

# BOOK REVIEWS

*Editor's note:* Due to too hasty proof-reading in an effort to meet a deadline, the last volume of our *Journal* regrettable contained more misprints than are acceptable, for which I apologise. The most seriously affected article was Breandán Ó Madagáin's on "Dáibhí Ó Bruadair and Irish Culture in Limerick, 1691", for which we subsequently provided a page of "Errata" – those who have not yet received this page can obtain it from me on request. Among the book reviews the most seriously effected was Conleth Manning's on *The Illustrated Archaeology of Ireland*, and the corrected version is now printed below. – E.R.

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Michael Ryan (ed.), **THE ILLUSTRATED ARCHAEOLOGY OF IRELAND**, Town House and Country House, Dublin 1991; pp. 224; ISBN 0-946172-25-0. Price: £19.95 (hbk).

This is a wide ranging and useful book in which the editor has brought together some thirty-seven contributors to cover many aspects of Irish archaeology. It is an indication of how specialised Irish archaeology has become that no one author could deal with all the aspects of the subject with any degree of authority. The book is well designed and profusely illustrated, largely in colour, and while its format gives it the appearance of a coffee-table book its high quality content belies such a dismissive classification.

The book is divided into seven sections. The first, called "Interpreting the Evidence", contains a number of contributions dealing with archaeological method and dating, and excavation under different conditions such as rescue, underwater and wetland archaeology. The other sections follow in chronological order from the Stone Age to the Early Modern Period. The choice of topics in these sections has been dictated to some degree by the expertise of the chosen contributors. The multiplicity of authors has inevitably led to some unevenness in style and content but this has been minimised by skillful editing and short introductory parts by the editor. Not all the contributors are archaeologists. In the prehistoric sections there are useful chapters on geology and raw materials by the late John Jackson, and on the environment by Michael O'Connell. This interdisciplinary aspect of the book is one of its strong points and is a feature of the Early Medieval Section also, where Dáibhí Ó Cróinín has written a chapter on Early Irish Christianity and Bernard Meehan, one on manuscript production.

Generally the information in the prehistoric sections is authoritative and up-to-date, being based on the most recent results from excavations, research and radiocarbon dating. The latter has radically altered our picture of the Neolithic in particular, and has placed certain burial and pottery types in a different order than heretofore. For example the Linkardstown-type burials and certain decorated pottery types found with them, which were formerly thought to be very late in the Neolithic, are now accepted as belonging to the earlier Neolithic having been pushed back over a thousand years by radiocarbon dating.

In older publications on Irish archaeology the Bronze Age often seems dull, consisting only of typologies of pottery, gold and bronzes, illustrated with line-drawings. In this book spectacular colour photographs of monuments, gold and bronze objects and pottery add life to the text, while recent excavations are throwing more light on the settlements of the period. The section on the "Iron Age", a difficult period with its dearth of habitation-sites, is both readable and scholarly.

The section on the "Early Medieval Period" is the longest in the book. This covers the period from the coming of Christianity around 400 A.D. up until the arrival of the Normans in the twelfth century. This has usually been known as the Early Christian Period in Irish archaeology. The editor has pioneered this new terminology which certainly brings us more into line with British and Continental usage, but is still not widely accepted here. The period is well covered in this section with much new information from excavations such as Deer Park Farms and the cities of Dublin and Waterford. The ornate metalwork possibly gets undue emphasis in comparison with everyday objects, and weapons which are not dealt with at all.

The next section covering the period from the Norman incursion up to about 1600A.D. is called "The Later Medieval Period", a not altogether satisfactory term for what was hitherto known in Ireland as the Medieval Period. To call it the High and Late Medieval Periods might have been more consistent and would have fitted better with the



title of David Johnson's chapter (Later Medieval Castles), which covers the later part of this period: the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries.

The final section, "The Early Modern Period", is short but interesting, containing information not easily available elsewhere on the Munster and Ulster plantations by Denis Power and Brian Lacy (the spelling Lacey is used for some strange reason).

While the text is almost free from errors (apart from misplacing Kilteel, Co. Kildare, in Co. Dubin, Kiltinan, Co. Tipperary, in Co. Kilkenny and Shinrone, Co. Offaly, in Co. Tipperary) a number of errors have crept into the illustration captions and a few illustrations have been printed in reverse (Tara on p.124 and the Black Abbey, Kilkenny, on p.180). Tullaghoge (not Tullahogue as in the caption on p.181) was not the inauguration site of the O'Neills of Clandeboy but rather that of the main branch of the O'Neills. On pages 123 and 204 an illustration appears to have been changed but the old caption left in place.

A major shortcoming is the total lack of references or even a select bibliography. There is no suggested further reading for the interested person whose appetite has been whetted by this stimulating book. Hopefully this lack will be redressed in further editions of the book, which is undoubtedly a landmark in Irish archaeological publishing and deserves every success.

CONLETH MANNING

Laurence Flanagan, **A DICTIONARY OF IRISH ARCHAEOLOGY**, Gill & Macmillan Ltd., Dublin 1992; pp.222; ISBN 0-7171-1928-9 (pbk) and 0-7171-1835-5 (hbk). Price: £12.99 (pbk) and £35.00 (hbk).

The author of this first dictionary of Irish archaeology was formerly Keeper of Antiquities in the Ulster Museum, and its contents reflect his interests and long experience with artifacts and monuments of all periods. In his introduction, he states that it does not purport to cover every aspect of Irish Archaeology, but is more in the form of a personal card-index which every archaeologist might have wished to have kept, but which few do. While a card-index is open ended, a book cannot be, and he hopes that the inevitable omissions occasioned by the arbitrary deadline have been randomly distributed.

The format is straight-forward, the entries in alphabetical order, each concise and easily read. The total of almost eight hundred entries covers excavated sites, monument types, portable antiquities, archaeological periods, raw materials and resources, human activities and archaeological method, many with references to journal articles. Fifty percent of the entries are specific sites, with a disproportionate bias towards Ulster, which accounts for more entries than the other three provinces together, though North Munster figures fairly prominently. Mooghaun, Co. Clare, the largest find of prehistoric gold in Europe does not rate a direct mention, but can be found on p.114, under Hoards – nor does Hillfort, the monument-type near which it was found. Other monument types and familiar, if old, names excluded are beehive, boulder-burial, cillín, cromlech, field system, gallán, henge, house, hut, long-barrow, mound, promontory fort, road, rock art, stone alignment, togher, trackway, tumulus. Dendrochronology has an entry, but radiocarbon dating and pollen analysis do not. There are, however, good, and for a dictionary, lengthy, entries for many historic towns and the buildings surviving within them. Broad coverage of Armada sites and wrecks reflects the author's curation and exhibition of the Armada material in the Ulster Museum.

The portable antiquities entries, again, are somewhat hit-and-miss, and the author often seems more concerned with citing examples than with defining what the object is and detailing differences of form for different uses of the same type of object. The following terms, taken from the illustrations in a standard Irish textbook of prehistory, have no entries: maul, pendant, Bann flake, sun-disc or disc, anvil, chape, lock-ring-dress- or sleeve-fastener, Y-piece, spear-butt, cup. While lunulae merit an entry, gorgets do not (not even that from Gleninsheen!). The single burials of the Neolithic have one entry, Drimnagh, Co. Dublin, which refers to it having a Linkardstown-type cist, but there is no entry to tell us what a Linkardstown cist is.

