

# THOMOND ARCHAEOLOGICAL AND HISTORICAL SOCIETY

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Brian Hodgkinson  
Tadhg Moloney  
Elsie O'Connell  
Larry Walsh

# PROCEEDINGS 2006

## LECTURES

17 January	<i>Mary, Lady Heath – the Irish Aviator</i>	Lindie Naughton
6 February	Annual Luncheon: Adare Manor Hotel	Dr Patrick F. Wallace (Director, National Museum of Ireland, <i>Member</i> )
21 February	<i>Elizabeth Bennis of Philadelphia and Limerick</i>	Rev. Dudley Levistone Cooney ( <i>Member</i> )
21 March	<i>The Irish House of Lords, 1780-1800</i>	Dr Charlotte Murphy ( <i>Member</i> )
18 April	<i>East meets West: Bobbio, intermediary between Ireland and the Holy Land</i>	Mr Conor Newman (NUI- Galway)
26 September	<i>Land Agents in Nineteenth-Century Co. Kerry</i>	Mr Liam Clifford ( <i>Member</i> )
17 October	<i>The Career of the 4th Earl of Dunraven</i>	Dr Milo Spillane ( <i>Member</i> )
4 November	<i>Recent Excavations in Glencurran Cave, Co. Clare</i>	Dr Marion Dowd (Sligo I.T.)
21 November	<i>The Impact of WW1 on Limerick</i>	Mr Tadhg Moloney ( <i>Member</i> )
5 December	AGM and Social Evening	



## EXCURSIONS

22-24 April [Weekend]	Cavan Organiser Speakers	Tony Browne Aogan Ó Fearghail
Sites visited	Headfort House, Cabra castle / demesne, Kingscourt church (Evie Hone windows), Ballyhaise, Cootehill, Kilmore Cathedral, Bedell grave, Killycluggin stone [replica], Cohaw court tomb, Maide Bán cultural centre, Kells High Crosses.	
9 - 16 May; [Week] Places visited	<b>Tuscany and Umbria</b> Organiser Elsie O'Connell Malaga, Ronda, Itálica, Seville, Carmona necrópolis Romana, Madinat Al-Zahra, Cordoba, Granada.	
25 May [Evening]	<b>Rosbrien</b> Organiser Speakers	Tom O'Farrell Tony Browne, Paddy Phillips
Sites visited	St. Dominic's graveyard, St. Dominic's well, Lemonfield House.	
12 June [Half Day]	<b>Adare / Clonshire</b> Organiser Speakers	John Collins Tony Browne, Brian Hodkinson, Liam Irwin
Sites Visited	Adare Fever Hospital/CBS school, Deer Park entrance, Garraunboy Tower House, Clonshire House.	
22 June [Evening]	<b>Lough Gur</b> Organiser Speaker	Anne Yeoman Michael Quinlan
Sites visited	Spectacles, Lime Kiln, Carraig Aille.	
3 July [Coach Full Day]	<b>Fermoy</b> Organiser Speaker	Randal Hodkinson Christy Roche
Sites visited	Glanworth, Labbacalle, Ballyhooly, Cregg castle, Fermoy (military cemetery, famine graveyard), Kilworth.	
13 July [Evening]	<b>Limerick Places of Worship</b> Organiser Speakers	Randal Hodkinson Randal Hodkinson, Dermot Fitzgerald (Christ Church), John Ryan (Mallow St. Hall), Sam Devine (Baptist Church).
Places visited	Dominican and Jesuit Churches, Christ Church, Mallow St. Hall, Trinity Church, Baptist Church, St. Michael's Pery Square.	
24 July [Half Day]	<b>Castletown</b> Organiser Speakers	Tony Browne Tony Browne, Brian Hodkinson, Liam Irwin.
Sites visited	Glenbrook House, Ballyneale House, Castletown medieval parish church, motte, medieval Hall House and Castletown Conyers House.	

7 August [Half Day]	<b>Nenagh</b> Organiser Brian Hodkinson Guide Brian Hodkinson
Sites visited	Nenagh Castle, Franciscan friary, Old C. of I. Tower and graveyard, Tyone Crutched Friars priory/hospital site, Kilkeary cemetery (grave of Maj.Gen. Sir William Parker Carrol), Kilboy church.
21 August [Evening]	<b>Askeaton</b> Organiser Tony Browne Guide Tony Browne
Places visited	Castle Hewson, St. Mary's Church of Ireland Askeaton, Inchirourke.
31 August [Evening]	<b>Clonlara</b> Organiser Rose Atkinson-D'Arcy Guide Freddie Bourke
Sites visited	Clonlara church, sheela-na-gig, Doonass House, 'Hell-Fire Club' tower.
2-4 September [Weekend]	<b>Kilkenny</b> Organisers Noreen O'Connor, Kate Hanrahan Guides Maureen Hegarty, Cristóir Ó Tuama, Breda Lynch, Liam Irwin
Places visited	Kilkenny castle, city walking tour, Kells priory, Gáirdín an Ghorta Newmarket, Jerpoint abbey, Duiske abbey, Ormond castle and manor house Carrick on Suir, Kilsheelin motte and medieval church, Cill Cais castle and church.
14 September. [Evening]	<b>Singland</b> Organiser and Guide Tony Browne
Sites Visited	St. Patrick's graveyard and St. Patrick's well.
2 October [Coach Full Day]	<b>Loughrea</b> Organiser and Guide Dr Charlotte Murphy
Sites visited	Kilmacduagh churches and round tower, Coole park, Loughrea cathedral, museum and Carmelite friary.



