

OBITUARIES

KEVIN HANNAN (1917–1996)

At the launch of Kevin Hannan's *magnum opus*, namely *Limerick: Historical Reflections*,¹ which took place in the Kilmurry Lodge Hotel in 1966, one got the impression that half of Limerick seemed to be present. Kevin was well known from the multitude of articles which he had written for the *Limerick Chronicle* and the *Limerick Leader* over the years, yet we were rather thunderstruck with the reception he received that night, and delighted at the large number of copies which were sold. The book was almost out of print at birth.

Born in 1917, Kevin died in St. John's Hospital, Limerick, after a short illness in November, 1996. A list of his attainments is impressive: President of the Old Limerick Society; a Committee Member from 1976 to 1991, and from 1992 to 1996 a Vice - president of the Thomond Archaeological Society; a member of the Historical Monuments Committee of Limerick Corporation; a member of the Museum Committee; an executive of the Limerick Civic Trust. He was an associate editor of the *Old Limerick Journal*, and he also edited and was the main contributor to histories of the parishes of St. John's and St. Patrick's. Surprisingly, he wrote but little for our own *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*,² perhaps because he was committed to contributing so many articles on local history to the *Limerick Leader* and the *Limerick Chronicle* for the past thirty years; in the 1950s he was also the angling correspondent to the former newspaper. During the last four or five years of his life he was frequently heard on local radio programmes, and, furthermore, on a few occasions appeared on television ably defending Limerick. It is tempting to shower superlatives at Kevin - tailor, historian, angler, nature lover, lecturer, raconteur and artist, he excelled at all these. An aside: he once told me that he quit tailoring for a year or two in the 1950s to fish in the Feale and Shannon where, as he said himself, he often made more money in a week on the Feale than in a half-year at the tailoring!

Kevin had an encyclopaedic memory. With a little encouragement he would recite Michael Hogan's "Drunken Thady" - all seven hundred and something lines of it. He could stagger us all with his intimate historical knowledge, rapping out a barrage of dates relevant to Limerick's history as he guided us, and many other learned groups, around his beloved city - there was little in Lenihan's or Begley's histories of Limerick that he did not know. He even surprised us often with his unexpected display of familiarity with some English poet, and would charm us by reciting some rousing verses by Browning or Tennyson in his resonant voice.

Kevin's generosity and unselfishness in helping students with their projects on things Limerick were proverbial. They used him; he was a fool for Limerick's sake, often researching historical data for them, which, in reality, they should have eked out for themselves.

¹I hope to review this book in the next *Journal*.

²"The Theatre in Limerick" - 32 (1990), 75–82; "The Cat with Two Tails" - 34 (1992), 64–66.

But I like to remember Kevin as a human being with his little faults and failings like us all. Though for many years an Officer of our Society, he had no great interest in archaeology. He drew the line at prehistory - pottery shards, quernstones, amber beads, flint flakes, Beaker pots, and all such he left for others to discuss. He was out of touch with much of modernism and post-modernism. He shook his head at modern sculpture such as is now occasionally found in Limerick streets, and 'daubs' he christened most impressionist art. Yet, he was usually sound enough in his judgements.

I believe he was happiest when he was among friends, correcting and contradicting them. And as his friends, we too were happiest when we had the privilege of his delightful company: Kevin is missed by many besides his two daughters and five sons, to whom we extend our earnest sympathy.

PADDY LYSAGHT

The Society also tenders its condolences and sincerest sympathies to the relatives and friends of the following members who died in 1996:

BRIAN BONNER, Salesian College, Pallaskenry, Co. Limerick.
ANN CLERY, Ballycummin, Mungret, Co. Limerick.
THOMAS COFFEY, 32 The Crescent, Lifford, Ennis, Co. Clare.
MICHAEL GILLIGAN, "Avondale", Ballysimon Road, Limerick.
GEORGE KLEISER, 24 Thomas Street, Limerick.
SEÁN MacAMHLAOIBH, "An Cnocáin", An Caisleán Nua, Co. Luimní.
ANNE NEILL, 8 Westfield Park, North Circular Road, Limerick.
MAGORIE O'SULLIVAN, "Loreto", Corbally, Limerick.
THOMAS SHEAHAN, "Kilcornan", North Circular Road, Limerick.
HILDA SHORTEN, "Aylesbury", North Circular Road, Limerick.