The book is, as the author states, a personal index, and as such, provides a useful overview of the subject in Ireland at the time of writing. It is, however, not the book to consult if stuck for a term, seeking a definition, or looking for a parallel for an unfamiliar object, but rather to use if seeking some general, often unusual information

about an archaeological site or artifact. A second edition might more usefully be in the form of a handbook of Irish archaeology, arranged chronologically, detailing the monuments, artifacts, technology and art of each period, and thoroughly indexed. Nonetheless this is a book which will be of general interest to the amateur and professional archaeologist alike.

LARRY WALSH

John Scarry (compiler), **MONUMENTS IN THE PAST: PHOTOGRAPHS 1870-1936**, The Stationery Office, Dublin 1991; pp. ix + 83; ISBN 07076-0169-X (pbk) and 07076-0193-2 (hbk). Price: £5.95 (pbk) and £9.95 (hbk).

This is a fascinating collection of 78 old photographs of many of Ireland's ancient monuments, compiled from old prints and negatives (mostly quarter glass plates) housed in the Office of Public Works Photographic Archives. These photographs are printed one per page, on good quality art paper, and reproduce clearly. Many are peopled, a fact which gives them added interest in that they provide an interesting record of the types of people who visited or worked on the monuments at the time - and of the clothes worn. Children with bare feet, men wearing headgear of almost every variety (caps, wide-brimmed hats, soft felt hats, boaters, top hats) and women in long, waisted dresses, all are much in evidence. The almost 'Mexican bandit' garb of two local fishermen at one of the stations on Inishglora, Co. Mayo (p. 40), the old woman with her shawl, seated on the ground with her basket of wrapped goods (souvenirs for sale?) and smoking her *dudeen* next to the Deerstone at Glendalough (p.39) and the young lad with his cap, high buttoned jacket and patched knee-breeches standing at the Romanesque doorway of Kilmalkedar (p. 35), are each as interesting as the more sophisticated visitors such as the lady and young girl standing at the entrance to Newgrange in 1910 - they had clearly arrived by motorcar: the lady still wears a scarf around her wide flat hat and tied below her chin to keep it on against the wind (p.31) - or the elegant black-coated gentleman wearing a very tall top hat who stands, Dracula-like, among the castellations on the tower of St. Doulagh's Church, Co. Dublin (p. 17). For me, however, the languid pose of the workman at Taghmon, Co. Westmeath (p.24) beats the lot!

Many of the photographs are more than records, some being almost works of art. A magnificent example of this is the view of Old Abbey Lane in Drogheda (p.67), a scene which many a late 19th century artist would have been proud to have caught (or contrived) on his canvas.

However these photographs were not intended as artistic or social documents but as archeological, architectural and historical records. They show that the Board of Works/Office of Public Works has not been idle in the intervening years. Ivy and overgrowth is everywhere in evidence, not least all over the walls and tower of Quin Friary (p.5). Indeed, the good work of these caretakers of our ancient monuments is clearly apparent when one notes the disrepair of the monuments in comparison to their state today, *e.g.*, the capless round towers at Glendalough in 1875 (p.3), at Kilmacduagh before 1879 (p.21) and at Ardmore in 1875-76 (p. 22, which shows the scaffolding around it - now we know when and how that peculiar cross got placed on top of the pointed cap!)

Eighteen of the photographs are of sites in North Munster, some of particular interest to readers of our *Journal*. For example, that on page 28 which shows Scattery Round Tower under repair on the 16th of March 1916 - the constructional woodwork is high up around the top with no visible means of access other than ropes which are hauling a workman seated in a boxlike affair up the outside of the tower, apparently to repair a wide, dangerous-looking crack extending down the middle of the tower; this was not the first nor the only time the tower required repair - readers are referred to the note on the matter published by Rev. Ignatius Murphy in our *Journal*, 16(1973-74), 89-90. The photo on page 27 showing the stone by stone removal of St. Molua's Church from Friar's Island to Killaloe as a result of the Shannon Scheme will also be of particular interest to our readers.

There are four pages of text at the beginning of this book, one providing a brief account of the photographs in the Archives, which is followed by three pages giving a very brief outline of the history of those 'Caring for Monuments: the State's role in the early years'. Descriptive text is minimal and confined to long captions to the photos, but despite this it is adequate for the purpose required - there is so much of interest in this book that it deserves to be recommended wholeheartedly.

ETIENNE RYNNE



Michael Connolly, **KERRY COUNTY MUSEUM : A GUIDE TO THE ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORY OF COUNTY KERRY**, Tralee Urban District Council 1992; pp.36. Price: £2.00 (pbk).

In his foreword to this booklet, Patrick F. Wallace, Director, National Museum of Ireland, refers to "the marvellous heritage and history of the county [Kerry] in the new Museum" in Tralee, all of which is reflected in this well printed guide with coloured illustrations on every page supplementing a clear and concise text.

Fortunately we have passed from the age of solid historical works, with their page after page of monotonous print, to the present when illustrations have, in a sense, ousted the history; the brush rather than the pen is the medium. This is very evident from this thirty-four page booklet where the illustrations convey a much better immediate impression of Kerry's past than all that we read in the text. This is not to imply that the text, which chronicles the various historical epochs with particular reference to Kerry, is not excellent. The author, without pretensions to original research, contents himself with guiding us at a brisk pace through Kerry and its history. We have text and illustrations of the first settlers, the early farmers, the Celts, the saints and scholars, the rebels and statesmen of the present century, and much more. It is a useful and pleasant introduction, especially for visitors or for anyone who wishes to know something about Kerry's past.

I have noticed one or two misprints and one or two infelicities of phrase. Yes, we know that the Earl of Desmond was killed at Glenageenty, but surely not "above" but possibly "below" or "near" Tralee?

It will interest our members to note that the authors of the foreword and the text both studied Archaeology at U.C.G. under our own editor, Professor Etienne Rynne - St. Brendan of Clonfert was Kerry's gift to Galway - is this a *quid pro quo*?

It might be said that the booklet has one serious fault: there is not enough of it.

PADDY LYSAGHT

George Cunningham, **BURREN JOURNEY NORTH**, Burren Research Press, Ballyvaughan, Co. Clare, 1992; pp.59; ISBN 0-9503080-3-X. Price: £3.95 (pbk).

George Cunningham, albeit after a longer than expected gap, has done it again - for the third time (and there's a fourth one to come) - with this attractive, handy, readable, visually and otherwise attractive, publication. The first was *Burren Journey* [reviewed in our *Journal*, 20(1978), 86-87], the second was *Burren Journey West* [reviewed in 32(1980), 71-72], and now this is the third; the fourth, *Burren Journey South* we are promised should follow shortly, all going well and according to plan.

In this *Journey* the author starts in Ballyvaughan and brings us on a circuitous route via Belharbour, Carron, Kinvara, Aughinish and Finavarra back to Ballyvaughan, making many interesting digressions up and down minor roads along the way. Although not all that long, unless one omits these digressions and seldom descends from one's car, it is not a journey one would readily make in one day. It is a fascinating excursion, nonetheless, and with this little booklet to hand is well worth taking the best part of a weekend to undertake. The text is written in George Cunningham's own enthusiastic, personal style, somewhat like a continuous talk, interspersed with personal musings, advice, and interesting and informative comments as one is guided along - George is with the reader all of the way, giving an account which could almost be put, with but little change, directly on to a tape to play in a car, and/or use with a walkman, as one follows the proposed route. The route is shown on a map inside the folding front cover, though one might quibble that this map might have been much improved with the naming of several important places relevant to the text, e.g. the Corker Pass, Corcomroe, Templecronan, Keelhilla/Kinallia, Dunguaire, Doorus, New Quay, Finavarra - most of these are marked by symbols for churches, castles, places of interest, etc., but it is not easy for the stranger to identify which refers to which.

