

## Book Reviews

Colum Hourihane, **Gothic Art in Ireland 1169-1550**, Yale University Press, London, 2003, xii+187pp. ISBN 0 300 09435 3. Price Stg. £45.

The word Gothic lacks precision referring either to a period roughly corresponding to the late middle ages or more specifically to buildings and artwork produced at that time. In Ireland it has rarely been used in the latter sense and then largely in a pejorative sense. Colum Hourihane argues that this is due to its introduction as part of the cultural dimension of the Anglo-Norman incursion and the church reform movement of the twelfth century. It was perceived in its own time and subsequently as an outside intrusion and a poor substitute for the native genius as represented in the 'Golden Ages' which preceded it. Even in its own terms it was seen as a debased version of the international style, a view strengthened when it merged with native traditions to create a particular insular style. The main aim of the author is to demonstrate the falsity of this view and show the value and vitality of this arm of Irish heritage.

The historical background and general features of the style are outlined initially. Its earliest surviving appearance is in architecture though he accepts the view of Tim O'Neill that this may not have been the first use of the style in Ireland. Subsequently it was used in sculpture, metalwork, frescos, tiles, ivories and manuscripts. Some of this material may have been imported as were the small number of vestments which survive. Sculpture was executed in stone, wood and alabaster. The author characterises Irish Gothic as rational and logical, conforming to a fairly rigid set of rules and differing little in either medium or location. He divides the style into two broad periods: an early period up to the middle of the fourteenth century, strongly influenced by English forms and a later period with a more complex adaptation of the style often merged with the older native artistic tradition. Only architecture and sculpture are represented in the first period whereas all the media are used subsequently and are geographically more widespread. The accession of Elizabeth I in 1558 is suggested as marking the end of the Gothic period in Ireland though the author somewhat confusingly also chooses the Miosach shrine as demonstrating the end of the tradition, not making it clear that it is a later reworking of this original 12<sup>th</sup> century object that he refers to and misdating it to 1536. Both points are, it should be said, correctly treated later in the work. The next chapter provides a useful survey of the historiography of the subject and given the paucity of the material much space is given over to seeking reasons for this. There is a certain amount of repetitiveness in the argument, essentially that scholars were seduced by the masterpieces of the pre-invasion period and saw them as more essentially Irish. He feels that this attitude has still not been eliminated as instanced by the continuing relative neglect of the subject and the failure to use the term Gothic for the period or the style or indeed the new gallery in the National Museum devoted to this art, which is simply titled 'Late Medieval Art'.

An entire chapter, titled 'Cashel of the Cathedral' is devoted to the sculpture of this much noted but hitherto largely unstudied building. It dates from the thirteenth century and is unusual in having relatively little subsequent alteration, either in medieval or Victorian times, as is the case with the other large Irish cathedrals. The grotesque carvings in the choir, with their unrelenting concentration on evil and vice, are expertly discussed with excellent accompanying photographs of their details and related examples from other churches. Their location in the upper areas, out of sight of viewers is noted, as is the use of incised lines and often extended tongues to emphasise their demonic aspect. The carvings on the capitals, dismissed by some scholars as crude, are reassessed by the author who emphasises their detail and variety. The strange carving of an owl attacking a human head on



a gargoyle on the tower over the crossing is also discussed and illustrated. An interpretation of the forces of evil attacking the virtuous is suggested. A full inventory of all the sculpture is provided in an appendix

Three more specialised chapters are devoted to Decorated Portals, the Pelican as a motif and Metalworking. The well-known examples of magnificently carved doorways at Clontuskert, Clonfert and Clonmacnois cathedral are discussed in detail. A panel at Clontuskert showing two yales with interlocking necks, a motif from manuscript illumination, is paralleled on a cornice table at Holycross Abbey and intriguingly on one of the wooden misericords in St. Mary's cathedral, Limerick. A carving of a swan on the latter is also mentioned for its rarity, only two other examples of this motif are known. The carving of St. Francis on the Clonmacnois doorway is paralleled with the examples from Ennis, Askeaton and Adare friaries, the latter incidentally confused with the Trinitarian priory in the index. The O'Dea crozier, now in the Hunt Museum and here termed the Limerick crozier, is highlighted both because it is the only surviving example of a Gothic Irish crozier and for its unique pelican motif. This symbolic representation of the pelican feeding her young from her own blood is regarded as the most graphic and accomplished in Irish metalwork of the period.

