Book Reviews


The book’s title and its general appearance (judging from the paperback edition, at least) might suggest that it is rather lightweight and a sort of jeu d’esprit on the part of its editor and publisher. This would be not quite fair, however, as even a cursory glance at the names of the various contributors reveals—starting with that of Dr. Patrick J. Hillery, President of Ireland, who wrote the Introduction. The authors include Dr. Katharine Simms who contributes a notable if all-too-short chapter on “The Early Irish Kings” (pp. 3-10), Sheila Mulley who contributes a short but succinct chapter on “O’Connor, King of Connacht!” (pp. 31-37), Warren B. Loane who writes a very readable chapter rather enigmatically entitled “Viking Norman Celts” (pp. 38-50) and an interesting chapter on “Ireland’s Contribution to the British Monarchy” (68-78), though how much of this need to be taken seriously is perhaps open to question, for instance the belief that Queen Elizabeth II is descended in thirty generations from Brian Boru (“sic”) who was himself twenty-first in descent from O’Dior (“sic”) O’Lo, King of Munster and of his wife Satta, daughter of Conn of the Hundred Battles, grandson of Tuatha Techtmar, King of Ireland around A.D. 153—a genealogy which I seem to remember seeing in a 19th century publication when at school and which I think went back to Adam! She also, through a grandmother and other ancestors, apparently claims other links with Brian Boru. It all smacks more of politics than history and if accepted uncritically could justify claims of the English Crown to this country. Princess Diana, apparently set to become the next Queen of the United Kingdom, has perhaps more legitimate claims to Irish ancestry, her six-times great-grandmother being Charlotte Sarsfield, a niece of the great General Patrick Sarsfield; the same Charlotte Sarsfield’s daughter married into the Bingham family, thus introducing a not-so-welcome ‘Irish’ strain into the family line: Sir Richard Bingham, “The Scourge of Connaught”, did not endear himself as Elizabeth I’s Governor of Connaught in and about the time of the Spanish Armada in 1588—which brings us to Dr. John de Courcy Ireland’s intriguing chapter on “Philip II of Spain” (pp. 86-93) whose marriage with Mary, daughter of Henry VIII allowed him to be called, inter alia, King of Ireland. Anne Chambers’ contribution (pp. 94-98) on “A most famous feminine sea captain” (Granuaile/Grace O’Malley) follows on from this period. Louis McRedmond and others contribute interesting entries, while Hugh Weir includes several useful and readable chapters himself, some anonymously.

The book is illustrated with 19th century woodcuts which enhance it, with a few photographs (including one of Eóin Conlan, the late King of the Claddagh who died in 1954, not in the 1930s as erroneously stated here), two maps, and some ‘comic’ drawings which definitely lower the tone of this otherwise reasonably serious publication. Its contents could perhaps have been extended to include “His Majesty King Muirready”, to quote Thackery’s comment on Ennis-born artist William Muirready, and the Kings of the Blaskets, The O’Cathains, and of other western isles—indeed, what about “Myles na gCopaleen crowned King of Ireland” as published apparently in The Irish Times and used on the cover of Cruiskeen Lawn by Myles in 1943.

All-in-all, this book is an easily assimilated collection of somewhat miscellaneous information, although it resembles somewhat Punch’s ‘curate’s egg’: good in parts.

ETIENNE RYNNE


This book consists of eleven chapters dealing with Clare and its people from earliest times down to 1986. The content classification for The British Library Cataloguing in Publication is given, p. 4, as “Social life and customs”. There is an appendix on famous Clare personalities and also a short bibliography.

There are thirty-eight, unnumbered, illustrations in all, including photos, reproductions of sketches, and maps. Five reproductions of Dineley’s sketches of 1680 are given; that of Bunratty Castle on p. 57 is needlessly again on p. 86. There are three maps; that on p. 8 being of the land bridges from Europe, presumably as of end of the Ice Age, though that is not stated, and one, p. 24, titled “Ancient territorial divisions of Thomond, now County Clare”. Readers of this Journal know that the proper extent of Thomond also includes much of North Tipperary and East Limerick. The third map, p. 74, is of the baronies of the county. The lettering on all three maps is not worthy of any publication costing so much.

In the foreword, p. 7, the author explains how he came to write this book: that while “browsing in the splendid Ennis library I came across a number of reference works on the history of Clare” and “became fascinated by
the Dalussian clans, their wars, their castles, their villains and their heroes” and “thinking what a pity it was that access to the reference texts by the public was somewhat restricted because of time constraints, and because of the difficulty of wading through heavy matter to find just what one is looking for”. This is a perfectly reasonable motivation for writing a book such as this, but to presume to set matters right surely demands a wide and scholarly background knowledge entailing critical ability to properly winnow fact from fiction and hagiography. We are, however, not told anything of the author that might justify his launching into archaeological and historical publication.

Numerous errors, sins of omission as often as inclusion, occur throughout the accounts of the prehistoric and protohistoric periods, and, indeed, also for the later historic period too. Where listing the functions of megalithic tombs on p. 14, Dinan does not make it clear that these were burial places. Where listing the functions of “ringed forts” (sic) on p. 13, burial is given before residential when it should not be included at all. The megalithic tomb shown on p. 16 is that of Bohach North (pronounced locally as Bochach North), near Mountshannon. The impression is given, p. 14, that the Cohaw court-tomb is in Co. Clare; it is in fact in Co. Cavan! Even from the Contents Page one can see the gaps opening up. Chapter 1 ends at 1000 B.C., chapter 2 begins at 350 B.C.; what has happened to the 650 years in between? Was Clare deserted? What of the Great Clare Find, the Glenisheen Collar and the Gorteenrach Hoard?

The chapters covering the periods after the Anglo-Norman invasion deal with fighters and politicians and are written in language that encourages more of the same; have we not learned from the events in Northern Ireland over the last two decades to stop uttering such words/thoughts as “splatting blood of religious and laity alike” (p. 81) and “it was pleasurable indeed to witness a heavy metal ball ... demolish the entire ‘County Home’ ... The end of pauperism and the genuflecting peasant was at hand” (p. 115). To infect another generation with this sort of attitude is surely equivalent to medieval high treason. Furthermore, I doubt if any Clare person, or any Irish person for that matter, could be described as a “genuflecting peasant” as late as the early 1970s! All Claremen will not agree with the closing date of 1924 given for the fight for freedom (chapter heading, p. 101), nor, indeed, will all Dalassians agree with the uncritical, hagiographical assessment of De Valera on p. 108.

The part of the appendix on famous Clare personalities relating to the modern era has the normal Irish imbalance of 35 dead to 4 living personalities. Notably absent are Edward MacLysaght, deserving of inclusion for his work on Irish surnames, and Clárán Mac Mathúna, from Limerick though an adopted Clareman, for his work on Clare’s Irish music and song. Surely at least two from the field of archaeology, Thomas Johnson Westropp and John Hunt are deserving of inclusion. Westropp published over 350 learned articles on archaeology, history and folklore, much of it relating to Co. Clare. That alone should justify his inclusion, while Hunt’s contribution to the economy of Clare through his involvement in the Bunratty and the Craggaunowen Projects surely justified his inclusion in the appendix. Incidentally, the photographs of the latter project on p. 21, is incorrectly titled “Reconstructed Crannog...”; the crannog is a replica, entirely modern in its materials, even to the extent of railway sleepers being used.

