

BOOK REVIEWS

Daragh Smyth, *A Guide to Irish Mythology*, 2nd edition, Irish Academic Press, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 1996; pp. 201; ISBN 0-7165-2612-3. Price: £5.95.

The challenge for domination of the new on the old is rarely graceful and frequently cruel and vicious. This seems almost a truism, verified irrespective of what the field of challenge is. Thus the young challenger will be brutal, the revolution frequently bloody, the coloniser will be oppressive, new religions and wisdoms will be both hostile to, and dismissive of, the old.

Time, however, brings if not wisdom, at least accommodation. The revolutionary will learn to parley, the coloniser will learn to share, ancient festivals and feast days will be "baptised" and find a refuge under the skirts of the new religion, and new perceptions of reality will in time lose their hostility to the older. In the field of the last-mentioned the change has been a long time a-coming. For over two hundred years now 'Scientific Rationalism', with its claim to an exclusive grasp of the truth, achieved through objectivity, has held centre stage as the only true wisdom. Mythology, or what has been described as "the distilled wisdom of former perceptions of reality", received a very bad press, indeed we were in fact led to believe that, with the advent of 'Scientific Rationalism', we had entered into a post-mythic age.

A glance at any dictionary will indicate just how hostile was the attitude adopted towards mythology. Myth is variously described as 'a false story or idea..... something invented, not real', 'a widespread, but false, idea', 'a false belief, held by people to justify social institutions', 'a purely fictitious narrative', (Forgive me if I point out the parallels between this and some of the latter day assaults on organised religion.)

Time does bring change, however, and time is always on the side of mythology. 'Scientific Rationalism' is losing its autonomous grip as the sole custodian of truth, objectivity is rightly seen as just another of the story-teller's techniques, and mythology is emerging from its hiding place to again offer its distilled knowledge and wisdom, 'the marrow of the bone' as it were, to those who will treat it with reverence and respect.

That, you may say, is a rather long-winded, over-flowing introduction. Perhaps you are right, but I wish to totally endorse the author's invitation to us in the introduction to accord to mythology the respect of a potentially historical bias, and secondly I wish to register my sincere appreciation of the work, and to congratulate the author on its coming so quickly to a second edition.

The last ten or fifteen years have seen a number of such books come on the market. They are all to be welcomed if they are good. Mythology, as I indicated, has had a long hard winter. We need a new spring time and we need many "Foclóir na Síde" to help us in our quest. This book is a particularly good one.

The literature research in this work is excellent and there is a very impressive bibliography. Speaking of the bibliography, as I glance through it I am reminded of just how little was written in the three score years or more between the seminal work of the early writers, Meyer, O'Grady, McNeill, O'Rahilly, *et al.*, and the recent reflowering. In its own way it confirms the point raised above.

It was pleasing to find the oral tradition included with the literary research. We can quite easily forget just how alive the oral tradition is to the painstaking researcher. I recently heard of a folklorist who only in the last ten years or so was thrilled to meet an old woman in north Mayo who could still bristle with anger as she told him the story of how the "Ultach used a foul stroke to kill the Erris man" - she was speaking of Cuchulainn's slaying of Ferdia as told in the *Táin Bó Chúailgne*!

One final word. I fully agreed with the suggestion of one of the early reviewers of the book's first edition that this book might most profitably be used as a travel guide for the enthusiast. Could I go further and suggest that in the next edition, which it is to be hoped will appear very soon, the author might consider including a working set of maps? This would not only enhance the work but would re-affirm the strong connection between mythology and territory or place.

MICHAEL O'MALLEY

Lisa M. Bitel, *Isle of the Saints; Monastic Settlement and Christian Community in Early Ireland* Cork University Press, first published 1990; paperback ed. 1993; pp. xvi + 268; ISBN 1-85918-017-5. Price: £12.95.

This book gives an overview of aspects of the Early Christian (or Early Historic to use the term enjoying the most current popularity) Period in Ireland. In so doing it relies heavily on a wide and very diverse group of medieval to

post-medieval saints' *vitae*. This hagiography is of very variable type quality and value. Some early history and, to a lesser extent, some of the more recent results of archaeological endeavours are used to augment the writer's arguments. Were this book intended (as it is not) to be a general review of Irish monasticism it would fall short with regard to the limited range of source material employed. The writer makes it clear that her aim is to provide an answer to the following question: "Why did the Christians of early Ireland support a class of religious professionals devoted to the veneration of dead holy men and women?" In some ways her title might better have been along the lines of "The Cults of Saints and their Relics in Early Ireland", or something of that sort, witness her extraordinary statement on page 9 that "Hagiography, written by and for monks, provides more evidence for the study of Irish monasticism than any other type of source, written or material".

The book will naturally invite comparison with others, but this publication is novel in its approach and more limited in its scope to the books with which it may be compared. It will inevitably be compared with several of the more broadly based overviews of aspects of Early Christian Ireland, notably *Irish Monasticism: Origins and Early Development* by John Ryan (Dublin 1931), and Nancy Edwards' *The Archaeology of Early Medieval Ireland*, which is reviewed by Dáibhí Ó Cróinín in the previous volume of this *Journal* [35(1993-94), 21-22].

The latter reviewer's own book *Early Historic Ireland* will also be juxtaposed with this book, as will *The Modern Traveller to the Early Irish Church* by Kathleen Hughes and Ann Hamlin (London 1977). Bitel may emphasise the power of monks and saints in early Ireland between 800 and 1200 A.D., and her over-reliance on saints' *vitae* would tend to give a misleading impression which the use of more secular source material such as the annals and monastic rules might have tended to balance out. However, her synthesis of recent work in historical geography and archaeology has redressed the balance somewhat, especially in chapters on "Monastic Settlement" (pp. 17-56) and, to a lesser extent, in her subsequent chapter on "The Monastic Enclosure" (pp. 57-82). These chapters are well footnoted to include much of the more recent archaeological research of the last two decades or so. Chapters 1 and 2 jointly form Part One of the book (pp. 1-82). Besides the chapters mentioned above there is a useful introductory section (without a chapter heading) entitled "Introduction to the Saints and the Sources".