The final chapter deals with the fifteenth century and what is termed the 'Gaelic Revival in Gothic Irish art'. This is paralleled with the nineteenth century 'Celtic Revival' and the author argues that both were linked to the pre-Norman past and were perceived as being essentially nationalistic. While this thesis might not find favour with all historians, of the medieval or the modern periods of Irish history, it is an interesting argument that art was politically imbued with the aim of reviving a cultural identity that had been weakened or lost through conquest and colonisation. The main difference was that unlike the later attempt to simply copy or replicate the past, the medieval process involved a greater merging of the existing tradition with the older one. Manuscript material provides the best example of this while in architecture it is argued that the tower houses are the best exemplars.

This is a pioneering work, tackling a subject which has been neglected up to now. Indeed the author felt the need to state in his preface that Gothic art does actually exist in Ireland. While excellent work on individual aspects of this heritage has been undertaken within the past thirty years, there has been no attempt to provide a broad survey. This book, exhaustively researched, extensively illustrated and written in a clear accessible style, triumphantly fills that gap. As the author acknowledges no single book can hope to cover comprehensively all the art of this entire period but he has provided an excellent exemplar for others to follow.

**Liam Irwin**

Kenneth Wiggins. **Siege Mines and Underground Warfare**, Shire Publications Ltd., Princes Risborough, 2003, 56pp. ISBN 0-7478-0547-4. Price Stg. £5.99.

In the study of warfare, sieges have always had a particular fascination. By their very nature they lasted a considerable amount of time whereas great battles, particularly before the advent of new forms of warfare in the nineteenth century, were frequently decided in a day. In addition ordinary civilians were frequently involved in sieges and the sufferings of women and children in particular gave an extra dimension to the suffering involved. Finally the psychological pressures imposed on not just the besieged but also the besiegers themselves made the subject particularly interesting.

The use of mining as a tactic in siege warfare goes back into prehistory. Carvings from ninth century BCE Assyria depict this and a treatise on the subject was written by in fourth century BCE



Greece. As late as the First World War, mining was used as a military device, most notably in the capture of the Messines Ridge in Belgium in 1917. The work of WW1 miners is graphically recreated in the best-selling novel by Sebastian Faulks, *Birdsong*.

Kenneth Wiggins traces the history of this military technique in a clear, concise and expert manner. Ranging from continental Europe and Britain to the Crusades and America he outlines the variety of ways in which warfare underground was employed. His first mention of Ireland relates to the Nine Years War when covered mining under portable shelters was employed. This was not always successful as the resourceful defenders of Liscaghan castle in Kerry showed in 1600 when the defenders sallied out and demolished the shelter. The first documented use of gallery mining in Ireland was by Sir Charles Wilmot at the siege of Listowel castle in November 1600 and his threat to explode a mine under the castle led to its surrender. Interesting one of these tunnels was uncovered during drainage work at the site in 1986. Sieges played an important role in the warfare in Ireland during the 1640s arising from what the author, echoing the modern euphemism, describes as the 'outbreak of trouble in Ulster' in 1641. The best documented and archaeologically tested example of deep gallery mining was at the siege of Limerick castle in 1642, the subject of a full scale monograph by the author, which is summarised here. He emphasises how old fashioned the techniques used were though in 1645 contemporary continental techniques appear to have been employed at the siege of Duncannon fort in Co. Wexford through the assistance provided to the Confederates by a French engineer.

Mining continued to be used in warfare throughout Europe during the eighteenth century and greater destruction was achieved by the invention of a supercharged mine known the 'globe of compression'. With the advent of the nineteenth century the nature of warfare changed though mining was still employed in the American Civil War and in some of the Imperial wars in China and India. After the First World War, mining ceased to be used in military conflicts.

For anyone interested in this subject, particularly those seeking a short, reliable and readable introduction, this book can be highly recommended. As always with Shire publications the standards of production are excellent. There are forty illustrations from a wide variety of sources which help explain and illuminate the text. An up to date guide to further reading is included and there is a good index.