How anyone could attempt to write any sort of synthesis of Clare’s past without copious references to the works of Westropp is beyond this reviewer. Only two of his works, those on Ennis Abbey and on Forts of Limerick and Clare, are listed in the bibliography. Few aspects of Clare’s past were not touched on by this great man. Again, neither Edward MacLysaght, John Hunt, Etienne Rynne, Fr. Ignatius Murphy, Gerry O’Connell nor John S. Kelly, all who have contributed enormously to the study of Clare’s past, are mentioned in the bibliography. Dinan mentions The Other Clare and Dál gCais in the bibliography, but not our Journal, the pages of which contain sufficient material for anyone to condense into a reasonably good concise archaeology and history of Clare, with a fair bit of social life and customs to fill out the story. There is scope for such a work, but this is not it. The author clearly does not know his sources nor contemporary authors dealing with Clare’s past.

Can one say something good about this book? I have found three good things to say! Firstly, Dinan provides a photo of Ardnacrusha power station close to completion of construction in 1928; readers can usefully compare this with a photo taken from the same spot at an earlier stage of the construction which was published in the last issue (1987, p. 77) of our Journal. Secondly, the reproduction of the photographs and of Dineley’s drawings is generally excellent. Thirdly, and most important of all, though many of his captions are totally offputting, even to one who still holds Clare dear to his heart after an absence of 16 years, one caption, that on p. 29 which reads “Partial round tower and ruined church at Drumcliffe”, offers a solution to a problem that has bothered this reviewer for quite a while, even through a number of archaeological legal cases, right up to the Supreme Court. While it may be difficult to appreciate the difference between a partial round tower and a ruined church, the word partial rather than the word ruined may be legally safer to use when describing many of our ancient monuments; if a monument is ruined that may well be argument for dispensing with it altogether despite the provisions of the National Monuments Acts; the adjective partial can not be so pedantically treated.

One could also quibble with several minor errors such as saying (p. 142) that the Ordinance Survey Letters were edited by Fr. O’Flanagan (he simply had them typed); MacAllister for MacAllister on p. 15 (and anyway the sketch is itself very erroneous and out of date); Cashlanna Gas for Caislean Gear on p. 19, the supposedly
“Unique limestone surface in the Burren” (p. 12) is similar to that found elsewhere (e.g., various upland limestone areas in Ireland, Malta, Yugoslavia, Inter alia); “. . . the Viking at Ciontarf” (p. 39)—was there just one?; northern Moiritera being sited in Galway rather than Sligo (p. 11), and so on and so on. Thankfully at £12.50 the book is outside of the price range of most second level students who, since the introduction of the new Junior Certificate, are encouraged to seek out the story of the history and geography of their own locality. Certainly this book will not provide proper answers, if any at all.

MARTIN A. TIMONEY


This is not a parish history as such, but rather a collection of vignettes illustrating the history of the parish of Cappagh, near Askeaton, Co. Limerick. Depending on personal preference some of these vignettes are of greater interest than others, but all are useful to the local historian. As one would expect there are details of local schools, churches, clergy and gentry, all nicely illustrated. Social and sporting groups are also dealt with, e.g. the local hurling team of 1924, the handball club, the pipe band and the local guild of Muinir na Tire. In this latter section it is nice to see the trustees of the local group water scheme recorded for posterity! As one who spent many years working to facilitate the development of rural water supplies, this reviewer can appreciate the difficulties that had to be overcome by all concerned in obtaining, for their neighbours as well as for themselves, the benefits of a piped water supply. Details of the plaques on the bridges at Stoneville and Ardgoil “Newbridge” are also given. The Ardgoil “Newbridge” plaque is important as it relates to the first half of the 18th century and bridge plaques from this period of our history are somewhat scarce. It is a pity that the author does not include details of the bridges (number of arches, etc.) or indeed photographs of them with the text. One would like to see more information on the mills, particularly the early cotton mill. The colourful account of the Going Affair in 1822 was obviously culled from local folklore and is all the more welcome for that: the somewhat lurid accounts of the deaths of Hayes, O’Callaghan, Garvey and Fitzgerald conveys only too well the horror of being buried alive in quick lime. Major Going was, as a consequence, shot shortly afterwards; those who did it were informed upon and hanged—the informer was some years later also killed.

As stated earlier, this book is not a parish history, but despite its imperfections (there is no title page for starters) Cappagh, A Sense of History shows its author to have a finely tuned sense of place.

PAUL DUFFY


In 1985 Muiris Mac Conghail made a prize-winning documentary film on the Blasket Islands called Oileán Eile—Another Island. But this is not the story of this film; it is a labour of love, the result of years of study and research by someone who has known the islands for the best part of four decades and who obviously understands them and their former inhabitants (the islands were finally abandoned in November 1953). In fact, it is virtually two books, which explains the dual nature of its title. Part I, consisting of three chapters, is called “The Blasket Islands”, and Part II, also consisting of three chapters, is called “The Blasket Library”. Indeed, should one wish to perhaps exaggerate a bit one might almost say that it is really three books, the third comprising the numerous coloured and black-and-white photographs, all excellent, some beautiful, and all accompanied by long explanatory captions—this pictorial portion could usefully, easily and profitably be reprinted separately as a wonderful souvenir-type handbook.

There are seven islands and several islets and nondescript rocks in this archipelago off the westernmost part of Ireland but without too much exaggeration one can say that really only The Great Blasket (An Blascaod Mór or An Oileán Tar) is of prime importance. The smaller inhabited islands, Inishtooskert (Inis Tuaisceart), Inisheeragh (An Taracht), Inishnabro (Inis na Bró) and Inishvickillane (Inis Ileileain), seem to have lacked a social centre such as An Baile (the village) on the Great Blasket; it was considered sufficiently large to be ‘divided’ in two halves, Ban an Bhailte near the harbour and Barr an Bhailte higher up, towards the island’s centre. The island’s two major authors, Tomás Ó Cionnithain and Muiris Ó Súilleabháin both came from the former half of the village, where also lived the best known of the island’s seanachai (storyteller), Peig Sayers; the Rí, or island’s king, lived in the other half of the village, and Tig na Dála (the Parliament House) was there, as was the schoolhouse. With these dwellings in mind, it is to be regretted that the book sadly lacks a map of the
Great Blasket, one indicating the various house-owners, the schoolhouse, etc.; the only map is the not very useful reprint of a maritime map inside the front and back covers which only shows the archipelago but not even its relationship to the adjacent mainland, never mind its place relevant to the rest of Ireland—either one knows where the Blaskets and Co. Kerry are or one has to guess!

