inhospitable terrain, recording and photographing hundreds of details for comparison, and finally editing and writing the finished work. A labour of love, no doubt, the value of which may not be realised for years to come. But the great pity is of course that this study will for the most part only be bought and read by the converted, while the towers themselves will continue to disintegrate and collapse for want of simple maintenance. Since I started my own work, three fine tower houses which once contained fire-places, windows, etc., have been reduced to piles of rubble, namely those at Kilkishen, Ballymullen, and the round tower house of Faunarooska at Fanore.

Although the author concentrates on Co. Tipperary, he uses many anecdotes and references to other castles in Ireland and Britain to support his ideas which are applicable to practically all tower houses in the country. He deals extensively with moated sites, bawns and urban towers (a subject greatly ignored up to now), and makes reference to the later development of the tower house as a fortified wings of Plantation houses and Tudor manors, quoting numerous examples throughout Tipperary. Particularly interesting is the chapter on "Life in a Tower House" which gives a well balanced view of the house, not only as a building with a totally military and defensive function but also as a thriving, busy farmyard where cows were milked, hay saved and poultry and bees kept under the (no doubt) watchful eye of a shrewd Tipperary man, who spent his evenings arguing about the price of barley with his neighbours, after a hurling match!

But of course many tower houses had their times of trouble also, and the booklet's author does not neglect this important if unsavoury aspect. His references to siege machinery, mechanical artillery, sows, etc., make interesting reading. Although these methods were rarely successful they were used well into the seventeenth century by both English and Irish alike.

Although tower houses are among the least understood monuments, they must have influenced the lives of our ancestors to a huge extent. The author quotes a figure of 3,500 towers for the whole country. If one considers that each tower may have employed about a hundred people as builders, servants, soldiers or farm labourers, then approximately one-third of the Irish population spent their lives in or around a tower house, yet, as the author points out, the historical information available on these buildings and their presumably colourful inhabitants is very scant and most of our accounts come from the letters and diaries of foreign visitors, whom he quotes liberally in this booklet.

Irish Tower Houses (somewhat of a misnomer when referred to in this abbreviated form) is a useful reference book for any historian dealing with the later medieval period in Irish history, despite its brevity: it contains no more than 35 pages in all, of which two are a Foreword by R. H. Buchanan of the Institute of Irish Studies, in Queen's University, Belfast, six are for reference notes to the text, and three are for an Appendix on "Stone Castles built in Tipperary before 1500". Although it does contain a distribution map of those in the county and four full-page black-and-white photographs (and a smaller one on the front cover), more illustrations would have been welcome. Also, I would like to have read something on the technology which was employed in building the towers, e.g. lifting gear, cranes, etc.

However, taken all-in-all this is a worthwhile work and a must for all antiquarian field-workers, both amateur and professional. The author is to be congratulated—*rath Dé ar a chuid oibre*.

RISTEÁRD UA CRÓINÍN.

At first sight a journal such as this, devoted to the publication of archival material, would not seem to be of immediate appeal to those only generally interested in history or to the archaeologist, given the lack of any pictorial content whatsoever. Appearances are deceptive however, and this journal is not only an example of the vital work of disseminating important archival material and so, perhaps, filling gaps formed by comparatively recent strife, but is also of particular interest in itself because of its contents.

The first article, a record of petitions relating to Ireland presented to the King and his Council, contains many interesting insights into medieval Ireland. The administrative ripples of the Bruce Invasion can be seen in the petition for rewards for service in the war or compensation for injuries received (*e.g.* SC 8/4/151, pp. 6-7). The tensions within the country are exemplified by the complaint in 1324 that the Cistercian Abbots in Ireland were refusing to receive men of the English nation into the order (SC 8/8/359). Topographical information can also be quarried, such as the request by the Friars of Youghal, *c.* 1278-83, asking to have a causeway made between their old churchyard and the new one (SC 8/153/7607, p. 50), or the wish of the Mayor and Commons of Limerick that the new bridge between the city and the Irish of Thomond be repaired (SC 8/193/9637, p. 62). Some petitions are intriguing. Who were the Irish scholars at Oxford whose arrest was sought in reprisal for the killing of 150 men by their relatives in Co. Louth in 1346 (SC 8/208/10,390, p. 66), and why would the building of a prison for fornicators by the Mayor and Bailiffs of Dublin in 1378-9 be likely to lead to disputes between the Archbishop and the city (SC 8/109/5418, p. 38)? Clearly a browse through an article such as this could lead one into a much deeper study of a fascinating period.

