

Book Reviews

Eamonn Gaynor, **Memoirs of a Tipperary Family: The Gaynors of Tyone 1887-2000**, Geography Publications, Dublin, 2004, 464pp. ISBN 0 906602 270. No price given.

As with Gaul in the time of Caesar, this book is divided into three parts and deals with the lives of three members of the Gaynor family, Fr Pat (1887-1949), his step-brother Seán (1894-1964) and Eamonn, the latter's son, born in 1925 and the compiler of the work. Part one is comprised entirely of the personal memoir of Fr Pat, written in the years before his death, dealing with his early life, training for the priesthood in Maynooth and, in greatest detail, his involvement in Sinn Féin. His account ends abruptly in 1922 though some details of his later life are provided incidentally in Eamonn's own memoir. The section on Seán Gaynor deals with his role in the War of Independence and Civil War and is compiled from his own lengthy statement to the Bureau of Military History and from his letters and interviews, supplemented by the records of other contemporaries. Eamonn's very personal account provides a fascinating insight into the life and times of a priest in the second half of the twentieth century.

The short account of his early life provided by Pat reveals, quite unconsciously, much about the mentality of people from his class and time. The size of marriage dowries looms large as does the equally prized status symbol of having priests and, somewhat less glitteringly, nuns in the family. His mother died young, a tragedy which he regards as 'lucky for her' as it meant she avoided a life of hardship and poverty, and he was reared by his grandmother. At the age of four, having been impressed by the tall hat and clean boots of the local priest, he told his grandmother that he would like to be a priest and from that day onwards, she worked to achieve that end. The other strong influence in his life was towards Irish nationalism, from a family dislike of the RIC (an uncle had been summoned for badger baiting by one while another had the effrontery to try to court one of his aunts), landlords and, most vehemently, Queen Victoria. This latter prejudice, which he retained to the end of his life - she is the 'queen-bigot' in his memoir - was based on the widely believed myth that she had given a mere £5 for famine relief rather than her very substantial actual donation of £2,000.

In Maynooth, he became active in the Columban League, as the Gaelic League was called there, though he admits to never having achieved any fluency in the language, a contradiction not entirely unknown then or since. He provides some not very revealing portraits of men such as the professor (and very poor teacher) of Irish, Dr O'Hickey, dismissed for his criticisms of the failure to make Irish a compulsory subject for the National University of Ireland, Dr Mannix, then President of the college against whom the students staged a silent revolt in 1907 and Dr McGinty, senior dean, shown demonstrating the petty vindictiveness that seems to have been a characteristic of so many churchmen of that era. After his ordination, he spent three years in Glasgow and then returned to his own Killaloe diocese in 1914 as Diocesan Inspector for schools, his sole duty which gave him nearly five months holidays each year. His support for Sinn Féin continued to develop until his formal involvement in politics during the East Clare election of 1917.

The remainder of his memoir provides a detailed account of his political activity up to outbreak of the civil war, which he argues began in Limerick city in January 1922. For this and much more forthright, open and debatable opinions, his account is of great value for those interested in that era of Irish history as is the more detailed, and to this reviewer much more tedious, account of Seán Gaynor's role. To those who argue that the men of that generation had no interest in material reward for their actions, the letters given here detailing his campaign for the best available Old IRA pension and the casual mention that Todd Andrews, M.J. Costello and Frank Flannery serially created jobs for him,

after he sold his farm, provide a useful counter view.

Eamonn Gaynor grew up under the strong influence of both these men. As a boarder at St Flannan's college, he received visits, advice and - most appreciated - cakes and chocolates from his Reverend step-uncle. His experience of sexual abuse in the college from some of the older boys is treated very casually here though he acknowledges that some of them subsequently became priests and continued their activities. His decision to become a priest was partly influenced by his close relationship with Fr Pat but in a strange and unsettling parallel, he also had made this decision at the age of four. In danger of death from severe burns, he had been made to promise to become a priest by his Mercy nun aunt. While he feels that this did not unduly influence his later decision, the fact that this formidable lady frequently reminded him of his promise remains disconcerting and it is significant that it was the issue which troubled immediately prior to his ordination. His account of life in Maynooth is brief and somewhat disappointing, tending to confirm his uncle's view of his generation as dull and conformist.

After ordination he was sent to London and there are revealing accounts both of life there, especially among the Irish emigrants and of his own development as a person. His recall to teach at St. Flannan's coincided with the death of Fr Pat. At the funeral he was asked by a representative of the bishop to hand over his uncle's writings, which he understood to be the memoir of his youth, but having promised not to make this public for thirty years, he refused. This led to the cancellation of his new appointment and a chilling episode of humiliation visited on his parents by some of his priestly colleagues. This is just one of a number of examples of the petty and vindictive actions of bishops and those priests in positions of authority which seem to have been commonplace in the Irish catholic church of that period. Having returned to London for a further period he was eventually sent into exile of another kind within his home diocese, appointed to the parish of Cranny, a noted destination for priests in bad standing with their superiors and usually loved all the more for this by their parishioners.

It was as an antidote to the boredom here that his media career began, first as a contributor to *The Furrow* and *The Universe* and later, after a further stint in England and then as the first priest for the new town of Shannon, on RTE. After one television talk, having berated politicians for claiming credit for obtaining benefits for constituents to which they were entitled, he received a letter from Oliver J. Flanagan expressing his amusement at such naiveté and pointing out that even Jesus did favours for his friends, notably by raising Lazarus from the dead. The letter, a classic of its kind, is reproduced in full. In Shannon he tried to put into practice the ideals of Vatican Two, promoting lay involvement, ecumenism and a liberal interpretation of *Humane Vitae*. This was disapproved of by the many conservative secret societies within the church. His account of the influence of Opus Dei, Knights of Columbanus, Catenians and the Knights of Malta [the 'elite outfit of all' to be distinguished from the paramedics of popular experience] makes chilling reading.

Eventually he was removed from the parish and all his initiatives, a meaningful role for the laity, social services and inter-denominational dialogue were abandoned under the new parish priest, whose letter of welcome into the Knights of Columbanus on his appointment to the parish was inadvertently sent to his suspect curate. His final years as a priest were spent in the comfortable parish of Quin where he devoted most of his time to rearing greyhounds before finally leaving the priesthood in 1977. His belief that he would get a job in the vocational school sector, as it was not controlled by the church, proved unfounded, as no doubt Oliver J. Flanagan would have told him. He claims to know that at least two bishops ensured that he was not appointed to particular posts and he was forced to take a teaching job in England. His memoir ends somewhat abruptly at this point: his subsequent marriage, return to Ireland and his life for the last twenty years is not mentioned nor is there any explanation for this curious omission.