The text of Part I is full of interesting information. For instance, on pages 34-35 we are given a ‘table’ of the population of the islands over their last 132 years, from 1821 to 1953: it varied between 98 (in 1861) and 176 (in 1916), dropping to under 100 again in 1939, to 50 in 1947, to 20 in 1953. On page 50 we have a discussion on the replacement locally of the larger wooden ‘seine’ boats by the tar-covered canvas naomhóg (currachs) in the mid-nineteenth century—tradition has it that the first naomhóg came to that part of Kerry from Clare. “Marriage and the family” is discussed on pages 53-56. The smaller islands are briefly dealt with on pages 28-33.

The text of Part II deals in a scholarly, historical and biographical way with the three best-known literary figures of the Blaskets. Tomás Ó Cionnfhthaín, Muiris Ó Súilleabháin and Peig Sayers, with important relevant comments on others such as John Millington Synge, Carl Marstrander, Robin Flower (Blaithín), Brian Ó Ceallaigh, George Thompson, Pádraig Ó Siadhail (An Seabhach), Kenneth H. Jackson, and Micheál Ó Gaoithín (Maithe File, Peig Sayers’ son). An excellent Bibliography is included, to which one should immediately add not only this book itself but also its author’s Beannachtaí Oileán Tiar, published in 1984-85 by The Wynkyn de Worde Society, London, and his “Tomás Ó Cionnfhthaín: Islandman”, published in Études Irlandaises, 12(1987), 155-164.

The archaeological sites on the various Blasket islands receive little mention in either the text or the photographs. However, of no little archaeological interest is the information provided with the illustrations on pages 22 and 91. The former shows what appears to be an ancient clochéin on Inis Tuasceart, which the interesting caption informs us “was lived in by a number of families from 1830 to 1850. The antiquary, John Windele, met Tomás Ó Catháin’s wife, Peig, and her family there in 1838. Some years later, the island became stormbound for some six weeks. Tomás died in the stone hut and his body putrefied: his wife, being too weak to carry it out, began to dismember it in the hut and cast the pieces out. She later went insane”. One of the photographs on page 91 shows another stone beechive hut, in Bun an Bhaille on the Great Blasket. It is more recent-looking, and superficially somewhat different from the accepted ancient examples, which is confirmed in the caption which informs us that it “was built about 120 years ago as a grain store, although it is built in the clochéin tradition of two thousand years ago”. Archaeologists would dearly like to know something of the methods of storing grain in it and hopefully someone might be able to collect the details before it is too late.

But one could continue commenting favourably about this beautiful and fascinating book. It brings the Blaskets to the reader: almost as much as a visit to them in their glory days would. As the author says “...once you make contact with the island and its culture you can’t escape from it, try as you might. It’s like a long relay race in which the baton is passed from person to person. Touch the place once and it sticks to your hand forever” (p. 147).

ETIENNE RYNNE


The International Folk Epic Conference was held in Dublin in 1985 and attracted scholars from countries as diverse as the U.S.A., Nigeria, Turkey, Yugoslavia, Finland, as well as Britain and Ireland. Twenty-seven of the twenty-eight papers delivered at that conference are published here. While the geographic and cultural spread of the contributors and their subjects is broad, the readership of a collection such as this will be limited. It is a scholar’s book and though the layman, however interested, may recognise some of the tales and topics discussed, the detailed dissection and examination of the themes, motifs and form of the varied epic material is really the stuff of the specialist. One cannot help wondering how the teller or singer of one of these epics would react to the very academic treatment of his subject. This is not intended as negative criticism, as this collection of papers is not aimed at the general reader and the scholarship and achievement of the contributors cannot be questioned.

Fourteen of the papers are concerned with what might be termed ‘Celtic’ material, aspects of the Fiannaíocht tradition of Ireland and Scotland in the main. The antiquity and longevity of this tradition is well illustrated by two papers—one on the pre-Norman Fiannaíocht, by Pádraic MacCana, dealing with its origins and place vis-à-vis the Ulster Cycle and its gradual elevation or acceptance by the eleventh or twelfth century all over Ireland; the second paper, by John MacInnes, is on, as he calls them, the Fenian or Osiscian ballads, still part of the living tradition in Scotland in the twentieth century.

Joseph Falaky Nagy in ‘Fenian Heroes and their Rites of Passage’ brings an archaeological dimension to his work in his discussion of the references in the early literature to fulacht fiadh (or fulacht fiadh). While the fulacht of archaeology dates to at least two thousand years earlier than those of the Irish literature, the
connection between them, though yet undefined, is interesting to scholars in both fields. The references discussed in this paper bring a very human perspective to the archaeological study of the monuments. Nagy sees the sites, as mentioned in the literature, to be associated with music and sex, in addition to cooking and bathing. The latter two functions are accepted by archaeologists as primary activities at the sites, while, perhaps regrettably, neither music nor sex leaves an unambiguous mark in the archaeological record.

Four papers in this collection commemorate the first publication of Finland’s national epic, *Kalevala*, in 1835. The Conference in Dublin in 1985 was organised to mark the one hundred and fiftieth anniversary of this event as well as the fiftieth anniversary of the establishment of the Irish Folklife Commission.

Should one’s interest extend to how the supernatural is used in Turkish epic, to the use of formulaic language in the Indian variety, or even to Faroese heroic ballads, then the nine other papers will hold plenty to occupy one.

This book is well bound and presented hardback, with a jacket featuring “The Táin”, a brush drawing by Louis le Brocquy. The editors and contributors are to be complimented on seeing such a work to publication within two years of the Folks Epic Conference, given that the papers were being submitted from such a wide geographic spread. One must also wish this book the success clearly aspired to on page ii, where it is stated that “This edition is limited to seven hundred and fifty copies”.

**DIARMUID Ó DRISCEOIL**


This is a book which all interested in our legal and historic past have been waiting for, ever since the destruction of Gaelic Ireland in the early 17th century. It not only gives us in the commonly-used vernacular (English) a detailed account and analysis of the ancient laws of Ireland, what might be popularly called the Brehon Laws, but it also includes invaluable commentaries on them. Furthermore, in the Introduction (pp. 1-16), the author provides what I believe to be the most concise, clearest and most easily assimilated scholarly assessment available of the main essential characteristics of early Irish society under the headings of *Tlacht*, Rural Character, Rank, and Kin-group. This most useful accounting is, in fact, an examination, expansion and justification of Binchy’s famous dictum that early Irish society was “tribal, rural, hierarchical, and familiar (using this word in its oldest sense, to mean a society in which the family, not the individual, is the unit)—a complete contrast to the unitary, urbanised, egalitarian and individualistic society of our time”. Everyone wishing to understand the way of life and the thinking of pre-Norman Celtic Ireland (and, indeed, to a great extent post-Norman Gaelic Ireland too) will treasure these sixteen pages as providing an invaluable background to a better understanding of Irish society of the time.

The Introduction is followed by eleven chapters (more about which below), four Appendices (including a long List of Law-texts and a lengthy Bibliography), four indices (including a long and detailed Index of Irish Terms and a 19-page General Index), finishing with a selection of samples (with translations) from the law-texts. The reader certainly cannot claim to be short-changed.