A second article is even more interesting as it provides an extraordinary view into seventeenth century Ireland. It is an edition, by Brian MacCuarta, of the papers of Mathew de Renzy, a planter of German extraction, who attempted "to establish himself as a landowner in the Gaelic lordship of Delvin MacCoghlan against the opposition of the lord, Sir John MacCoghlan" (page 110). "The letters provide perhaps unique evidence of how a planter used his knowledge of Irish in coping and understanding his new environment, for de Renzy had learned classical Irish with the Gaelic learned family of MacBruaidheadha in Thomond" (page 111). Again, a quick survey of the letters points out a short description of the inauguration of a MacCoghlan (page 116), of the state of coinage at the time (page 131), much information regarding castles, passes and fords as well as contemporary political advice and intelligence. Most valuable of all is the opportunity to have a view into seventeenth century opinions and attitudes, while reliable topographical information such as this can be of great assistance in reconstructing settlement patterns and military campaigns of the time.

Finally, and by no means least, T. P. Power's edition of "A Minister's Money Account for Clonmel, 1703", is an important source for the study of Clonmel, its population and physical layout. Three hundred and seventy-one houses are listed, arranged by street or suburb, and one can see both New English and Old English surnames. Even today, in what we hope are enlightened times, many important artifacts and documents are lost or destroyed because of ignorance. The presence of local museums, professionally staffed and securely financed, will greatly increase the chances of such items being preserved. But that is only half the story. The dissemination of knowledge must be one of the basic principles of a local museum and so the Tipperary (S.R.) County Museum is only too glad to see items from its collections, such as this, edited and publicised for the benefit of those interested in the past.

The volume is provided with indexes prepared by Declan Murtagh (pp. 201-224).

P. HOLLAND

C. E. J. Caldicott, H. Gough, J. P. Pittion (editors), **THE HUGUENOTS AND IRELAND: Anatomy of an Emigration**, The Glendale Press, Dublin 1987; pp. 444; ISBN 0-907606-43-1. Price: £36.00.

The Edict of Nantes, which had guaranteed religious toleration and equal political rights with Roman Catholics to French Protestants, the Huguenots, was revoked in 1685. The resultant persecution initiated a large scale Huguenot migration and resettlement, not alone to other areas in Europe but also to North America and South Africa. The exact scale of the immigration to Ireland has yet to be fully determined, but on present evidence it appears that about five thousand Huguenots settled here in the late seventeenth century. They became particularly prominent in industry, trade and banking though some also invested in land.

To mark the tercentenary of the 1685 edict, a colloquium was held in Dublin in April 1985. A distinguished group of international scholars delivered nineteen papers which have been brought together and edited in this volume. The original 1598 Edict of Nantes, like the Treaty of Limerick, remains more honoured for its breach than its observance. Roland Mousnier, in the first of the five papers in French, gives a re-interpretation of the reasons for its issue and sets it in the general context of the history of toleration. Jean-Pierre Poussou and Phillippe Loupes examine different aspects of the effect of the revocation in south-west France. One of the joint editors, Edric Caldicott, examines the Edict of Beziers (1632) for the light which it sheds on policy towards the Huguenots

under Richelieu. The final contribution from the French aspect is a study of the Huguenot influence on Michelet, the great Romantic historian, by Paul Viallaneix.

Two papers are directly concerned with England. John Millar questions the standard view that English protestants were horrified by the revocation while James II was sympathetic. Millar demonstrates convincingly that public concern for the Huguenots was neither as strong nor as unqualified as was later claimed. James, while suspicious of the Huguenots on political grounds and undoubtedly zealous for Catholicism, disliked persecution and his attitude was determined above all by an ideological unwillingness to interfere in another kingdom's internal affairs. Mark Goldie uses the Huguenot experience to explore the issue of toleration in restoration England.

Louis Cullen sets his discussion of the Huguenot commercial success in the general context of the way distinctive groups through particular advantages, rich agricultural surpluses in the case of the Huguenots, were able to play a disproportionate role in the under-developed and formative world economy of the seventeenth century. He examines their vital role in the brandy trade and consequent links with Dublin. Harmon Murtagh expertly analyses and elucidates the Huguenot involvement in the Irish Jacobite war while Patrick Kelly rehabilitates the Marquis de Ruvigny, showing that he was not the architect of the initial 1697 penal law passed by the Irish parliament. James I. McGuire traces government attitudes to religious non-conformity from the restoration settlement to the Toleration Act of 1719. He emphasises the essentially English roots of Irish policy and the consequent problems in implementation. David Dickson contrasts the greater commercial success of the Quakers in Ireland, which he attributes to a higher birth rate, less emigration and fewer instances of marriage with Anglicans. The Huguenot settlement at Portarlington was unique as it was the only place where they were the dominant group. The area had been the subject of an abortive earlier attempt at plantation and was largely abandoned when retired Huguenot officers of the Williamite wars settled there. Raymond P. Hylton reconstructs life there in the formative period 1692-1771.