**Morgan McCloskey**

Noreen Higgins, **Tipperary's Tithe War 1830-1838**, St. Helen's Press, Tipperary, 2002, 289pp. ISBN 0-9542754-1-1. Price €15.

Payment of a tenth of what one produced each year, from which the word tithe is derived, is based upon a biblical exhortation. While this originally was to be given to the poor, it became the practice in the organised Christian church to use this as the main method of supporting the clergy. In post-Reformation Ireland the majority Roman Catholic population were obliged to make this payment to the clergy of the Established Church. In many cases laymen became entitled to these payments which further fuelled resentment. Originally all tithes were given in kind, one tenth of the actual agricultural produce was handed over, but by the early nineteenth century this was rare and tithes were a cash payment. Tithes were only levied on land, which in a predominantly agricultural Ireland involved a greater proportion of the population than in Britain. Due to the exemption of grassland used for cattle grazing in 1735, most tithe was levied on tillage crops and in Munster on potatoes, with the result that it was the tenant farmers, cottiers and labourers who paid most.



Assessment and collection of this tax was complex but normally involved an evaluator who assessed the amount to be paid and a proctor who actually collected it. Sometimes the tithes were leased to a tithe farmer who added a percentage for his expenses thus exacerbating the burden. Resistance to tithe payment grew in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries and led in the 1820s to a scheme whereby the payment would be levied more widely in each parish and a set figure agreed for a twenty-one year period. However this 'tithe composition' did not solve the problem as it was not compulsory and by 1830 only 60% of parishes had adopted it. Even where it did operate the basic sense of injustice at paying a tax to a church which did not provide any service remained among the Roman Catholic population and when an agricultural depression led to a decline in farm incomes, a full scale opposition or 'tithe war' began in 1830. After eight years of social unrest, violence and intimidation the issue was finally resolved in 1838 through the subsuming of tithe into the rent paid to the landlord.

Tipperary was one of the main centres of the tithe war with widespread violence, murders of clergymen and tithe agents and a strong political dimension. The author provides a detailed study of the county during this disturbed period. Her first chapter provides a general context, explaining clearly the underlying tensions in Irish society both at national and local level. This is followed by a useful background to the tithe issue itself, outlining its complicated history and operation prior to 1830. The main focus of the study is on the years 1831-4 and is written in chapters with generalised titles which are subdivided into separate sections which deal not just with Tipperary but stray at will into neighbouring counties or discuss government attitudes and responses. The titles given to the chapters do not mirror in all cases their actual contents. There are comprehensive accounts of meetings, acts of violence and legal proceedings. One of the more interesting trials was that of Joseph Pennefather, son of the rector of Newport, who was a vehement anti-tithe activist. Official sources, newspapers and folklore are employed to excellent effect in recovering these activities and particularly interesting contrasts are highlighted between the perceptions of the authorities and those of the ordinary people. Chapter 7 is largely a general account of the various parliamentary inquiries, reports and legislation in the years 1832-3 punctuated randomly with paragraphs about events in Tipperary. The entire period 1834-8 is covered in the final chapter which is again an amalgam of discussion of events in the county with accounts of official attempts to find a solution. The author regards the outcome of the tithe war as a victory even though payment for the Anglican clergy was to continue in a new form. She acknowledges that there was widespread Catholic dissatisfaction and that anti-tithe demonstrations continued for some time. However she points out that the large arrears of tithe which had accumulated during the protest were written off, the old system with its tithe farmers, agents and proctors was abolished and a major reform of the Established Church was undertaken.

The book is well illustrated with twenty-one illustrations and eight maps. There are ten appendices, mostly of source material and useful glossaries of persons and terms though one might quibble with some of the latter, particularly relating to vestry and cottiers. There is a comprehensive bibliography which shows the wide range of sources consulted. Some printed primary source material is included under secondary sources. There is an index both of persons and places. While the work will be of greatest interest to Tipperary people, its treatment of the wider political and social context and its clear explanations of many of the technical terms and aspects of this topic gives it a wider relevance. The author is to be warmly congratulated on the diligence and comprehensiveness of her work and for her initiative in making what was an MA thesis available to the wider public.

Mary Ryan



Daniel McCarthy, **Ireland's Banner County, Clare from the Fall of Parnell to the Great War 1890-1918**, Saipan Press, Ennis, 2002, xi+213pp. ISBN 0-9544087-05. Price €40.