The book provides some valuable insights into the catholic church at the beginning and the middle

of the twentieth century and also has some interest for the era of the war of independence. The lives of the three Gaynor men - the women of the family remain shadowy figures - are not integrated in any successful way and it lacks a broader historical and sociological context. It is not always an easy book to read but it is enlivened by Eamonn's ability to select good anecdotes, among many, the description of whiskey drinking Knights of Malta as 'balls of malt' or the spirited response of a bikini-clad woman in Kilkee to the demand of the local priest that modesty demanded a one-piece suit, 'which piece do you want me to remove, Father?' but in this regard, as in all other matters Fr Pat emerges as by far the most interesting character, not least by his descriptions of many of his fellow priests as 'overgrown altar boys' and the idealised role-model French priest, Curé d'Ars, as nothing more than a 'pious ostrich'.

Tom O'Connor

Conleth Manning (ed.), **Excavations at Roscrea Castle: Archaeological Monographs 1**, Stationery Office, Dublin, 2003, 180pp, 100 plates, 52 figs. ISBN 0-7557-1431-8. Price €15.00.

This is the first in a new series of monographs from the Department of Environment, Heritage and Local Government. As a 'first' it has two functions, to do what it says on the cover and describe the excavations, and to set a standard for the whole series. Happily it has achieved both goals.

The book opens with a chapter on the history of the castle, which started life in 1213 as a royal castle, built in timber. Later in the century it was rebuilt in stone and passed into the hands of the Butler family, which held it for the remainder of the medieval period. In the early 18th century it changed hands and the Damer family built the large house in the courtyard, which bears their name. In 1798 it was leased as a barracks and in 1858 was purchased outright for military use then, after 1922, it became the property of the local authority. The chapter is well illustrated with the early maps and drawings one expects from this type of publication, but an added bonus is the group of three photos of soldiers and workmen inside the castle taken in 1853. One wonders if these are the earliest photographs from the town?

A detailed description of the castle takes up the second chapter, and a phasing of the whole complex follows on from this. So far the book, excepting a short history section by David Edwards, has been by Con Manning, the editor. The next chapter, by Jane Fenlon, is a description of the surviving 17th century plasterwork in the SW tower.

Four chapters, each describing the results of separate excavations by four different directors, then follow. Each of these chapters is a mini-report in its own right, with site description, finds section and discussion. The authors of these are, sequentially, the editor, Joanna Wren, Alan Hayden and Geraldine Stout, with the help of various experts in the finds sections. The main discoveries of the first two chapters are the pit prison inside the gatehouse and the drawbridge slots and pit at the entrance to the gatehouse. A well and the base of an earlier tower are the main features of the third excavation in and around the SE tower, while an external fosse by the SW tower is the main feature of the fourth. All these excavations were conducted as part of the conservation/restoration programme, which is described in the next chapter. The whole is then rounded off with a general discussion putting the whole of the work into its Irish and European context.

The strength of this book is that it brings together the results of a series of small excavations that would get lost if they were to be published individually in local journals. An especially wise decision, in this respect, was to include a summary of Geraldine Stout's work, which had already appeared in print twenty years ago. This makes the volume a fully comprehensive report on all the work at the castle and so justifies the monograph format. The whole is greater than the sum of its parts.

The book is lavishly and well illustrated throughout and the reconstruction drawings are especially welcome. There was only one extra illustration I would have asked for. In the reconstruction of the ground floor of the gatehouse a vault was constructed over the restored flanking walls of the central passage, yet the rooms to either side had timber ceilings, which seems an unusual arrangement. While mention is made of the evidence for the vault in at least two places in the text, a drawing or photograph showing the evidence would have been nice. However this does not detract from the whole and if this volume is the standard for the series then I look forward to forthcoming volumes in the series.

Brian Hodkinson

Heather A. King, **Clonmacnoise Studies Volume 2; Seminar Papers 1998**, Stationery Office, Dublin 2003, 221 pp, 149 figs. ISBN 0-7557-1793-7. Price €18.

The genesis of this volume was the seminar on Clonmacnoise held in 1998 to coincide with the launch of volume one of this series. The title of the volume, however, is a little misleading because, as the cover notes state, two papers given at the seminar will be published elsewhere while four of the eleven articles were not seminar papers.

The first paper, by Donald Murphy, is a report on excavations carried out 1999-2000 on the site of the new Bord Fáilte office. Two female burials of the 13th century are the first medieval female burials recovered from Clonmacnoise, but the main find was the large ditch, backfilled in the 8th-9th century. This is interpreted as part of the main monastic enclosure. As part of the work a geophysical survey was conducted on the supposed line of the ditch further to the east, which found nothing. If one accepts that the feature is correctly interpreted — the possibility of a right-angled turn does not seem to have been considered — then the failure to identify a 5-6m wide by 3.5m deep feature demonstrates the serious limitations of geophysical survey. The second article, by Harold Mytum, on a surface and geophysical survey of the whole monastic complex conducted well before the excavation described in the first article, amplifies this theme. Magnetic susceptibility, magnetometer and resistivity surveys all failed to find the enclosure ditch, whichever course it takes. The conclusions to draw from the first two articles are firstly that it is dangerous to place too much faith in geophysics and secondly there is no true substitute for dirt archaeology.

In the third article Peter Harbison presents three previously unpublished 19th century drawings of the site. The fourth paper, by Conleth Manning, is a straightforward description of the early masonry churches at Clonmacnoise, which includes several known only from early drawings and plans. The article ends with a note on the round tower that raises the intriguing possibility that the ashlar masonry from the upper part, which fell after a lightning strike, was reused in the smaller tower attached to Temple Finghin. Edel Bhreathnach follows with a manuscript source based article on learning and literature in early medieval Clonmacnoise. A survey of the Clonmacnoise grave slabs, by Catherine Swift, forms the sixth article. In it she looks at the documentary references for burial at Clonmacnoise and discusses the evidence from the inscriptions on the slabs themselves. She also uses case studies from Islay in Scotland and the Shannon basin to suggest that small collections of grave slabs may be an indication of the distribution of ecclesiastical estates. Aidan MacDonald's survey of the annalistic references to the Cathedral, Temple Kelly and Temple Ciarán, forms the seventh article.