The chapter titles include Law of Persons, Property, Offences, Procedure, Punishment, Law-texts, and Law-schools. Sub-headings with these include a wide variety of aspects of early Irish law, such as those relating to kings, clerics, druids, entertainers, women, children, fowling, senility, slaves, inheritance, currency, barter, lost property, killing, injury, rape, hospitality, trespass, theft, drunkenness, contracts, hostages, fasting, oaths, ordeals, duels, fines, putting to death, flogging, the laws themselves and the more-famous individual law-schools. The material under these sub-headings often makes fascinating reading, as much for the legal information contained therein as for the amount of general knowledge supplied and for mere pleasure. The treatment of the law-schools (including that of the O’Davorens at Cahermacnaghten in the Burren, Co. Clare) are useful and concise historical accounts. There are two maps associated with these law-schools, one (on p. 247) showing placenames referred to in the discussion on pre-Norman law-schools and the other (on p. 255) listing the principal legal families of the 14th-16th centuries and showing where their employers ruled—both maps are somewhat spoiled by the freehand writing on them of the various names. We are also provided with useful tables (on p. xxiii) giving the ranks of society from king down to male slave, and of units of ‘currency’, with one milch cow as the basic unit.

We are told on p. 231 that “many of the essentials of the early Irish legal system go back at least as far as the Common Celtic period (c.1000 B.C.)”, and on p. 232 that “This pre-literate Irish legal tradition was presumably passed on by lawyers from generation to generation in the form of alliterative verse and legal maxims”. We are also told on p. 232 that “The writing down of law-texts in Irish may have started as early as the 6th century, but the linguistic evidence shows that the bulk of this work was done in the 7th and 8th centuries”; most of them survive only in manuscripts dating from the 14th-16th centuries. No doubt flexible enough in earlier times, once in written form they became less so, capable of interpretation but not of alteration.
One hesitates to select items of interest here, as one would be tempted to go on at too great a length. However, a random dipping into the text provides such interesting statements as "An outside view of a society is often particularly illuminating, but apart from a few comments by St. Patrick in the 5th century, there are no foreign accounts of Ireland before Giraldus Cambrensis’s Topography of Ireland in the late 12th century" (p. 1); "the basic unit is the _tuatha_, conveniently translated ‘tribe’ or ‘petty kingdom’" and "that there were probably at least 150 kings in Ireland at any given date between the 5th and 12th centuries" each ruling over his own _tuatha_ of on average about 3,000 people, and which to be a proper _tuatha_ according to one law-text had to have at least an ecclesiastical scholar, a churchman, a poet and a king (pp. 3-4); "The druid was a priest, prophet, astrologer, and teacher of the sons of nobles...oaths were sworn in his presence" but by the 7th-8th centuries his position had been "reduced to that of sorcerer or witch-doctor" and "Their magic spells were certainly feared: an 8th century hymn asks God for protection from the spells of women, blacksmiths and druids"—however "The druid’s power could be useful in war" (p. 60); "Most texts distinguish two grades of wife: a man’s chief wife or _cétimhner..._ and his concubine (_adairach_ or _dornun_) (p. 70-71); "Divorce (_imscarad_) is permitted for many reasons" (p. 73).

But enough. The above quotes surely show that the author has succeeded in one of his aims: "that this book will make the fascinating subject of early Irish law accessible to a wider readership than before" (p. xvi). Indeed, this is a truly successful book and extraordinary value at the extremely reasonable price. A book to acquire, to consult and to treasure.

Etienne Rynne


Modern archaeology owes more to the 1960s than perhaps to any other decade. It was the formative period which introduced ‘The New Archaeology’ and heralded the development not just of Urban Archaeology and Environmental Archaeology but also saw major advances in the techniques of archaeological recording. It was also the decade which witnessed the acceptance of medieval archaeology as an academic discipline throughout most of Western Europe.

Archaeological interest in the Middle Ages grew quickly in the years following World War II. The surge of interest in Britain and the Continent, however, was not reflected in Ireland until the late 1960s and ‘70s when urban renewal necessitated the excavation of sites in advance of redevelopment. Dublin was for a long time the major centre of medieval excavations in the country but work was also carried out increasingly on rural sites and on monuments in the course of restoration such as Holycross, Bunratty and Ballintubber. The official recognition of medieval archaeology as a subject of study came in 1973 with the institution of a lectureship at Queen’s University, Belfast. Since then the subject has gradually percolated into most university curricula throughout Ireland. Study has been hampered, however, by the absence of a general coursebook and in assembling and reviewing the Irish evidence Dr. Barry has provided a welcome text.

Medieval archaeology derives a substantial part of its information from the standard archaeological processes of excavation, artifact analysis and field survey. In order to interpret this data within its broader context, however, it is necessary to draw on related fields of research such as the history of art and architecture, historical geography and the study of documentary sources. In the nineteenth century Ireland had a distinguished tradition of medieval research. Graves’ examination of cross-legged effigies and his monograph (co-authored with Prim) on St. Canice’s Cathedral were pioneering studies the importance of which were recognised outside the country. Wilde’s _Catalogue of the Antiquities in the Collection of the Royal Irish Academy_ provided a concise study of many medieval artifacts ranging from pottery and weapons to stirrups and check-pieces. At the close of the nineteenth century and during the first two decades of the present century Lord Walter FitzGerald, Thomas Johnson Westropp and E. C. R. Armstrong kept the period in the forefront of scholarly attention with an extensive series of papers on castles, churches, armorial plaques, tombs and objects as diverse as seals and finger-rings. After 1922, however, there was a decline of interest in the High Middle Ages. The Harvard Mission (1933-36), which had such a formative influence on the development of scientific excavation, did not include an Anglo-Norman site within its brief. Between the 1920s and 1960s, indeed, little work was done and Joseph Raftery aptly summed up the situation in 1963 when he stated: "it is...ironic to say that we probably know more of the things used in his daily life by man in 1600 B.C. than in 1600 A.D."

The emphasis of Dr. Barry’s study, influenced substantially by the techniques of historical geography, is on settlement history. He systematically describes the major settlement types and the changes which occurred in these monuments between the arrival of the Anglo-Normans in 1169 and the Dissolution of the Monasteries in 1540-41. Material culture is incorporated only in so far as it is relevant to the broader story but a concise review
of the published evidence is provided under the sub-heading of crafts and industries (pp. 95-115). The presentation concentrates heavily on published excavation evidence which is ably summarised. The advantage of this approach is that it directs the student immediately to the sources of further information but at times it has the drawback of reading like a catalogue. The major weakness of the book as a text, however, lies in the brief attention given to architectural history and the omission of art history, both of which are areas where significant research has been published. Despite this lacuna the concentration on excavated evidence is to be welcomed for two reasons. Firstly, it has the advantage of providing a fresh insight on the period and, secondly, it disseminates knowledge which previously has only been available to a handful of specialists.