It is hard to write a perfect guide book of this kind, and no doubt those who know and love the Burren will find minor errors and sins of omission here and there throughout, but remarkably few in fact. One could point out, for instance, that "daggers, socketed and looped, fashioned in late Bronze Age times" (p.21) are extremely unlikely and almost certainly are Middle Bronze Age spearheads, while to hint at dating the promontory fort at Kinvara because



"similar sites elsewhere have yielded habitation evidence of Early Iron Age, circa 500-300 B.C." (p.42) is certainly "hazardous" - which sites? and where?

The author three times (pp.47, 50 and indirectly on p.57) makes an interesting suggestion regarding the erection of the martello towers (from the placename Mortella, in Corsica - not 'Mortello' as given on p. 50) at Aughinish and Finavarra, when he wonders "Either de Basterot persuaded the authorities to build them or they were built because de Basterot, as a French national, posed some security threat". Bartélemy, Comte de Basterot, who had married a Frances French, a member of the well-known Galway family, came to this part of Clare "following on the turbulent revolutionary events in France" in the late 18th century (p. 47), and his aristocratic background could, therefore, have accounted for Cunningham's first suggestion - English longtime distrust of both her nearest neighbours, the Irish and the French, would account for his alternative suggestion. Maybe some 70 martello towers were planned around Ireland (p.50), but only 47 are known [see P. Gosling, *J. Galway Archaeo. Hist. Soc.*, 42(1989-90), 143] and not all were "built around 1804" - these two, and some others, were built between 1811 and 1814 (Gosling, *ibid*, p. 139). Cunningham mentions a "rusty old cannon" on the roof of the Finavarra tower - this, a 24-pounder, is the only one surviving of the three originally there (Gosling, *ibid.*, and photograph on p. 142)

Only two misprints worth commenting on were noticed: in line 13 on Page 11 'Muckmish' should read 'Muckinish', and in the 12th last line on page 28 'distant' should read 'distinct' - Walsh Printers, of Roscrea, are to be complimented on the production of this publication, an elegant piece of work.

A schoolmasterish approach sometimes occurs in the text, e.g. "How many of these can you detect?" (p.25); "Can you discern the rounded rocks from the glacial drift scattered on the shore ...?" (p.52). This takes away from the otherwise generally literary text, but will, I suppose, create a more personal touch for some. For this reader, however, it is the interesting list of curious coincidences apparently linking the Burren with the author's Roscrea on pages 37-38, and his bit on philosophising on meeting a man who had worked with Hencken at Cahercommaun and Poulawack (p.33) which evoke the very personal approach of the author.

On pages 53-54 the author expounds on the shellfish of the area, including the great oyster bed called 'The Red Bank' which supplied Dublin and other large markets with oysters during the last century - one wonders did the former, world-renowned Red Bank Restaurant, in D'Olier Street, Dublin, famous for its oysters, take its name from this North Clare source?

But no matter. Let us praise and thank George Cunningham for this little guidebook. Although he humbly omits his own contributions to "Burren Reading" on page 46, he will not be forgotten - they are all genuine examples of *haute vulgarisation*, that is, high quality but popular and easily assimilated sources of knowledge. We look forward to the fourth in the series "in the not too distant future" (p.59).

ETIENNE RYNNE

Meike Blackwell, **SHIPS IN EARLY IRISH HISTORY**, Ballinakella Press, Whitegate, Co. Clare, 1992; pp. vii + 65; ISBN 0-946538-21-2. Price: £7.50 (hbk).

This pocket-sized book has initial impact. Black lettering on a fawn background, title prominently displayed on the spine, it is a book that would be easily found on a shelf. It contains some thirty illustrations and reproductions of seals, crests and maps. A leaf through the sixty-five pages of text shows eleven chapters, each with its distinctive heading and giving the period covered. These deal with such as man's first arrival, with skin-covered boats, and go on to cover those periods of Irish maritime history during the Viking, Norman and Bruce Invasions. Some of the crests of Irish cities and families used depict ships, and a Glossary of terms and a Bibliography are included. Featured in the latter are names, respected names, in the maritime sense, such as De Courcy Ireland; Greenhill; Johnston; Hornell; and, that master of masters, Professor Seán McGrail. Others are mentioned, some of which are held in particular affection, and these include Estyn Evans, Wakeman, and Wood-Martin.

The cover design features the celebrated conceptualised drawing associated with Gerald the Welshman, or Giraldus Cambrensis, who was no friend of the "rude Irish", showing two oarsmen rowing in opposite directions. All in all, at first glance a scholarly work, this book promised much.

But "a promise made is a debt unpaid"; does this book deliver on its promise or should the fundamental question of "Who is the audience" be asked? Whilst the author spent some time working and living in America it should be appreciated that "Americanised spelling" tends to jar on the Irish reader. This factor is, however, of little importance in the overall context and it must be stated that there are some interesting sections contained within this book. These, however, are difficult to assimilate, for sentences tend to be convoluted, excessive in length and difficult to follow or even to understand on the initial reading. Quotes and extracts are not referenced in all instances and assumptions, not



all founded on a reasonable basis, often tend to belittle the reader's intelligence. Logical, systematic linking of factors, item to item, could have improved readability, but the myriad of typographical errors (e.g. "Whilegate" on the title page as the place of publication) unfortunately seem to indicate a hurriedness not indicative of indepth scholarly research.

As previously stated, there are some interesting snippets but these tend to be outweighed by the errors of fact. Man did not arrive in Ireland in 680; if this is correct where does this leave Newgrange, Ceide Fields, *et al.*?; did St. Patrick request that the Brehon laws be written down, and did St. Finbarr (*sic*) really found Glastonbury? It is very unlikely that dug-outs were used as sea-going craft apart from estuarial drift and in the context of this chapter, to describe the methodology of expansion and sewing as used by other cultures, tends to be misleading. The coracle danced on the waters of the River Boyne as late as 1948 and was not "last seen in 1936"; the gunwales of currachs are not "normally" of oak - this is reserved for the ribs - and to state that the Irish currach "reached such a high state of development through sheer necessity due to the lack of suitable trees for plank-built boats" is simply not accurate. Unfortunately there are more, many more, instances of such lapses, and one is left with a sense of disappointment, for "the promise made" by this book, despite its initial attractiveness, remains a "debt unpaid".

DES TOAL

Breandán and Ruairí Ó hEithir (eds.), **AN ARAN READER**, The Lilliput Press, Ltd., Dublin 1991; pp. viii+302; ISBN 0-946640-54-8. Price: £15.95 (hbk).

*"... the holy island that sleeps like a great shark on the grey waters of the Atlantic Ocean".*

The impressions of James Joyce as he approached Inis Mór, the largest of the Aran islands: three almost barren limestone rocks which extend geographically, geologically, archaeologically, botanically, and until a few short centuries ago historically and politically, from the Burren of North Clare, and which rise out of Galway Bay to take an almost legendary position in the Irish psyche. For centuries this windswept limestone has been a place of pilgrimage for countless *strainséirí* who came—and continue to come—to study, write, or just wonder at the might of the sea and the tenacity of the people:

*"... antiquarians like O'Donovan and Petrie; botanists like Praeger and Colgan; linguists like Marstander and Finck; cultural and revolutionary nationalists like Hyde and Pearse; writers like Synge, Joyce and Richard Power; film-makers like Flaherty and Mac Conghail; painters like Keating, Lambe, Rivers and McGonigle; an occasional mystic in search of the wisdom thought to exist on the fringes of continents..."*

This evocative book—a collection of the writings of visitors and islanders— was edited by islander and journalist Breandán Ó hEithir and his son Ruairí. Tragically, Breandán died before the book was completed. Ruairí continued the work, and presents us with an inspiring composite picture of life and nature on these enigmatic islands.