The eighth paper by Kieran O'Connor and Conleth Manning is a detailed description of Clonmacnoise Castle. For a castle enthusiast, this paper is the highlight of the volume. I have walked around the fence that surrounded the site several times and never managed to get in but I see from several of the photos in the volume that the fence has been removed, so this article spurs me on to make another visit. Conleth Manning makes his third appearance in the volume with an article co-

authored with Cathal G. Ó Háinle on a previously unrecorded 17th century Clonmacnoise chalice now in Ballinahown church. The article outlines its discovery and gives a detailed description of the piece.

The Nuns' Church is the subject of the penultimate article by Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh. In it she ponders on why historians and archaeologists have not accepted the date of 1167 given in the Annals of the Four Masters. Its construction is attributed to Derbforgaill, daughter of the king of Meath and, if one believes misogynist historians, largely to blame for all of Ireland's woes these last 850 years. Using a combination of the historical information and an assessment of the architectural remains Ní Ghrádaigh argues that there is no real reason to question the date of 1167. The final paper, by Keith Emerick, is on the restoration of Whitby Abbey following its bombardment by German warships in World War I. My initial reaction was to question the relevance of this to Clonmacnoise, followed by the assumption that it must be one of those make-weight papers by a speaker invited from abroad to give an international flavour to the seminar. In fact it is an interesting account of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society's (now the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland) early restoration work on Irish monuments such as the Nuns' Church at Clonmacnoise and how this influenced restoration work on the other side of the water.

In summary this is a stimulating collection of articles, with something for everyone interested in Clonmacnoise. It is amply illustrated throughout and I particularly welcome the use of colour on the plans in the first article, which makes them very easy to read.

Brian Hodkinson

Margaret Franklin, **Tracing Your Limerick Ancestors**, Flyleaf Press, Glenageary, Co. Dublin, 2003, 121PP. ISBN 0 9539974 4 8. €10.50.

This is one of a series of guides to researching family history, which is published on a county basis and its appearance relatively early in the series (five others have appeared to date) is to be welcomed. The author is well-known to all local history researchers in the region through the excellent service that she provides in the Limerick county library and was an ideal choice to write this book. She has maintained the high standards of the other volumes, providing a clear and authoritative overview of the main sources for such research.

There is a short first chapter giving general and very sensible advice on how to go about the task of compiling family history, which she distinguishes from genealogy by the wider scope of the enterprise and the need to understand the historical context of one's ancestors. Her suggestion that copies of all such work should be donated to local libraries or heritage centres is timely as people rarely seem to do this, possibly by lack of awareness rather than any reluctance. The second chapter explains the administrative divisions of the county and while this information is very basic, her maps of the baronies and civil parishes and the full listing of the latter accompanied by the date of the tithe applotments are very useful.

Succeeding chapters deal with the different types of record, land, church graves and census. For each there is a clear explanation of their location, nature, usefulness and how to access them. It should be noted that the Cromwellian confiscation was not undertaken by the 'English Crown' but by the republican regime of Oliver Cromwell and the Books of Survey and Distribution also include details of the Williamite confiscation. In the chapter on church records no mention is made of the Baptists in Limerick, the location of the Michael Leader Church of Ireland parish transcripts is not made clear and it is regrettable that the totally inappropriate word 'pogrom' is used, yet again, for the campaign against the Jews in 1904.

Newspapers and Trade Directories are discussed in further chapters as well as useful books, articles and other miscellaneous sources. There is a valuable concluding chapter on archives, services and addresses and a short but sensibly compiled index.

The saddest aspect of the publication of this excellent guide for research on Limerick is the fact that it coincided with the closure of the Limerick Ancestry Centre. This invaluable archive, containing over one million Limerick records carefully built up over the past twenty-five years by Chris O'Mahony, Margaret McBride and their small, dedicated staff, was simply closed down by the City and County councils and its unique collection dispersed. This shameful, penny-pinching and short-sighted action has deprived local researchers of access to vital records and damaged the image of Limerick abroad through the demise of its service to those seeking help on tracing their Limerick ancestors, for which they were glad to pay. While this book retains its utility and value, it is unfortunate that it should have been undermined in this way by those elected to serve the community and who then squander far greater amounts of money on useless activities to 'improve the image' of Limerick.

Tony Browne

Paddy Buckley (ed.), **The Memoirs of Maurice Meade: A Forgotten Freedom Fighter**, privately published, 2003, 47pp. No price given.

Maurice Meade was born in 1893 at Elton, Co. Limerick. As was not uncommon at the time he left school at the age of twelve to work for a local farmer. His meagre wages were paid directly to his father and no money was ever given to him. Not surprisingly, he longed to escape from such a life and at the age of seventeen enlisted in the British army. During the First World War he fought in Flanders, was taken prisoner by the Germans, moved to Limburg where he joined Casement's 'Irish Brigade', fought with the Germans in Egypt and on his return to Ireland took a prominent part in the War of Independence. He joined the National army in 1922 and served with the 18th Bn in Tipperary during the Civil War. He was discharged from the army as 'medically unfit' in 1924 but managed to survive to the good age of eight-one years, dying in 1972 and is buried in Emly where he lived for the latter and less eventful part of his life.

Given his colourful early life, it is fortunate that he wrote down some of his recollections of those times, which have now been made available to a wider public by Paddy Buckley of Longstone, Cullen. There is a charming simplicity and directness in his account. His enlisting in the army has touches of farce and comedy, being dragged from the barracks in Cork by his sister and sent home, only to jump from the train at Knocklong, make his way to Clonmel and re-enlist only to be again 're-claimed' by the indomitable sister and finally escaping again to finally be posted to the Channel Islands - safe from her clutches. His account of the First World War is somewhat disappointing, given his experience of the trenches, German prisoner of war camp, service in Egypt, court martial and sentence of death for treason in London after the war, pardon and return to Ireland, re-arrest and final escape from Clonmel barracks. All this is told in a matter-of-fact way and one wishes he had elaborated some more. It is likely that this is due to the ambivalence which has attached to such episodes until very recently in Ireland.