The volume is divided into seven chapters, beginning with an introduction which provides a brief review of the principal documentary and cartographic sources. In chapter 2 the scene is set for the Anglo-Norman invasion by a short summary of pre-Norman settlement. In seeking to provide an overview of the previous half millennium, however, this chapter is patchy and inevitably certain issues are introduced which cannot be followed up. The real meat of the book is found in chapters 3-7 where the Irish evidence, both urban and rural, is concisely reviewed. Chapter 3 is devoted to the earliest Anglo-Norman monuments, the mottes, stone castles and ringworks, thrown up to strengthen and maintain their hold on the newly conquered countryside. Rural settlement is the subject of chapter 4 and here the problems of the status of the rural borough and the identification of medieval villages are investigated. The evidence relating to moated sites, on which Dr. Barry has elsewhere published more extensively, is also summarised in this section.

The Anglo-Normans established an urban network throughout the lordship of Ireland and their towns form the subject of chapter 5 in which the excavated evidence from Dublin, Carrickfergus, Cork, Waterford, Drogheda, Limerick, Armagh, and Downpatrick is presented. The church was a powerful influence in medieval society and the evidence relating to its buildings is recounted in chapter 6. Chapter 7 deals with the problem of growth and decline in the Later Middle Ages. This is a period for which archaeology is potentially very important because of the lack of documentary sources. The phenomenon of desolation is one which has attracted attention all over western Europe and Dr. Barry concludes that it resulted from a complex set of causes including famine, the Bruce War, plagues, the Gaelic Revival, and probably internal migration as well. The evidence for late medieval monuments, such as tower houses, friary buildings and the Pale Ditch is presented towards the end of this chapter. Following Cosgrove, Dr. Barry suggests that the Pale was not fully dug up (p. 181) but in the absence of intensive fieldwork it is difficult to be certain about this. Large portions of the Pale Ditch (mostly unrecorded) exist between Kells and Ardee where it has been noted that sections were left undug because the builders utilised naturally defensive features such as bogs.

The relationship between the archaeology of Anglo-Norman Ireland and that of Britain and the continent is only lightly touched upon. It is an area of comparative research which requires further work. At the moment it seems fair to observe that Anglo-Norman Ireland tended to follow British and European trends rather than establish a distinctive culture of its own.

The Anglo-Normans never succeeded in conquering the whole island and one of the interesting features of medieval Ireland is the co-existence of two fundamentally different cultures. Gaelic culture is hardly evident, however, partly due to the elusive nature of the evidence. With the possible exception of Evert Rim Wares the identification of the material culture of Gaelic Ireland has proved difficult to establish. Nonetheless, Waterman’s work at Lisnabawn and Hunt’s excavations at Clonroad More (surprisingly omitted) provide an insight into the lifestyle of the native Irish during the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, while Rynne’s work at Thady’s Fort is important for the light it sheds on lifestyles during the later middle ages.

Dr. Barry has provided a coherent, well arranged, textbook in which the evidence is presented concisely and in an accessible way. He has placed all students of the period in his debt and it is to be hoped that the publishers will encourage the author to prepare further editions in the future.

JOHN BRADLEY


Although written almost eighty years ago, Goddard Orpen’s Ireland under the Normans still remains an essential student’s handbook for two reasons. Firstly, because of his narrative grasp and secondly because of his detailed knowledge of monuments on the ground. Together with Westropp, Orpen pioneered fieldwork into Ireland’s Anglo-Norman heritage and it is to be regretted that few of his successors have displayed the same grasp of local and national events. Part of the reason for this is the complex problems associated with linking documentary records with earthwork evidence on the ground. One example will suffice to illustrate this difficulty. In the Song of Dermot and the Earl the castle of Trim is described as a fortified house with a trench thrown around it and
enclosed with a stockade (lines 3223-5). In recent years the accepted interpretation of this account is that it describes
a ringwork castle, and much has been written recently about this type of fortification. Yet such interpretations
overlook the fact that the same monument is described a few lines later (in line 3300) as "la mot", suggesting
that it was a motte rather than a ringwork. The reason for this ambiguity is doubtless the fact that the author
was composing a chanson for recital round the firesides of his patrons and consequently he was more attuned
to the requirements of verse and a good story rather than those of archaeological accuracy.

George Cunningham, however, is not daunted by such problems and is evidently equally at home in the library
as in the trenches of the earthworks which constitute such a considerable portion of the present volume. This
is a detailed study of both Anglo-Norman documentary evidence and fortifications in the baronies of Ikerrin
and Clonlisk in Co. Tipperary and the barony of Ballybritt in Co. Laois, which together constitute the core area
of the ancient Ely O'Carroll. Here, as the author remarks, the field evidence is particularly important because
of the almost total absence of documentary evidence. The volume is divided into three sections. The first consists
of background in which he determines, for the first time, the extent of pre-Norman Ely O'Carroll and adds
significant insights on the extent of twelfth-century Ormond as well. The problems associated with identifying
the settlement patterns of pre-Norman Ireland are reviewed and assessed. More importantly, however, he establishes
the main routeways of the region in a pioneering manner by utilising information from saint's lives and surveying
remains such as toghers. By identifying these routeways the author is able to demonstrate that most, if not all,
of the early Anglo-Norman fortifications were built on or near the main corridors of communications. It was
in precisely these areas, of course, that the best land was to be found.

Part two is an account of the historical background of the Anglo-Norman advance. He indicates that the castle
at Thurles was most likely Theobald Walter's first major fortification, and he traces the pattern of advance and
colonisation until 1220. By 1215 there were known Anglo-Norman strongpoints at Thurles, Roscrea, Birt, Kinitty,
Drumcullen and Ballylusk, while Nenagh would only appear to have been fortified in the final phase, after
1216. Part three is a detailed review of the historical and archaeological evidence relating to the earliest Anglo-
Norman fortifications. He successfully identifies thirteen ringworks by listing all sites which have masonry, irregular
features or other non-ringfort characteristics from the Anglo-Norman areas. Twenty-four motes are present
within the study area and the author rightly appeals for a uniform system of mote classification. One controversial
suggestion is that motte-building may have gone on much later than the generally accepted date of c.1215: he
points to the square motes at Sierkieran and Aghaboe which may have been built as late as 1284 (p. 161). Few
can quibble however with his conclusion that many motes continued to function as administrative centres until
the fourteenth century.

This fine book is copiously illustrated and furthermore a detailed catalogue (including ground-plans, sections and
photographic illustrations) of the fortifications is provided. The book has a preface by J. F. Lydon, Lecturer in
Archaeology at Trinity College, Dublin, and a thought-provoking foreword on the medieval landscape by Dr. John
Fehan, Director of the Environmental Survey of North Tipperary. It is rounded off by a bibliography of manuscript
sources and of primary and secondary printed sources, and finishes with an index of persons and places.

John Bradley

G. MacNiocaill and P. F. Wallace (eds.), KEIMELIA: STUDIES IN MEDIEVAL ARCHAEOLOGY AND
HISTORY IN MEMORY OF TOM DELANEY, Galway University Press, Galway 1988; pp. XVI + 622;

Keimelia is the classical Greek word for treasures, and the keimelion under review here is a veritable hoard
of keimelia. Containing no less than thirty-five contributions from colleagues and friends of Tom Delaney, it
bears witness to both the professional and personal high regard in which he was held. Although he died at an
early age, Tom Delaney, through his work at Carrickfergus and particularly on medieval ceramics, significantly
promoted the development of medieval archaeology in Ireland.