Part Two of the book deals with the community, is divided into six chapters (Chapters 3-8) and is followed by an Epilogue and two Appendices (one on "Place Names" and another on "Saints' Names"). A fairly comprehensive "Selected Bibliography", "Subject Index" and an "Index of Proper and Place Names and Places" follows. The fifteen figures consist of four maps and a variety of other illustrative material which are well drawn and clear. The photographs chosen are generally well reproduced, especially the splendid University of Cambridge Photographs of the monastic enclosures at Comeen, Co. Roscommon, and Kiltiernan, Co. Galway. The former site has unfortunately suffered much from recent land clearance and bull-dozing since the photograph was taken, with more than three-quarters of the earthworks and enclosure having recently been lost to "farm improvements".

The use of the Irish versions of place-names on the maps and in captions to (some of) the plates and figures as well as (sometimes) in the text is a novel approach, but is sometimes confusing. Unfortunately not every archaeologist, historian, historical geographer or general reader who reads this book will know Reask as *Riasc*, *Cluain Mocca Nóis* as Clonmacnoise or *I* as Iona, while others will have difficulty in identifying Máel-máedóc ua Morgain with St. Malachy, even though he is equated with Saint Malachi [*sic*] on page 238. It might have been preferable if an English language version was placed in brackets for the uninitiated. The Irish spellings are not always accurately rendered, and the Fig. 1 (p. 16) "Monastic Communities" (which is markedly selective in its inclusion of sites) could well have done with translations to the place-names for the convenience of most readers. Archaeologically, Chapter 1 presents some problems (especially on p. 49), in the sense that many early Christian sites are assumed to have been sited where they were simply because of a desire on the part of the monkish planners to Christianise pagan sites, something which can really only be demonstrated for certain by excavation. Likewise, what Bitel illustrates as Crónán's shrine at Tempul [*sic*] Crónáin, Co. Clare, is simply one of two such "tent-shaped" or "house-shaped" shrines at the site, and while these, or one of them, may have folkloric associations with the saint such a link has not been historically or archaeologically demonstrated. These are minor quibbles however, as the production is well laid out, designed and legible, while the text is fluid and thought-provoking.

For this writer the most interesting chapters were undoubtedly that on the "Spirituales Medici" (Chapter 6, pp. 173-193) which, as an exploration of what can be gleaned from Saints' lives on healing and miracle-working, was fascinating. It could, if expanded to include subjects such as saints' curing- and cursing-stones for instance, be the subject of a book in itself.

In her Epilogue (p. 224), Bitel concludes that the saints "..... continued to preside over the hearts and minds of the Irish". The author has gone some way towards provoking further thought and research on these holy men and women and their lives.

JIM HIGGINS

Ragnall Ó Floinn, *Irish Shrines and Reliquaries of the Middle Ages*, Country House, Dublin, in association with the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin 1994; pp. 46; ISBN 0-946172-40-4. Price: £4.95.

From the absurd Shrine of St Lachtin's Arm to the perfect beauty of the Lismore Crozier, the shrines and reliquaries associated with Irish saints have an enduring fascination. In this scholarly, well-written and generously illustrated book, Ó Floinn offers a concise understanding of the origins, form, purpose and preservation of those, many from North Munster, now preserved in the collection of the National Museum of Ireland; he also deals with the families who acted as their respective keepers for generations. He gives them their full human import, seeing into their wider political, social and religious significance for Irish society throughout the middle ages. The captions to the many illustrations in the book provide additional details of the objects under discussion, and there is a very useful inventory of the families associated with surviving reliquaries, which lists the keepers, the names of the relics, their provenance and present location.

The enshrining of the remains of saints and martyrs was initiated in the Mediterranean regions and in the Holy Land, and with the first recorded Christian mission to Ireland by Palladius in AD 431, the first relics, apparently those of the apostles Peter and Paul, arrived on Irish soil. The author suggests that by at least the seventh century the cult of relics of native Irish saints had become an integral part of Christian devotion. Pre-twelfth century entries in the Irish annals cite several instances of the enshrining of relics, and of the theft and destruction of both corporeal and associative relics such as books, bells and croziers. However, there are just a handful of surviving early shrines, among them the remains of the little early seventh-century tomb-shaped shrine of tinned bronze from the River Blackwater at Clonmore, Co. Armagh, which is the earliest datable Irish reliquary, and the early eighth-century belt-shrine from Moylough, Co. Sligo.

Ó Floinn explains how the cult of relics became particularly significant in the changing world of twelfth-century Ireland. With the establishment of diocesan sees in the twelfth century, the possession of the relics of saints associated with particular foundations became a vital attribute in the heightened competition for royal patronage and diocesan status - some of the finest examples of this period being the shrine of the Book of Dimma associated with St Crónán of Roscrea, and the Cross of Cong (which contained a relic of the True Cross sent to Ireland by Pope Calixtus II in 1119), which was sponsored by Toirrdelbach Ó Conchobair, King of Connacht, in the 1120s. The author also deals with the practice of inscribing shrines with the names of the lay patron, the ecclesiastical patron and sometimes the craftworker himself, a tradition which can be traced back to the early tenth century. Accurate renderings of shrine inscriptions which document the names of kings, clerics and craftsmen can facilitate the fixing of the period of manufacture of a shrine. But as Dr. Michelli points out in her recent detailed study of inscriptions on pre-Norman reliquaries, these are not to be read like inscriptions in other media. They are, as she explains, 'a typological phenomenon in their own right', revealing the complexity of the social system of the time in which only family members of the highest rank with connections to the relic were entitled to commission the reliquary itself.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of Ó Floinn's book is his discussion of the wide range of uses of relics, from promulgating laws and placing a hex on an enemy, to their application as folk cures, as battle talismans and for swearing oaths. The curative properties associated with these relics endured well into the nineteenth century, the most astonishing case being the seventeenth-century account of how the Book of Durrow was dunked in water which was then used as a cure for sick cattle. It is worth considering too that shrines and reliquaries may have been regularly used in the christianised inauguration ceremonies of Irish kingship candidates. The late Irish *Life* of St Máedóc of Ferns describes the performance of the deiseal or auspicious right-hand turn made with the Brecc Máedóc during the inauguration of the king of Bréifne, and lore gathered in the neighbourhood of Mullach Leic, the inauguration site of the MacMathghamhna of Oirghialla, proposes that the Domhnach Airgid was used in the same manner. The Cathach Colaim Chille, traditionally the battle standard of the Uí Dhomhnaill of Tír Conaill, and its Scottish counterpart, the Breccbennach Choluim Chille, which is portrayed on a seal of Scone Abbey, may also have had their place in kingship ritual.