Clare has been an exceptionally fortunate county in terms of its historiography. From the great scholarly work in the nineteenth century of James Frost, Philip O'Dwyer and T. J. Westropp to the twentieth century contributions of Ignatius Murphy, David Fitzpatrick and Ciarán Ó Murchadha, the social, political and religious history of the county has been extensively studied. Too add to this embarrassment of riches, we now have Daniel McCarthy's detailed study of the period 1890-1918 which further enhances our understanding of this crucial period in Irish history.

The first section provides a valuable study of the county in the period leading up to the outbreak of the First World War in 1914. Separate treatments are given to the rural and urban areas, the latter focusing on Ennis, Ennistymon, Killaloe and Kilrush. The structures of rural and urban society, administrative and political organisation, agrarian unrest and the development of nationalism are comprehensively treated. The author draws heavily on existing published material for much of this and integrates it successfully with his own research in local newspapers, police and government reports.

Section two concentrates on the impact of the Great War on the county. There is a short but valuable discussion of Unionism. Clare had the highest percentage of Catholics in the country [over 98%] but Unionists united to oppose Home Rule. The main leaders of this movement were H. V. McNamara of Ennistymon House and Colonel O'Callaghan-Westropp of Lismehane. McNamara caused much dismay in August 1911 when he claimed at a Unionist rally in Co. Down that Protestants were being persecuted in Clare. A number of his fellow religionists publicly repudiated his claim.

Recruitment in the county and the experiences of Clare soldiers in the trenches are both discussed and a list of those who died is provided in an appendix. More than 500 lost their lives with many others permanently disabled. The author notes that the local authority forbade the inscription of regimental badges on gravestones of these men, a tangible symbol of the limbo into which this aspect of Irish history was consigned after the war. Due to a campaign by Limerick man Tadhg Moloney, Secretary of the *Royal Munster Fusiliers' Association*, this restriction was removed by Clare County Council in 1998. The role of the church, particularly that of Bishop Fogarty and individual priests, is given fair and balanced treatment. The impact of the 1916 Rising, the election of DeValera in 1917 and the growth in Sinn Féin popularity are also briefly discussed. The resounding success of Sinn Féin in the 1918 general election where in Clare DeValera and Brian O'Higgins, the poet and principal of the Irish College at Carrigaholt, were returned unopposed provides the conclusion to this work.

The text is enlivened by useful maps, charts and photographs. A wide range of source material, newspapers, documents and secondary works have been utilised. The structure of the book is somewhat haphazard and it would have benefited from a longer and clearer conclusion which might have more clearly outlined a general argument. However those interested in the county during this turbulent and formative period will enjoy and learn from reading the work.

Mary McNamara

Geraldine Stout, **Newgrange and the Bend of the Boyne**, Cork University Press, Cork, 2002, 233pp. ISBN 1 85918 341 7. Price €40.

The bend of the Boyne refers to the detour which the river makes, near the village of Slane in Co. Meath, on its eastward course to the Irish sea. Here it is forced, due to the geological obstruction



of an elevated ridge, to change direction abruptly and run southwards and parallel to the ridge until it moves northwards again through a glacial gorge. Within this small area settlement has evolved over five thousand years and left on the landscape a wide and impressive range of archaeological monuments. In recognition of this important heritage, and the impressive passage tombs of which Newgrange is pre-eminent, the area was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO in 1993.

Geraldine Stout has been involved with the area for more than twenty-five years beginning as an archaeology student working in the summer on the excavations at Knowth conducted by Professor George Eogan of UCD. She utilises her own research and that of a wide range of other scholars in the fields of archaeology, history and historical geography to explain how this special landscape has evolved from Stone Age times to the present day. The book has grown out of a special case study written for the *Atlas of the Irish Rural Landscape* which was published in 1997 and is intended to be the first in a series of such expansions into full scale books of these case studies.