As with his earlier life, his recruitment into the IRA seems quite accidental but his military experience made him a valuable asset to the flying column established by Donnacha O'Hannigan in which he became training officer. His involvement in the attacks on Ballylanders and Kilmallock RIC barracks in April and May 1920 is barely alluded to with the statement that he had nothing to add to what has been already written. He provides a more detailed account of the Grange ambush of

November 1920 and that at Dromkeen in February 1921. There are accounts of other actions, raids on house for arms and insights into life 'on the run' during that period. His account ends with the signing of the treaty. While this short work will be of interest to those keen on the detail of the War of Independence in east Limerick, there remains a strong sense of a missed opportunity to tell a more comprehensive story at greater length but at least we have 'half a loaf'.

Seán de Bháil

Patrick J. McNamara, **The Widow's Penny**, Privately published, Limerick, 2003, 543 pp. Price Hard bound €45, Soft bound €30.

This long awaited book, which according to the author in his press release took seven years to complete, is the first publication specifically dealing with Limerick's involvement in the First World War. It was published in 2003 not 2000 as stated and no ISBN is provided. It consists of eleven chapters, which are nicely presented, and includes photographs that have never been published before, with maps of battle areas where men from Limerick fought and died in this terrible conflict.

Chapter One outlines the 'leading players' of the conflict, listed as the Austrian Archduke Franz Ferdinand, Kaiser Wilhelm II, David Lloyd George and Lord Kitchener. In the somewhat sketchy two pages on the origins of the war the reference to Britain's international policy of 'so-called splendid isolation' would need some elaboration and there is no explanation of the reasons for the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Chapter Two consists of eight pages of mainly posters and advertisements taken from the newspapers on recruitment in Limerick while Chapter Three 'War news' is also made up of verbatim quotes from the newspapers. Chapter Four, 'aces high' gives details of Limerick men who were killed serving with the Royal Flying Corps. The next two chapters deal with the role of chaplains and poets: the latter are mostly well known international figures, with the exception of two Limerick men, Charlie Copeland who wrote a poem about his brother John who was killed in action on 26 October 1914 and the noted writer Criostoir O'Flynn who wrote a piece about his uncle Thomas Flynn killed in action on 10 November 1917. Chapter Seven describes the battles on sea, land or air during the war, in which Limerick men fought and died. Chapter Eight, provides some interesting tales about some of the men who were killed or died from illness or as POWs as well as those who survived. Chapter Nine, 'shot at dawn' is about two Limerick men who were executed on the orders of the British military hierarchy, Privates Patrick J. Downey and James H. Wilson.

The final two chapters in the book are perhaps the most important. Chapter Ten, titled *The Memorial Register of Limerick Born Casualties of World War I*, is the most up-to-date list of men and women from Limerick who died serving in the war, while Chapter Eleven lists the relevant cemeteries and memorials and where they are located. Mr McNamara quite rightly states that his is not the definitive list of Limerick casualties of World War I, and that further research may result in slight amendments. Indeed he has a fear that there may have been many more, and this may prove to be correct, given that the original war memorial, unveiled in Pery Square on Remembrance Day, 11 November 1929, and blown up in August 1957, had as its inscription *To the glory of God and the memory of 3,000 Officers, NCOs and men of Limerick City And County who fell in the Great War 1914-18*.

It is regrettable that chapters one to nine, while interesting, rely on items cut and pasted from newspapers without any explanation or context. The book has no footnotes or endnotes thereby depriving the reader of the knowledge of where the information was taken from and the lack of an index makes it difficult for anyone who wishes to check on a name or place or a particular subject. The list of abbreviations at the commencement of the book is useful but incomplete: terms such as

C.F., O.F.M., H.M.S., R.A.M.C., R.E., R.F.C., should have been included. The list of sources at the end of the book is quite limited and does not give their place or date of publication.

In the chapter on Limerick-born casualties he has Corporal Andrew Heffernan, Number 4235, 'C' Company, 2nd Battalion, Royal Munster Fusiliers (RMF), the son of Michael and husband of Annie, Kilmallock, Co. Limerick: while this is correct in accordance with the information provided by the Commonwealth War Graves Commission, the fact is that he was born at Guilford, Surrey, England. This additional information can be found in HMSO *Soldiers died in the Great War 1914-1919*, part 72, a work included in the Sources mentioned by the author at the end of the book. It has to be questioned whether the Second Lieutenant James Shannon Dunn referred to on page 237 is the same Second Lieutenant James Shannon Dunne (with an 'e') on page 289. The Regimental Sergeant Major of the 2nd Battalion RMF John Ring referred to on page 104 did not come from Limerick, though he settled in Limerick after his career in the army was over he had originally hailed from Bandon, Co. Cork. The author's note, at the end of many of the names, is information taken from other sources without acknowledgement.

The author gives a good account of the first action performed by the Royal Munster Fusiliers on European soil at Etreaux, France on 27 August 1914; however, it should be noted that this rearguard action against the onslaught of the German army saved the British army from extinction, as a good ten miles separated them when the action finally ended. His reference to the inscription on the Turkish Memorial at Anzac Cove, Gallipoli, is quite interesting, but again he might have acknowledged the fact that it was delivered by Mustafa Kemal (who later became known as Ataturk, 'Father of the Turks') to visitors from Great Britain, Australia and New Zealand in 1934. The statement that the Germans prohibited the playing of the Last Post at the Menin Gate, Ypres (Ieper), Belgium, during the Second World War is incorrect. The ceremony was not officially forbidden, the committee responsible decided not to proceed with it as it could have been interpreted as an act of defiance, or as a gesture of support for the allies.

The author's assertion that the account of the court-martial and subsequent execution of Private Patrick J. Downey appears for the first time *in its entirety* [my italics] in his book gives the misleading impression that he is providing something new and original. This case, and that of Private James H. Wilson, was published in the book *Shot at Dawn* by Julian Putkowski and Julian Sykes in 1989 and further developed in the 'Shot at Dawn Campaign' website. This failure properly or generously to acknowledge the work of others is, sadly, not a unique instance in this work.

The main value of this book is the list provided of those from Limerick who died serving during the war though this is undermined by the lack of properly referenced sources. The general reader may find the other chapters interesting, but the lack of proper scholarly apparatus and the failure to provide a context and analysis of much of the material used, limits its value and utility as a work of reference for the discerning historian or informed reader.