As early as 1185 we have an account from Geraldus Cambrensis of the miraculous properties of the islands:

*"There is an island in the sea west of Connacht which is said to have been consecrated by Saint Brendan. In this island human corpses are not buried and do not putrefy, but are placed in the open and remain without corruption. Here men see with some wonder and recognise their grandfathers, great grandfathers, and great-great-grandfathers and a long line of ancestors."*

The "Introduction" (pp.1-9) was written by Breandán Ó hEithir and is a marvellous short essay on the islands. This essay could easily be abstracted and usefully reprinted separately as a little pamphlet for all new converts to the fascination of Aran. What follows are numerous pieces about the Aran islands, written by various people including such noteworthies as Roderick O'Flaherty, George Petrie, T. J. Westropp, Patrick Pearse, John Millington Synge, James Joyce, Somerville and Ross, Thomas Mason, Liam O'Flaherty, Máirtín Ó Direáin, Seamus Heaney, and Tim Robinson, among many others.

An article by the editor of our own journal is included and appears at first glance to be the only original contribution in that it is the only one lacking a reference to a previous publication, but, of course, Etienne Rynne's "Dún Aengus— Fortress or Temple?" was originally published in Irish as "Dún Aengusa—Daingean nó Teampall?" in the Spring 1991 issue of *Archaeology Ireland*. Professor Rynne argues convincingly that the famous stone fort could hardly have been intended for habitation or for military purposes, but a better title to indicate his alternative



suggestion might have used the term "ceremonial site" rather than "temple".

The charm of the book is increased by the reproduction on the dust cover of George Petrie's wonderfully romantic view of a monumental Dún Aengus perched above a raging sea, though, given the inevitable fate of dust covers, it is a pity that it was not also included as a frontispiece. One or two other illustrations, such as Keating's *The Aran Fisherman and his Wife* or Bill Doyle's unique photographs of vanishing traditional life on the islands, would likewise have been welcome. Perhaps these could be considered for future editions.

With the wealth of written and visual material available on these islands, the difficulty must surely have been in deciding what to leave out rather than what to put in. What we do have in this book is a stirring introduction to island life and circumstance which must inspire any reader to want to find out more, and which, along with Tim Robinson's *Stones of Aran*, will give an intimate insight into this small but vital spot on the Earth's surface. The endpiece to the book, Michael Longley's *Leaving Inishmore*, will remind many of us why we will always have the desire to return there—go there or get this book and find out why.

JOHN HARRISON

Averil Swinfen, **FORGOTTEN STONES, ANCIENT CHURCH SITES OF THE BURREN AND ENVIRONS**, with a foreword by Peter Harbison, Lilliput Press, Ltd., Dublin 1992, pp. viii + 146; ISBN 1-874675-01-5.  
Price: £11.99 (pbk).

The Burren has long been a favourite haunt for archaeologists and antiquarians, attracted by the beauty of the landscape and the profusion of monuments. Amongst the architectural remains are a large number of ruined churches, which often surprises visitors, given the sparse rural population today. No doubt the abundance of good quality limestone encouraged the development of stone architecture and it is important to remember that the size of the population may have been higher in the middle ages than we imagine. The churches at Oughtmama, for example, set in the hills to the south of Corcomroe, are now very remote, but today's isolation is deceptive – the author's marvellous coloured photograph (humbly not acknowledged) of this church adorns the book's cover. The quality of the buildings suggests that around 1200 a relatively prosperous community must have existed in this bleak location.

Oughtmama is one of many church sites in the Burren which have been recorded by Averil Swinfen in her admirable book *Forgotten Stones*. Altogether eighty-two sites are described, including one which eluded examination since it lies beneath the sea! This is Kilstaphen, where the remains of the church are reputed to reappear above the waves every seven years. Although the majority of churches discussed are medieval, later buildings are also included – Penal churches, the Moravian church at Crossard, and several Church of Ireland buildings, which, like their medieval precursors, have now fallen into ruin. The church at Lisdoonvarna, demolished in 1965, had a life of only 106 years.

One of the interesting facts to emerge from *Forgotten Stones* is the number of parish churches that existed in the Burren. In Ireland few medieval parish churches survive intact (in contrast to England, for example) and the reasons for this have never been properly examined. Parish churches were certainly built in great numbers from the twelfth century onwards, and there was much architectural activity in the years around 1500. A number of the Burren churches have fine doors and windows of this date, as at Drumcreehy, Kilshanny, Moy, Rathborne and Toomullin. By the seventeenth century, however, most such buildings were in ruins. It is commonly believed that the Great Rebellion of 1641 and the Cromwellian wars were to blame, but decay had set in long before this. It is interesting that Lady Swinfen mentions at least six churches in the Burren which were ruined by 1615. This coincides with evidence from other counties, suggesting that medieval parish churches were victims, not of the seventeenth century wars, but of the Reformation and its immediate aftermath.

Having lived in the area for thirty years, the author is familiar with almost every breen, and her book is filled with local insight. The reader is even taken to Con's Dance-hall in Ennis, where revellers can admire an ornate mantelpiece, salvaged from the nineteenth century workhouse at Ballyvaughan. Many loose pieces of sculpture are recorded, including the well known carving of St. Sebastian from Kilvoydan.

In an age of 'specialists', it is refreshing to discover the breadth of Lady Swinfen's interests, as she moves from early saints like St Sebastian or St Tola to the equally revered Michael Stewart, the celebrated osteopath of Kilfarboy. In short, this is a delightful book, written with enthusiasm, affection and understanding. Moreover, it is beautifully produced and accompanied by excellent photographs.

ROGER STALLEY



Roger Stalley, **IRISH HIGH CROSSES**, the Irish Heritage Series: 69, Eason & Son Ltd., Dublin 1991; pp. 24 (unpaginated); ISBN 0-900346-95-7. Price: £2.50 (pbk).

This is another most attractive little booklet in this series, comprising a good, very readable text and numerous first-class photographic illustrations, many in full colour. Although apparently written as an essay on the subject rather than as a straight-forward textbook account of the chronology etc., of High Crosses, this booklet will nonetheless be as interesting to scholars (but not necessarily students) as to the more enlightened and enterprising tourists.

The text starts with a few introductory words followed by a brief discussion of the morphology of the so-called 'Celtic Cross', particularly the origin of the ring on the cross head. A linen hanging from Egypt, dating from about A.D. 500 depicting a long cross with a wreath behind the cross-head, not around it, is brought into the discussion to good effect. The symbolism of the wreath of fruit and flowers as representing rebirth and renewal, Christ's victory over death, is mentioned; other parts of the High Crosses are also interpreted symbolically, e.g. their stepped heavy bases to recall the rock of Calvary. Interestingly this important linen hanging also depicts the method of inserting the cross into the base, identical to that of the Irish crosses.

