Book Reviews


A quarter of a million people visit the passage tomb of Newgrange every year, making it the most popular archaeological site in Ireland. The authors, both experts on the Boyne valley, have written this book primarily as a guide for visitors and its structure is designed to replicate a tour of the site. However its value far transcends such a worthy aim and it is also a stimulating examination and discussion of the nature and function of the tomb and its associated sites.

The Stouts do not agree with some vital aspects of the work of the late Professor M. J. O’Kelly who excavated and did significant restoration work on the tomb in the period 1962-75 and they are not reticent about expressing these opinions. The book opens with a strongly worded criticism of the vertical quartz wall which O’Kelly had constructed and which provides the most immediate, and for many quite startling, first view of the mound which contains the tomb. It is of course well known that many experts share this doubt about the accuracy or appropriateness of this façade. Both at the time and over the years since these questions have largely remained out of the literature and it is to the credit of the authors that they are prepared to face the issue head on. However their equation of O’Kelly’s work with that of Saddam Hussein might be considered a tad extreme, if not downright offensive. They also say that it has been included in an international list of the world’s worst archaeological reconstructions without indicating what this list is or where and by whom it was compiled. They further consider that O’Kelly had an interpretative agenda, which seems to imply that he distorted or wilfully refused to accept the evidence, in regard to the later-Neolithic/early-Bronze age activity at the site.

Having got the wall out of the way, subsequent chapters, which all have commendably brief and clear titles, deal successively with the entrance, passage and roof box feature. Each is a model of clarity and the accessible prose is excellently supplemented by the accompanying high quality photographs and plans. When discussing the issue of ritual, their view that the tomb was primarily a burial place is emphasised. It is argued that far more than the five adults whose bones were discovered in the excavation were originally interred there, based on the fact that there were four stone basins in the tomb, more than in any other tomb in Ireland. These basins are considered to have contained the cremated bones of the dead. The speculations about ceremonies, and it must be emphasised that this is all they can be, are reasonable and balanced based on the view that essentially the religion of the builders was derived from the landscape in which they farmed and the importance of the seasons. The art work in the tomb and kerb is placed in its British and continental European contexts and Newgrange, wherever its motifs and inspiration came directly from, is regarded as the zenith of this cultural achievement.

The role of the surrounding stone circle, of which only twelve of a probable thirty-five to thirty-eight stones survive, is given extended treatment. The work of David Sweetman in this regard is acknowledged, particularly his role in discovering and deciphering the ‘woodhenge’ feature which preceded the stone circle. The authors
suggest a parallel between the pre and post Vatican 2 approaches to the celebration of
the Mass in that this later development at Newgrange, in their view, opened up the
mysteries of the ritual to a wider congregation.

A further chapter is devoted to a potted history of the site from its abandonment in
the Bronze Age to its current role as a ‘tourist product’ to use the contemporary debased
language of commerce. There is practical advice about visiting the site and discussion of
the new visitor centre which is viewed in a generally positive light. It is suggested that
more of the wider Boyne valley area and its wealth of archaeological sites should be
included in the shuttle bus service now provided.

The final chapter discusses the sources used by the authors who are the first to have
used the personal papers of O’Kelly, which are an important supplement to his justly
celebrated monograph published in 1994. The suggestions for further reading, while
possibly too numerous for the general public, are a convenient listing and guide to
recent scholarship on the area and shows the impressive extent of the research by the
authors. The book is most attractively designed and produced by Cork University Press
and is an invaluable addition to the ever-expanding literature on Irish prehistory.

Liam Irwin


As the author of this work points out, in his introduction, John Redmond has managed
the not inconsiderable feat of being both neglected and being a much maligned figure in
modern Irish history. This has in the main been due to two significant decisions made by
him towards the latter years of his life. The first was his call upon Irishmen to enlist in
the British army at the outbreak of the First World War in 1914, after the Home Rule
Bill was placed on the Statute Book at Westminster. The second was his acquiescing to
what he perceived to be the temporary exclusion of six counties from the provisions of
the Bill with a view to having it brought into operation following the 1916 rebellion.
The last main biography of John Redmond, by Professor Denis Gwynn of University
College Cork, was published in 1932. Gwynn had full use of Redmond’s papers, having
being given access to them by his son, Captain William Archer Redmond. However it
did not provide much information on his earlier career, concentrating on the early
twentieth century. It also reflected the time in which it was written with the turbulent
1920s and its bitterly divided politics reflected in its approach and judgments. The short,
more recent, study by Paul Bew in 1996, while valuable, did not fill the need for a full
scale study.

Now, and it may be stated not before time, Dermot Meleady, a secondary school
teacher from Dublin has written in a comprehensive, detailed and analytical manner the
first volume of a proposed two volume work on Redmond. This is called Redmond: The
Parnellite, a title that would appear to have been taken from the first chapter of
Gwynn’s work, covers the period of his childhood and early political career, his
leadership of the small number of Irish MPs who stood loyally by Parnell after the split
in the party, to his becoming the leader of the re-united Irish Parliamentary Party in
1900 after almost ten years of disunity and rancour.
The debacle following the split features prominently in the book and the author
explains Redmond’s motives for becoming a stalwart supporter of Parnell both before
and after Parnell’s demise. When the rupture occurred, Redmond although he vacillated
for a short period, nailed his colours firmly to Parnell’s mast in Committee Room 15 when the majority of the members of the party moved to have him replaced as their leader. Redmond defended his leader against all the odds, stating categorically that ‘it seems to me that in selling our leader in order to preserve the Liberal alliance, we are selling absolutely and irrevocably the independence of the Irish Party’.