There is an initial detailed discussion of the area showing how geology, climate and biology have combined to create its particular character. The author argues for a sizeable settlement in the Mesolithic period. This is based less on clear evidence, though Bann flakes were identified at Newgrange, and more on the presence of suitable resources and the proximity to securely identified late Mesolithic sites in counties Dublin and Louth. The earliest incontrovertible evidence for human settlement has come from houses under and beside the Neolithic tombs at Knowth and Newgrange. The earliest date to 3900BC and were constructed of timber on a simple rectangular plan. There was associated evidence of mixed farming activity and these sites indicate permanent settlements at a very early stage of the Irish Neolithic. The broad similarity in early Neolithic sites throughout Ireland is noted as is their close relationship to early farming evidence from Britain and Atlantic Europe. While there is some evidence of continuity from the Mesolithic, the essential components of this new way of life, animals and cereals were imported, most likely from Britain based on ceramic evidence. The most remarkable achievements of these settlers, the passage tombs, are expertly discussed in an enviably clear and concise manner. This section and the following more detailed discussions of the three great tombs at Newgrange, Knowth and Dowth should be recommended reading for anyone seeking an authoritative assembly of current knowledge based on the excavation of twenty five tombs over the past forty years.

The author is critical of the restoration work undertaken by Professor M.J. O'Kelly at Newgrange. She doubts that the white quartz wall which he constructed, taking the advice of an engineer's analysis of the collapsed cairn material, is correct. While questioning this technically, she seems also to have an instinctive dislike of its 'glaringly modern appearance', a reaction it must be said shared by many. She concludes that 'it is difficult to imagine that the monument could ever have appeared like this in prehistoric times' and claims somewhat imprecisely that 'many have argued for its removal'. It is also usefully pointed out that while the roof box structure which facilitates the illumination of the chamber by the rising sun at the winter solstice is unique, a similar effect is obtained at two sites on Orkney where the rays enter directly through the tomb entrance. This section of the work also includes brief discussion of the Newgrange pit circle and Monknewtown henge, both Bronze Age ritual sites.

The introduction to the section on the early historic period has the startlingly bald assertion that St Patrick began his mission in the Boyne valley though this is properly qualified subsequently and the attempt to substitute Knowth for Slane as the site of Patrick's paschal fire ignores the likelihood that this is a metaphorical literary device rather than a historical event. The discussion of the rich early Christian heritage of the area is followed by a comprehensive treatment of the medieval landscape. The role of the area as a theatre for the major wars of the seventeenth century is discussed:



Cromwell's visit is treated with a welcome restraint and there is an understandable extended treatment of the battle of the Boyne. All the recoverable features associated with the battle site are identified and mapped using documents, maps and paintings. In contrast the eighteenth century was a time of stability and economic development and the creation of new landed estates profoundly affected the landscape and gave it the essential form which still survives today. This process is comprehensively delineated and agricultural and industrial development outlined. There is a rather brief discussion of religion, tiresomely labelled the penal landscape and containing the misleading statement that the Church of Ireland was only 'established' by law in the reign of George I. There is a strong focus on the built heritage of the region in the nineteenth century while the twentieth century section focuses on how modern farming has impacted on the landscape. There is also an interesting discussion on the line of defensive pillboxes erected during WW2 while the final section tackles the difficult issues which arise from the balance to be achieved between protecting this unique landscape and facilitating social and economic development.

The book is extensively illustrated with excellent quality photographs, maps and drawings. These are comprehensively explained; indeed the captions complement and in places elaborate on the main text. Paintings inspired by the area by modern artists such as Nano Reid, Richard Moore and Raymond Balfe are reproduced as well as work by earlier painters like Joseph Tudor and James George O'Brien. Poems by Francis Ledwidge and Seamus Heaney sit somewhat uncomfortably beside paeans to the Knowth Troweller and George Eogan, an indulgence for which the author may easily be forgiven. But it is the excellent text; clear, scholarly, authoritative, comprehensive and balanced which makes this such an outstanding work. The author has set an exactingly high standard for those who will follow in this series.

**Margaret O'Brien**

Francis Costello, **The Irish Revolution and its Aftermath 1916-1923, Years of Revolt**, Irish Academic Press, Dublin, 2002, 452pp. ISBN: 0716526336. Price €45.

Michael Hopkinson, **The Irish War of Independence**, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 2002, 274pp. ISBN: 071713010X. Price: €30.