Among the other contributions, two deserve special mention. John de Courcy Ireland discusses the maritime dimension, concentrating on their contribution to shipowning, port engineering, canal administration and maritime education. He mentions the D'Esterre family who had settled in Limerick and Clare as early as 1669. Angelique Day utilises a family archive to illustrate the life of a Huguenot ancestor heiress in the eighteenth century.

The study of the Huguenot settlement in Ireland has been neglected for far too long. The main contours were set down in the last century and there has not been a major examination of the topic since the early part of this century. The application of modern research methods has now provided us with a much-needed fresh perspective. The emphasis on placing events in Ireland in their English, French and wider European context is particularly instructive. We owe an immense debt of gratitude to the organisers and particularly to the editors of this volume who have made the important fruits of the colloquium available to a wider audience.

LIAM IRWIN

Hugh Weir, **Historical, Genealogical, Architectural Notes on Some HOUSES OF CLARE**, Ballinakella Press, Whitegate, Co. Clare 1986; pp. 285 + ; ISBN 0-946538-00-X. Price: £38.00 (£34 stg.; US \$50).

What an undertaking, and what an impressive publication! This book is clearly the result of diligent work undertaken over a long period, work which was equally clearly a labour of love—and unlike Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* the end-result is a real gain, one which will be appreciated by all who are in any way at all interested in Co. Clare or in the Big Houses of Ireland. It is a scholarly work, if not pretentious or over-burdened with academic minutiae (it eschews all plans, measurements and strictly architectural jargon), and it amply fulfills the author's intended aim as indicated in the adjectival portion of the book's title. The author also tells us, on the flap of the attractive dust-jacket, that the book "has been written to be enjoyed", and strangely, perhaps, anyone with even a superficial acquaintance of the Banner County cannot fail to enjoy dipping into it.

One of the more attractive aspects of this large book is that it is not confined to the Big Houses of Co. Clare, but also includes the odd castle/tower house, numerous now-ruined mansions of former beauty, a great number of lesser, unpretentious houses of the smaller landowners and even quite a few single-storeyed, almost nondescript, houses. Indeed, one gets the impression that almost any house in Clare which is likely to merit even a fleeting glance is included... and appropriately it is with the outsides, not the interiors, of the houses that the author deals.

Many of the houses, surely more than 50% of them, are illustrated with clear little sketches by the author, not great art perhaps but almost all attractive and serving their purpose. The entries include the meaning or derivation of the name, a list of the associated families, the townland, the location relative to the nearest roads and town/village, an abbreviated description of the present condition of the relevant site house and its surrounds, and a longer account of its history. Of course one could lengthen each entry, some by several pages, but the interested reader can do that for himself, though an individual bibliography would have helped; Hugh Weir's notes will certainly do to be going-on with.

To praise the book is easy, as is to recommend it as a most useful, nay indispensable, reference book to have

in one's library, but one can also find fault, not serious fault but fault nonetheless. Absence of pagination is the main fault. For instance, there are sixteen unpaginated pages from the title page to page 1. These include a three-page *Foreward* by the Knight of Glin (in which he shocks one by reference to "Red Mary O'Brien at Lemeneagh"—Maire Ruadh in Weir's text, of course), a three-page *Preface* and an important two-page *Introduction* by the author, and a map of Co. Clare showing the main locations. These pages should have been numbered with lower case Roman numerals, i-xvi, as is usually done. But only the 285 pages of the actual catalogue of *The Houses* are paginated—and they are followed, unbelievably, by forty-eight unpaginated pages, which include nineteen of unlisted and unnumbered, though captioned, photographs (forty-eight of them), two pages of a general bibliography and twenty-one pages of an admirable index.

Perhaps, in congratulating the author, we should also remember the people who built and lived in these houses. The Knight of Glin, in his last paragraph, sums this up for us all: *Whatever we may think of the landlords and their life and times... it was they who built all the fine buildings we see today from mansion and courthouse to demesne walls and gate lodge... an irreplaceable architectural legacy.* As one who from his infant days always loved the unusually topped wall around Dromoland's demesne, seeing it not only as a thing of beauty but also as a feature which signified that the end of the long road from Dublin to Kilkee was at hand, I willingly second those remarks.