For both the rusty scholar, and the interested layman, Ó Floinn's *Irish Shrines and Reliquaries of the Middle Ages*, which in the most palatable and erudite way explains and enlivens the collection of these esoteric objects in the National Museum of Ireland, is a must for the bookshelf.

ELIZABETH FITZPATRICK

Avril Thomas, *The Walled Towns of Ireland*, 2 vols., Irish Academic Press, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, 1992; pp. x + 214 and vi + 257; ISBN 0-7165-2474-0 (vol. 1), 0-7165-2475-9 (vol. 2), 0-7165-2481-3 (the set). Price: £35.00 (vol. 1) and £45.00 (vol. 2).

John Bradley, *Walled Towns in Ireland*, Country House, Dublin 1995; pp. 48; ISBN 0-946172-46-3. Price: £5.95.

The generally accepted attitude towards Ireland is of a 'Green Isle', a rural landscape, so much so that one seldom associates walled towns with it - and certainly not in the same way as one does with Britain, France, Spain, Italy, Central Europe and even much farther afield. Yet Ireland may have had over a hundred such towns - Avril Thomas lists 56 certain examples, 35 less certain but probable examples, and 20 (to which one might perhaps add Ardrahan, Co. Galway) which are only doubtfully acceptable. Individual Irish walled towns have occasionally received notice, but only three attempts to deal with them generally have been made, all very different. The first was J.S. Fleming's *The Town Wall Fortifications of Ireland*, slight and lightweight, a more superficially attractive than useful book published in Paisley, Scotland, in 1914. It deals with nineteen towns only, and it certainly did not answer the military architect's, military or urban historian's, or archaeologist's purposes, and it is quite amazing that we had to wait until the 1990s for the other two publications dealing with the subject.

Avril Thomas' two volumes will, without doubt, stand the test for a long time as the standard work which all researchers dealing with the subject will have to consult, even though their price seems unreasonably high and it is therefore unlikely that they will find their way into many private libraries. Strangely, it seems to this reviewer, each volume is priced differently, and though they appeared as a unit both have a different ISBN number, while the two combined have yet another different number. No matter, there may be a good reason for this - is one being encouraged to purchase the volumes individually (can one?) and if not why is there not a separate price for the pair? But every public library which makes any pretension to assisting academic research *must* acquire them.

The first volume is the more interesting as it presents the results of the author's research. The basis for this volume will be found in volume 2, namely a detailed gazetteer in which we get not only a clean, neat map of the walled area of each town, a description of the surviving remains, the known history of their construction, details of their circuit, published and other references to them, etc., but also a useful discussion giving the author's summary and comments on the walls. This gazetteer demonstrates a great deal of specialised research and will doubtless be referred to and consulted by all who wish to learn more of any of the walled towns of Ireland. It is set out alphabetically (though one might quibble at the universal use of Londonderry for that town - surely a single line under Derry, referring one to the longer name, might have been usefully added?).

One might also quibble at the gloomy, dark look (due to over-inking?) of many of the photographs in volume 1. That on page 78 showing Kilmallock's 'Blossoms Gate', for instance, is murky and even major detail of the structure is invisible. The photo seems to have been taken after a heavy shower, but such an excuse can not be used for the cloudy look of Clonmel's West Gate on page 75, or for the massive black blob on page 64 which purports to be the mural tower at Kells, Co. Meath, or indeed for the grey and indistinct photograph on page 52 of a map (albeit an old one, c. 1612) showing the walls at Carrickfergus. Many of the line-drawings suffer too, not only from over-inking so much as from over-reduction - the five plans taken from maps, all on page 21, will suffice to mention as examples of this, though it is hard to resist also mentioning the lists of tolls granted by murage charters on page 111 - by removing the quite unnecessary frame around this figure the lists could have been enlarged without trouble to readable size - the same might be said for the figure on page 155.

Avril Thomas usefully, and very sensibly, divides Irish walled towns into six periods:

- (i) The Hiberno-Norse period (e.g. Dublin, Waterford, Limerick).
- (ii) The Anglo-Norman period, phase I, c.1170-1250 (e.g. Dublin, Kilkenny, Drogheda).
- (iii) The Anglo-Norman period, phase II, c. 1250-1350 (e.g. Kilmallock, Fethard, Athenry).
- (iv) The Anglo-Norman period, phase III, c.1350-1485, (e.g. Carrickfergus, Naas, Adare).
- (v) The Tudor period, 1485-1603 (e.g. Carlingford, Athlone, Sligo).
- (vi) The Stuart period, 1603-1685 (e.g. Jamestown, [London]Derry, Askeaton).

Distribution maps are provided for each period, but these are somewhat too small, though legible, and would have been much more useful if done page size and on the same base map, with rivers, lakes and high ground marked, as is the generalised map on page 258 of volume 2 (a smaller version of the exact same map appears on page 182 of volume 1 - useful for comparison and to prove the point).