Dermot Meleady has meticulously consulted a wide variety of sources both primary and secondary in weaving together the early years of Redmond’s life and career and has contributed to the long overdue rehabilitation of a man who deserves better recognition than he has hitherto received. There are references throughout the book relating to important Limerick men such as Lord Dunraven, John Daly, Bishop Edward Thomas O’Dwyer and their interaction with Redmond. His ability to face down O’Dwyer in December 1890 on the issue of clerical participation in a convention in the city is highlighted. His various visits to Limerick are discussed though the city is not given a separate entry in the index. His important speech in Limerick on 2 September 1900 where he condemned what he saw as the increasing and undesirable Anglicisation of Ireland is quoted. He lamented in particular the decline of the Irish language, which he stated was ‘almost dead’ and the failure to teach Irish history in schools.

There is relatively little discussion of his personal life though his meeting his first wife in Australia, their marriage six months later, the birth of their three children and the tragic death of his wife in childbirth aged only twenty-eight are noted. His remarriage, exactly ten years later, is briefly mentioned.

The author is to be commended for the extensive research he has undertaken. His judgements are fair and balanced and provide a valuable insight into the earlier career of Redmond. The second volume on his career, after the reunification of the Irish Party of which he was leader to his death in 1918, is eagerly awaited.

Tadhg Moloney


The somewhat strange title of this book is a reference to the statement of Bishop Thomas Nulty (Roman Catholic Bishop of Meath 1890-8) in a pastoral letter read in all 148 churches of his diocese on Sunday 3 July 1892 in which he claimed a ‘divine right’ to instruct his flock on how they should vote in the coming general election. Specifically Catholics were told they could not vote for Parnellite candidates and continue to remain Catholics. The essential argument by Lawlor is that Nulty’s role was a decisive one in the defeat of Parnellite candidates in elections in Meath during the 1890s.

Charles Stewart Parnell had begun his political career in Meath where he was elected MP for the county in April 1874 at a by election caused by the death of the sitting MP, John Martin. His success, ironically in the light of later events, was due in very large measure to the support of the bishop and taking their cue from him, individual clergy. His direct involvement with the county was short-lived: at the general election of 1880 he was elected in no fewer than three constituencies, Cork City, Mayo and Meath and he opted to sit for Cork which he was to represent for the remainder of his career.

Bishop Thomas Nulty ironically returned from Rome after his consecration as Bishop on the very day that the O’Shea divorce verdict was announced, beginning the process which was to lead to the split in the Irish Parliamentary Party on the issue of
Parnell’s fitness to lead and the eventual fateful decision to oust him. The political divisions and debate in Meath were not confined solely to or indeed in many cases only marginally, to the question of moral outrage over Parnell’s liaison with Katherine O’Shea and the scandal of the involvement of his name in her divorce from her husband. The broader political question of whether the alliance between the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Liberal Party under Gladstone was the only hope of Home Rule for Ireland and as a consequence Parnell should be sacrificed for the greater political good was a more significant factor.

The study shows that political affiliation in the county was determined much more by an urban-rural divide than by economic or class issues. Broadly speaking the big urban centres were Parnellite while the rural areas supported the anti-Parnellites on the land issue as they felt that only the Liberals would support their aim of defeating the landlords. One of the most valuable conclusions relates to the influence of the Catholic Church on the issue. It shows clearly that the larger urban centres, Kells, Navan and Trim, remained strongly Parnellite despite the very strong condemnation of Parnell by the clergy in these towns. In smaller areas, such as Slane and Oldcastle on the other hand, local opinion was influenced to be anti-Parnellite by their priests. Interestingly the village of Moynalty followed its Parnellite priest. The author argues that the general view of academic historians that priests in late-nineteenth century Ireland could usually only influence their flocks to do what they already wanted to is not borne out by the evidence in Meath on this issue, at least. There the formidable bishop, McNulty and the majority of his priests played a decisive role through sermons, speeches, using their influence in having candidates selected and then working to ensure their election.

The appointment of a nun as matron of the workhouse in Navan was an important issue which is discussed in detail. The Catholic Church strongly supported the transfer of control of the workhouse to the Mercy Sisters but the Parnellite Poor Law Guardians joined with the Protestant members to vote against the proposal. However, by a narrow majority, the nun was appointed in November 1891. When the Poor Law elections were held the following March, the Parnellite candidates were strongly attacked by the clergy for their stance on this issue and they failed to be re-elected. This was an indication of the future of politics in the county. In the 1892 General Election Michael Davitt was formally nominated by Bishop Nulty to stand as an anti-Parnellite against the sitting Parnellite MP, Pierce Mahony in North Meath and on 3 July Bishop Nulty issued his ‘divine right’ pastoral. Davitt was elected on 15 July by a majority of 403 votes but, following a petition to the courts that ‘undue clerical influence’ had been exerted, he was unseated the following December. When a new election was held in February 1893, Mahony failed to regain his seat and the defeat of the Parnellites was complete when they also lost the election in South Meath. This was further reinforced in March when nominees of the bishop won all the seats in Navan Poor Law elections at the expense of the Parnellites.

This study of local politics in Meath in the aftermath of the downfall of Parnell is a fine example of the value of good local historical research, focussed on a specific issue and how it operated at county level while placing the topic firmly and impressively in its national context. As John Bruton points out in an introduction to the book, the legacy of the split can still be seen in the county today. The diocesan seminary was located not in Navan but in the Westmeath town of Mullingar as a direct result of the Bishop’s anger at the support given by Navan to Parnell in direct defiance of his own direction. The new cathedral was also built in Mullingar while the Sisters of Mercy continue to be
involved in the management of Our Lady’s Hospital in Navan, the successor of the
workhouse. Pierce Mahony on the other hand, has achieved recognition in the name of
Navan’s GAA club. The ‘Parnell Split’ has indeed cast a long shadow.