Joost Augusteijn, (editor), **The Irish Revolution 1913-1923**, Palgrave Press, Hampshire, 2002, 248pp. ISBN: 0333982266. Price €25.25

Francis Costello is best known for his highly regarded biography of Terence MacSwiney, Lord Mayor of Cork whose death from hunger strike in Brixton prison in 1920 aroused universal sympathy for Ireland's cause and hastened the search for a political settlement which culminated in the signing of the Treaty. His latest work, is claimed to be 'the first full length analysis of the Irish revolution in its totality, taking into account the wide range of social, economic and political developments as well as the IRA's campaign of guerrilla warfare and the British response to it'. While one might quibble with the publisher's description of his book, any new study of this crucial period in modern Irish history is to be welcomed. Much of the book is taken up with a discussion of significant aspects of the struggle for Irish independence and included in the useful appendices are a series of historical documents beginning with the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 and ending with the Good Friday Agreement of 1998.

The question any prospective reader is bound to ask is whether there is anything revealed within which will radically alter our perception of what occurred. One can only reply that Costello adopts the standard line that the bitter Anglo-Irish conflict, from 1919 to 1921, was justified by the



negotiated settlement reached in December 1921 and rejects the argument of revisionist historians, Roy Foster being perhaps the most prominent, that the bloody catalogue of assassination and war during this period was not necessary to achieve this end.

Both Hopkinson and Costello blame Lloyd George for much of the violence which occurred, arguing that if he had taken a more consistent approach to the situation, peace would have come much sooner. The latter point refers to the 'dual policy' of coercion and conciliation which the British Government adopted throughout the conflict. Indeed, it is worth pointing out that the final conciliatory gesture of the offer of a Treaty by Lloyd George was counterbalanced with the coercive threat of a war should the Irish delegation refuse to sign the document. Hopkinson finds Lloyd George's handling of the situation to be particularly unimpressive, strongly arguing in an article in Augusteijn's book that 'Lloyd George does not merit the favourable historical press he has generally received on the Irish Question'.

Costello saves the best quote for last when, towards the end of the epilogue, he cites the words of Edward Carson to Winston Churchill in the House of Commons on 24 April 1914:

If Home Rule is to pass, much as I detest it, and little as I will take the responsibility for the passing of it, my earnest hope, and indeed I could say, my earnest prayer would be that the Government of Ireland for the South would prove and might prove such a success in the future, notwithstanding all our anticipations, that it might even be for the interests of Ulster itself to move forward that Government, and come in under it and form one unit in relation to Ireland. May I say something more than that? I would be glad to see such a state of things arising in Ireland in which you would find mutual confidence and good will between all classes in Ireland as would lead to a stronger Ireland in a federal scheme.

Hopkinson's book focuses on the events which occurred between the Soloheadbeg Ambush on 21 January 1919 and the Truce which came into effect on 11 July 1921. The author is the first to acknowledge, however, that unlike his expertly researched book on the Irish Civil War aptly entitled *Green against Green*, his current offering is far from being the definitive work on the War of Independence since, much to his annoyance, all the British and Irish records dealing with the period have not yet been released. He also did not have access to the archives of the Bureau of Military History which was finally opened to the public in March 2003. The study of this newly released material will greatly enhance our understanding of the 1913-1921 period. Nevertheless, Hopkinson succeeds in providing us with a fresh picture of the complex negotiations which took place between Britain and Ireland during the conflict, as well as an interesting account of how both sides conducted their respective campaigns. There is an interesting quote in the book from Peter O'Connell, a Meath Volunteer who, in response to the criticism that his county was not particularly active during the conflict, commented 'just because we were an army didn't mean we had to go round shooting people all the time. We could get our way by other means. We didn't want to kill anyone'.

The only major error I could find in Hopkinson's book was where he mistakenly identifies the murdered Mayor of Limerick, George Clancy, as George Cleary. The author does nevertheless interestingly argue that Limerick provided an excellent example of 'the successes and limitations of guerrilla warfare in small town /rural settings'.