The various types of Irish High Crosses are also outlined as in their dating and purpose. Most of this is relatively straight-forward, but some will undoubtedly take issue with statements such as "But do any of the high crosses go back before 800?" - most would consider that they do and Stalley's missing century is arguable. The author's interpretation of some of the iconographic panels on the so-called Scripture Crosses is also arguable, for instance when he states that the feeding of the five thousand with the loaves and fishes and the wedding feast in Cana of Galilee are the two favourites - the former occurs a few times but the latter is unknown to me, as is Christ's journey to Emmaus which he tells us is to be seen on the west fact of the South Cross at Castledermot. Co. Kildare. The interpretation of some other well known panels (e.g. the Arrest of Christ or *Ecce Homo*?) and of minor details in some (e.g. women arriving at the empty tomb or angels inducing sleep on the soldiers?), also will give rise to discussion.

All-in-all, leaving aside such minor and pedantic quibbles, this is a grand little booklet, one which it is a pleasure to have and/or give to a friend - great value at the price too!

ETIENNE RYNNE

Gerard Madden, **HOLY ISLAND, JEWEL OF THE LOUGH : A History**, East Clare Heritage, Tuamgraney, Co. Clare, n.d. (but 1990); pp. 39. Price: £3.00 (pbk).

This guide booklet is a simple summary of Inis Cealtra, alias Holy Island, Lough Derg, Co. Clare. Its material is derived from a number of sources. Firstly, Macalister's detailed survey [*Proc. Roy. Irish Acad.*, 33, c (1916), 93-174] provided many of the drawings and two of the maps; secondly, the author has had access to some of the recent and regrettably as yet unpublished excavation and research work on the island undertaken from 1970 to 1980 by Liam de Paor, and thirdly, the papers of the late Rev. Edgar Talbot who ministered in east Clare. The booklet is copiously illustrated with 15 monochrome pictures of the island, its monuments and others elsewhere, 9 drawings, 1 rubbing and 3 maps.

About half the booklet is devoted to the history and hagiography of the island, the sort of blend that the casual tourist enjoys - the near credible and the far-fetched. The history of the island is carried down to the present, and it is good to have that on record. The island is put in the context of the monuments around Lough Derg. The rest of the booklet is devoted to a tour of the monuments of the island, giving brief descriptions of each and the various interpretations by Macalister, de Paor and others, notably Rev. E. Talbot. The latter's interpretation of the name 'Church of the Wounded Men' being based on the O'Grady motto *Vulneratus non Victus* (Wounded but not Conquered) surely lays that problem name to rest.

Some minor printing errors occur (e.g. at least one line missing from the top of page 31), but there are other problems too, more of a self destructive nature. Bibliographically the booklet is a *non est*. It lacks a title page, but begins instead with a full page of acknowledgements. It also lacks a place and a date of publication which with the absence of an ISBN make library cataloguing and referencing difficult. Regrettably neither the photographs nor the drawings are numbered or captioned, although their positioning is kept in step with the text which makes for easy on-site use. There is no List of Contents. The basic bibliography is very varied in style and deficient even within its



eight entries. Omitted from the list is an article written by Liam de Paor in *The Irish Times* of the 23rd of April 1976, though this is mentioned on pages 18 and 19. The general map of the island on page 17, taken from Macalister, is so dense with monuments and names that an enlarged version, at least of the core area, would be preferable in a guide book such as this - this could to a great extent, easily have been accomplished by replacing the large title on top as a smaller caption below.

That guide booklets like this appear is the fault of the historians and the archaeologists for not producing them. That they appear like this is the fault of the author who, having put in a fair effort, finds himself either unwilling or unable to ask the advice of a professional to cast a cold eye over the text lest he be told to consign it to the rubbish bin. A critical eye and some minor adjustments could have improved this basic text considerably.

Despite any such comments, this little, copiously illustrated booklet will sell well to native and tourist alike. It will, furthermore, provide ready access to material for a case study of a monastic site for Junior Certificate students in the area seeking out the story of the history and geography of their own locality. Most importantly, it will further increase the pride of the people of east Clare in the heritage that is theirs, to make use of it and to pass it on intact to future generations.

MARTIN A. TIMONEY

Patrick F. Wallace, **THE VIKING AGE BUILDINGS OF DUBLIN**, Medieval Dublin Excavations 1962-81, Series A, Vol. 1. National Museum of Ireland and Royal Irish Academy, Dublin 1992; Part I: text, pp. xv + 207; Part II: illustrations, pp. viii + 215 (24 plates and 189 figures); ISBN 1-874045-00-3 (hbk) and 1-874045-01-1 (pbk). Price: £45.00 (hbk); £29.95 (pbk).

Archaeologically, Dublin is probably the most important town of Viking Age date in Western Europe. Its significance is largely due to two factors: a great depth of stratigraphy and the exceptionally high quality of the preservation caused by waterlogging. A simple indication of its archaeological wealth is provided by the fact that Dublin has produced evidence for over 200 houses whereas a little over a dozen have been uncovered from Viking Age York.

In the years between 1976 and 1981 Dr Wallace, one of our Society's Vice-Presidents, carried out excavations on a series of fourteen plots along the west side of Fishamble Street. These properties had commenced c. 925 and occupation continued there at least until c. 1100 when the evidence ceases due to the fact that archaeological deposits later than this time were destroyed with the construction of cellars in Georgian and Victorian times. Thirteen levels of occupation were distinguished, giving an unparalleled insight into the changes in house shape, layout and building methods over a period of almost two hundred years.

The identification of the different building types in the Viking Age town, first published in our *Journal*, 24(1982), 19-28, is one of the major results of the excavations. Virtually all of the buildings were of post-and-wattle, and five distinct house-types have been recognised. Type 1 consisted of a sub-rectangular structure having average dimensions of 7.5m by 5.4m, with opposed doors in the narrow end-walls and paired roof supports. Internally it was divided into three aisles. A central aisle accommodated the hearth which was flanked by low benches, used for sitting and sleeping, in the side aisles. This house-type was the most common building in Viking Age Dublin and it is represented by 67% of the excavated structures. Type 2 was a smaller version of type 1, but it lacked a hearth and was usually placed at the rear of the type 1 houses where it may have functioned as extra accommodation space, or as an outhouse or workshop. Type 3 was a variant of type 1, but it was confined to one part of Fishamble Street where it may have developed due to the special constraints of the property plot. Type 4, consisting of just one known example, was a sunken-floored building of a type more commonly found in England and Scandinavia. Type 5 was a small rectangular post-and-wattle structure which probably functioned as a storage shed or as an animal pen.

The sequence of house construction is detailed from the pre-foundation work to the building of the walls, the laying of the floors, and the thatching of the roofs. A chapter is devoted to the subject of reconstruction and there can be little doubt about the accuracy of the final forms in view of the quality and quantity of surviving information.