These two volumes are evidence of considerable literary research - the references provided at the end of each entry in the

Gazetteer and the Bibliography on pages 245–253 of volume 2 are eye-opening and in their own way will be invaluable for all future research. However, one wonders how much detailed work was done in the field, inspecting the actual surviving walls. I know Athenry, one of the finest walled towns in Ireland, too well to accept the photo on page 33 as either valid or useful - it must be at least 40 or more years out of date - details in the gazetteer entry also leave much to be desired.

These two volumes are heavy going, especially for the general, non-academic reader, though they provide an essential and long-awaited tool for specialists such as those mentioned above in paragraph 1. But all is not lost for the interested non-specialist, amateur militarist, architect, or archaeologist - tourist even - for John Bradley has answered their prayer.

The respective titles of the two books are significant and meaningful: *The Walled Towns of Ireland* and *Walled Towns in Ireland*. Both live up to their name, the former does deal with all of the walled towns while Bradley's doesn't, but provides instead a rounded commentary on Irish walled towns in general rather than in particular. He deals with the subject in four main parts: (i) Monastic Towns; (ii) Viking Towns; (iii) Anglo-Norman Towns; (iv) Plantation Towns. Where he deals with individual towns he places them into their context, something which is greatly aided by the many fine illustrations, nearly all in glorious technicolour, which not only are of town walls but also of churches and other buildings in the various towns - if this approach is not understood, then the photograph on the cover, of St. Canice's Cathedral and Round Tower, in Kilkenny, might otherwise seem strange in such a book. This is an easy book to read, and a pleasure to peruse, despite which it is academically sound and ought to be obtained and studied by all who wish to learn about Irish towns, particularly those of the walled variety. It is a useful book to recommend to scholars and amateurs alike: Avril Thomas' two volumes are a full meal for which John Bradley's much smaller booklet will serve as an excellent, tasty and useful entrée.

ETIENNE RYNNE

Tadhg O'Keeffe, *Fethard Co. Tipperary: A Guide to the Medieval Town*, Fethard Historical Society, 1997; pp. 30; ISBN 0-9518168-1-0. Price: £3.00.

The medieval walled town of Fethard is situated in the heart of South Tipperary where it nestles quietly in the famed valley of Slievenamon. It is undoubtedly the best preserved medieval town in Munster, and elsewhere in Ireland its architectural integrity is rivalled only by the remains at Athenry, Co. Galway. The National Heritage Council, in recognising the importance of the town, commissioned a detailed survey of it in 1993. This was carried out by Dr. Tadhg O'Keeffe and the guidebook under review here is based on the results of this survey.

The guidebook consists of two parts. Firstly there is a brief historical account of the town's foundation and development and, secondly, there is a walking guide to no less than twenty-seven points of interest around the town. The historical summary is a well written account. It outlines how Fethard was founded around 1200 and how it came to be populated by English and Welsh settlers. The conditions which led to its walling in the late 13th century are also dealt with, as is the major contribution the Everard family made to the town throughout the later medieval period. After the vicissitudes of the seventeenth century, when Fethard's citizens escaped the wrath of Cromwell by tamely submitting to him, the town entered a period of decay, and during the nineteenth century a good deal of the medieval fabric of the town was demolished.

The second section of the guidebook brings us on a walk round the town. There is a wealth of architectural monuments and features to be seen here, ranging from Holy Trinity Church - one of the largest and finest medieval parish churches in Ireland - to the North Gate, the only surviving gateway in the town wall, and from the Augustinian Abbey on the east side of the town to the gaunt and rather emaciated Sheela-na-Gig who guards Watergate Bridge from her lofty position on the town wall. Each of the entries for the various stages of the tour are well written and supply both dates and general contexts for the features under discussion. It is a pity, however, that the fine collection of medieval masons' marks in the Augustinian Abbey (see this *Journal*, 32 (1990), 35–40) are not mentioned and that attention is not drawn to the interesting groups of medieval grave-slabs at both this site and Holy Trinity Church. Nonetheless, the guidebook offers the possibility of an interesting and varied tour for visitors to the town.

The guidebook is an extremely attractive publication. It is printed on very good quality paper and its layout and design (which was carried out by Mr Joe Kenny of Fethard) are a credit to the publishers, Fethard Historical Society. The book also contains a series of very good colour photographs of the town (mainly by Joe Kenny) as well as charming reproductions of antiquarian drawings and a series of modern line drawings (by Claire Lee, Killusty). In the centre of the book is an eye-catching and useful map of Fethard on which all the sites of interest are clearly marked.

Dr. O'Keeffe and all associated with this publication are to be warmly congratulated. It is essential reading for anyone visiting Fethard, an architectural gem in Munster's medieval landscape. It remains an intriguing puzzle as to why Bord Fáilte has not granted Fethard Heritage Town status, and it is to be hoped that this publication may cause that organisation to see the error of its ways in this regard.

DENISE MAHER

Valerie Bary, *Historical, Genealogical, Architectural Notes of Some Houses of Kerry*, Ballinakella Press, Whitegate, Co. Clare, 1994; pp. 247+; ISBN 0-946538-08-5. Price: £38.00.