MAY THEY REST IN PEACE

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The seven lectures and ten outings during the year were popular and reasonably well attended. The weather it would seem, is the arbiter for our half-day and evening outings: a fine evening and the crowd is almost too large for the narrow boreens and cul de sacs in which we often find ourselves; a wet and windy evening and only the hardy and the committed souls will brave the elements. Above all it was a year of two quality outings. Our own Professor Rynne exceeded himself, if such is possible, organising and conducting the April 19th to the 13th excursion to the Isle of Man. And the four-day outing in September organised by our President, Rev. John Leonard, was, in the opinion of all on the outing, the most successful and best organised one for many years — praises galore and not a hiccup or grumble of note. Details of both below.

At the Committee Meetings, which were well attended, among the many issues discussed was Fr. Donagh O'Malley's suggestion that a plaque be erected near the site of the Franciscan Abbey on the new road between Baal's bridge and Athlunkard Street, where so many burials, presumably belonging to the Abbey, were discovered. We wrote to the city manager informing him of our request. We were agreeably informed that Glenbrohane church will not be demolished as planning permission to do so has been withdrawn. We have recommended that whatever repairs may be necessary should be carried out with tact, so as not to destroy the character of this quaint and ornate building. Several ideas were voiced as to how the old and now vacant church of St. John's could be secured against vandalism. The Summerville Avenue fountain has still eluded our best efforts to have it transported and erected at its original location on the dock road.

Sadly the year was marred by the death on the 11th of November of Kevin Hannan, a vice-president of our society and a renowned historian of the city. Most of all, our Committee members will sadly miss him. He was our mentor on all things concerning Limerick, and his stentorian criticisms of many of our more mundane thoughts and suggestions often gave us pause. If it were not a rather outworn cliché, it is tempting to pin Ó Crohán's accolade to the Blasket Islander's on Kevin.

LECTURES

17th January - "The Limerick Jewish Community".

Liam Irwin, History Dept., Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

20th February - Annual General Meeting with lecture by Judith Hill on "Public Monuments in 19th century Ireland".

3rd March - Annual Social at University Club, Plassey House, University of Limerick, where Ald. Jim Kemmy, T.D., Mayor of Limerick, spoke on "In search of John Francis O'Donnell", a much neglected Limerick poet.

15th April - This lecture on "Excavations at King John's Castle" took place at the Castle by kind permission of Shannon Castle Banquets. The lecture was given by Ken Wiggins, Archaeologist, who had carried out the excavations.

16th October - "Bronze Age Metallurgy in Munster".

Dr. Billy O'Brien, Dept. of Archaeology, U.C.G.

8th November - "Death and Burial in the Middle Ages".

John Bradley, Dept. of Archaeology, U.C.D.

2nd December - "Twentieth Century View of Limerick City".
Hugh Murray, FRIAI, of Murray O'Laoire Associates, Architects.

OUTINGS

9th-13th April - The Isle of Man

Organisers: Anne Yeoman and Prof. Etienne Rynne

Speaker: Prof. Etienne Rynne, Dept. of Archaeology, U.C.G.

12th May (full day) - North Cork Houses

Organiser: Marie Condon

Speaker: Liam Irwin, History Dept. Mary Immaculate College, Limerick.

22nd May (evening) - Mount Ievers, Sixmilebridge, Co. Clare

Organiser and Speaker: Bill McInerney.

16th June (full day) - Birr town and castle, and Clonfert Cathedral

Organiser: Paddy Lysaght.

Speakers: Margaret Hogan and Christy Cunniffe.

30th June (half day) - Inis Cealtra, Co. Clare

Organiser: Cian O'Carroll

Speaker: Professor Liam de Paor.

10th July (evening) - North Circular Road, Limerick

Organiser and Speaker: Tony Browne

28th July (half day) - Shannon Grove and Kenry

Organiser and Speaker: Tony Browne

18th August (half-day) - Knockaderry Area

Organiser and Speaker: John Cussen

1st September (half-day) - Rearcross and Vicinity

Organiser and Speaker: Larry Walsh, Curator, Limerick City Museum.

18th - 21st September - Dublin area:

Wed 18th: - The Royal Hospital and War Memorial at Islandbridge; The Masonic Hall, Molesworth St; The National Museum.

Thurs. 19th: - Provost's House, Trinity College; Ely House; Newman House and University Church; Iveagh House (Dept. of Foreign Affairs).

Friday 20th: - Arbour Hill - 1916 Leaders' Burial Place; Áras an Uachtaráin; The King's Inns, No. 9 Henrietta St; Rotunda Chapel; Belvedere House; M/s Desirée Shortt's house, North Great Denmark St; The Writer's Museum, followed by dinner at the Chapter One Restaurant.

Saturday 21st: - Government Buildings; Office of the Taoiseach and Cabinet Room; Rathfarnham and Drimnagh Castles.

Organiser: V. Rev. John Leonard, *President.*

PADDY LYSAGHT