The search for the origins of the Dublin house-types forms the basis of chapter 6 and here Dr Wallace provides a masterly review of the Irish, British and Continental literature. Of the five house-types only type 4 is clearly not native and the others all appear to be derived from type 1. The problem with type 1, however, is that it shows little or no development in the period between c. 925 and 1100. It is a fully evolved type even in the earliest levels and, accordingly, it has three possible origins. Firstly, it may have been introduced from outside; secondly, it may have



been an indigenous development, or thirdly, there is a chance that it is a compromise between native and foreign house designs. The three-aisled plan is found in parts of the Scandinavian world, but there are significant differences between the Dublin house plans and those found elsewhere during the Viking Age. Dublin, for instance, has provided no evidence for curved or bowed walls, for opposing doors at the ends of side-walls, or for buildings which combine dwellings with byres. The absence of these features might be explained on the grounds of local geography or of Ireland's milder climate, but it is more difficult to explain the absence of internal roof supports, such a characteristic of the Dublin houses, throughout most of the Scandinavian world. The problem in seeking an indigenous origin for Dublin's houses has been the fact that the houses of Early Christian Period Ireland tended to be round in plan. It has been recognised for some years, however, that this pattern changed around the year 800 when people began to build houses of rectangular form. The reasons for this are unclear but Dr. Wallace has argued in the pages of our journal that one of the influences affecting this development was the on-going construction of rectangular timber churches which would have been introduced to Ireland in the fifth century, if not before. The division into aisles with a central hearth flanked by areas of raised bedding and seating is found in native round houses, and Dr. Wallace suggests that these may have been taken over into the rectangular plan. I find his argument convincing and would agree with him that, in the present state of knowledge, an indigenous origin is likely for the type 1 house. Indeed I would go one further and suggest that type 2 is not simply derived from type 1 but it is also the equivalent of the *cuile* or back-house, a well attested feature of early Irish rural housing, found, for instance, at Deer Park Farms, Co. Antrim.

The volume is rounded off with an appendix by Thomas Healy dealing with engineering considerations in reconstructing the Fishamble Street buildings. This is followed by an excellently illustrated glossary of technical terms, setting a standard for all future descriptions of early vernacular housing, an extensive bibliography, and, finally, a detailed catalogue of the 137 buildings found in the excavations at Fishamble Street and John's Lane. With the exception of a few photographs which have not reproduced well this is an excellently produced publication. More importantly, however, it is a major contribution to archaeological scholarship in Ireland.

JOHN BRADLEY

John Bradley, **GERALDINE TRALEE: AN IRISH MEDIEVAL TOWN**, Tralee U.D.C., Tralee 1991; pp.40.

Price: £2.50

It is refreshing to find such an approachable, if of awkwardly broad format, book as *Geraldine Tralee*, which blends medieval Irish history and archaeology into something that will appeal to everyone, tourists especially, and even disinterested teenagers and people who have not looked at a history book since their school days.

*Geraldine Tralee* assumes very little of the reader and this, together with consistently straightforward language and layout are the book's main strengths. Even the enticing cover reflects the high standard of illustration within. Both the introduction and the chapter on the Normans provide an excellent background for the newcomer to Irish history, and there is a logical progression from topic to topic throughout the book. Each section is concise and to the point without sounding matter-of-fact or boring, and although the book's main purpose is to complement the "Geraldine Tralee" exhibition, one is not at a disadvantage even if one has not already been to see it. The exhibition is a permanent one consisting of life-size models of streets, houses, shops, etc. (with suitable sounds and 'odour effects' *inter alia*) set up in 1990 underneath the Kerry County Museum, in the Ashe Memorial Hall, Tralee - one is taken around the exhibition in a small electrically - propelled car.

I found the chapter on "The Irish Medieval Town" to be extremely well written with some lovely illustrations and photographs, but the highlights of this book for most will probably be the sections on "Trades and Crafts", "Food and Diet", "Clothes", and "Games and Pastimes". These are a wonderful example of how history and archaeology can be attractively and usefully combined and are full of the information that one always wanted to know but were too afraid to ask.

The final chapter recognises the skills of the mason and cobbler as well as those of the historian and archaeologist, and rightly so, in re-creating the "Geraldine Tralee" exhibition. What is amazing is just how much life that John Bradley, a member of this Society, can put into the topic of Tralee during the Middle Ages given that "no medieval building survives in the town and even the identification of the original street plan poses problems". This must be a shining example of what can be done in other Irish towns which have much more and better preserved



medieval remains - for example Athenry, the unique market cross of which forms the basis for a reconstruction in a drawing on page 16 and in plaster and stone in the actual exhibition (see p.39).

However, one can make some minor criticisms of this book. The reconstruction drawing on page 18 of what one automatically assumes to be Medieval Tralee ought to have been captioned on the same or facing page - the caption is on page 16. Also, a town plan would have been helpful for the chapter on "Geraldine Tralee", more specific illustration credits are needed throughout, and a section on medieval hygiene could have been interesting even if probably disgusting.

In summary, *Geraldine Tralee* is an excellent book which would be ideal for those wishing to improve a basic knowledge of medieval Irish history and archaeology, but also is strongly recommended for those who think that they know it all already!

PAUL MCNAMARA

Seán Spellissy (ed.), **THE ROYAL O'BRIENS : A Tribute**, O'Brien Clan Association, Cratloe, Co. Clare, 1992; pp.64; ISBN 0-952-0211-0-2. Price: £4.95.

This sixty-four page foolscap booklet with its excellent coloured cover of Bunratty Castle might be dismissed as a scissors-and-paste job. Scissors and paste have been used, which give us little historical and judiciously chosen asides that make agreeable reading. Leafing through its pages I find that the great Irish giant, Patrick Cotter, was descended from the O'Briens, as was the film star, Merle Oberon. It has many pleasant scraps of information about the O'Brien marshals, physicians, bards and brehons, as well as a harrowing tale of one Patrick O'Brien who was cannibalised by his shipmates. But it is not all bits and scraps and fine photographs. There are four or five solid historical articles included as well; for instance, Brian Ó Dálaigh's lengthy account of the O'Brien strongholds of Clarecastle and Clonroad from 1200 to 1600, Henry Comber's one on Cornelius O'Brien of Birchfield, and Grania R. O'Brien's interesting records of some Dromoland wives.

Personally, I feel that the article by Grania R. O'Brien, giving extracts from a Dromoland account book dating from the 1720s, is worth a week-end in the Queen Anne suite in present-day Dromoland. For instance, the wine account for eighteen months amounted to £82.18.0d, and this included over sixteen quarts of plain brandy, sherry brandy, seven gallons of white wine and several hogsheads of various other wines. Mending the clock cost 5s.5d; hair powder [anti-vermin powder for wigs] cost 3s.6d, and toothache could be soothed with "bark" which was stuffed into "ye hollow of ye tooth".

Many notable O'Briens, from Brian Boru to our contemporary, Vincent O'Brien, get special treatment though Conor O'Brien and his famous wife Máire Rua are strangely absent. Some of the articles are reprinted from *The Other Clare* and *Dál gCais* our sister journals in Co. Clare, though most are original productions; Seán Spellissy, the editor, gives us several articles and notes, all of relevance and all interesting.

The O'Briens had their fair quota of black sheep down the years but, as one would expect from the nature of this publication, they are discreetly ignored rather than whitewashed. Armchair history, so turn off the tele and enjoy a good read.

PADDY LYSAGHT

Freddie Bourke, **KILTENANLEA PARISH CHURCH AND ITS COMMUNITY, CLONLARA, CO. CLARE, 1782-1992**, Clonlara Development Association, 1992; pp. 36. Price: £3.00 (pbk)

Though there are not many pages in this publication, its size (A4) matches the length of its title - and it is packed with fascinating information. When I read in its brief Forward that "it deals only with the Protestant Church and its Community" I feared that it would appeal only to a small, select readership. . . but how wrong can one be?

