

Editorial, 1992

Our Society has been most fortunate in its Presidents. They have always served us well, some for longer than others, - there is, thankfully, no set term of office, all Officers, from President to Committee members, being elected annually on their respective merits; it is almost invariably the case that our Presidents retire at their own request, for it is quite an onerous post, requiring a lot of tact, and a real sense of duty which makes sometimes heavy demands on the incumbent - presiding at the Society's public lectures and frequent Committee Meetings is not necessarily the most burdensome. We have a new President this year, and consequently it is time to gratefully acknowledge the truly presidential service rendered by Christopher Lynch during the previous five years, from 1987 to 1991 inclusive. He not only served the Society as our President but immediately previously, from 1976 to 1986, as a Vice-President, and before that, from 1971 to 1975 as our Hon. Secretary, probably the most demanding of all posts in any Society. As President, Vice-President, Secretary, Committee Member, or an ordinary member of the Society, Christopher Lynch throughout played a quiet, unobtrusive role, always acting in the Society's best interests. Our Society has always had members who were also prominent in the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, including filling the post of Vice-President for Munster. Within the recent couple of decades these have included in an unbroken sequence Professor M. J. O'Kelly, Tom Pierce, George Cunningham, Captain Frank Parker, Rev. Martin Canon Ryan and, of course, Christopher Lynch (1989-91). In his professional post as the person responsible for the successful operation of the marvellous, restored castles of Bunratty, Knappogue and Dunguaire, we owe him much - who will forget how he, with the goodwill of the late Lord and Lady Gort and of John Hunt, made Bunratty Castle available to us when we requested it for special occasions, for example in 1967 when we launched *North Munster Studies*, a book of essays the Society published in memory of the late Monsignor Michael Moloney, or almost a decade later when we launched *Féilsgríbhinn Éamoinn Mhic Giolla Iasachta*, the 1975 number of our *Journal* which was given over to an important collection of papers in honour of our oldest, longest-standing, and probably most widely known member, Dr. Edward MacLysaght.

One could continue for quite some time merely listing the work Christopher Lynch has done for the Society, but in some ways much of it was done indirectly in that his work for tourism in the Shannon Region has resulted in a far greater appreciation, not only in North Munster but throughout Ireland and across the broad Atlantic, of our remarkable archaeological and historical heritage. What can we say other than "Thank you, Chris, for all that you have done for North Munster and for somehow finding time to also serve so diligently and successfully as our President - and we know that we can with confidence look forward to your continued assistance, as ever willingly given, now that you are once again a Vice-President."

* * * *

While our living heritage in the form of thatched vernacular houses and horse-drawn farm machinery may be disappearing before our very eyes, local museums and/or heritage centres are mushrooming throughout the country, including North Munster; for instance, the one set up in June 1991 by local effort in the Church of St. Cronan in Tuamgraney, Co. Clare. President Mary Robinson appreciates the importance of our heritage and values such local enthusiasm and effort, and she showed us this by travelling down to that ancient church in East Clare, fascinating in its own right, to open the centre. Would that everyone in authority

was so conscious of the merit and value of our past, especially those who are in a position to do something useful about it, financially at least!

President Robinson's interest in museums and historical matters was also demonstrated to us in North Munster when in October 1992 she presented the inaugural Gulbenkian Irish Museum Award to Limerick Museum. The Award was for special exhibitions, and Limerick won it for its "Kings in Conflict" exhibition commemorating the 300th anniversary of the Jacobite/Williamite (depending on which side you favour!) Wars between James II and William of Orange - with special reference, of course, to the two famous Sieges of Limerick (in 1690 and 1691), and the infamous Treaty of Limerick allegedly signed on the Treaty Stone now at Thomondgate [see our *Journal*, 33(1991), 1 and frontispiece]. Limerick Museum won the award over eleven other entries, including National institutions from all over Ireland. Limerick Museum goes from strength to strength and has certainly become one of *the* places to visit in the city. Sincerest congratulations are due to Limerick Corporation and, in particular, to our member Mr. Larry Walsh, Curator of the Museum, who was responsible for the organisation and design of the exhibition.

* * * *

Limerick has another important museum also, the world-renowned Hunt Museum, and it, too, can celebrate 1992 as a major year in its short history. The first big year was 1978 when the museum was officially opened by Limerickman Mr. Desmond O'Malley, the then Minister for Industry, Commerce and Energy, in its temporary home, the National Institute for Higher Education, Limerick, and our member Dr. Patrick Doran was appointed its Honorary Curator. The Museum is still housed in the same building, now the newly instituted University of Limerick, but early in 1992 two important decisions were made: firstly that a permanent home was to be recreated for it in the Old Custom House, the fine building in Rutland Street, Limerick, and secondly that a fulltime Director was to be employed. Restoring and to some extent reconstructing and altering the Old Custom House ('old' is not merely because it is old, having been built in 1765, but also to distinguish it from James Gandon's masterpiece, the more recent but better known Custom House built in Dublin between 1781 and 1791), will take a few years, but a fulltime Director was appointed by late 1992 - Mairéad Dunlevy, M.A., a longtime member of our Society who was formerly in the Art and Industrial Division of the National Museum of Ireland, and who is an internationally acknowledged expert on archaeology, textiles (lace especially), pottery, glass, etc., etc., in fact the ideal person, one of whom the late John Hunt would fully approve - our life member, Gertrude Hunt, certainly approves and is delighted with Mairéad's appointment.

* * * *

The Society has much pleasure in gratefully acknowledging here generous grants-in-aid from the National Museum of Ireland, the Ulster Folk and Transport Museum, University College Cork, and University College Galway, towards the publication of the articles by Finola O'Carroll and Michael Ryan, by Linda M. Ballard, by Denise Maher, and by Etienne Rynne respectively.

The Hon. Editor would, as usual, like to thank the contributors of articles, notes and reviews for their patience and for allowing us publish them in our *Journal*. He wishes also to acknowledge the continued help and encouragement he received from our President, Fr. John Leonard, and Vice-President Mr. Paddy Lysaght, throughout the preparation involved in producing this volume.