This is the second volume in what is intended to become a national series, the first being Hugh Weir's *Houses of Clare*, which was published in 1986, and reviewed in this *Journal*, 29(1987), 106–107. The high standards of the first volume have been fully maintained and even improved on in this book, resulting in a notable and exciting publication that will surely become an indispensable reference work for consultation. The format is similar to the first volume, in that the gazetteer entries are divided into name, associated families, townland and parish, location, present condition, features and history. Most are accompanied by neat line-drawings by Stephanie Walsh, the author's daughter. As Valerie Bary has contributed articles to *The Irish Ancestor* and is a Board Member of Killarney Genealogical and Visitor Centre, the research is obviously scholarly, especially in respect to the associated families and history entries which are impressive. As an architect I would have liked to have seen more technical information in the present condition and features entries, but as it is mentioned that this type of terminology has been avoided I suppose it is wishful thinking to look for it. There is an interesting foreword by Professor Maurice O'Connell, kinsman of one of Kerry's great sons, and a general introduction by the author who provides the reader with information as to how to make best use of the material contained in the book. One great improvement on the previous volume is the double-page map of 'The Kingdom', showing the location of all the houses and castles mentioned, using two tiny and almost similar symbols to differentiate between castle and house. These are numbered according to the page in the gazetteer, though I feel that it would have been an improvement if they had all been given their own consecutive number in the book rather than rely on the actual pages. This map has been drawn by the author's husband, Brian, (keeping everything - apart from the foreword - in the family), and it is a pity that it has been reduced in scale somewhat, so that, although perfectly clear, it is difficult to differentiate between some of the very closely grouped numbers. The two pages of the map overlap but are printed so that they seem to match up — and give Kerry a sizable extra peninsula! Again, as in the previous book, the entries are not confined to the Big Houses, since many less pretentious buildings, ruins and sites are included, plus practically all the castles. I could not find a couple of castle ruins, including a tower at Doon, and a handful of sites are not present, but, after all, the title mentions houses not castles.

There is nothing serious to criticise here, and in such an extensive work as this errors are bound to creep in, but the book has again repeated the eccentric pagination of the previous volume, with only the 247 pages of the actual gazetteer numbered, leaving the 18 pages of the foreword, etc., at the beginning blank and all the 10 pages of the excellent photographs (many early) at the rear, together with 20 pages of the index, etc., also blank. This unusual approach was commented on in this *Journal's* review of the *Houses of Clare*, but apparently without effect. A few small points - one or two of the careful little sketches seem to be taken from an uninformative angle, for instance Meanus House shows little more than a triangular gable end with a tiny window high up in it, while some of the views show the distorted converging verticals of the wide angle lens, very apparent, for instance, in the fine doorcase at Kilmurry House. I surveyed Ballymullin Castle near Tralee some years ago, and it is described on page 38, while the map location indicates page 39, but otherwise all seems in order.

In describing the present condition of some houses the author tactfully mentions that they have been modernised, but omits to mention that the new window designs, etc., are inappropriate - I am afraid that I might have mentioned this! The word 'bartizan' seems to be coming more common in describing turrets on castles but it was originally a spurious word picked up erroneously by Sir Walter Scott from a misspelling of brattice, meaning a wooden hoarding or breastwork on a castle parapet, and in Scotland it was used to refer to the actual parapet. Perhaps better not to use it at all. Peel or Pele when referring to a castle tower is also dubious; it sometimes refers to a Scottish border tower but originally referred to a palisade and the word continues in Ireland as the Pale. Some castles such as Ballymalis and Gallerus have been National Monuments for some time, and Listowel was originally of the same design type as Bunratty, and was not a gatehouse. There are two interesting structures at Lixnaw connected with the Old Court which I recollect whilst trying to make sense of the extensive ruins there - the Hermitage or Castle, an oblong tower, and the Cock House, an octagonal tower probably used for cock-fighting; neither merit a mention.

These small points are very minor thoughts and do not take away from a massive and diligent work of studious research. Even a Burned House is included, which was built in 1829 and was accidentally burnt in the same year immediately after completion. It has now entirely disappeared. Well done, Valerie Bary and Ballinakella Press.

DAVID N. JOHNSON

Adrian Hewson (Co-ordinator), *Inspiring Stones*, The Diocesan Council of Limerick. Killaloe and Ardfert in association with FÁS; pp. 8+208, Limerick 1995. Price: £10.00

This imposing book, the history of each parish in the now combined Church of Ireland dioceses of Limerick, Ardfert, Aghadoe, Killaloe, Kilfenora, Clonfert, Kilmacduagh and Emly, has much to recommend it to all our members, even to those of a different persuasion. It was written, compiled and supervised by Adrian Hewson with the full-time help of ten FÁS workers, and some outside, interested people who helped with their suggestions for improvement, with proof-reading, and above all, with their enthusiasms, spurring the team on towards its completion.

In most instances a photograph or a line-drawing of the parish church or the ruin is included. Unfortunately, in some cases not even a ruin remains. Since so little is known about quite a few of the more ancient churches, one is saddened by the few lines devoted to them, often followed by remarks such as: "now closed", "demolished" or, "now in ruins".

The book is brimming with photographs. 198 in all, as well as, 81 vignettes of people, objects and events, anything from the Misericords in St. Mary's Cathedral, Limerick, to the rule of 19th century women or to a note on Thomas Davis. While most of the illustrations are of churches, features of interest, such as church plate, memorials or effigies within, are often appended; all snippets that put flesh on the often otherwise skeletal history. There are little maps of the location of the churches inserted in relevant pages of the text, which would, I feel, be far better put together, jig-saw wise, on a single page. Incidentally, the off the vertical lean of the round tower at Kilmacduagh shown in a line-drawing would, if it were accurate put the more famous one at Pisa in the half-penny place.

This publication has its shortcomings, which cannot be excused on the grounds that it is not the work of professionals but of amateurs; it has its quota of misprints, some of the photographs are misty, it is without an ISBN number, and I failed to find an address where copies could be purchased.

And, as one would expect, it has a Church of Ireland slant, not in what it states so much as what it omits to state. For instance, we are told that the Papal Nuncio, Cardinal Rinuccini offered a *Te Deum* in St. Mary's Cathedral, celebrating the victory of the Confederate forces at Benburb. True. However, in these ecumenical times, they could have added that the Cardinal celebrated Mass for the victory in St. Mary's as well.

If you like the sight of church spires towering over village roofs as you drive through the Munster countryside, and if you are interested enough to stop and stare and perhaps wonder, keep the book in your car; it will add enormously to your pleasure.