Costello refers frequently and annoyingly to Dáil Éireann as 'the Dáil Éireann' a matter which should have been cleared up at the initial proof reading stage. As a native of Newcastle West, I was gratified to see that it had merited a mention in Costello's book when he discusses the Republican or Dáil Courts which operated during the conflict as part of Sinn Féin's plan to undermine British rule



in Ireland by setting up a rival administration. In particular, he uses Seán Brouder's recollections on the matter:

I can vividly recall the first sitting of the Sinn Féin court. It was held in the upper room of the Carnegie Library, Newcastlewest. Father Punch, who, like all the young priests of the time, enthusiastically supported Sinn Féin, presided and was supported by his fellow judges...Among the litigants, I remember the committee of the West Limerick creamery.

Not since Desmond Williams edited *The Irish Struggle 1916-1926* almost forty years ago has someone seen fit to issue a collection of essays by distinguished historians dealing with the subject of Ireland's struggle for Independence. Joost Augusteijn, author of the highly regarded study, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the War of Independence, 1916-1921*, admirably seeks to redress this situation with the publication of a highly varied collection of expertly researched articles dealing with propaganda, electoral politics, constitutional politics, underground government, military motivation, the role of women, the part played by socialism, plans to commemorate those who had participated in the 'revolution' and the appropriateness of the term 'revolution' itself to describe what occurred between 1913 and 1923. All three books deserve to have a wide readership, as each new perspective on that turbulent ten year period which began with the formation in 1913 of a military force dedicated to achieving Irish independence and ended with the partial achievement of that goal enriches our collective understanding of what will surely remain a highly complex and much contested era in modern Irish history.

**Frank Bouchier-Hayes**

Brian Williams and Sarah Gormley, **Archaeological Objects from County Fermanagh**, Blackstaff Press, Belfast, 2002, xii+163pp. ISBN 0 85640 714 3. Price €15.99.

This work, as its title makes clear, is a catalogue of archaeological artifacts from the county. It was initially compiled in the 1980s by Brian Williams as part of the archaeological survey of the county by the Northern Irish Department of the Environment. In 1998 it was decided to publish it and Sarah Gormley updated and checked the manuscript while Brian Scott acted as editor. More than one thousand items are included and the material is presented in two separate sections, a general catalogue and one specifically devoted to artifacts discovered during archaeological excavations in the county since 1930. This latter catalogue is not a comprehensive finds-list for each excavation but does provide a representation of the types of objects recovered. While objects in private hands are included it is accepted that not all such material has been tracked down.

Each object is described and dated where possible and only pre 1800 items are included. The provenance where known is indicated and its present location identified. The catalogues are alphabetical based on townland name and the Ordnance Survey sheet numbers and Irish Grid map references are given where known. References to any published material are provided. The fact that Enniskillen is given as the find place for a great number of the objects may be misleading, particularly for items found in the nineteenth century as many collectors and dealers lived there. The other frequent provenance is around lakes, hardly surprising in this county, but care needs to be taken in assuming that meant human settlement in such areas. While this may be the case, draining and dredging may also account for this bias in location.



The listings are preceded by a valuable introductory essay on the history and topography of the county from the Mesolithic to late Medieval times. While finds of Mesolithic date are scarce, they do show that there was human occupation in the area at that time. No Neolithic settlement sites have been found but the one hundred and thirty three polished stone axes recovered testify to the activities of the first farmers. All four types of megalithic tombs are found in the county and the typical range of Neolithic material has been recovered from those excavated. Good examples of Food Vessel pottery and Urns testify to Bronze age settlement as do the weapons and tools of bronze and gold objects recovered. Two lunulae are known in addition to dress fasteners and ring money. As elsewhere in Ireland, little Iron Age material survives but this lacuna is compensated for by the rich finds from the succeeding Early Christian era. Pre-eminent among these are the two fine metal book shrines, the Soiscél Molaise and the Lough Erne shrine, both now in the National Museum of Ireland. Relatively little material has been recovered from the county's estimated surviving six hundred ring forts and one hundred and twenty crannogs. The Clogher Cross, now in Monaghan County Museum is claimed for Fermanagh as it was kept at Gewalt church near Ederny. Other medieval finds are log boats, crannog ware, rotary quernstones and spindle whorls.

This chapter is extensively illustrated with maps, drawings and photographs. There is also an extensive bibliography and comprehensive index. While primarily of interest to people from the county and specialists, this is a valuable record and research resource. One would hope that the counties in the North Munster area might at some stage be as fortunate in having similar work undertaken in this region.

**Bridget Burke**