Liam Irwin

John R Kenyon, Castles, Town Defences and Artillery Fortifications in the United
Kingdom and Ireland: A Bibliography 1945-2006, Shaun Tyas, Donington 2008, xii +

This monumental work, the product of over thirty years’ labour, is a necessary addition
to the bookshelf of any serious student of castles. It is divided into two main sections,
the first of which lists general works on the subject, while the second part is
topographical and forms the bulk of the book. This latter section is arranged by country,
in the order England, Wales, Scotland, The Islands and Ireland. Each country is then
broken down by county and within each county there is a section for general works
followed by the individual sites. At the end there is an appendix of works that came to
the author’s attention after the initial text was submitted, followed by separate author
and place indexes.

I am pleased to note the author has retained the old counties of the UK so, for
example, there is just Lancashire rather than Lancashire, Merseyside and Greater
Manchester. The new administrative counties around Dublin are similarly ignored. In
his introduction Kenyon points out that the major pre-1945 publications on English and
Welsh castles can be found in David Catheart King’s, Castellarium Anglicanum (1983).
He also acknowledges that there may be works he has missed so invites readers to send
in additions and corrections, which will be listed in a separate section of the annual
bibliography, published by the Castle Studies Group. This book is well laid out, easy to
use and, excellent value for a hardback. Buy it and try to spot omissions; I have and I
haven’t.

Brian Hodkinson

Joost Augusteijn (ed.), The Memoirs of Captain John M Regan, A Catholic Officer in
84682-069-4 Price £55.

These memoirs of an RIC man provide a unique and unusual aspect on the ‘Troubles in
Ireland’ in the period from 1914 to 1922. This is especially so for students of the period
in this area because Regan was the last County Inspector of the RIC in Limerick,
although it should be said Regan’s use of cover names limits somewhat its value for
local historians. As he later joined the RUC, the memoirs also give an insight into what
it was like to be a Catholic serving in the RUC in the early years of the northern state.

Regan was born in Belfast, in 1889, the son of an RIC Inspector who had been
promoted from the ranks. In 1908 he joined the RIC as an officer cadet. Following time
spent as a District Inspector, 3rd Class, in Counties Clare and Fermanagh Regan decided
to volunteer for service in the British Army in the First World War. He joined the Royal
Irish Rifles in October 1915 with the rank of Captain. His action, in volunteering his
services, was in sharp contrast to many fellow officers in the RIC, who when requested
to make themselves available for military service, in January 1916, by the then
Inspector General, Joseph Byrne, found all manner of excuse to avoid doing so.
By his actions Regan was obviously a brave and resolute man. When his service was completed he rejoined the RIC in Cork in 1919 and in April 1920 he was appointed staff officer to Brigadier General Cyril Prescott-Decies, RIC Divisional Commissioner. Following this appointment Regan was transferred to Limerick with the rank of District Inspector. In September 1920 he was promoted to the rank of Acting County Inspector. It was during his tenure in Limerick that serious questions have to be asked about his attitude towards disciplining his subordinates and also towards revenge killings as reflected in his memoir. He writes about avenging dead comrades:

it is a fact that those police quickest to avenge the death of a comrade were Irishmen and men of an excellent type. Black and Tans, having drink taken, might fire out of lorries indiscriminately, loot public houses, or terrorise a village but the Irishman would avenge his comrade when absolutely stone cold sober and on the right person. It required a great deal of courage to do so as if detected he ran a serious risk of being hanged."

These words are a chilling reminder of some of the cold blooded killing that took place in Ireland at the time as Regan seems to link men who killed in cold blood with being ‘an excellent type’. It is highly debatable as to how successful these ‘Irishmen’ were at dealing with the ‘right person’. In giving tacit if not substantive support to RIC men bent on revenge it would seem that Regan was alluding to Sergeant Eugene Igoe an RIC man who had charge of a group of mainly Irish-born RIC men who carried out a number of killings. At the inquest into Sergeant John Hearty, who was shot and mortally wounded in Mallow Street, Limerick in May 1920, Igoe went on the record as saying that the police would not stand idle while their comrades were being shot.

Regan also refers to a Black and Tan whom he names as ‘Wellarly’, and whom he describes as ‘a public school type of fine physique and excellent manners’. Wellarly was a cover name for Constable Thomas Huckerby, who was originally stationed at Foynes. In August 1920 Huckerby accompanied a Constable Hall to see a doctor in the nearby village of Shanagolden. When they emerged from the doctor’s house they were held up by an IRA party, under Captain Timothy Madigan, who were hoping to relieve them of their weapons. When it emerged that Huckerby and Hall were unarmed the IRA forced them to remove their uniforms and boots and they were allowed to return to Foynes in their bare feet and underclothes. The IRA burned the uniforms and boots in frustration at finding no weapons. That evening the RIC and Black and Tans returned to Shanagolden and exacted revenge for the indignities that had been heaped on Huckerby and Hall. The creamery, along with some shops and houses, was burned down. A number of men, found playing cards in a house, were driven some miles out of the village, stripped of their boots and clothing and forced to walk home in a manner similar to what had happened to the policemen that morning. Additionally a sixty-year-old man named John Hynes was fired on and killed. The shooting of John Hynes was blamed on Thomas Huckerby, who was immediately transferred to Abbeyfeale.

On Saturday 19 September 1920 the IRA laid an ambush for the curfew patrol on the outskirts of Abbeyfeale. The purpose of the ambush was to shoot Thomas Huckerby. Two police men, Constables O’Donoghue and O’Mahoney were killed in the ambush and Huckerby, the target of the action, escaped because he had not been rostered for the patrol. On the following Monday evening Huckerby stalked two young men, named Healy and Hartnett, while on their way home from work. He shot and killed both young
men on the outskirts of the town. Neither of the men had any involvement with the IRA. Significantly, when the death certificates were issued by a Military Court of Inquiry, the cause of death was put down as ‘Shot by revolver shots fired by T D Huckerby’. In almost all instances involving police shootings at the time the terms ‘justifiable homicide’, ‘shot in the execution of his duty’ or ‘shot while trying to escape’ were used, but pointedly in the case of the Abbeyfeale killings these terms were excluded. It was obvious that the officers, constituting the Court of Inquiry, effectively considered Huckerby to have murdered the young men. Regan’s reaction was to move Huckerby to Limerick City ‘in order that he would be under our eye’.