It is fitting, therefore, that Keimelia contains a large number of papers on medieval pottery, amongst which
are important contributions on Leinster cooking ware by R. Ó Floinn, on Dublin's medieval pottery by K. J.
Barton, and on Irish medieval pottery imports by J. G. Hurst. Other archaeological contributions include a study
by Peter Harbison of a number of exotic cross-slabs from Counties Carlow and Wexford, and an investigation
into the units of linear measurement apparent in insular art by James Lang. Eamonn Ó Carragáin examines
the theoretical significance of the depiction of Paul and Antony on high crosses in Britain and Ireland, and concludes
that this is a eucharistic motif, while Finbar McCormick deals with the archaeo-zoological evidence for the
domesticated cat in Early Christian and Medieval Ireland. Other contributions range from a study of Anglo-
Saxon mounts from Dublin by Leslie Webster to analyses of a Viking Age silver hoard from Donegal by James
Graham-Campbell and of a medieval tile from Co. Dublin by Thomas Fanning and Elizabeth Eames.

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The volume also contains a number of historical studies, including Brian Lacy's work on the development of Derry in which he throws doubt on the tradition that Colmille founded the early monastery there. Howard Clarke extracts material of Irish interest from the early English pipe rolls, while F. X. Martin investigates a case involving intrigue and murder in an Augustinian friary in Dublin in the fourteenth century, the grim intricacies of which are matched only in the novels of Umberto Ecco!

In addition to the papers noted above, there are a number which those interested in the place of North Munster in medieval archaeology and history will find useful. Anthony Candon's contribution, for instance, deals with Muirchertach Ua Brien, one of Brian Bóruma's most distinguished descendants, who sought to bring Ireland into the International political arena of the twelfth century, while C. A. Ennep examines the development of colonial society in Tipperary and Kilkenny following the Anglo-Norman settlement. On the archaeological front, Michael Ryan examines the Irish horn-reliquary of Tongres/Tongeren, Belgium, and suggests a context for it in a north Munster workshop tradition. Other contributions of relevance to this area include John Bradley's study of Anglo-Norman sarcophagi in Ireland (which should be viewed alongside the same author's recent study of the only definite pre-Norman sarcophagi from Ireland—that from Cormac's Chapel, Cashel—see this Journal, Vol. 26, 1984), Conleth Manning's account of the finding of a Sheela-na-Gig at Ballinaclough, Co. Tipperary, and John Cherry's article on medieval jewellery from Ireland which includes details on a beautiful pendant cross of silver of late medieval date from Kilnmallock Abbey, Co. Limerick. Finally, note should be taken of Patrick Wallace's survey of the relevance of the buildings of Viking-Age Dublin to vernacular architectural studies in which a number of north Munster sites—including Caherduffmore, Co. Limerick and Thady's Fort, Co. Clare—are considered.

*Keimelina* is a work where historical, archaeological and literary approaches to medieval studies are complementary. In time, no doubt, its publication will come to be regarded as a milestone in the development of medieval archaeology in Ireland, a development which Tom Delaney played his part in fostering.

**John Sheehan**


This major work, the result of many years of cumulative and painstaking research, provides us with the definitive account of the Cistercians and their monastic works in Ireland. Books dealing with the history and/or architecture of the medieval religious orders in this country have appeared from time to time but, until the advent of this study, have tended to be either selective or lacking an in-depth perspective. Roger Stalley's volume covers, firstly, the history of the Cistercian order in Ireland from its introduction to the Dissolution, and is followed by an account of the layout and architecture of the abbeys including the works of the fifteenth-century revival. These chapters are succeeded by detailed assessments of various architectural features as found in Cistercian buildings, such as vaulting, towers and cloisters. Chapters on stone sculpture and decorative furnishings complete the core sections of the book and the appendices include a comprehensive catalogue of the thirty-three major Irish sites.

The simple purity of the Cistercian rule found expression in the plain, if not severe, forms of architecture utilized in the earlier building phases of their monasteries. This harmony and sense of proportion led the German scholar, Hanno Hahn, to conclude that the Cistercian master masons employed a modular plan based on two squares with sides set out in a ratio of 3:4. Stalley has shown how these proportional methods were also adopted in the laying-out and construction of certain other Irish abbeys. As the first Irish Cistercian monastery at Mellifont was constructed with the help of masons from the mother-house of the order at Clairvaux, in Burgundy, the parallels with that region have been searched and delineated by Stalley with notable comparisons made between Boyle and Jerpoint and French churches such as Fontenay. Later on this love of plain simple lines gives way to a more decorated style in features such as windows and cloisters. The fifteenth-century revival of architectural forms in Ireland is probably best exemplified by the abbey of Holycross, Co. Tipperary, which has a separate chapter devoted to it in this book. Though the Cistercians undoubtedly played an important role in this revival, one must not overlook the fact that in many respects their sister order, the Augustinians, and the mendicant friars, have supplied us with most of the finer works and monuments of this period, particularly in North Munster and the West of Ireland.

As one reads the history of the Cistercian order in medieval Ireland one realizes that the turbulence of the period, as Stalley has pointed out, is often mirrored in their affairs, perhaps especially the differences that underlay the two 'nations' of Irish and Anglo-Norman. These differences, particularly the wealth and endowments of the Norman houses, were often reflected in the architecture and furnishings. Nowhere is this 'division' more clearly delineated than in the use of decorative tiled pavements—a common feature of the houses in Leinster,
which were under Norman influence, but, as the present writer has noted elsewhere in this Journal (vol. 23 (1981), 14), entirely absent from even the wealthiest abbeys in the Irish-held areas of Connacht and Munster.

For purchasers and readers of this splendid volume interested in the Thomond region there is much of importance and value, not only in very full treatment given to the abbey of Holycross but also in the wealth of historical and architectural information provided for sites such as Corcomroe and Monasteranenagh among others. As an established art historian, Roger Stalley has given us the benefit of his knowledge and scholarship in this field with the inclusion of a section covering the artistic achievements of the Cistercians in carved stonework and mural paintings, along with sections on what survives of their output of illuminated manuscripts and religious metalwork. A full bibliography is complemented by a very useful glossary and a comprehensive index.

The large A4 format selected for the volume enabled the author to include a range of line-drawings (mainly plans) to the desired scales, and this format also facilitated the chosen size and clarity of the many excellent black-and-white photographic plates. Works of this size and nature are commonly priced far beyond the reach of students and scholars, but thanks to some generous grants-in-aid the price tag of £25 stg. is low and presents extremely good value for money, and more importantly, remains within the limits of personal budgets. Both the author and Yale University Press are to be congratulated and complimented on a very fine and splendid publication.

THOMAS FANNING


Dr. Katharine Simms has given us a brilliant and thrilling study of a hitherto obscure feature of medieval Gaelic Ireland, the gradual process of change in its political structure between the twelfth and sixteenth centuries. From the Norman incursions to the Tudor conquest she has traced with exactitude and drawing from a rich variety of sources the replacement of the title ri (rex) by tighearna (dominus) and she has shown in great detail the implications for the Gaelic polities of this transition in their leadership from kings to warlords. The work is a most valuable contribution to the scholarship of medieval Irish history not only in what it achieves, which is remarkable, but also in what it promises in the development of that scholarship; it represents a signal unification of the source-study, methods and disciplines required for the understanding of two realities usually, and especially in recent years often excellently, treated apart from one another: the history of the English colony in medieval Ireland and the history of medieval Gaelic Ireland.