ETIENNE RYNNE

Seán Kierse, **EDUCATION IN THE PARISH OF KILLALOE**, Boru Books, Killaloe, Co. Clare 1987; pp. 151; ISBN 0-9512279-0-4. Price: £6.00.

Seán Kierse, the Principal of Killaloe Boys' National School for 28 years and an authority on local history, has set out to produce the story of the schools of the Parish of Killaloe, Co. Clare, over a period of three centuries. In this task he has succeeded wonderfully. The informative introduction deals with the evolution of education in Killaloe from the earliest times to the opening of the first two statutory schools in the early eighteenth century, almost two centuries after the Acts (of 1537 and 1570 respectively) which originally envisaged the schools had been passed.

These two schools, the Protestant schools, are dealt with in the first two chapters. The parish school, set up in 1723, was fee-paying at first but was free from the end of the century. Particularly noteworthy is the fact that at the beginning of the 19th century and before Emancipation, the Church of Ireland Bishop paid for the employment of a special schoolmaster to instruct Roman Catholic children in their own catechism. When the Board of Education was set up in 1831 to oversee the new system of National Education, a joint application was sent from the Church of Ireland Bishop, Edmond Knox, and the Parish priest of Killaloe for recognition. This was immediately forthcoming and the parish school joined the National Schools' system in 1832. This ecumenical experiment lasted only eight years when the school withdrew to join the Church Education Society. Thirty years later the school re-connected with the national system but falling numbers led to its eventual closure in 1922. The failure of this experiment led to formation of Catholic schools in the parish and thus Killaloe followed the national trend of denominational primary education, a situation which pertains, with few exceptions, to the present day in Ireland.

The account of the little-known Killaloe Diocesan school refers in passing to the Church of Ireland Bishop of Killaloe and Kilfenora, and brought to mind that in Roman Catholic administration Kilfenora is united with Galway and Kilmacduagh. These last two dioceses are suffragan sees of Tuam but Kilfenora remains a suffragan see of Cashel. Thus we have the unique situation, in Ireland at least, where the bishop of Galway is answerable to two Archbishops—one in Connacht, the other in Munster.

The chapter on hedge schools filled this reviewer with admiration for the teachers who worked in dreadful conditions. Winter time was particularly difficult with some hedge schoolmasters having to travel from house to house teaching individual children in order to eat.

The six chapters dealing with the Catholic primary schools of the parish are a source of detailed information on the schools from their respective dates of foundation. These are the tales of ordinary people, priests, nuns, teachers, children—who ensured the schools' survival through good times and bad. In these chapters are found the human stories behind several 'exceptional closings' as they are officially known in Departmentalese!

The chapter on secondary education details the persistence of the parents in ensuring the continuation of such a school in Killaloe and their ultimate success in the 1980s with the opening of the new Community College. The final chapter deals with the Gaelic League teachers of the early years of this century.

One cannot help but be impressed by Appendix 1 which lists all the teachers (Principals, Assistants and Monitors) of the schools since the 1830s. The bibliography is extensive and indicative of the time and effort put into this work. To anyone considering a similar study it should prove indispensable. This book is a labour of love and I have no hesitation in recommending for it a wide readership.

GEARÓID LAIGHLÉIS

John Fleming, **ST. JOHN'S CATHEDRAL, LIMERICK**, Four Courts Press Ltd., Blackrock, Co. Dublin 1987; pp. 104. Price: £9.95.

The author, Fr. John Fleming, a native of Ardpatrick, Co. Limerick, of which he has also published a history, has been Diocesan Secretary of Limerick since 1975, and is at present (1987) Vice-Rector of the Irish College, Rome, where he is researching for a doctorate in canon law on the writings of Gilbert, the twelfth century bishop of Limerick.

The book, which Dr. Newman, Bishop of Limerick, notes in his foreword was commissioned by him, is more than a history of Limerick's major nineteenth century architectural undertaking. Chapter 1 gives a brief account of medieval Limerick, post-reformation events at St. John's Gate, near the site of the cathedral, the early bishops, the cathedral chapter of Limerick, outlining the survival of the Roman Catholic chapter, which, apart from a brief period during the Confederate wars of the 1640s when St. Mary's was reclaimed, was without a cathedral until St. John's was opened in 1861. Notes on the eleven ancient prebendary churches of the diocese are included. In modernising the names of the members of the first chapter recorded in *The Black Book of Limerick*, M. Oconyng is given as M. Quin, unfortunately further obliterating from history the Gunning family of Limerick, whose name had previously been phonetically eliminated from Carrigogunnell and Castleconnell. Chapter 2 outlines the history of St. John's parish, the medieval parish church, possible links between Garryowen and the Knights Templar, the post-reformation Catholic clergy and their chapels, and the penal church of 1753, the inadequacy of which by the 1840s caused plans to be made first for renovation, then for a new parish church, and finally in 1856, as a result of the response to appeals for funds, to the decision that the new church should be a cathedral.