On Saturday 27 November two ex-British soldiers named Michael Blake and James O’Neill were stopped and shot dead while travelling from Dublin to Limerick. James O’Neill and Patrick Blake, Michael Blake’s brother, had been found not guilty of the shooting of Constable Walter Oakley at a court-martial in Dublin. They had been released following their trial in Dublin but they were stopped and murdered at the Cross of Grange about six miles from Limerick City. Again neither Blake nor O’Neill had any involvement with the IRA. They came from families that, between them, had contributed ten sons to the Munster Fusiliers. Both men had ‘recognised the court,’ and they had stayed apart from IRA prisoners while on remand. From the evidence at the Court of Inquiry, much of it given by British soldiers, it emerged that a group of about eight masked men had carried out the killings. The leader, of the party, was a very tall man who spoke with a distinctly English accent. While there is no definite evidence tying Huckerby to the shootings at the Cross of Grange it is very interesting to note that it was on the Thursday, following these shootings, that Regan saw fit to transfer Huckerby back to the RIC Depot in Dublin. Regan does not refer to these shootings in his memoirs but he was the RIC County Inspector for Limerick at the time. Regan refers to Huckerby, or ‘Wellarly’ as he calls him, as ‘undoubtedly the most extraordinary man I had met’. Very laudatory terms for describing a man who was in reality a cold blooded killer. Constable Thomas Huckerby resigned from the RIC on December 26 1920 because disciplinary charges were pending against him. The record does not state what the nature of these charges was.

Regan also mentions shootings at a dance at Caherguillamore House, near Bruff, where one Black and Tan and five IRA men were killed. This dance which was run by the IRA to raise funds was held on St Stephen’s night 26 December 1920. The raid on the dance was organised by the RIC under their County Inspector. Here again serious questions are raised about Regan’s attitude towards the discipline of subordinates and also about his attitude towards ‘shooting to kill’. Firstly he mentions, in relation to the IRA sentries, ‘meanwhile the armed sentries outside had been shot at sight’. He refers to one of the IRA who ‘saved the situation for me. With what I thought was brazen effrontery he demanded to know our authority for being there. This was the last straw, with one of my men shot dead. He was hit and there was a rough house for some time, several of the IRA being injured.’ His last statement is a total understatement. In an interview in February 1994, Major Ged O’Dwyer stated that every male attendee at the dance was beaten up. Ged O’Dwyer and his brother Nicholas were among the very few IRA members to escape from Caherguillamore House that night. Some of those attending the dance were so severely beaten that they never recovered their health. This was in addition to the five IRA who were killed. Four members of the IRA, including three sentries, had been killed before one of their members, Ned Moloney, shot dead Constable Alfred Hogsden. Moloney was immediately shot dead by Hogsden’s
comrades. When writing his memoirs Regan used the shooting of Hogsden as a pretext for the killings and assaults at Caherguillamore despite the fact that at least three IRA sentries, John Quinlan, Harry Wade and Daniel Sheahan had been shot at the outset of the raid. The timing of the shooting of the fourth IRA man Martin Conway is debatable but it most likely occurred before the shooting of Constable Hogsden.

The memoirs also carry an exchange between Regan and a lady prisoner at Caherguillamore. The lady most probably was a sister to Martin Conway the chief organiser of the dance, who was shot dead in the course of the raid. Regan states that the lady asked him as to ‘when she would get out’ as she wanted to go to the races. Regan intimated that he was also going to the races and the young lady proceeded to give him a tip for one of the races. This might seem highly improbable given the circumstances of what happened at Caherguillamore but it adds a certain light relief to a chronicle that is otherwise totally lacking in levity or humour.

Captain John Regan’s attitude to discipline and killings by his subordinates was in sharp contrast to that of the Military Brigadier in Limerick, Brigadier RP Cameron who, in the case of the shooting dead of Richard Leonard, at Caherconlish, in December 1920, had the three officers involved placed under arrest. Although the three officers were eventually exonerated by a Military Court of Inquiry Cameron indicated by his actions that he was not prepared to tolerate or condone his subordinates being involved in random or retaliatory killings. It is doubtful that the same could be said for Captain John Morton Regan.

Viewpoints of the ‘Irish Troubles’ from the perspective of the RIC have rarely been chronicled. Regan’s service in Counties Clare and Fermanagh before WWI and in Counties Cork and Limerick during the period 1919-1922 provides a valuable insight into this period of Irish history. He chose to join the RUC after the establishment of the Free State but suffered career frustration on account of his religion. In editing this work, Augusteijn has made a major contribution to a fuller understanding of Ireland in this critical part of the 20th Century.

Tom Toomey


In a review article in the 1993-94 issue of the *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, Liam Irwin noted the ‘regrettable neglect of academic research on Limerick history’. This neglect has now been somewhat redressed with the publication of two books by Dr. Matthew Potter, who is currently a post doctoral student at the University of Limerick. Both works were sponsored by Limerick City Council, of which Dr Potter is an employee.

The first book consists of twelve chapters and charts the evolution and development of Limerick Corporation / City Council over the eight hundred years of its existence from 1197 to the present day, with a minor interlude during the Cromwellian era in the 1650s when the Corporation was abolished for a period of five years from 1651 to 1656.
The author has made full use of available source material both primary and secondary and has greatly facilitated the student of Limerick's history and the general reader admirably by dividing the book into two sections, which he calls the two ages of Limerick Corporation. The first section deals with the period from the establishment of Limerick Corporation during the medieval era with the granting of the first charter to the struggle for the reformation of the corrupt Corporation. The second section deals with the era from the 'Reformed Corporation' to the present stage where we are informed that the age of the professional administrator had come to the fore in local government. This culminated with the appointment of the first City Manager in 1934, and which saw a drastic reduction in the powers that the Council members had wielded in addition to a reduction of its members from forty down to fifteen.