The colony is best known to us through the earlier researches of such scholars as Orpen and later of O'Ney-Ruthven and Lydon. The study of medieval Gaelic Ireland, pioneered by MacNeill, has been illuminated in recent years by such scholars as Mac Niocaill, Ó Corráin, and Nicholls. Dr. Simms has quite remarkably mastered the knowledge and skills requisite to both scholarly worlds, a rare accomplishment. She is as familiar with the annals and genealogies as she is with state papers and estate and civic charters, and she is most original and persuasive in her assertion and demonstration of the historical evidence to be drawn from Gaelic bardic poetry, a feat hitherto well-nigh impossible, given the grammarians' reluctance to yield any of these treasures to extra-philological uses and the inability of most historians to draw solid nourishment from them.

After treating of the nature of the diverse sources with which she will be working and describing the political background, in an essay on medieval Irish conceived of as 'Gaelic' and 'Anglo-Norman' separately, she proceeds to an account of the inauguration-ceremonies, titles, and meaning of Gaelic kingship: methods of election and deposition; the topics of king's counsellors, administration, vassalage, army, and revenues. She draws from these detailed studies, lucidly presented, a number of well-informed conclusions that give us a new understanding of the dynamic character of the Gaelic policy as it changes in face of English (and continental) realities.

For Thomond, her use of the annals and Cailleabhair Thordhelbaigh and such well-known works of O'Brien promotion as Cogaidh Gaedheilre Gallaibh is supplemented by inquiry into unpublished bardic poetry in manuscript. The relationship between the intercine O'Brien struggles and the de Clare lordship is thereby more fully illuminated. It is noteworthy that Simms is able to provide material and observation relevant to the several regions even though the foundation of the work is laid in her special studies of O'Neill territory and the north more generally.

The volume, seventh in the series Studies in Celtic History, under the general editorship of David Dumville, includes an extensive bibliography and several indexes of more than usual interest and utility. The result of the whole, in methods and substance, is a work of extraordinary importance and integrative power. Dr. Simms, showing the way, gives us cause to hope that one day we shall know the medieval history not of two Irlandes, but of one.

LEO McNAMARA

This beautifully presented guide is fully up to the high standards maintained by this series and the display of coloured and black-and-white illustrations are practically faultless, as is the technical detail and description. Very slight niggles occur; the floor plan (illustration 5) is small, only the ground floor is given, and it has no north-point indicator or scale. As the upper floor is described a further plan would have helped, and the account of a staircase in the north-west corner of the upper floors is difficult to follow without the orientation. The use of the word 'transom' to describe the top panel or entablature of a chimney-piece seems unusual; the word is specifically associated with window design and refers to the horizontal bar of wood or stone dividing a window, as against the mullion, the vertical bar. The house appears immaculate in the finely coloured interior photographs, but in the inner fold of the front cover the illustration of the Wedgewood Room shows the carpet turned over at the corner, which catches the eye immediately in such neat and tidy surroundings. In a similar vein, the fine colour centre spread shows the splendid dining-room table in the Oval Room set for a meal, but alas and alack, the place settings would present problems for the guests as the cutlery is in a state of chaos: only three or four settings are reasonably complete. Leaving aside the incidental whims of photographers (or servants?) which detract in no way from the excellence of the guide, it is interesting that a view by Thomas Roberts, c.1770 (illustration 3), shows the original castle, a large tower-house with a wing attached, which was demolished when the present house was built. The building marked as 'Sarsfield's Castle' on the Ordnance Survey is therefore not the original, but is an example of an adjacent fortified chapel and tower-house, with in this case the chapel still attached. It is a remarkably fine example of this not very common type of castle, which is one of the characteristics of the Pale, and this point could perhaps have been brought out in the text.

The North Munster connections with Lucan House are slight, although popularly known as 'Sarsfield's Demesne' (though nowhere so described in this publication) and lived in by the Sarsfields for a while in the 15th and 16th centuries. While Patrick Sarsfield of Siege of Limerick (1691) fame never certainly lived there, there is a monument by James Wyatt, described as "one of the most perfect pieces of European neo-classical taste" (illustrations 27 and 29), to him in the grounds near the house.

Also of interest is the so-called Oratory, sited beside the river. While to all appearances an ancient ruin, it is in reality an 18th-century Gothic bath-house, built to avail of the waters of the renowned sulphurous spa in the area (illustrations 32 and 33).

It is a pity that the facade of Lucan House has been altered by the removal of the stucco rustication on either side of the portico, which can be seen in Thomas Milton's view of 1793 (illustration 2), but the building remains one of the finest neo-classical Georgian houses in the Dublin region. It is indeed fortunate that it is lovingly maintained by the Italian government as their Ambassador's residence, and this publication offers a comprehensive and complete account of its architecture, lavishly illustrated. Those interested in Palladian architecture should buy this modestly priced guide—even the most discerning will not be disappointed.

D. Newman Johnson


This little booklet is not really for public consumption so much as for the people of Ballingaddy and perhaps also neighbouring Ardpatrick and Kilmallock. It is very much what it sets out to be: "a mini-history of Ballingaddy and a worthy souvenir of the celebrations marking the 150th anniversary of Ballingaddy church". In this regard it is ideal, recounting the known history of Christianity leading up to the opening of the church, consecrated and blessed on the 15th of August, 1838. It then goes on to record the various alterations and improvements carried out on the church right down to the present day, in such detail that the names of the benefactors are recorded here for posterity, ranging from those who presented stained glass windows, baptismal font, etc., the artisans who prepared the floor for terrazzo work in 1938, those who repaired the sacristy roof free of charge, to the electricians who assisted with the lighting, and many others too, including sacristans and parish clerks who nearly all were hard-working women!

Leaving aside the central theme of the text, one should point out that five maps are included and eight pages of photographs. One of the latter shows the headstone over the grave of John Flanagan, described on page 11 as one "who established ten world records and won three Olympic gold medals in weight throwing"—why not be specific and say that the medals were won in 1900, 1904 and 1908 for throwing the hammer, thus starting a great Irish tradition (the hammer throw was not held in 1896, the first of the modern Olympic Games)? After Flanagan the gold medal for this event almost became Irish property: in 1912 it was won by Matt McGrath from
Nenagh, and in the next Olympic Games, held in 1920, by Flanagan's near neighbour, Pat Ryan of Pallasgreen; a slight break occurred in 1924 when the then veteran McGrath could only manage the silver medal, but Dr. Pat O'Callaghan, from Duhallow, Co. Cork, showed the rest of the world the way in 1928 and 1932—he was world record-holder when the 1936 Olympics came around but Ireland was not allowed compete because of a dispute with the International Federation. Flanagan's grave is truly something for Ballingaddy to boast about.