Tadhg Moloney

Malachy McKenna and Fergus Kelly (eds), *Celtica*, vol. 24, School of Celtic Studies, Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, 2003, 369pp. ISBN 1 8550 186 1. Price €26.

This volume of *Celtica* is in memory of Brian O Cuív, one of the most noted and prolific scholars of the twentieth century and editor of the journal, who died in 1999 and includes a title index of his publications for the period 1942-71. It has twenty-three articles, two review articles and twelve book reviews. While all the articles are densely scholarly, some are more accessible to and of more interest to the general reader than others.

Jacqueline Borsje and Fergus Kelly discuss the references to the evil eye in medieval Irish literature and law. Belief in the evil eye can be traced back to the Sumerian civilisation of five thousand years ago. In Irish texts the most notable feature is its occurrence in battle contexts, most widely known from Balor, king of the Fomoir. Having reviewed the literary evidence under five headings, the destructive eye, the angry eye, casting the evil eye, protection against the evil eye and envy and the evil eye Dr Borsje notes the ambiguity of so many references, arising she suggests from it being a taboo subject. Dr Kelly reproduces and discusses a twelfth century legal commentary on the subject.

Caoimhín Breatnach continues his debate with Professor Pádraig Ó Riain on whether the manuscript *Lebar Glinne Dá Locha* is one and the same as Rawlinson B 502. This has already been aired in the journal *Éigse* and here Breatnach restates his belief that they are separate manuscripts and questions the methodology employed by Ó Riain.

In the early medieval church, hairstyle or tonsure, was of great importance and was sometimes used to determine Christian orthodoxy in the British and Irish churches, particularly in regard to issues such as the dating of Easter and conformity to Roman practices. This is discussed by Daniel McCarthy and illustrated by examples from the Books of Kells, Durrow, Dimma as well as computer generated images - a marriage of early manuscripts and modern technology.

Pádraig Ó Macháin contributes two articles. The first provides a list and short discussion of fifty-nine poems by the poet Fearghal Óg Mac an Bhaird (fl. 1567 - c. 1620) which on present knowledge is his entire surviving output. His second contribution discusses an Irish manuscript recently re-discovered in Mount Melleray abbey. This is a translation by Tomás Ó Iceadha of the Roman missal. It is dated 1810 and 1814. It appears to be a translation of a companion to the altar, or compact pocket missal, which was first published in London in 1791. It was reprinted a number of times and the exact edition used has not been determined. It is also suggested that this is the manuscript which was made for the translator's own use at mass.

This volume of the journal, with its impressive range of contributions, is a worthy tribute to the notable scholar to whose memory it is dedicated. It also includes a title index of his publications for the period 1942-71 - a most impressive list as well as being a valuable guide for researchers and it is to be hoped that this work will be completed to provide a full listing of his entire output.

Nora Murphy

Joe Fenwick (ed.), **Lost and Found: Discovering Ireland's Past**, Wordwell Ltd., Bray, 2003, xxiv +349 pp, 92 plates, 58 figs. ISBN 1 869857 58 5. Price €30.

It is a truth universally acknowledged that most archaeologists have an uncanny ability to make a subject which is so inherently fascinating, mind-numbingly dreary. This applies equally to lecturing and publication. Those who have struggled with the obscure jargon and convoluted prose endemic to excavation reports and learned monographs or sat bleary eyed watching endless slides of incomprehensible plans and unintelligible features which the expert interminably drones on about, will hail the publication of this book. It was conceived, the editor tells us, in a lucid moment at an conference of the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland - apparently rare interludes at such gatherings. The basic idea was to encourage and facilitate specialists to write in an informal style and in a personal way about their work and to share with the general public the magic of making some discovery which advanced knowledge and understanding of the Irish past.

Thirty-one scholars responded to this invitation/challenge, predominantly archaeologists though there is also the odd (if that is not a tautology) historian. Indeed given the stellar cast list, one wonders about the omissions: did some distinguished academics consider the enterprise too populist or vulgar

or were they not asked? There is an interesting appendix of biographical notes on the contributors which contains some unexpected information. The fact that Dr Patrick F. Wallace is a Knight of the Danebrog may not be widely known but his designation as Danish comes as an even greater surprise, particularly given the 'civic honour of his native County Limerick' which we are told he recently received. Those interested in the passions of Dr Tadhg O'Keeffe will be pleased to learn that they include everything recorded on the Blue Note label in the 1960s.

So, what has this motley group produced? Well, an appropriately motley collection. Some keep to the editorial brief and concentrate on one particular discovery which they made or were party to while others list virtually every original thought they have ever had. Particularly depressing are the essays, fortunately the exception rather than the rule, which are written in the humourless, factual academic-speak that the book set out to avoid and those which seem more interested in self promotion or self justification than in conveying the delights of the discipline to the public. If there were a prize for the best contribution it should surely go to Gabriel Cooney for his original and delightful piece, 'An axe in three plays...' which uses imaginative reconstructions of pre-historic and nineteenth century situations as a backdrop to his own discovery of a neolithic polished stone axe on Lambay island in 1997. The mystery which so many non-specialists feel when told that simple objects like these are more interesting to many archaeologists than so called 'treasures' is well explained here though Michael Ryan conveys the excitement of the latter in his account of working on the Derrynaflan finds. The fact that these were discovered by the use of metal detectors is noted, but only obliquely commented upon, by Ryan whereas Wallace issues a robust condemnation though his moralising about discoveries not being for fame sits a bit uneasily with the self-promotion evident in some of the essays.

Many of the contributors discuss their introduction to archaeology as children whether in the case of Barry Raftery through being the son of an archaeologist or Tadhg O'Keeffe from his father's pride in the castle of his native place. Raftery reveals, in his nicely titled essay, 'once upon a time in the west', some unsuspected aspects of the character, sang-froid and wit of Éamon de Valera. Some use the opportunity to acknowledge the role of ordinary members of the public, such as Ragnall Ó Floinn's discussion of John Towey the finder of the Moylough belt-shrine or Brian Lacey's tribute to Mabel Colhoun for her survey work on Inishowen. The influence of Professor M.J. O'Kelly on Irish archaeology is acknowledged by his former pupil Margaret Gowen and also by Pat Wallace, who describes him aptly as 'an inquisitive genius'.