Dr. Potter informs us in this easy to read book that the wearing of the red robes by councillors is a throwback to the feudal days, which continues to this day although several councillors in recent time have refused wear them. Also of interest is the fact that to this day, Limerick does not have an official coat of arms and that the castle motif only made its first appearance during the middle of the nineteenth century. During this time the civic motto, Urbs Antiqua Fuit Studisque Asperrima Belli, also made its first appearance: it is usually translated as 'an ancient city well versed in the arts of war', which is a description that befits the history, and perhaps the character, of Limerick city. Interestingly, the reader will see that the question of the boundary extension is not a new phenomenon, but dates back to the middle of the nineteenth century, when the Borough Council passed a resolution to establish a committee to examine the best way to obtain such an extension, however, the matter went into abeyance for a period of twenty years, and when the issue was again taken up around 1878, the city received only 365 acres. The boundary has been extended piecemeal ever since. No doubt the present City Council hopes that history will not repeat itself, either in terms of delay or degree of success in their current campaign to obtain a more substantial boundary extension into both counties Limerick and Clare.

The enactment of the Local Government Act 1898, which extended the electoral franchise and ushered in a new Council, marked a significant change as did the Limerick City Management Act 1934. The latter introduced the position of City Manager thereby reducing the powers of the elected Council members, who had heretofore consisted of forty but following the Act was reduced to fifteen, it was not until 1950 that it was increased by another two members, which was in line with a boundary extension. There is a wealth of factual information and interesting detail about the municipal history of Limerick city in this book and is therefore an invaluable contribution to the local study of Limerick's history and is to be recommended to any student and let it be said to the general reader with an interest history.

The second book by Dr. Potter, on the mayoralty, was also funded by the Limerick City Council, and is a worthwhile companion to the previous work. It is also divided into two parts, the first section deals comprehensively with the evolution of the institution of the mayoralty of the city, whereas the second provides short biographies of each individual mayor since 1842. The Municipal Corporations Act of 1840 was the instrument which brought about the death knell of the previous corrupt corporation and the institution of a new reformed body. The paucity of information and particularly the absence of primary source material for the previous periods led the author to decide to commence his study with the elevation into the office of mayor of Martin Honan on 1 January 1842.
From that time to the publication of this book there have been 179 mayors of Limerick, some who have served two terms and others have had three periods in office. Two men have occupied the position five times, Dan Burke, T.D., from 1936 to 1941 consecutively, and George E. (Ted) Russell but not consecutively. He was the last to serve three consecutive terms and in terms of current competition for the office, not alone between political parties but within them and among Independents, this is unlikely to occur in the foreseeable future.

Another interesting aspect of Limerick’s mayors, which is discussed, is why the city never received the honour of having a Lord Mayor, as Cork did following the visit of Queen Victoria in 1900. Dr. Potter cites two of the various theories have been put forward as to the reasons for this, one being that John Daly, the Fenian, who was mayor from 1899 to 1902 would have declined the honour, and the second being that the offer was never made because of the insult given to the Prince and Princess of Wales in 1885 when the Corporation refused to give them an official welcome. These suggestions of course are just pure supposition as there is no evidence to support them. Other items of interest discussed in this work are the earlier ‘Dutch Mayors’, the eighteenth-century ‘Smyths and Verekers’, the important ‘Perys of Newtown Pery’, and the more recent ‘Murdered Mayors’. The significant breakthrough of the ‘First Female Mayor’ is also noted.

There are some minor points that should be noted. Stephen O’Mara Senior is described as having remained a Parnellite throughout the period of the split in the Irish Party during the latter years of the nineteenth century, but in fact he was an anti-Parnellite during this time. While James F. Barry, who was mayor from 1902–03, is listed as a member of the ‘Labour’ party, it should perhaps be added that his successor, Michael Joyce, MP, who was mayor for two consecutive years from 1905 to 1907 had also been a member of this, somewhat misleadingly titled ‘party’. The common belief that Gerard B. Dillon, mayor from 1949–50, was the proprietor of the Thomond Cinema House in Nicholas Street, is at variance with a statement in a letter in the Limerick Leader on 4 July 1956 that any reference to him as owner of the Cinema was incorrect.

Dr Potter has placed all the citizens in his debt by the extensive and painstaking research he has undertaken culminating in these two fine additions to the historiography of Limerick. The City Council is also to be commended for allowing the author leave of absence from his administrative job to undertake the writing and research and for generously facilitating their publication.

Tadhg Moloney


Up to 250,000 Irish men may have served in the First World War and as many as 35,000 of them probably died. During the Second World War 120,000 men from the island as a whole served, with a death toll calculated at 7,000. Until relatively recently this aspect of Irish history has been at best ignored, more often denigrated. There has now been a welcome change in that regard with both academic historians and the general public acknowledging, researching, even to some extent, celebrating this courage and sacrifice. Fergus D’Arcy has identified a lacuna in this area, namely the graves in Ireland of those who died, directly or indirectly as a result of both conflicts.
He suggests that the total number of such people, soldiers, sailors and airmen from over twenty nations who are buried on the island is in the order of 5,700, the majority, 3,800 from WW1, with at least 1,900 from WW2.

In regard to the dead of 1914-8 it must be remembered that repatriation was forbidden in most cases with the victims being buried and commemorated near to where they died. Were it not for the work of the Commonwealth War Graves Commission (CWGC – originally IWGC, Imperial War Graves Commission) and the Irish Office of Public Works the graves in Ireland would not have been noted, marked or remembered. This book is partly an administrative history of both Bodies, as well as a study of diplomatic relations between Britain and Ireland on the issue of dealing appropriately with such graves and finally, but perhaps of greatest importance, and certainly of most interest to readers, it is the story of those who rest in the various cemeteries.