Chapters 3, 4 and 5, comprising 46 pages, deals with the cathedral itself. Its architect was an Englishman, Philip Charles Hardwick, who worked in Ireland from 1851 to 1866, and was also, locally, the architect of Mount St. Alphonsus, of the restoration of the Augustinian and Trinitarian abbeys at Adare, and of the completion of the building of Adare Manor. The design and construction are detailed, as are notable events such as the laying of the foundation stone on the 1st of May, 1856, the consecration of Dr. Butler as coadjutor bishop in July, 1861, and the consecration of the cathedral itself on the 21st of June, 1894. The interior of the cathedral, the chapels, monuments, statues, altar and stained glass are described—it is a pity that all that can be said of the origin of the stained glass in the five light window of the apse, a memorial to the founder, Bishop Ryan, is that it was probably made in Birmingham. The spire was an addition by the Limerick architect and engineer, Maurice Hennessy, to Hardwick's original tower which had been left incomplete for seventeen years. There is some confusion about the number of Hennessys and their location—here described as Messrs. M. and A. Hennessy, based in St. John's Square. C. M. Murphy, in her architectural guide to Limerick city, reviewed in the last issue of this *Journal*, locates M. A. Hennessy on Cecil Street, while Bassett's Directory for 1875-76 and 1880-81 locates Maurice A. Hennessy, architect and civil engineer, at 10 Upper Glentworth Street. The spire was built between 1878 and 1883; the work delayed by the collapse of the cross and some masonry in a storm in September, 1882. We learn that in recent renovations the height of the spire has been accurately and officially measured at 308 ft. 3 ins. from the top of the cross to the base of the tower, rather than the usually quoted 280 ft. Renovations in this century complete the account.

The final chapter gives a short description of the treasures of the diocese—*The Black Book of Limerick*, the O'Dea mitre and crozier, the Arthur crucifix and chalice, the White manuscript, the Quin monstrance, the John Paul II chalice and paten, and the collection of portraits of bishops and some priests of the diocese put together by the present bishop, Dr. Newman. Also mentioned here are 12th century copies of two important ecclesiastical texts by Bishop Gilbert, c.1110, preserved in Cambridge University Library and in Durham Cathedral Library. In this chapter, the unattributed photograph of the O'Dea mitre was first published in Eason's Irish Heritage Series booklet, *Historic Limerick*, 1984, for which it was specifically taken by the publisher's photographer in 1983. More seriously, the reference given for the section on the Arthur crucifix and chalice, *J.K.S.A.S.*, vol. 7 (1885-1886), 369-371 [in fact *J.R.S.A.I.*], mentions neither the Arthur crucifix nor the Arthur chalice in the possession of the cathedral. Instead, it is a note describing a second chalice belonging to Bishop Arthur, which, together with his vestments, was preserved by the descendants of the Creagh family, to which Bishop Arthur's family was related by marriage, a collection, twenty pieces in all, which was purchased by the National Museum in 1907. The notes on the crucifix and chalice (and some other of the treasures) in chapter 6 seem to paraphrase the Limerick Museum souvenir catalogue of the exhibition 'Treasures of Thomond', 1980, where the text on the crucifix is referenced to John Hunt's article in *J. Roy. Soc. Antiq. Ireland*, 1955, and that on the chalice to J. J. Buckley's 'Some Irish Altar Plate', a supplement to the same *Journal*, 1939, where both Arthur chalices are described. The note on Fr. White's opus is not improved by the addition of the adjective 'handwritten' to 'manuscript', and the reference given in the General Bibliography on pp. 99-100 to a contribution by A. Gwynn in *North Munster Studies* (published by our Society in 1967) simply does not exist.

It is unfortunate that low quality paper was chosen, which is undoubtedly responsible for the poor contrast, obscuring detail, in the photographs. The only plan of the cathedral given is minute: a portion of J. H. Metcalfe's

lithograph of the building viewed from the east, showing the original design of 1856. However, the book is a useful up-to-date bringing together of the facts and figures of the building which has dominated Limerick's skyline for just over one hundred years.

LARRY WALSH

Seán Spellissy and John O'Brien, **CLARE COUNTY OF CONTRASTS**, Ennis 1987; pp. 199; ISBN 0-9512474-0-9 (Spellissy), ISBN 0-95124750-6 (O'Brien). Price: £11.50 (£11.00 stg.; US \$27.50).