Conor Newman in 'the elephant and the tunnel' delightfully deconstructs the credibility gap that frequently develops between the smart-ass specialists and sceptical local people especially when the former subvert long-held and cherished beliefs. Aidan O'Sullivan's account of his discovery of the medieval fish-traps in the Shannon estuary, with its particularly good illustrations, and Kenneth Wiggins contribution about Ambrose Jones and King John's Castle in 1642 will be of interest to readers in this region as will the essay by our Vice-President, Professor Etienne Rynne.

The decision to provide suggestions for further reading after each essay is excellent, given the enviable ability of some contributors to whet one's appetite to know more, though again not all did provide bibliographies while others included manuscript references and unpublished theses, not exactly suitable for the general reader at whom this book is aimed. But overall this is a marvellous read and should be purchased by everyone with even a passing interest in archaeology to help them understand better the discipline itself, its methodologies and techniques, its charms and limitations and, by no means least, its intriguing practitioners. We should all be ever sensible of the warmest gratitude toward the persons who have bought us these insights.

Liam Irwin

Bernadette Cunningham and Raymond Gillespie (eds), **Stories from Gaelic Ireland: Microhistories from the Sixteenth-Century Irish Annals**, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2003, 16 illustrations, 224 pp. ISBN 1 85182 747 1. Price €45.

The authors of this work are a husband and wife partnership who, together and individually, have made a major contribution to the study of the history of early modern Ireland. The volume of essays were written, they tell us, for amusement arising out of their study of the sixteenth century Irish annals. Rather than using these sources in the usual scholarly manner to gain information for specific historical investigations, they have looked on the annalists in the role as storytellers. In studying this aspect of the annals, they help illuminate the social and cultural world of the time and of both the writers and their audiences. The book is also an exercise in the technique of microhistory. This involves the detailed examination of a limited area, a reduction in the scale of historical study not just for its own sake but to help test wider theories about political, social or religious developments.

The main sources used were the four sets of Irish annals which have substantial material relating to the sixteenth century, Annals of Ulster, Connacht, Loch Cé and the Four Masters. These are expertly and accessibly discussed in the introduction and it is emphasised that they do not provide a detailed narrative but are, rather, a collection of material, often from earlier sources, varying in length and rather haphazardly arranged. The entire exercise, its value and limitations and the techniques employed is clearly and stimulatingly considered and justified. The stories chosen are placed in their context, as far as is possible, often from other entries in the annals or from different and varied source materials surviving from the period.

Seven stories are selected for discussion, one each in 1508, 1534 and 1549, 1568 and three from the 1580s. In 1508 the Annals of Ulster have a long entry on the burning of a church in the diocese of Clogher, Domnach Magh da Claine. This was a premeditated act by an Irish chieftain to attack another while he attended mass. The attack is set in its context, mainly rivalry between two families but its occurrence on St. Patrick's day is also seen as the deliberate ambushing of a local pilgrimage site in honour of the saint. The murder of a historian by his wife in 1534 is analysed and the punishment meted out is shown to have been a lesson in the importance of maintaining order. The wife, who was pregnant by her husband, was kept in prison until after the birth and then hanged. Two of her accomplices were also executed, in their case by burning, which was unusual for the time, hanging being the preferred form of capital punishment. The 1549 entry involves the granting of large numbers of livestock to poets by Ruaidhrí Mac Diarmada, lord of Moylurg which he had obtained by cattle raiding on his enemies. The story is seen as indicating the correct behaviour of a lord on his accession to control of a lordship.

The eulogy for Ruaidhrí Mac Diarmada who died in 1568 was written by his son and is used to provide revealing insights into the mentality of the time in regard to death, memory and remembrance. In 1586 the MacCostellos of Mayo handed over a castle and half their lordship to a member of the more powerful Dillon family which is shown to have been a survival strategy which allowed them hold on to the rest of their property with a secure title, helped by an influential patron. The positive 1584 obituary of Sir Nicholas Malby, President of Connacht in the Annals of Loch Cé is shown not to be exceptional. English officials, it is argued, were not seen as unacceptable political leaders in sixteenth century Connacht provided they did not try to change the norms of traditional society or disrupt the existing social hierarchy.

The final story in this original and stimulating book relates to a shower of hailstones in Elphin in 1588: 'a wild apple was not larger than each stone of it... and it was with shovels the snow was removed from the houses; and it was in the middle month of summer that shower fell.' The annalist

explained this as divine punishment for the actions of the local Church of Ireland bishop, John Lynch. The reasons for his unpopularity are examined in the context of the political, social and religious tensions of the time. That such an unseasonable meteorological event occurred seems to be correct, as there is independent testimony from the English deputy governor though he dates it to the previous year. In this, as in all the other cases, examined here the potential for gaining valuable insights into a period of Irish history for which sources are scarce is superbly demonstrated.

John O'Connor

Maureen Comber (ed.), **John O'Donovan and Eugene O'Curry, The Antiquities of County Clare: Ordnance Survey Letters 1839**, Clasp Press, Ennis, 2003, vi + 323pp. ISBN 1 900545 15 2. Price €21. Maureen Comber (ed.), **T.J. Westropp, Folklore of Clare**, Clasp Press, Ennis, 2003, iv + 130pp. ISBN 1 900545 160. Price €12.

The Ordnance survey began in 1825 when military engineers were given the task of mapping the entire country at the scale of six inches to one statute mile. This was primarily to establish the exact boundaries of townlands, the smallest Irish administrative divisions which had long been in use for public and private transactions but which had never been properly delineated. This was seen as necessary then to establish a basis for valuation of land which in turn would be used for a new system of taxation. As part of the survey, attention was to be given to placenames and antiquities. The men sent out to conduct this fieldwork, by research, observation and interview transmitted their work back to the Dublin headquarters by letter and it is these invaluable documents that are reproduced in this volume. The letters are organised on a parish basis and the basic format is a description of its boundaries, discussion of names and description of all antiquities, particularly churches, castles, graveyards and holy wells. There are also fascinating insights into the marathon work undertaken by O'Curry and O'Donovan and the difficulties and privations which they faced.