The book starts with a few brief words setting the scene at Clonlara, near Doonass, about six miles north of Limerick City, and then gives the background to the building of the church there. The church began in 1782 as a rectangular building, to which a fine square tower with four tall, elegant pinnacles was added in 1830, and a chancel and small transepts in 1891 - Hilary Gilmore's beautiful drawing on the book's cover shows clearly the architectural merit of this church, an unusually fine example of what the *Shell Guide* terms 'Protestant Gothic'. We are given interesting information on the tower's architect, James Pain, an Englishman who with his brother George had been



apprenticed to the famous architect John Nash who had sent them over to Ireland in 1810 to supervise the construction of Lough Cutra Castle (called 'Loughcooter' here) for the first Viscount Gort, after which James settled in Limerick and his brother in Cork. James designed not only church towers and spires in Limerick and its neighbourhood, but also redesigned the city's bridges, Limerick gaol, and Dromoland Castle. The architect for the chancel and transepts was William Corbett, C.E., Limerick City Surveyor, like Pain a leading designer of the Gothic revival. We are given a brief list of his major works, but the pedestal he designed for the Treaty Stone (see our last *Journal*, p.1) is not numbered among them.

There follows a few pages on the various clergy in charge of the parish, of whom the Rev. William Twigge (c. 1690 - 1726) and the Rev. Charles Massy (1796-1817) are the most interesting. The former is interesting mainly because of a notebook compiled by his wife Diana and daughter Jane between 1704 and 1716 which has recently been acquired by the Public Record Office. It contains numerous recipes, not only for food but for cocktails, and also medicinal cures which the unfortunate Reverend had to endure in an effort to alleviate the kidney or gall-bladder trouble from which he suffered severely.

Rev. Charles Massy, is interesting in his own right, for not only was he rector at Kiltenanlea but during 1801 and 1804 he was also Vicar of Laracor, Co. Meath, forever associated with Dean Swift and Stella (Esther Johnson); and then there were his marital adventures. He first married Mary Anne Ross-Lewin in 1796 against his father's wishes. While he was officiating in church on the Sunday after Christmas 1803, she eloped with the Marquis of Headford. The matter went to trial and he was awarded £10,000, a real fortune in those days. His marriage was subsequently dissolved by Act of parliament in 1808, and in 1813 he married Susan Westropp; they had one daughter who married a Bindon - Massy, Ross-Lewin, Headford, Westropp, Bindon, what a series of names to conjure with, particularly in North Munster!

Brief histories are given of the Massys of Doonass (who claimed descent from Hamo de Massy, a companion-in-arms of William the Conqueror), of the Vincents of Summerhill (one of whom married well, to one of the Bourns of San Francisco, and to whom Ireland owes the generous gift of the Bourn-Vincent Memorial Park, including Muckross House, in Killarney), and of the Phelps of Waterpark. Standish Hayes O'Grady, the noted Irish scholar of Erinagh House, Clonlara, also gets well-merited treatment, as do some other Protestant families from the area. Pages 27-35 are devoted to the gravestones in the parish church, listing the names alphabetically from Airey through, *inter alia*, Arthur, Bindon, Massy, O'Grady, Phelps, Vincent, and Westropp, to Young. Most interesting in this section is not so much the gravestones as the photograph on page 29 of a "Ladder Shelter - used for storing a ladder for general maintenance and to gain access to the tower" - I would defy even the best archaeologist to identify the purpose of this construction without being so informed!

An unusual, useful and interesting publication - thank you Clonlara.

ETIENNE RYNNE

Polly Devlin, **POLLY DEVLIN VISITS THE MUSEUM**, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin 1990; pp.32 (not paginated); ISBN 0-901777-22-6. Price: £2.50 (pbk).

This small-sized booklet is an enthusiastic undertaking aimed at popularising the ceramics department in the National Museum of Ireland. The title, however, is somewhat feeble and does not do justice to the writer's lucid discourse on the subject of ceramics. Polly Devlin is an accomplished writer and journalist, originally from Co. Tyrone and now living in London. To many archaeologists the subject of ceramics is offputting and considered dull. The finer points of the potter's art are often overlooked or abandoned for more lucrative subjects. Polly Devlin's invigorating and humorous approach to the subject may change a few minds.

The text is presented in a chronological fashion, beginning with a brief general introduction to the history and development of pottery-making. The socio-economic impact such developments as the potter's wheel, the art of glazing, and the discovery of porcelain had on early societies is clearly emphasised.

The first part of the booklet deals mainly with individual pieces from the Chinese Collection in the Museum. Comparative art-styles are noted in detail and enlightening historical facts concerning individual pieces provide welcome and interesting little additional nuggets of knowledge.

Pottery types that were popular in the Western World during the 18th and 19th centuries are briefly discussed and illustrated in the second part of the booklet. The author notes the styles and techniques developed by individual ceramists during this period and makes many valid comparisons and criticisms of their work, as in the case of a fine pair of pottery lions.



Enhancing the text of the booklet, each page has at least one black and white photograph of an *objet d'art* in the collection. It must, however, be said that when discussing colour variations in individual pieces it is impossible for the reader to distinguish such from a black and white photo! The absence of page numbers is also disconcerting. These minor criticisms, however, do not detract from the text which is in essence a most useful and easily read introduction to the fundamental facts regarding the art of ceramics. It is precise, entertaining and informative - an excellent and handy little guide for any visitor to the ceramic exhibitions in our National Museum.

CARON MCCARTHY

Mairead Dunlevy, **PENROSE GLASS**, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin 1989; pp. 51; ISBN 0-901777-19-6.  
Price: £4.95 (pbk).

This is a beautifully produced booklet, very well illustrated and keenly priced. The text is brief, but it is fully complemented by twenty photographic plates, many in full colour and with long descriptive captions.

The booklet opens with a dedication to Caitríona MacLeod, a former Assistant Keeper in the Art and Industrial Division of the National Museum, who had "devoted herself to improving and researching the National Collection of Irish Glass". This is followed by a Preface by Patrick F. Wallace, Director of the Museum, and a Foreword by John Teehan, Keeper of the Art and Industrial Division in which Division the author proved herself a worthy successor to Miss MacLeod before moving to North Munster as Director of the magnificent Hunt Museum. The text proper starts with a few words on the business history of Waterford before dealing specifically with the Penroses and their glass-making.

The earliest Waterford factory which made drinking glasses existed in Gurteens townland near the city from about 1720 to 1735. On the death of its proprietor there was no great urge to continue the work due to marketing restrictions. However, when those laws were repealed in 1778 and permission given in 1780 to export "glass, glass bottles or glass of any kind or denomination whatsoever from or out of the kingdom of Ireland", it encouraged glass manufacturers in Ireland to reconsider the industry.

The Penrose family were a Quaker family who settled in Waterford in the mid-seventeenth century. They owned land and properties there, *i.e.* a bacon yard, a tan yard, a coal yard, and eventually, in 1783, a glass factory on the quay which is now known as Merchants Quay. This factory employed from fifty to seventy people, including manufacturers, cutters and engravers. Waterford was a busy port and advantageously situated for trade with England, the Continent and across the Atlantic. Consequently it is not surprising that the Penrose factory supplied the greater part of the home market and also exported to Britain, Spain, Jersey, France, Portugal, Madeira, New York, Pennsylvania, Newfoundland, Canada and the West Indies. Apart from clear flint glass, the Penroses also made dark green, dark blue, and enamel glass. They sold their glass in different stages of finish, even blanks which were sold to other merchants who could then cut or engrave pieces according to the customer's order. The Penroses were fully aware of marketing techniques and cultivated aristocratic patronage, even sending a service of glass to Milford in 1788 "for their Majesties' use".