At first glance this book appears to be an updated illustrated version of Lewis' *Topographical Dictionary*, and the frequent mention of Lewis in the text would seem to confirm this. Fortunately, however, a careful reading of the text soon dispels any such illusion: Spellissy and O'Brien have produced a much more valuable topographical work on Clare than is contained in Lewis. It is certainly more accurate! The only serious error noted relates to the inscribed plaque from Lisdoonvarna Castle mentioned on page 48. Evidently the author has taken his information from Frost's *History and Topography of Co. Clare* (1893); the plaque is, in fact, now to be found in Ennistymon—see Rynne's note and illustration in this *Journal*, Vol. X, no. 1(1966), pp. 74-76. One might also query the "double ring-walls" stated on page 116 to be at Ballykinvarga. However, as can be seen from the extensive Bibliography on pp. 195-6, Seán Spellissy has otherwise done his research well, and it shows in the text, although the utility of the work is reduced by not keying the sources to the text by way of footnotes or otherwise.

Reading this as an engineer, this reviewer welcomes the inclusion of a considerable amount of data on Industrial Archaeological sites in the county—the Shannon Power Scheme, the Ballyhickey Lead Mines, the water-mill at O'Callaghans Mills, and various bridges of interest. Where bridges are concerned, incidentally, I must express amazement at the author's restraint shown in his not commenting on the barbarity inflicted with the pipe-lines on Doonbeg Bridge—shown clearly in John O'Brien's photograph on page 71.

O'Brien's photography adds greatly to the text, although not all illustrations are of equal quality. Particularly impressive, though, is his view of the disused silver mine at Kilbricken, Doora, on page 72, and that of Belclugga Bridge at Spanish Point on page 8.

This publication will be a welcome God-send to the historical society excursionist and will also be of some use to the historian and archaeologist.

A final comment would be that the large, wide format of the book makes it unwieldy. A useful index is supplied, and eight pages of maps.

PAUL DUFFY

James T. McGuane, **KILRUSH FROM OLDEN TIMES**, Clódoirí Lurgan Teo., Inverin, Co. Galway 1984; pp. ix + 114. Price: £3.00.

James T. McGuane retired as headmaster of Kilrush Vocational School in 1977. Since then he has devoted his time to historical research and has now produced *Kilrush From Olden Times*. His book meets a real need, as no history of Kilrush parish has been published previously. The earlier history of the region, centred on Inis Cathaigh, is dealt with in the first chapter. The second chapter is concerned with the Spanish Armada and its rather tenuous association with the embryo town of Kilrush. The third chapter deals with the Vandeleur family and their influence on the development and expansion of the town; the sixth chapter with the infamous Vandeleur evictions of July 1888, which is followed by an alleviating short account of some of the Vandeleurs from then to the present day. From then onwards Mr. McGuane devotes most of his book to the period between 1800 and the late 1950s. As a social history it is worth study, particularly for its treatment of dairying in West Clare and the history of the Catholic parish of Kilrush. The book is plentifully illustrated with good and interesting photographs.

SEÁN SPELLISSY

John S. Kelly, **THE BODYKE EVICTIONS**, Fossabeg Press, Scariff, Co. Clare 1987; pp. 184.

Already, in the pages of *The Other Clare* (Vol. 4, 1980), the author of this comprehensive account of the Bodyke Evictions has briefly dealt with the events, which, as he has it, put Bodyke "on the lips of men and women throughout Ireland". His post-graduate work in University College, Galway, on land agitation in East Clare would further indicate an interest of long standing on the happenings he so thoroughly deals with here. It is

only right that, one hundred years later, the participants in those stirring times should be remembered and that we, in more settled days, be reminded of the hardships undergone by our forebears.

This book was obviously brought out now to coincide with the centenary of the events described. However, for whatever reasons, it unfortunately manifests annoying features which can only be attributed to a degree of haste. I can not remember who it was said that history was "one damn thing after another", but at times while reading this book I found myself wondering if the chronology of events had entered some kind of 'time warp'. For instance, on page 45, 1986 appears instead of 1886, and, on page 57 a letter from Under Secretary Buller is assigned a date in February 1881, which is patently incorrect. Such unnecessary 'slips' would surely have been avoided if more time was available, but, on page 41, population figures for the County for the years 1841 and 1881 are given which are totally wrong. (The relevance of this Table IV in this particular part of the book—even were it correct—escapes the reviewer.)

