

EDITORIAL, 1996

Late again, and this time very, very late in getting this number of the *Journal* to press. And no good excuses either, other than difficulties involved in editing some of the longer articles and, of course, procrastination! Not just *mea culpa* but *mea maxima culpa*. It won't happen again! most of the material for another *Journal* to appear within a couple of months is already to hand, as is that for the following number too. So let us optimistically continue for a while in hope! Meanwhile, let you all be grateful to our president, Fr. John Leonard, to one of our best-known and best-loved Vice-Presidents, Paddy Lysaght, and above all to the Director, Ivan Morris, of our patient and conscientious printers - to all of them for exerting continuous and, regrettably, very necessary pressure on me to "get on with the job".

Does this *Journal* influence matters on a national scale? Maybe. For instance, in February *The Irish Times* informed us that the Government had increased "grants for the repair or renewal of thatched roofs on cottages [*sic* — *recte* houses] from £2,000 to £2,400 and from £3,000 to £3,600 for houses on islands". Does this mean that Ireland's traditional Paul Henry views of the countryside (of railway station posters fame) will return to please the native and to entice the tourist? Does it mean that our recent comments [*e.g.* in vol. 30 (1988), pp. 1–2 and vol. 35 (1993–94), pp.109–111] have influenced the Clare-born and reared Minister for Arts, Culture and the Gaeltacht, Micheal D. Higgins, to act in such an enlightened matter? Evidence of the power of the pen?

The then opposition of the day also played its part in urging conservation of Ireland's finer, mainly urban, buildings: in August *The Irish Times* reported a speech by Mr Bertie Ahern, leader of Fianna Fáil, in which he spoke about the necessity of appreciating and preserving the interiors of Ireland's historic buildings. He used some choice and very quotable phrases, *e.g.* "As legislators, Fianna Fáil recognises that, although public opinion has moved on, the law has not" – doesn't that sound encouraging? He also stated that the "once wholesale" destruction of Ireland's architectural heritage still continued at a "corrosive pace" due to "the bogeymen of ignorance and neglect," in the latter regard commenting that "buildings are callously allowed to fall into disrepair as a prelude to destruction" – and Edward Carson's birthplace in Harcourt Street, Dublin, is not the only example! Mr. Ahern rightly praised the efforts of many public-spirited individuals and of those voluntary altruistic organisations to which our urban and Big Houses heritage owes so much, the Irish Georgian Society and An Taisce. But Mr. Ahern's most quotable remark in these matters was "The wreckers' ball needs only to be swung once for something to be lost forever" – let us remember that.

And then there was the fuss about the dropping of History and Geography as compulsory subjects from the Junior Certificate curriculum. Horror of horrors! As a university teacher, your Hon. Editor has over the years often been shocked and sometimes appalled at the lack of knowledge of those two subjects among his students. One would think everyone would know the difference between the Pennines and the Apennines, between the Baltic states and the Balkan states, between Louis XIV and Louis XVI, Turlough and Rory O'Connor, Dermot

Mac Murrough and Art Mac Murrough Kavanagh, Hugh and Owen Roe O'Neill, the Tudors and the Stuarts, not to even mention the difference between the Fianna and the Fenians! Yes, we should insist that for a general education the teaching of History and Geography in the schools ought to be compulsory.

To finish with an account which appeared in *The Irish Times* of the 29th April 1996, of an exciting adventure undertaken by one of our better known conservation-minded Clare members, Oliver Moylan. It was ambiguously but well titled "West Clare trainspotter goes loco", and reads as follows:

An Ennis man was so passionately angry about the moving of an old steam engine to another location at the weekend that he staged a protest by sitting in the cab while it was lifted and transported to a new base in west Clare.

As a result he became the first passenger since 1961 to travel on the old west Clare locomotive.

Later, a bonfire greeted the arrival of the locomotive engine in Moyasta, where three miles of tracks had been laid. It is hoped that the engine, which was immortalised in song by Percy French's *Are You Right There Micheal?*, will be able to run again before the end of the year.

Mr Oliver Moylan of Ennis Chamber of Commerce and three members of the Ennis heritage group, Oidhreacht na hInse, who were opposed to the move, had positioned themselves in the engine cab in order to stop the removal of the engine from Ennis railway station to its new base in Moyasta, about 40 miles from Ennis.

Shortly before the locomotive was lifted by crane on to the transport truck, the Oidhreacht na hInse members alighted but Mr Moylan remained on board, disregarding warnings about his safety.

The locomotive left Ennis with Mr Moylan on board followed by a cavalcade of cars and supporters of the move.

The first stop on the journey west was at Fanny O'Dea's pub in Lissycasey, where Mr Joe Taylor of the West Clare Railway Committee presented Mr Moylan with a glass of hot whiskey "to show there are no hard feelings."

The locomotive reached Kilrush, near Moyasta, shortly before 8 p.m. where Mr Moylan addressed the waiting crowd before leaving the engine cab.

Your editor regrets that he missed out on getting *The Clare Champion* for that week or he might have been able to enlarge further on this 'historical' event and perhaps even illustrate it with a photo!

* * * *

The Society has much pleasure in acknowledging generous grants-in-aid towards publishing the following articles: from the National Heritage Council (through Dean Sirr of St. Mary's Cathedral) for B.J. Hodgkinson's article; from *Dúchas* for that by Seán Ó Nualláin and Eamon Cody; from University College Cork for those by Elizabeth Shee Twohig and by Rose M. Cleary; and from University College Galway for those by Breandán Mac Aodha and by Etienne Rynne.

Thanks are also due to Bernie Broderick for, as usual, helping with the typing involved.

The article reviewing the late Monsignor Ignatius Murphy's three-volume *Diocese of Killaloe*, and his two short articles on the Kilkee souterrain and on the Birr Stone, are all published, as promised, in the present *Journal*, although due to pressure of space the updating of the two latter is being retained for publication in the next number.