The approach is basically chronological with the first chapter devoted to those who died due to the sinking of the SS Anglo-Californian, Lusitania, Laurentic and Leinster ships. It is largely due to these disasters that there is such a concentration of war graves in Counties Dublin, Cork and Donegal, particularly in the cemeteries of Grangegorman, Cobh and Upper Fahan. In chapter two there is a discussion of the specifically designated military cemeteries. The one in Limerick, on King’s Island, had been given to the War Department in 1856, as part of the grant of the entire 80 acres of the area, by the Commissioners of Woods and Forests in which up to then it had been vested. It was stipulated in the transfer that the cemetery be used ‘for the interment only of such of Her Majesty’s Troops or others belonging to Her Majesty’s service as shall die at Limerick’. It was not until 1928 that the land was handed over to the Irish Free State and in 1934 most of this was transferred to Limerick Corporation as a site for the Island Field Housing scheme, with the one-acre cemetery retained. It contains thirty-nine war graves covering the period 1914-21 with nineteen from the Royal Welch Fusiliers who died 1918-19, most of them from the ‘Spanish flu’ epidemic. Interestingly and somewhat unusually none of the graves contains anyone with an Irish address or from an Irish regiment. There is one Australian buried here and no further military interments took place after June 1921 though there have been some civilian burials.

Attempts to have the standard monuments of commemoration of WW1, the Cross of Sacrifice and the Stone of Remembrance erected in the Free State were unsuccessful and the author points out that neither is present in any cemetery in the Republic: the only one is in the Irish National War Memorial Garden in Islandbridge in Dublin. He does not mention the fact that the original memorial in Pery Square in Limerick had the Cross of Sacrifice design. Many relatives were keen to have the standard IWGC headstone and there is a sad case recorded of a Limerick widow, Margaret Byrne of Francis St., whose late husband had been discharged from the army in 1925 arising from his wartime induced disabilities but because he died in 1932, he was not eligible, as only those who died before 21 August 1921 could have such a memorial stone.

Discussion of the varying situation up to and after the Second World War constitutes the rest of the book. One of the interesting issues highlighted is the thorny question of headstones for the dead of WW2. In 1950 the Irish government finally agreed to a long-standing request from the CWGC to allow the erection of their permanent headstones in Ireland. Nothing was said about the engraving of regimental badges on these stones: an ‘Irish solution’ was adopted in that if there was no objection it could be done but if a local authority did object, then they should not be allowed. In the event only in County Clare was this never done, though it appears to have been less continued refusal but
rather an assumption that such permission would be refused. Following a one-man campaign in the late 1990s by Thomond Archaeological Society member, Dr Tadgh Moloney, Clare County Council eventually agreed, though not without some opposition, to allow regimental insignia. As the author points out this is ‘striking testimony not only to changed times but to the significance of the action of one individual and his commitment to preserving the memory of the war dead’. Another indication of such change was the costly restoration by the OPW of the Island Bridge Memorial Park which had been allowed to fall into a shameful and embarrassing state of disrepair and dereliction. The cemetery of the German War Dead in Glencreen, Co Wicklow had meanwhile been opened without undue problems in 1961 and a separate chapter is devoted to it.

The author has performed a major and magnificent task in producing this book. An extensive range of archival material has been unearthed and used to great effect. Local historians and informed and interested individuals also provided help and assistance and are generously thanked and acknowledged. The lucid text is enlivened and enhanced on every page with excellent photographs, plans and contemporary illustrations. There is an excellent, comprehensive index, vital in such a work of record. This labour of love is a valuable and welcome addition to the thankfully growing body of scholarly work on this topic.

Liam Irwin


This book provides an introduction to modern scholarship on the theme of violence in modern Irish history. One of the most popular approaches to this topic has been the link between violence itself and its representation. Therefore most of the contributors are not historians. The contributions of the literary critics, philosophers and film commentators will probably not be to the taste of people reared in, or expecting, traditional historical approaches and this may also account for the fact that this reviewer found the one essay by a distinguished historian to be by far the most stimulating and sensible one in the entire collection.

Peter Hart sets out to examine the opposing claims about the necessity for violence in the 1916-23 period of Irish history. While admitting that the exercise is ultimately futile in that history cannot be rerun to test any hypothesis he justifies it by claiming that it resurrects and opens up to debate a lot of assumptions that need to be questioned. It is also, as he admits, a very entertaining activity and it underlines the interesting notion that absolute solutions or even general agreement should not have greater merit than sincere and rational disagreement, which is frequently more stimulating. He begins with 1916 ‘the Ground and Year Zero’ and argues that the success of the rising lay in the heroism of the leaders, martial discipline and especially the anger and sympathy engendered by their execution. He emphasises however that it received no popular endorsement until well after its occurrence. His challenging conclusion is that if Sinn Féin had remained non-violent but had used methods similar to the Land League it might have been just as successful, in achieving its overall aims while making the IRA and its violence unnecessary.

Bernice Schrank takes the work of Scán O’Casey to explore both the theme in his written work but also in his personal life and attitudes. Danine Farquharson, one of the
joint editors, titles her essay ‘Sexing the Rising’ and begins with a quotation from Liam O’Flaherty’s novel, *Insurrection* which she interprets as showing his belief that there was an inextricable link between shooting a gun and sex. Similar discoveries of erotic connotations continue in her examination of more contemporary novels, such as Jamie O’Neill’s *At Swim Two Boys* which ‘makes homosexual the all too heterosexualised Easter Rising’ and Roddy Doyle’s less than brilliant work, *A Star Called Henry*.