Having disposed of some of the niggling criticisms, it is only fair to stress the value of this case study of an episode in the Plan of Campaign. Mr. Kelly goes to great lengths to provide the background to the evictions, which lasted from 2 June to 15 June 1887, and in several appendices amplifies material given in the body of the text. We learn of pertinent occurrences in the years prior to the evictions; we are introduced to the main protagonists—Col. O'Callaghan and Fr. Murphy; much use is made of what would nowadays be called 'media coverage', but this is supplemented with judicious resort to private papers and other sources of information. In all, a comprehensive and fair account is tendered for our perusal.

The author manages to embroil us in the convoluted goings-on; we can feel for the unfortunate tenants but also a certain sympathy for the embattled Colonel is engendered. Somehow one gets the impression that, to a degree, events could easily have taken a different turn had there been a little less intransigence, prompted perhaps by 'outside agencies'. Were the tenants manipulated? Should Fr. Murphy have been more pliant? Did the colonel get poor advice? Was it in the interest of the Land League that a peaceful solution should be avoided? We just do not know and we never shall, but somehow one can not avoid asking was it all necessary, could not a solution have been found, did the tribulations of the Widow MacNamara and the O'Halloran family have to take place? Maybe it is difficult to transport ourselves back to those years one hundred years ago; compromise and agreement are now the 'buzz-words'. We are not in touch with the feelings, the aspirations and hopes, of those times and, as a result can sometimes find it difficult to fully understand.

We must be thankful to Mr. Kelly for giving us this graphic account of the events of June 1887. It is good that he has so adequately chronicled the importance of what took place at Bodyke a hundred years ago: what had formerly been but a footnote in the account of the Plan of Campaign, now has received the treatment it deserved. Might one, however, hope that he will some day publish somewhere in full the relevant Land Agent's Rent Book which he tells us on page 181, the last page of the text, is now in his possession?

PAT FLYNN

Máirín Doddy, James O'Connor, *et. al.*, **SHOPFRONTS OF ROSCREA**, Roscrea Heritage Society in association with AnCO, The Industrial Training Authority, Roscrea 1984; pp. 40. Price: £2.00.

Kathleen Moloughney, **ROSCREA ME DARLIN'**! Privately published, Roscrea 1987; pp. iv + 113. Price: £6.00.

These two books on Roscrea are very different, both in content and character. The first one, *Shopfronts of Roscrea*, is a very welcome addition to the minor flood of publications emanating from the Roscrea Heritage Centre at Damer House via the Roscrea Heritage Society.

It is, in effect, an illustrated selection of some of the finer 'traditional' or 'vernacular' shopfronts of the town. Each of the fine sketches of a facade of a pub or shop is accompanied by a short piece of text with notes on the date(s) of the building (or its frontage), and comments on its decoration or its unusual or salient features. The text is short, readable and uncomplicated. For the most part the clear uncluttered illustrations are allowed to speak for themselves. Few of the buildings are very unusual, except perhaps in the fact that they have managed to survive the 'Plastic Age' unscathed, despite enormous odds. There are hundreds of similar buildings with fascias, architraves, mouldings, or whole facades and interiors like them all over the country. Unfortunately, many were modernised out of recognition from, in particular, the 1960s onwards, and many more continue to be messed about or destroyed completely. There is, however, something very familiar about the interior of McMahon's Public House in Rosemount, for instance (see pp. 14-15). It has a type of atmosphere which could be felt in many an old-fashioned shop or public house.

This booklet could and should serve several useful purposes. It should, for instance, create an awareness of the many commonplace vernacular buildings which are so everyday and taken for granted, but are fast disappearing.

It should dispose every interested person to do what he/she can to press for their preservation and to make photographic and archival records of what still exists in every part of the country. Various architectural historians have over the last number of years begun to create an awareness of how important this aspect of our heritage is, of how much we have lost and are still losing. These buildings are the architectural equivalents of thatched houses, Big Houses, or Georgian buildings at other but equally important levels.

The booklet is very well laid out and printed on laid paper with card covers and the overall design of the publication is excellent. Long may the traditional shopfronts of Roscrea remain an attraction to all who look at them. The shopkeepers and tradesmen of Roscrea are thanked in the acknowledgements to the booklet, and on p. 14 it is noted that Sean O'Brogue, an ex-henchman of Ned Kelly, the outlaw of Australian fame, was once a barman in N. H. McMahon's Public House in Rosemount but did not prove an attraction as people were afraid of him.