The majority of pieces illustrated in this publication have 'Penrose, Waterford' faintly mould-marked underneath. A favourite decanter of the Penrose glass house was barrel-shaped with three triple neck-rings, a relatively large flat lip, and the moulded flutes carried on to the base. Plate 3, on page 22, shows a beautiful finger-ring engraved with the Penrose crest. Many scent bottles, finger-bowls, decanters and flasks are also illustrated. Plate 6, taking up the two pages in the book's centre, shows a panoramic view of Waterford painted by William Van der Hagen in 1736 which depicts the city as the Penroses knew it just a few decades before they opened their factory, a factory which started Waterford on the road to glass-working fame. The Penrose phase closed because of the death of the principals, notably William Penrose who died suddenly in 1799.

I really enjoyed this little booklet and can heartily recommend it to all, even to those only mildly interested in Irish glass.

ANGELA KELLY



Mairéad Dunlevy, **DRESS IN IRELAND**, B.T. Batsford Ltd. London 1989; pp. 200; ISBN 0-7134-5251-X.

Price: £25.00 (hbk)

When one knows that the author of this book studied archaeology at University College Dublin, researched her M.A. thesis on bone combs, worked for many years in the Art and Industrial Division of the National Museum of Ireland, and is at present the Director of the Hunt Museum in Limerick, one knows that the book will be written with great authority and knowledge.

Beginning with material from the Bronze Age and continuing up into the twentieth century, with a special, short (rather too short), appendix on the Irish national costume, all aspects of the subject are covered, the native dress before the Norman invasion and the differences between the English costumes and the later Irish dress. To complete the picture in the later periods, as well as discussing fashions among the upper classes, due attention is paid to the dress of the poor.

For this reader, the greatest interest lay in the earlier period. It is for instance, a source of wonder to see the horse-hair belt which dates from about 750 B.C. It was found in a bog at Armoy, Co. Antrim along with a socketed axehead, a gouge, a sunflower pin, a razor in a leather case and part of a woollen garment. The sheer technology of this belt must be one of the highlights of the book. It is made from black horse-hair and is woven in a herringbone design with very sophisticated tassels.

The mantle or outer woollen cloak, is always associated with Ireland in the middle ages. The Irish mantle was extremely practical in the Irish climate and however barbaric the English thought it, the Irish mantle was nevertheless issued to the English soldiers serving in Ireland. It was perceived as 'a garment by day, a house by night' and was worn by all classes of society. While the poor people would have worn a rather plain cloak, the mantle and its fringes could be highly coloured and decorated, even embroidered, for those who could afford such luxuries.

Fashion may be simply fashion or it may be political. The Irish were often called barbarians by their English enemies in matters of custom and dress. With regard to clothing, the author reminds us that John Lynch in the seventeenth century said that if barbarianism was merely a matter of being unfashionable, then yearly every nation was plunged into barbariansim as new forms of dress are introduced.

As the book is published by Batsford, the reader can be assured that it will be copiously illustrated. What a shame, therefore, when compared to McClintock's book, *Old Irish and Highland Dress* that the illustrations common to both are so much better and clearer defined in the earlier work. Strange that with all the technical advances in the reproduction of coloured illustrations (and these are excellent here) that black and white pictures in so many modern books have a washed-out look. It is a fault of the publisher, not the author, but it does detract from the book when one wishes to study details in the photographs.

Inevitably, *Dress in Ireland* will be compared with H.F. McClintock's book, which was first published in 1943. The latter book stood the test of time for almost half a century. Researchers will always hold it in high regard. It is no disrespect to McClintock to say that the present book far superceeds his work. The results of the latest modern research since McClintock's time is included here, both concerning traditional costumes and material of various dates recovered from bogs. The most evident distinction is the sheer professionalism of Dunlevy's work. Her undoubted competence with sources in the Irish language is a big advantage, and with great authority she knits together literature and material remains, and weaves fashion, history and politics into a seamless garment.

SIOBHÁN DE HÓIR

Anne O'Dowd, **COMMON CLOTHES AND CLOTHING 1860-1930**, National Museum of Ireland, Dublin 1990; pp. 46; ISBN 0-901777-20-X. Price: £4.95 (pbk).

The older of us may have been fortunate enough to remember seeing some aspects of the everyday clothing which forms the topic of this booklet, as it was worn in its natural setting. The younger generation will not have had that privilege, and our gratitude is due, then, to the Irish Folklife Division of the National Museum of Ireland for mounting the travelling exhibition and for this booklet, prepared by Anne O'Dowd, which accompanied it. The Irish terms describing the clothing are explained simply and clearly and the garments described in detail. The booklet is extremely well illustrated both with old photographs, some dating back to the nineteenth century, and also with illustrations of actual examples of the clothes from the Museum's fine collection. As Anne O'Dowd reminds us, it



was clothing almost totally dependent on local resources and locally produced fabrics. The old photographs are especially valuable since they illustrate the clothes and, in addition, we see the actual people who made and wore them. We therefore get a glimpse into another long-vanished world and of a people whose likes will not be seen again.

SIOBHÁN DE HÓIR

John Clement Ryan, **IRISH WHISKEY**, The Irish Heritage Series: 71, Eason & Sons Ltd., Dublin 1992; pp. 25 (not paginated); ISBN 1 -873430-03-5. Price: £ 2.50 (pbk).

Like the rest of these delightfully produced booklets, this one contains a mine of information on its chosen subject - a subject one suspects may be dear to the heart of many a good archaeologist or dedicated historian.

Very early in the text, among some marvellous coloured photographs, we discover that the secret of distillation was brought to Ireland by sixth century missionary monks from that cradle of invention, the Middle East. The writer then traces the whiskey trail to a time when its old name of *Uisce Beatha* showed it to be a natural anti-biotic preventing food-poisoning for those who had to eat food that we would consider to be 'off'. Its exciting taste sought and found favour with such famous 'imbibers' as Queen Elizabeth I, Sir Walter Raleigh, Dr. Samuel Johnson and even Peter the Great who admits, "...of all the wines, the Irish spirit is the best"!

By the 18th century there were almost 2,000 whiskey stills in Ireland and Irish whiskey became one of the favoured drinks throughout the British Empire and in America. By the middle of the last century, we are told that more than 400 brands were marketed from 160 Irish distilleries, but American Prohibition and the Trade War of the Thirties saw Scotch Whisky (note the lack of the letter 'e') gain ascendancy on the world stage. It is only since 1972, when the remaining five distilleries came together to form the Irish Distillers Group, that Irish whiskey is staging a revival on the international scene.

In dealing with these five firms, however, one could fault the number of photographs devoted to each. Apart from those showing products of all the firms together, eleven refer specifically to Jameson brands, seven to Bushmills, five to Middleton, only three to Powers and none at all to Paddy, which, according to the text, is "the choice of the younger generation in Ireland"! Furthermore, The Irish Whiskey Trail Map inside the cover flap and the related text at the end of the booklet deal only with Bushmills, Dublin and Middleton, with nary a mention of the fine Locke's Distillery Museum at Kilbeggan. As well, although other towns and cities are noted in the aforementioned map, no illustration or mention in the general text is made of even their larger distilleries such as the giant Persse Distillery in Galway city, which only ceased full operations at the start of this century.

These are but quibbles, however, and fade when the writer brings us through the various processes of whiskey making, and tells how the smoky taste settles more gently on the Scotch palate. He shows us how Irish Coffee is really made and why Irish Whiskey "is the nectar that loosens the tongues of poets, the creativity of playwrights, the voices of singers and the fingers of musicians". In our mind's eye we can join with the writer in one of life's little pleasures and walk slowly the length of a whiskey warehouse with him and inhale the rich, aromatic vapour that fills the interior of the building. This, then, is a book to enjoy, curled up before the winter fire with that special glass.

PEADAR O'DOWD