Timothy McMahon takes us to China in 1900 for his meditation on the theme while Seán Farrell concentrates on the Dolly’s Brae world of nineteenth-century Ulster. Brian McIlroy and Keith Hopper illustrate the theme from film, the former concentrating on what he terms the Irish ‘Troubles’ movie genre while the latter focuses on Neil Jordan’s film *Angel*. Elmer Kennedy-Andrews analyses the work of the distinguished poet, Ciaran Carson emphasising his work as an urban poet. The final essay is by the philosopher Richard Kearney who explores the relationship between ‘poetics and ethics as it pertains to the remembrance of time through place’. His specific case study is the New York City memorial to the Great Famine through which he ruminates on the problems inherent in commemoration of historical events particular those of a violent or traumatic nature.

Anthony O’Carroll


There are two ‘Bloody Sundays’ in the Irish historical pantheon: 21 November 1920 when fourteen men [eleven British Intelligence officers, two auxiliaries and an army officer] were killed by the IRA and in a reprisal fourteen civilians were killed by the Black and Tans in Croke Park and 30 January 1972 when fourteen men leaving a civil rights march in Derry were killed by the British Army [thirteen on the day and one from his injuries some months later].

This book investigates the ways in which the events in Derry on 30 January 1972 have been represented in film, theatre, literature, TV programmes, photography, art murals and music. It also discusses how it has been the subject of pressure-group campaigns, commemorative events and legal discourse. There are six chapters arranged in themes. Films examined are the Paul Greengrass feature film *Bloody Sunday* and the TV film *Sunday* by Jimmy McGovern. In theatre, Frank McGuinness’s *Carthaginians* and Brian Friel’s *The Freedom of the City* are analysed. In poetry, Thomas Kinsella’s *Butcher’s Dozen* is studied while in the area of visual art, the work of Willie Doherty and the Bogside Artists are considered. Scholars from the fields of literary criticism, cultural theory, media studies and art criticism utilise an interdisciplinary approach to the subject.

The first chapter of the book attempts to provide a social and political context in which the events of that day occurred. The main dynamic at work was the demand of the civil rights movement for change in terms of housing policy, policing and the conduct of local elections and the response of both the local administration and Britain to this challenge.

The second chapter explores the way in which photographs of the victims have been presented and used by their families in commemorations and political campaigns, particularly the demand for a new government enquiry. Their representation on murals and banners and particularly work by a group termed the Bogside Artists is also discussed.
Chapter three, entitled Virtual Justice explores the Saville Enquiry, a new examination of the events ordered by Tony Blair after years of pressure from relatives and politicians unhappy with the findings of the 1972 Widgery report. Because the physical environment of the Bogside area has changed out of all recognition since the early 1970s a virtual imaging environment has been created to facilitate the work of the enquiry and the evidence of witnesses. While this virtual-Derry has been lauded for its technological innovation the ethical issues have not been explored. These and the use of other technologies as well as the availability of a website are explored and discussed.

Chapter four analyses the two major movies on this subject, the Paul Greengrass feature film Bloody Sunday and the TV film Sunday by Jimmy McGovern. Both films take issue with the findings of the Widgery enquiry and claim on the basis of their interaction with the people of the area to present a truthful narrative of what occurred. The problems inherent in, and the limitations of, this claim are analysed.

Thomas Kinsella's poem Butcher's Dozen is discussed in chapter five. Based on the Irish eighteenth-century poetic form, the aisling, the victims appear to the poet in a dream and give their version of what happened. The poem was an angry response to the Widgery report and in particular to what Kinsella saw as the contradictions between the evidence presented and the conclusions of the judge. The final chapter deals with the approach of two dramatists to the events of that day and in particular to their exploration of how it impacted on the community in Derry.

There is much to discuss, stimulate, reflect on and perhaps disagree with in this interesting work. It is not, it has to be said, the easiest book to read and some of the specialist language and concepts of the disciplines from which the authors come may be off putting for the general reader. However for those interested in studying the long term effects of such a traumatic event and the use of memory and remembrance by families and the wider community, it is a timely and valuable study.

John Kelly


In the summer of 1987 George Cunningham, then a relatively young teacher, retired as principal of Coolderry National School, five miles west of Roscrea. In the months and years that followed George initiated a number of projects dedicated to historical and environmental research, conservation and publication. Among them was a conference on medieval studies held twice-yearly since 1987 at Mount St Joseph, the Cistercian monastery, near Roscrea. This volume, published during the fortieth conference in 2007, commemorates that anniversary and provides a comprehensive record of the varied strands of that particular project's achievement.

Each Roscrea conference is built around a distinctive topic though a few central themes prevail: the material, spiritual and intellectual life of the medieval church; the Cistercian Order; manuscripts, printed books and libraries; settlement and everyday life, particularly that of the 'monastic midlands'. It is often suggested that the conference should broaden out and develop new themes; that it should venture into other historical periods; that it should look at recent events and personalities. Wisely, all this has been resisted. While other gatherings and conferences blur the boundary between scholarship and popular culture and succumb to modishness, Roscrea has held steadfastly to its
initial goals, always with the intention of promoting a greater understanding of the medieval world. As universities give in without much protest to the pressure to divert funds from medieval studies into more ‘relevant’ areas it may be left to projects such as the Roscrea Conference to shield what is now a spluttering flame.