This edition of the letters is based on a typescript produced in 1928 by Rev. Michael O'Flanagan of Bray. It was edited and indexed by Maureen Comber and first published in hardback in 1997. The availability of the work of these remarkable men in a paperback version to the wider public provides both enjoyable reading and a valuable research tool for anyone interested in local history research for County Clare. Clasp Press has also produced a paperback version of the articles on Irish folklore first published by Thomas Johnson Westropp in the journal of the English Folklore Society 1910-13 which they issued in hardback in 2000. This was reviewed in *NMAJ*, 41, 2001.

Mary Ryan

Seán Spellissy, **Limerick in Old Photographs**, Gill and Macmillan, Dublin, 2003, viii + 120pp. ISBN 0 7171 2940 3. Price €14.99. Seán Spellissy, **Window on Aran**, Book Gallery, Ennis, 2003, 264pp. ISBN 0 9545218 0 3. Price €15.

The indefatigable Seán Spellissy has produced another two books, both in the same year on this occasion. The photographs of Limerick come from a variety of sources. The most fascinating group come from the private collection of the late Roy McCormack (1924-2001) generously made available by his daughter, Barbara Bingham. He methodically recorded the changing face of Limerick over the past thirty years especially the business premises, corner shops and terraces that have now vanished. These are supplemented by contributions from other private collections, notably that of the Waldron and Mulholland families. Some very valuable photographs taken by Stan Stewart are included through the generosity of Martin Breen who acquired them from the late Gerry O'Connell of Ennis. Tom

Keogh provided a generous selection from his own collection and that of Limerick Museum in addition to copying all the other donations. Each photograph is given a generous caption with useful information reflecting the author's deep knowledge of the city supplemented in places with his personal comments. The appearance of the odd photo of Kilkee will raise no eyebrows given the exodus of Limerick citizens there each summer.

Producing books of old photographs has become something of a cottage industry in recent times. What sets this work apart from many others is the range of previously unpublished material and the accompanying commentary. What lets it down is the very poor quality of reproduction of so many of the photographs. They are, quite frankly, appallingly bad. This cannot be blamed on the compiler who has been very poorly served indeed by his publisher.

This is very evident in his second book, published by himself, whose illustrations and overall appearance are far more impressive. He has long had an interest in and love of the Aran Islands. This book is his personal celebration of the area. The first chapter provides a general and eclectic account of the island group, which are a separate barony of county Galway though geologically and geographically part of the Burren. Today the name Aran is used for the group but this is a modern term; in the nineteenth century the designation was South Arran Islands. Separate chapters follow this on Irishmore, Inishmaan and Inisheer which provide a general account of each island. There is a chapter on the surnames which is based on a list made by an RIC man, Sergeant William Law, at the end of the nineteenth century with additions from the 1901 census and the 1996 draft register of electors. The final lengthy chapter is titled the plants of Aran and in tabular forms lists the plant names in Latin, English and Irish and its possible use as a medicinal, culinary or 'other' ingredient or if it is poisonous. We are told that this list is merely a précis of material he compiled amounting to an Aran herbal, which is lodged in manuscript form with Galway and Clare county libraries. There is a bibliography, index and lengthy acknowledgements.

An immense amount of material has been written on the Aran island both in the past and recently, it must in fact be one of the most written about places in Ireland.. One thinks particularly of the outstanding books by Tim Robinson, *Stones of Aran - Pilgrimage* (1986) and *Stones of Aran - Labyrinth* (1995) and the wonderful, collaborative, scholarly, *Book of Aran* (1994). Seán Spellissy has now added his own contribution to this vast literature and those who admire his own distinctive style and approach to the various places and subjects that he has written about over the past fifteen years will read it with interest.

John Kelly

Sam Hutchison, Towers, Spires and Pinnacles: A history of the cathedrals and churches of the Church of Ireland, Wordwell Ltd., Bray, 2003, viii + 154 pp. ISBN 1 869857 57 7. Price €25.

The Church of Ireland has approximately 1,100 churches where services are conducted, 650 of them in the Republic. The author, a retired insurance executive, spent nearly ten years photographing and recording 850 of them and from this data base he has made a selection providing brief discussion, usually their date, architect and main features supplemented by his excellent photographs.

The work is arranged chronologically in thirteen short chapters from the middle ages to the present day. The medieval churches still in use in Ireland are almost all in the care of the Church of Ireland though unlike England where at least 5,000 are still used for worship less than thirty function in Ireland. The oldest church still in use is St. Cronan's Tuamgraney while the North Munster region can boast of three cathedrals, St. Mary's in Limerick, Killaloe and Kilfenora in Clare. The other medieval churches mentioned here are Holy Trinity, Fethard and the former Augustinian friary church at Adare,

now dedicated to St. Nicholas, both founded in the fourteenth century but most of whose surviving structures are from the following century.

The only eighteenth-century buildings discussed are the cathedral at Cashel stated to be one of the most elegant of all Irish Georgian churches and St. Mary's, Templemore, a non-classical structure. Among early nineteenth-century buildings noted are All Saints', Castleconnell, St. Cronan's, Roscrea (1812), St. Paul's, Cahir (1817, John Nash) and St. Kieran's Cloughjordan (1837, Pain brothers). The church at Congor, Co. Tipperary, now re-located to the Folk Park at Bunratty is also mentioned. These were part of the great period of church building financed by the generous government funding of the Board of First Fruits in the aftermath of the Act of Union and the compensation paid to the Church for the loss of its clerical boroughs. This enabled grants, usually £500, to be paid to parishes to erect new churches. This 'First Fruits' style of church, plain rectangular hall, with tower at the west end and small sanctuary at the east, gave way in the Victorian period to a more elaborate gothic style. The church at Abington (1870, Rawson Carroll) is praised particularly for its polychromatic exterior and interior, octagonal spire and good stained glass as is St. Columba's, Ennis (1871, W. H. Lynn). Christ church, Corbally, Co. Tipperary (1847) is one of the most distinctive church of Ireland churches, with two storeys and an unusual belfry.

While the twentieth century was a period of decline for the Church of Ireland in this part of the island, some very interesting churches were erected. St. Peter and Paul, Kilmallock (1938, F. G. Hicks) was built of red brick and its original blank east wall was altered at the suggestion of Éamon de Valera to incorporate the east window of Bruree church, when the latter closed, and his generous contribution to the cost is acknowledged. The other twentieth-century church in county Limerick, that at Foynes, is not mentioned as it has been closed. Clare and Kerry are unusual in Munster in having two relatively modern churches erected in each county. The 1927 Christ Church at Spanish Point, with a striking red-tiled roof and white wall, sits somewhat incongruously in its location while the similarly dedicated church at Shannon, a simple pre-fabricated wooden structure, is an exceptional example of shared worship with the Methodist and Presbyterian congregations.