PADDY LYSAGHT

Elizabeth FitzPatrick (ed.), *The Care and Conservation of Graveyards*, The Office of Public Works & The Stationery Office, Dublin 1995; pp. 24; ISBN 0-7076.1614-X. Price: £1

This is a fine booklet. It is ideal reading for anyone with an interest in graveyards. For those who are more involved in caring for or cleaning up graveyards it is essential.

In the past few years many of the graveyards have suffered from the over-enthusiastic approach of well-intentioned local people. Unfortunately many clean-up schemes were started without any archaeological advice. Some graveyards have been damaged by overall spraying, fires have been lit beside and even within the remains of Early Christian churches. extensive digging has been done, earlier churches have been rebuilt, stone removed from them, stone broken with sledge hammers, and the extreme case where a bulldozer was brought in to do a clearance. All of these horrendous acts were done by people believing themselves to be acting with the very best of intentions, but with a lack of knowledge on how to care for a graveyard. The O.P.W. hopes to avoid the occurrence of these problems with the publication of this booklet.

The booklet explains the role of the Office of Public Works in the cleaning up of graveyards, who the possible owners might be, and even where funding might be available. The importance of first getting expert advice to draw

up a plan of work for a graveyard is made clear. The booklet then takes one through the stages of removing the vegetation, taking care of set stones and features that become exposed, and reporting the discovery of archaeological material and architectural fragments. Surveying the graveyard is acceptable, but straightening of memorials or re-aligning them is not. It is explained that if cleaning of memorials has to be done then water and a soft brush is all that is needed. The care of early buildings and of the surrounding graveyard walls is dealt with. Following the cleaning of a graveyard there is often a tendency to erect new headstones or freshly mark out plots; solid reasoning against these practices is given. There is advice, which is relevant to both parish committees and local authorities, on what and what not to do when a graveyard extension is needed. There are two lists, do's and don'ts, that summarise in a clear way the correct procedures and should, if followed, preserve the heritage of the graveyards and still allow the improvement of their condition.

This booklet should be distributed not just to the clergy of all persuasions and officials of county councils, but also to undertakers, stone masons and all communities and FÁS workers who are involved in graveyard schemes. The booklet goes through all stages of a clean-up scheme, who to contact, what must be done before starting, when to start, the value of the material in the graveyard and how to cope with it.

I found only minor faults with this publication. All the photographs in the booklet are of clean graveyards showing no obvious reasons for archaeological concern. It is a pity that a small rural graveyard was not photographed before and after a clean-up scheme, showing what can be achieved. There are no locations given for the photographs or drawings, nor are they numbered. More details might have been given of the reasons against overall repeated spraying of a graveyard which can result in excessive weed and moss growth in the following years. Photographs of graveyards which have been sprayed could have been included. Points which have been mentioned include the importance of avoiding making new paths which are not in keeping with the graveyard, that, where possible, if the gates are in bad condition they should be repaired rather than replaced by new ones, and that internal Early Christian and Medieval divisions which can still survive must not be disturbed. A problem after a clean-up scheme is that new plots can be made and old plots excessively enlarged, and I have myself seen an early 18th century headstone thrown to the side to make way for a polished black granite stone. If locals were given an understanding and a pride in their graveyard such 'improvements' as the latter might not occur.

Little advice has been given as to how to maintain the graveyard after the clean-up scheme. The major problem in keeping a graveyard tidy is the constant growth of vegetation; others being the re-digging of old graves and the deteriorating condition of older buildings in the graveyard. Maintenance of the graveyard after the proposed clean-up should be done as a matter of local pride. Weed-killer may seem a solution, but it encourages the growth of moss and other coarser weeds for the future and we simply do not know the long term effect of even small quantities of chemicals on stone. Graveyard days could be established when the parishioners would collectively go and cut the fresh growth, grass, small tree shoots, briars, and suchlike before they get out of hand. This should be in Spring or early Summer (perhaps Good Friday would be an ideal day to begin) and again in Autumn. The other possible solution is to use sheep or goats. Grazing animals need only be put in for a few days every few months; they would not be needed for longer nor would they stay.

The care of our graveyards is with the local communities. This booklet has set out clearly the do's and don'ts in the graveyard. It is well laid out and has a very attractive cover which certainly catches the attention. Congratulations to Edward Bourke, Margaret Keane, Sean Kirwan, Tom Curtis, Eamon Grennan and the editor, Liz FitzPatrick, on a much needed and well presented guide to the care of graveyards. It is excellent value for £ 1.

MARY B. TIMONEY

Gerry Joyce, *Limerick City Street Names*, Limerick Corporation, 1995; pp.146; ISBN 0-905700. Price: £12.00

Even the fastidious will find it difficult to pick holes in this informative and useful book. Well bound with a grained buckram cover, and printed on good quality glossy paper which gives sharpness to the many photographs of places and personalities scattered throughout the book, it is good value at its price.

In a nine-page introduction we get a precise summary of how the city was developed from the thirteenth century onwards, by the gradual construction of its city walls, with particular reference as to when and why the streets came to be named. Only a handful of the streets had names before 1786, when the Mayor, Sir Christopher Knight, ordered that boarded labels with their names be put up on most of the streets. Up to the nineteen-fifties, or thereabouts, streets were named after local families or well-known historical personalities, but since then developers have tended to use inappropriate or 'twee' Anglicised names for estates and streets, as they deemed them more attractive or more

fancy for intending purchasers. Fortunately Limerick Corporation has now set up a sub-committee to submit a list of names for developers to use, names which would be more in tune with our cultural heritage.

Gerry Joyce has dug deep, researching the main portion of the book, the forty pages devoted to the origin of the street names. As one would expect, he has unearthed some surprising nuggets, as for instance, Patrick Street is not called after our national apostle nor after Sarsfield, but after Patrick, a member of the well-known Limerick Arthur family. Gearóid MacSpealáin's article entitled "Notes on Place-names in the City and Liberties of Limerick", which is reprinted in full from our 1943 *Journal* (pp. 98–117), adds to our knowledge of the various districts in and outside the city, and fills out what we have already been told about the streets.