The second book, by Kathleen Moloughney, is an entirely different sort of book. It comprises a sort of *pôtpourri* of popular lore and local history interspersed with reminiscences and descriptions of historical occurrences. In her introduction, the author notes that she has compiled it "...to record information, on people who lived in Roscrea at the end of the last century and the beginning of the present one". Short sections deal with aspects of the 19th and early 20th century social history of the town, and topics like Marriage, Food, Old Roads, Old Cures, Electricity and Orphans are among those featured. There are sections on various streets and areas interspersed throughout the text also, and these deal mainly with those who lived there rather than with the history of the street itself. The walking tour of the streets, mentioning their main architectural features as well as their history, written by George Cunningham in 1983 and reviewed in this *Journal*, 25(1983), 86-87, complements these sections admirably and might well be profitably read in conjunction with them.

This book, unlike the first one reviewed, is of very local interest and the information and photographs in it will no doubt bring feelings of nostalgia to many people in the town and its vicinity; the author expresses the hope that "...it will give some pleasure and information to all who read it"—it will.

JIM HIGGINS

Noel Kissane, **THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF IRELAND**, The Irish Heritage Series: 42, Eason & Son Ltd., Dublin 1984; pp. 25 (not paginated); ISBN 900346-60-4. Price: £2.50.

One expects the Irish Heritage Series to produce either new material or familiar material shown in a new light, and this booklet is no exception. The heritage of the National Library is so rich that the text here is mainly a description of the various collections acquired by the library, from the early Royal Dublin Society and Joly Collections to the Philips, Laurence and other Collections. It also describes the various categories of material in the library, not only books and pamphlets but also newspapers, manuscripts, maps, posters, photographs and slides, engravings, etc. The illustrations, as always, are the great joy of these booklets and the colour reproduction is excellent. The cost may seem rather expensive for what appears to be so slight a publication, but I would rather pay than be without it!

SIOBHÁN DE HÓIR

Patricia Boyne, "JOHN O'DONOVAN (1806-1861): a biography", *Studies in Irish Archaeology and History*, Boethius, Kilkenny 1987; pp. xvi + 166; ISBN 0-86314-139-0 (hard covers) and ISBN 0-86314-140-4 (paperback). Price: £16.95 and £8.95 respectively.

John O'Donovan was born in poor circumstances in County Kilkenny, received little formal education, spent most of his life working for low wages on a scheme which was intended to aid the administration of British law in Ireland, saw three of his nine children die in infancy, suffered all his life from bad health, and died at an age when most scholars are entering the period of their maturity. Yet he is one of the greatest scholars of the nineteenth century in Ireland and did more to bring the literature and the traditions of early Ireland to the attention of modern audiences than any man, except his friend and brother-in-law, Eugene O'Curry, and his younger contemporary Whitley Stokes. He was author or editor of some dozen books and seventy articles, travelled the country for eight years recording the placenames for mapmaking and the lore associated with them. During this time he wrote also a vast number of letters which provide us not only with a great body of information on the history and folklore of most counties but give us a clear insight into the character of the writer. O'Donovan's scholarship was given international recognition in 1856 when he was elected a corresponding member of the Prussian

Academy of Sciences on the same day as Johann Caspar Zeuss, the founder of modern Celtic scholarship on the continent.

In view of O'Donovan's distinction in his lifetime and the legacy of scholarship which he has left, it is extraordinary that no biography of him has appeared in English until now, though there have been two in Irish, by Éamonn de hÓir and by "Bráthair Críostamhail" [P. C. Normoyle], each of them in tandem with a biography of Eugene O'Curry. This new biography of O'Donovan by Patricia Boyne is a welcome effort to fill this gap. This is quite a short work, the body of the biography comprising no more than 132 pages, supplemented by appendices, including a bibliography of O'Donovan's writings, notes, and a general bibliography, a dozen illustrations and a useful index. The account follows the life of O'Donovan in chronological order, with the longest section devoted to his work with the Ordnance Survey. Chapter 3 which runs to 27 pages provides a generous selection of extracts from the letters which he wrote from various parts of the country while travelling on behalf of the Survey. Other important chapters deal with his early years, his editorial work on the *Annals of the Four Masters* and the *Laws*, and his relationship with the newly-established Queen's Colleges. An interesting chapter deals with his family of six surviving sons, some of whom shared their father's temperament and intelligence and carved out careers which would be worthy of biographies of their own. None of O'Donovan's sons had a son of his own and his only granddaughter married a Liverpool doctor. It seems that O'Donovan's name and family died out with her passing.

There is much of interest in this biography of John O'Donovan, but it adds little to what was already known of his life from the two biographies in Irish. Indeed, there are many details to be found in those which are omitted here. It is strongest when dealing with O'Donovan's private life but is altogether lacking in any assessment of his scholarly work. However, as a first biography of its subject in English it is to be warmly welcomed.

GEARÓID MAC EOIN