This quality of the photography is a notable feature of this work. It is clearly written and provides within the limited space a useful and informative work of reference. There is a gazetteer arranged on a county basis, a glossary and bibliography. A valuable index of architects is provided in addition to a general index. In contrast to the measured, uncritical and celebratory tone of the author, the short foreword by the Rev. Robert MacCarthy, Dean of St. Patrick's Cathedral Dublin, pulls no punches about the difficulties of maintaining this important heritage and the apparent political 'stroke' nature of the distribution of the limited state aid.

Vera Bennett

Charles Coulson, **Castles in Medieval Society; Fortresses in England, France, and Ireland in the Central Middle Ages**, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, 441pp. ISBN 0-19-820824-3. Price £65 sterling; O. H. Creighton, **Castles and Landscapes** Continuum, London, 2002, 270pp. ISBN 0-8264-5896-3. Price £65 sterling; John R Kenyon and Kieran O'Connor, **The Medieval Castle in Ireland and Wales**, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2003, 261pp. ISBN 1-85182-726-9. Price €55.00

For those interested in castle studies the last year has seen a flurry of publications to whet the appetite. Charles Coulson's tome is by far and away the heavyweight of the three, comprising 441 pages with no illustrations except those on the dust jacket. The work is a social history of the castle based, for the most part, on documentary sources and is in the van of current thinking which sees castles as more

than simply defensive structures. They played a variety of roles in medieval society, fortress, home, estate centre, display of power and symbol of lordship. Defence was often not the primary consideration in design and siting, and a variety of structures could, in medieval eyes, be termed castles. Most of the documents cited are, unsurprisingly, either French or English with just the occasional foray over to Ireland, but there is one section devoted to Ireland in the chapter 'Colonisation and Fortress'. This is clearly a work that will be a standard text for the foreseeable future. It is hard work to read but worth it for the more rounded insight it gives.

Though it is basically about English castles, Oliver Creighton's book is well worth reading because it complements Coulson's by drawing its examples from the field rather than documents. It too stresses the multiplicity of factors that influenced castle siting and the variety of functions castles played in medieval life. The book is a much easier read than Coulson and a fine example of landscape archaeology. The author has, however, been badly served by his publisher since the quality of reproduction of many of the photographs is exceedingly poor. I had to return my first copy because it lacked half the bibliography. One expects better quality for £65.

The final work is a collection of essays in honour of the renowned Welsh archaeologist Jeremy Knight. I must straight away declare an interest as one of the contributors and so will restrict myself to listing the contents. There are fourteen essays in all, nine of Irish interest. Kieran O'Connor reinterprets the earthworks at Baginbun, Co. Wexford, Con Manning writes on the Record Tower at Dublin Castle, Tom McNeill discusses the flooring in circular towers in Wales and Ireland, David Sweetman has an article on Hall houses, while Tadgh O'Keeffe and Margaret Coughlan tackle the chronology of Ferns Castle, Terry Barry writes on moated sites, John Bradley and Ben Murtagh describe Brady's Castle in Thomastown Co. Kilkenny and David Johnson does the same for Carncastle Co. Antrim. My own article is a summary of the results of my work on the Rock of Dunamase, Co. Laois.

Brian Hodkinson

Di Martino, Vittorio, **Roman Ireland**, The Collins Press, Cork 2003. 208pp ISBN1903464196, Paperback, Price €15.

Roman Ireland is the sort of fun book that no local academic would dare write. The basic premise is that there were several invasions of Ireland by the Romans and that the Romans heavily influenced Irish culture. I personally have no difficulty with that. I cannot believe that a powerful empire with a fleet on the Irish Sea never sent forces to Ireland between 43AD and c 410 AD. The Romans did not sit passively on their borders and await invasion but were actively engaged beyond them. Hot pursuit, in modern parlance, was common and punitive expeditions were the norm. In 55 and 54BC Julius Caesar led expeditions to Britain designed to overawe and punish the natives rather than occupy the land. There was, without doubt, peaceful trading by Romans in Ireland and Irish in Britain. The result could only be some degree of Romanisation of Ireland. Think how often we see on TV societies which reject western values happy to wear baseball caps and Manchester United shirts. The problem is proving it all archaeologically.

This book has been widely researched and I have even provided material from my own work at Cashel. Where I have a problem with it is that it takes all of the evidence that is out there and stretches it almost to snapping point. One example of this is the comparison of the plans of Hod Hill, an Iron Age hill-fort in Dorset, with Drumanagh, a promontory fort on the east coast which has produced a large amount of Roman material. The logic seems to be that Hod Hill is known to be Roman so a site

of similar outline with Roman material must also be a Roman fort. However the reason Hod Hill has a Roman date is because of the typical rectangular Roman fort which was inserted into it, a feature totally lacking at Drumanagh. Similarity of outline is irrelevant. The story that Drumanagh was a Roman fort broke in the *Sunday Times* some years ago but the illustration produced in that article and subsequent illustrations in *Archaeology Ireland* show no Roman features at all. At best we have a civil trading station on the site.

Elsewhere place name evidence is cited to show that in England places named Longford tend to be within three miles of Roman roads therefore Corlea trackway near Longford in Ireland and dated to c 150BC may, possibly, be Roman influenced. The straightness of the track is interpreted as a Roman trait, but if I were asked to build a trackway across a bog I would keep it as straight as possible simply to minimise the use of materials. The book also credits the Romans for things that happened in Ireland long after the collapse of the western Empire. For instance the Romans used water-mills therefore their introduction into Ireland in the 7th century is a direct Roman influence. But according to Rynne, the earliest known examples of some types of mill are from Ireland (Colin Rynne, 1998, *Technological Change in Anglo-Norman Munster*).

This is a book whose basic premise is sound but which needs to be read very critically, due to the way that evidence is used. As a warning and in conclusion, I can now exclusively reveal that there is a Roman fort under King John's Castle. My evidence is a sherd of Samian ware from the excavations there and a coin, now in Limerick Museum, from next to Thomond Bridge.

Brian Hodkinson