The list of streets that have had a name change, and especially for the long list of those narrow, unhygienical and unsightly lanes that have vanished, is something for which we should all offer a *Te Deum*. The inclusion of a map of the town walls and the folding Collie map of 1769 inserted inside the back cover helps visually to pin-point many of the places named in the text.

Local historians will treasure this publication, and since it has an eye-catching dust-wrapper that gives it shelf appeal, the hesitant public, if they succumb to buying it, will be delighted with their purchase.

In a page of Acknowledgements Gerry Joyce requests that any new information relative to his book would be welcome, and should be communicated to him at Limerick's City Hall. Alas, this was not to be. Sad to say, after a long illness he died on the week the book was published.

PADDY LYSAGHT

Michael Kenny, *The Fenians: Photographs and Memorabilia from the National Museum of Ireland*, Town and Country House, in association with the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin 1994; pp. 47; ISBN 0-946172-42-0. Price: £4.99.

Michael Kenny, *The 1798 Rebellion: Photographs and Memorabilia from the National Museum of Ireland*, Town and Country House, in association with the National Museum of Ireland, Dublin 1996; pp. 48; ISBN 0-946172-50-1. Price: £4.95.

In 1993 Michael Kenny, of the Art and Industrial Division, National Museum of Ireland, published an excellent booklet called *The Road to Freedom: Photographs and Memorabilia from the 1916 Rising and Afterwards*, which was reviewed in this *Journal*, 35(1993–94), 132–133 by Professor J.J. Lee. It comprised an absorbing selection of photographs, documents and artifacts relating to the Rising, and was accompanied by a concise text which explained the background leading up to the Rising, the event itself, and its aftermath. Obviously encouraged by the success of this work, Kenny has since published two similar booklets, one on the Fenians and the other on the Rebellion of 1798. The same format is adhered to, and once again both the illustrations and the text succeed in bringing vividly to life the main events of each respective period.

To a great extent, the rising of 1867 was geographically specific, being largely Dublin-based, though in Kenny's *The Fenians* we find much of local interest for North Munster readers. The raid on the police barracks in Kilmallock, itself the subject of four articles in the 1967 volume of our *Journal*, is recalled by an illustration of the courtroom scene in Kilmallock during a sitting of the special commission set up in June 1867 to try the local Fenians accused of being involved in the attack. The Young Ireland movement of the 1840s is dealt with as part of the background to the foundation of the Irish Republican Brotherhood (the correct name for the organisation, the term 'Fenian' coming from the American organisation, the Fenian Brotherhood), and there are two photographs concerning the Clareman William Smith O'Brien who was one of the leaders of the Young Irelanders. One of these photographs is of a poster dating to 1848 offering £500 reward (a huge amount at the time) for his capture, and the other photograph is of a large ornate gold cup presented to him by the Irish residents of Melbourne and Geelong on his release from prison in 1854 (see the Editorial in our *Journal* for 1987).

In this booklet are wonderfully evocative charcoal sketches of Limerickman John Daly, the old Fenian who spent twelve years in a British jail (see this *Journal* for 1977, pages 65–68 and that for 1979, pages 39–49) and of Tom Clarke (married to Daly's niece, Kathleen) a fellow-prisoner of Daly's and first signatory of the 1916 Proclamation. A photograph of Daly taken with Clarke and Seán MacDiarmada shows us two generations of Fenians and clearly demonstrates the link between the 1867 Fenians and the men of the 1916 Rising. Also of particular North Munster interest are two very interesting photographs of the front and the back of a Land League flag from Kilmaley, Co. Clare, depicting Parnell and Davitt.

The Rebellion of 1798 is an event in our history which has been interpreted (and often reinterpreted) very differently, and sometimes very narrowly, by many disparate groups down through the years. An author could easily be tempted towards over-simplification, given the confines of such a short booklet, but writing in a very clear style Michael Kenny shows a great understanding of his subject. In particular, he elucidates the complexities of the many and varied factors which lead to the events of 1798, and the profound effect the rebellion had on religious and political loyalties in Ireland. This very informative account of the Rebellion is undoubtedly just the first of many publications we shall see on the subject as the bicentennial year approaches.

Both these booklets are succinctly written, concise yet very informative. Although written in reverse order chronologically, all three complement each other and together make up a very useful trilogy indeed.

PETER DUNDON

Liam Kelly, Geraldine Lucid, Maria O'Sullivan, *et al.*, *Blennerville Gateway to Tralee's Past*, The Blennerville Windmill Committee in association with FÁS, Tralee 1989; pp. 463; ISBN 0-9513627-0-4 (hard covers) and ISBN 0-9513627-1-2 (paperback). No prices given.

This huge volume, with pages slightly larger than the normal A4 sheet, could well be the bench mark for all local history publications. Quality as well as quantity underline the contents of this handsome production, which tells the story of Tralee's past in a series of chapters mostly penned by the above-named authors. While the majority of the contributions have a nautical connection or deal with the lost world of the Irish windmill, our interest is captured immediately by a marvellous synopsis of the world of Irish myth and legend by Maria O'Sullivan, which is suitably illustrated by Jane Savage. Not content with this, Maria brings us on an exciting voyage of discovery as we delve deeply into the folk history of Blennerville, which probably got its name from the Blenners, from whom the Blennerhassetts are descended. Once the port of Tralee, we learn about the changing times of this small Kerry town, from landlord to tenant, from Big House to the lowly one-roomed mud cabin, which once made up 60% of the houses in Kerry according to the 1841 Census.

While there is sadness in the photograph of Murphy's, "the last thatched cottage in Blennerville", excitement grips the reader as we see and read about the attempts to find the body of no less a person than Robert Emmet himself. According to native lore, this great national patriot was buried secretly in the local churchyard at Blennerville, while his head was divined by Frank MacCarthy of Ballyjamesduff to lie in Ringsend! Bi-location at its worst!