## Appreciation

Claire O'Kelly

Claire O'Kelly had a deep interest in the archaeology, history and heritage of North Munster. Up to the time of her death in October 2004 she regularly kept in touch with the Thomond Archaeological Society and was particularly conscientious in ensuring that her annual membership subscription was up to date and for the correct amount. Inevitably, given her age and residence, her main direct interest was in the Society's journal and she was particularly pleased that in recent years it was edited by a former student at UCC of her late husband, Professor M.J. O'Kelly. It became disconcertingly clear to this editor how carefully she read the journal when she alerted him to a rogue 'h' which had found its way into the wrong position in an Irish word, testimony both to her exacting standards and deep knowledge and love of the Irish language.



Claire O'Donovan was born in Cork city on 21 July 1916, the only daughter and third child of Edward O'Donovan, an employee of Cork Corporation, and his wife Johanna Kelleher. She was educated at St Aloysius School, Cork and Coláiste Muire, Ennis, and trained as a national school teacher at Mary Immaculate College, Limerick. In the late 1930s, while teaching, she attended UCC by night where she studied archaeology under Professor Seán Ó Riordáin and met her future husband, Abbeyfeale man, M. J. (Brian) O'Kelly, a fellow student, who later succeeded Ó Riordáin in the Archaeology Dept. in UCC. In 1945 marriage ended female teacher's careers but becoming a wife, and later mother of three daughters, did not lead to an abandonment of her scholarly interests. She was in the fortunate position that she could collaborate

in her husband's work and her research interests complemented his. She and Brian worked together to set up the public museum in the delightful setting of Fitzgerald Park on the Mardyke in Cork, an enterprise with which both were involved for many years afterwards. Her daughters remember the excitement when Claire made at home the clothes for an exhibit of life-size Early Christian figures, designed from careful study of illuminated manuscripts.

She supported and assisted in Brian's many important excavations in the 1940s and 1950s in Cork, Limerick, Kerry, Tipperary and Clare but it was from 1962 onwards, when he began his life's major work at Newgrange, that she made her greatest contribution. She embarked on independent research into two significant aspects of the famous passage tomb. She trawled through the literature in both English and Irish to trace the literary and antiquarian references



to the site and establish beyond doubt that all references to Brú na Bóinne were indeed to the tomb. Her discovery of consistent traditions of a relationship between the site and the sun was an important factor in the further investigation of this, leading to the startling revelation in 1967 of how perfectly the tomb was aligned with the rising sun at the mid-winter solstice. Her delight at this discovery was tempered somewhat by the absence of her husband, and more importantly the family car, just before Christmas for many years subsequently as it was further studied.

It was the megalithic art of the Boyne valley however that became her abiding interest and where she made her greatest scholarly contribution. She laboriously traced the motifs from the stones to produce a corpus of the art of Newgrange. This work, undertaken in often difficult conditions, both physically and climatically, allowed a detailed examination of the art which even the best photographs could not match. One needs to remember how little of the modern technology which facilitates such work now, was available forty years ago. Her later pioneering study of the unexcavated tomb at Dowth remains the major work on this site and where her research had to be done under even more harsh conditions.

Of her publications, her paper on Dowth, presented to the Royal Irish Academy was her most significant addition to the Irish archaeological literature. She linked her archaeological interests with her knowledge of Irish to make important contributions to de Bháldraithe's *English/Irish Dictionary*. Her election in 1984 as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London was an acknowledgment of these scholarly achievements. She also undertook the difficult task of preparing the manuscript of Brian's major text on Irish archaeology, *Early Ireland*, unpublished at his death in 1982, for the press, a task she completed superbly in 1989. To non-specialists she is undoubtedly best known for her excellent guidebooks to Newgrange and Lough Gur. It is easy to forget that this was a pioneering initiative and showed her appreciation of the need and potential market for such publications. These guides are models of clarity with judicious selection and explanation of material to inform and help visitors get the most from the sites. Like her husband she had the invaluable gift of communicating knowledge and information whether with students or the interested general public in a clear and accessible manner.

Claire O'Kelly was a warm, humorous, vibrant woman with a passion for learning and knowledge. Apart from archaeology and languages, she was interested in history, poetry, music and the arts in general. She remained keenly abreast of, and interested in, current affairs to the end of her long life. She could hold strong opinions and was not reluctant to express or defend them. She believed in excellence, demanding it from herself as strongly as she expected it from others. Her years at Lough Gur were very important to her both personally and professionally and as a result Limerick and its people remained very close to her heart throughout her life. A final affirmation of this was the decision to donate her and Brian's books to the University of Limerick where they can now be consulted in the Library Special Collections. Solas na bhFlaitheas dá h-ainm uasal.

Liam Irwin

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We also remember the following members who died in 2005

Mr Seán Dalton

Mrs Noreen Lynch

Mrs Eyleen McCarthy

Mr Liam Mulligan

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## List of Members 2005

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