The first part of this commemorative volume consists of five papers chosen as representative of the hundreds given at the conference. The 2002 spring conference was devoted to ‘Treasures from Lorra’ to which Siobhan Fitzpatrick, the Librarian of the Royal Irish Academy presented a paper on manuscript D ii 3 in the Academy’s library, a Latin mass book better known as the Stowe Missal. There she set out the manuscript’s tangled provenance and recent history and carefully summarised the evidence that points to its origins at the end of the ninth century in the monastery at Lorra. A paper by another librarian at the Academy, Bernadette Cunningham, on the relationship between Michéal Ó Cléirigh, the guiding light of the Annals of the Four Masters and various members of the MacAodhagáin family of lawyers from Ballymacegan in the parish of Lorra opens a wide window on the process of scholarly interaction – collaboration, mentorship, teaching, transcription – still vigorous in seventeenth century Gaelic Ireland. Given its monastic home, Cistercian history has provided a theme for many Roscrea conferences. Thus the inaugural conference on the history of the Irish Cistercians heard a paper from Willie Hayes based on his almost-daily observation of the work of excavation, conservation and restoration at Holy Cross Abbey between 1969 and 1977 which, in the absence of a published report, is now an important part of the record of that great project. His paper is complemented by one from Billy Colfer on the Anglo-Norman Cistercian foundations at Tintern and Dunbrody in Wexford. Colfer reconstructs the organisation of their granges and estates and, in so doing, provides an important paper on the economy, polity and social organisation of medieval Wexford. Máire Geaney provides a magnificent article on medieval roofing techniques, illustrated by studies of two key examples, Donaghley Castle near Dublin and St Mary’s, Youghal, the oldest surviving medieval roof in Ireland.

The second part of the volume focuses on aspects of Roscrea heritage. Valerie Hall, professor of palaeoecology at Queens University Belfast outlines the vegetational history of Monaincha, a brilliant example of the value of sustained study of a single site over the *longue durée*. Professor Ray Gillespie provides a comprehensive outline of the waning fortunes of medieval Roscrea while Professor Peter Harbison provides yet another sparkling instalment from his on-going research into early topographical and antiquarian drawings, and in this case reproduces important views of St Cronan’s church at Roscrea made before its destruction. Two other essays – in words by George Cunningham, and in pictures by Brian Redmond – record specific instances of key heritage projects of the past two decades, most spectacularly the clawing back of Roscrea’s round tower from the dereliction and decay that threatened to overwhelm it and a similar tale of rescue and restoration of the town’s early eighteenth-century Damer House.

The Roscrea Conference cannot be considered in isolation from the monastery where it has always been held. Its themes frequently consider aspects of monastic life and the conference routine follows, in part, that of the monastery. A Roscrea conference held elsewhere would have a different and, most-likely, a lesser quality. It is appropriate then that the everyday life of the monastery is quietly recorded in the third part of this volume in essays by three of its monks. A meticulously detailed article by Laurence Walsh records the history of Ballyskenagh, the townland by then renamed Mount Heaton, where Mount St Joseph was founded in 1878. Ciarán Ó Sabhaois, much in the
manner of his scribal precursors, provides a chronicle of the past twenty years at the monastery: the coming and going of monks, the hospitality extended to its visitors, the everyday work of the monastery's farm and the life of its school. An essay by Richard Purcell provides the background to how monks and boys from the school collaborated with John Hughes to produce two highly successful compact discs of sacred music, Salve I in 2002 and Salve II in 2006.

The volume's concluding section was compiled by Carmel Cunningham, George's patient collaborator and steadfast partner as a record of the proceedings of each conference. Here she meticulously lists each lecturer and the lectures given (a valuable scholarly contribution in itself); records the titles of books launched at successive conferences and provides details of field-trips taken. It concludes with a celebration of the conference, in verse, by Yvonne O'Connor. Most poignant, there is a list of conference lecturers who have since died: George Otto Simms, F.X. Martin, Jim Kemmy, Ellen Prendergast, James Lang, Frank Mitchell, Sean J. White, Liam de Paor, Elizabeth Hickey, Peter O'Dwyer, Michael Harty, William O'Sullivan, Ann Hamlin, Leo Swan, Thomas Fanning, Columcille Conway and Benedict Kearns, to which, since the volume's publication, must be added Máiréad Dunlevy. The list hints at the convivial, ecumenical and humane nature of the gatherings and is a timely reminder of the values held in a gentler era of scholarship. This book is a fine record of their contribution and of the generous, comradely, spring and autumn days when many benefited from the dissemination of research of the highest quality while enjoying the gracious hospitality of Mount St Joseph. 

John Logan


As its title conveys this is a publication to celebrate the centenary of the Roscrea bacon factory. The editors describe it as a 'labour of love' as they both have long personal and family associations with the factory, now known as Glanbia Meats Roscrea, to reflect more recent change in ownership. It is an affectionate and entertaining account of the many changes that have occurred over the years since its establishment.

The origins of the factory go back to 1904 when a group of local farmers and a priest, Fr Cunningham, formulated plans for the enterprise which would be a co-operative and was modelled on the success of the Danes in developing their pig industry. In 1906 the site in the centre of town with its medieval castle and the magnificent eighteenth-century Damer House, was planned to be sold by the Military authorities and serious consideration was given to buying it as the site for the proposed factory. Luckily the sale was abandoned, not just for the preservation of such important historical buildings [though the fight to save Damer House had to be fought against in the 1960s when the local authority wanted to demolish it] but also for the comfort and health of the townspeople. By 1907 the project was underway at the site at Bunker's Hill. Everyone from the employees to the management, to local farmers who not only supplied the raw material but became shareholders, worked enthusiastically to make it a success. Originally it employed ten people and an experienced bacon curer and sausage maker was sourced from Cornwall. Quality was the key to success and the numerous awards received provide testimony to this as does the commercial success of the
products. Major expansion occurred in the 1980s, with new factories at Parkmore and Carrig and exports to the USA and Japan. In more recent years the new owners, Glanbia have continued to investment in and develop the industry.

The story of the factory is told in a clear chronological manner interspersed with many photographs which help to bring the narrative alive and provide a fascinating record of the many developments and occasional set backs over the one hundred years. A sign of further recent change is the inclusion of a paragraph in Hungarian to reflect the contribution of workers from Hungary who have been an important element of the workforce since 2001. There are three affectionate reminiscences from men who worked or had family who worked there. It is an attractively designed and produced book which will be of great interest to anyone with connections to the factory or to the Roscrea area and indeed for anyone interested in a success story of enterprise and initiative in twentieth-century Ireland.

Liam Irwin