The Great Famine is also covered in this huge volume by Geraldine Lucid and Maria O'Sullivan, while the former also writes extensively about 19th century emigration from County Kerry. Both chapters are suitably illustrated with tables and advertisements of the day, accompanied by some rather searing sketches in pen and ink. The wealth of research is very evident here, especially in dealing with the good ship, *Jeanie Johnston*, and her famous voyages to Quebec.

Liam Kelly is next to fill our path with a most comprehensive history of the port of Tralee, which could well be a book in its own right. Maps, illustrations, photographs all augment the detailed text as we see the great two-mile long canal from Blennerville to Tralee take shape and finally open in 1846. Even then, however, larger vessels were being built "drawing more water than the canal could provide". Sailors, lifeboat-men, fishermen, factory workers, councillors, all face the camera here, as do the many ships which plied the great sea canal before mercantile decay set in and the great waterway was mostly filled in "for warehousing" in the '60s. We believe, however, that it is shortly to be re-opened.

Another major portion of the book deals with 'Steam Development in the South of Ireland'. Here Liam Kelly plots the development of mercantile shipping and takes a special look at the once famous Limerick Steamship Company. From its beginnings in 1853 as the London and Limerick Steamship Company Ltd., to its demise in the 1970s, the red and white banded funnels of the company plied the coastlines of these islands. Its fifty-five ships listed on page 347 were familiar sights in most of the seaports of these islands, although Galway and not Liverpool is the port depicted on where page 350 should be!

The chapter, 'Windmills in Ireland', by Fred Hamond, is a must for those who wish to learn about this aspect of early Irish industry, leading from the horizontal mill right up to the restoration of the famous Blennerville Windmill, which is such a tourist attraction today. Numerous diagrams explain the various mill-workings and a site map of the Kerry corn and tuck mills in 1841-42 on page 391 show how widespread the milling process was in the county before imports through other ports finally killed off this localized industry.

Contributions on 'Barrow Castle' by Edward Roe, 'Flora of the Region' by Tom Ryall and 'Bird Life of Blennerville' by Frank King finish what in effect is quite a long 'read' on a native place. Yet this book should be read by the non-Kerry person as well as the native, for many of the chapters contain excellent summaries of national events as well as processes, many of which now, unfortunately, are lost. The volume may well lie heavy on the average shelf, yet its contents are a mine of information on a special time, not so long ago indeed, when sailor and miller looked to the skies for more than inspiration.

PEADAR O'DOWD

John Teahan, *Irish Furniture and Woodcraft*, Town House and Country House (for The National Museum of Ireland), Dublin 1994; pp. 46; ISBN 0-946172-39-0. Price: £4.95.

A book such as this could easily fall between two or three stools, ending up as a bit of upper class journalism for everybody, a handy, general guide-line for those who frequent auctions and are vaguely interested in antiques, or an academic and scholarly illustrated essay on the subject. And it does, for while it rests firmly on all three stools, and while it will adequately satisfy the everyday reader, the antique lover and the expert, it still leaves one wanting more.

The author, an expert in the arts and crafts of the more recent past of the last few hundred years, bravely ventures back into Ireland's prehistoric and early historic past, and in a brief few pages has probably summarised the known evidence for that period as well for the general public, as is readily available anywhere. Indeed, even the expert archaeologist will welcome it, particularly the photograph of the beautiful early (c.800 A.D.) wooden bucket bound with decorative bronze bands, a fairly recent discovery (1979) from Derrymullen, Co. Laois, which has not been previously published. One might comment, however, that to suggest a date of 7th to 10th century for the Ballinderry gaming-board is unnecessarily wide - something closer to c.950, would be more useful. On page 14 the author mentions that the beautiful and elegant wooden statue of St. Molaise, from Inismurray, Co. Sligo, "has been painted several times, and traces of green, red and white paint are still visible". It probably was, indeed it was customary to whitewash the figure from time to time when it was preserved in Teach Molaise on Inismurray, but caution should rule when traces of polychrome are being suggested - see Fergus O'Farrell, regarding this very statue, in *Figures from the Past* (ed. E. Rynne, Dublin 1987, p. 207), where the alleged red paint, particularly, has been suggested as due to a fungal growth.

Apart from some brief discussion of chairs, as evidenced in High Cross iconography, in the Book of Kells, and on medieval reliquaries, very little is attempted on Irish furniture until the eighteenth century. This is almost certainly largely because of the lack of survival of early pieces due to natural deterioration and the troubled centuries of war when the Irish lost not only their lands but also their houses and household goods. We know from various written accounts of the time that their houses were well-furnished, though "continental and particularly English influences had come to assert themselves on Irish furniture". We know much more a bit later for, as the author points out on page 33, "A great period of Irish furniture-making was that from about 1740 to 1760" when Irish furniture was "generally of sturdy and robust character".

In the nineteenth century "uniquely Irish types of furniture and woodcraft were developed" and for several pages these types are discussed under the headings 'The neo-Celtic style', 'Bog-wood furniture', 'Killarney woodcraft', 'Travel furniture', and 'Baroque and classical styles'. Those owning old furniture will undoubtedly find these pages fascinating.

The book finishes with a brief few comments on modern Irish furniture, where internationally renowned Eileen Gray, born in Enniscorthy but who lived and worked mostly in Paris, gets due credit, as do Frederick MacManus, a Dubliner who worked later in London, and Raymond McGrath, an outstanding designer who also was principal architect to the Office of Public Works (it was his attractive drawing of the Dromoland gazebo/belvedere which in 1978, a year after his death, appeared on Ireland's EUROPA 11p stamp).

All-in-all, this is a lovely little book to have, one which will allow the ignorant to quickly and easily learn enough to talk intelligently about Irish furniture (it is, helpfully, copiously illustrated with colour and black-and-white photographs) and, indeed, if printed a little larger and with a glossy hard cover it would make a fine coffee-table book - but not one to be allowed wander too far away from its owner!

ETIENNE RYNNE