All-in-all, this little booklet ably fulfills its purpose and might, indeed, serve as a model for all such commemorative publications.

Etienne Rynne


In this all too short booklet, Graham Harrison takes us on a rapid tour of Saint Eunan's Cathedral, Letterkenny, pointing out the major historical, architectural and religious features of the building, planned in 1890, begun in 1891 and completed in 1901 at a cost of over £300,000, and then, almost a century later, restored in 1985 at a cost of over £500,000. This booklet was produced soon after the restoration of the cathedral. The text is adequate and there is a list of bishops of Raphoe Diocese from A.D. 697 to the present. There is a brief preface by Seamus Hegarty, present Bishop of Raphoe, and a colour illustration of the bishop's diocesan coat of arms on the first page. The booklet is copiously illustrated with 15 colour and 36 monochrome pictures, 17 of which have a greyish-green tint reflecting to some extent the colour of the carved stone.

The works of many artists and craftsmen, Amici of Rome (painted ceilings including Gaelic Revival interlace!), Mayer of Munich and Hardman (windows), Harry Clarke Studios, A. E. Child, Michael Healy, Ethel Rhind, Beatrice Elvery and Catherine O'Brien (stained glass windows), Richard King (painted medallions), and Telford (organ) are represented here. Curiously, the sculptors of the many detailed and exquisite pieces are not named. The sculptors of the Columban Arch, illus. 20 and 41 to 44, which "is no mean epitome of [Raphoe Diocesan history]", as Bishop Patrick O'Donnell said at the time, surely deserved mention by name. The wealth of architecture and art made concentrations of prayer difficult here, as it must have been in some of our medieval abbeys and churches: perhaps that is why Seamus Hegarty, Bishop of Raphoe, in the preface felt the need to remind us to "Avail of the opportunity to pray".

There are a number of improvements I would like to have seen in the booklet. The lack of pagination, here as throughout the series, makes references to the text virtually impossible. The lack of a map, even an outline one, and the absence of the original plan of the cathedral (and that may well have been a masterpiece worthy of publishing in its own right) makes following the text off-site somewhat difficult; inclusion of a layout plan would have greatly facilitated the reader and visitor alike. St. Eunan's cathedral is stated (p. 6) to be the work of William Hague, a Dublin architect, though The Shell Guide, 2nd ed. (1967), p. 348, and other sources, give Hague and MacNamara. Why is there no illustration of the gate-pillars? These, too, are adorned with most attractive panels of Gaelic Revival interface! Why is there no illustration of the Cathedral's predecessor on this site, Dr. McGeeigan's parish church of the 1830s mentioned on p. 3? Has Lucas not conclusively shown many years ago that penal crosses are religious souvenirs from Lough Derg rather than "for easy concealment at a time when the practice of Catholicism was outlawed", that in fact the term 'penal cross' is a misnomer?

Despite these minor shortcomings and quibbles, there is more than ample here to savour the Cathedral and its riches. No doubt it would have greater sales than the many religious pamphlets on sale at the back of the Cathedral, even though it is apparently not on sale there! This booklet, just as the Cathedral itself, would surely be "an intellectual and spiritual edification for the people" (p. 4). One has become accustomed to quality in these Eason Irish Heritage Series booklets and this one is no exception. Long may the series continue!

Martin A. Timoney

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Although this little book was published five years ago, it seems well worthwhile, even at this late stage, to bring it to the notice of the Society’s members. It is an important, clear and concise account of the subject of its title. McGraile, a Master Mariner, is currently Professor of Maritime Archaeology at Oxford University and this product of a labour of love is written in an easily-read style. McGraile's deep understanding and extensive knowledge of maritime matters comes alive for the reader as one is transported on a word-picture journey which is painted so well by this acknowledged master. The book is lavishly illustrated, containing as it does some forty-six illustrations spread over its sixty-four pages; its cover plate is the well-known Early Iron Age gold model boat from Broighter, Co. Derry.

Man and the sea, rafts and boats, maritime archaeology, water transport in Northern and Western Europe are but some of the sections in this little book. Items of Irish interest, also included, are references to curraghs and coracles, to Tim Severin’s voyage on the skinboat “Brendan” in which he crossed the Atlantic in 1976-77 and which is presently on public display at Craggaunowen, Co. Clare, and to the Broighter boat which is currently on view in the National Museum of Ireland.

McGraile brings the reader through the systematic and chronological approach of maritime archaeology, excavation, conservation and display, and quotes many examples from such as the boats from ferriby, Sutton Hoo, Brigg, and also Viking and Medieval craft.

Methodology as to the construction of prehistoric boats, the stitching together of craft, developments of the dug-out to chine and clinker boat, all are here to be discovered in a most readable fashion. McGraile with his wealth of experience also enlightens and delights the reader with his sections on propulsion, steering, pilotage and navigation.

It is a joy to read; an excellent reference piece and at the price it should be on the shelves of all of this island nation who wish to become acquainted with the maritime heritage. It is an enlightening read for those researching the subject or who have even the slightest interest in boats, and is recommended accordingly to them.

Des Toal


Price: £3.00 (card covers).

This memoir, a paper to mark the centenary of MacLysaght’s birth read to the National Library of Ireland Society in November 1987 by Charles Lysaght, biographer of Brendan Bracken is, in a sense but an appetizer; it stimulates the appetite for the main course, a fuller biography, the ingredients for which are there in plenty. While this is an admirable memoir it is no more than that. It is far too slender a record of a career in Ireland, full of historical and other interests, spanning most of the last hundred years. ‘Mac’, as he came to be known, played so many parts with, and sometimes without, success, but always with his own individual charm and panache, that to try and compress it all into twenty-seven pages is to endeavour to squeeze a quart into a pint bottle.

Since the Thomond Archaeological Society published a Festschrift in his honour as volume 17 of the North Munster Antiquarian Journal in 1978, it is unnecessary to list Mac’s many achievements here. He is best known for his books on Irish families, less well known for what is perhaps his more seminal, Irish Life in the Seventeenth Century, for which he was awarded a Doctorate in Literature by the National University. Many will however be surprised by his profusity in so many fields from a reading of the bibliography appended to this booklet—to which should be added one or two of the items listed with the Obituary published in this Journal in 1986 (vol. 28, pp. 118-120).

His love for the Irish language, best exemplified by his abortive attempt to bring Irish-speaking workmen to his clan home in Tuamgraney, so that it would become an Irish-speaking oasis, is both amusing and revealing. What happened was that the Irish speakers became fluent in English.

Yes, Mac was a poor psychologist, an idealist who could never see the mote in another’s eye. He was a pretty poor businessman as well, a worrier about small money matters, one who hated having his routine upset, but he was above all a hard worker with the gift of making and maintaining many friends. He was a colourful and lovable man as is evident from this affectionate, neatly produced and well illustrated memoir.

I’m not at all sure that I am happy with the colour illustration on the front cover from a drawing by Thomas Ryan. Being a little stiff, it does not catch the essential ‘Mac’. The more human photograph on the back of a smiling ‘Mac’ at 96 years of age working in his study, is how I remember him.

Paddy Lysaght