

Book Reviews

J.P. Mallory, *The Origins of the Irish*, Thames & Hudson, London, 2013, 320pp. 122 illustrations. ISBN 978-0-500-05175-7. Price €25.15.

'I don't do twinkle' the author sternly warns his readers in the introduction to this long-awaited and stimulating book, not to expect any Paddy Seanachai passages. In fact, Séamus Seandalaí does constantly enliven his text and entertain his readers with witty asides, clever contemporary references or analogies and amusing comments which make it an entertaining as well as an informative and challenging reading experience.

The search for the origins of the Irish is taken back if not quite to the Big Bang itself then certainly to the origins of the planet in a first chapter which expertly blends and elucidates current thinking among geologists and geomorphologists. In an early example of 'twinkle' he describes the break-up of the Vendian super-continent around 600 million years ago as 'partition' due to the fact that what would become the north-western portion of Ireland drifted northwards as part of the Laurentia continent while the rest went southwards as part of Gondwana. The likelihood of both parts ever being joined again was remote but, as with contemporary Irish politics, unlikely things do happen and about 400 million years ago, against the odds and all predictions had they been available, the land masses came together (or collided, for those suspicious of peaceful processes) which event is, of course, described as 'unification'. Around 65 million years ago Ireland emerged from under the sea, where it had been for most of the previous Cretaceous period (142-65 million years ago) though apparently the area around Carlow might have managed to keep its head above water. The beginning of the last Ice Age (though we are warned that to assume that 'last' means 'never again' may be presumptuous and we might be in for a rude - and cold - awakening one of these million years or so) was the main determinant of the Ireland we now have, beginning its long process about 1.6 million years ago. The emergence of Ireland in the shape and size of the present island is relatively recent, no more than 12,000 years ago and certainly before any human occupation had occurred.

These first 'Irish people', though the author would deny them this designation, were almost certainly Mesolithic hunter gatherers – as with all other archaeologists the tantalising possibility of earlier Palaeolithic pioneers is not definitively ruled out, a wise precaution no doubt against a future discovery of crude hand axes or a decorated cave full of art or even a Neanderthal skull. While the original Mesolithic people might have crossed from Scotland or Wales, the author interestingly argues for the Isle of Man basin area speculating that they might have been forced westward due to rising sea levels. The first 'Irish' it would appear from this argument, only came here reluctantly and out of desperation. Interestingly the best evidence we have of these people is from Co. Limerick, two cremation burials from Castleconnell and two skeletons from Killuragh Cave near Cappamore.

Little evidence survives for the acquisition of farming knowledge and techniques by these original settlers, or more correctly perhaps by their (culturally different) successors in the later Mesolithic, nor indeed for any substantial contact with the Neolithic arrivals shortly after 4,000 BC. The evidence suggests that the major change involved in the introduction of farming was a relatively rapid development which closely paralleled a

similar process in Britain and the two islands appear to have close contacts throughout the period but an origin in Brittany is also a possibility supported to some extent by evidence of continuing influence from there throughout the period. On the much-argued issue of the introduction of Beaker pottery and metallurgy the author opts for immigration both from northern Britain and Atlantic Europe in the later third millennium and also suggests further arrivals *c.*1200 as evidenced by hill forts and bronze swords. Ireland, it is noted, has the greatest number of the latter per area in Europe. All these successive settlers are given the clumsy (Mallory's own adjective) name *Irelanders* because they do not 'tick all the boxes' of what he requires as a true definition of 'Irish' as exemplified by his 'target Irishman' Niall of the Nine Hostages who is irritatingly conjured up at the beginning of every chapter.

The author emphasises the lack of any evidence for a significant migration of people to Ireland during the Iron Age, as archaeologists have long been pointing out to the chagrin of those who imagine a triumphant arrival of tall, blonde, blue-eyed, hard-drinking, gregarious 'Celts' who so charm the indigenous inhabitants that they immediately adopt their language, laws and customs. The major ritual and ceremonial sites of this period are credited to existing 'native' elites. He does however suggest that there was some population movement in the first four centuries AD mainly of Romano-British settlers.

Having discussed the archaeological evidence, in a chronological format in the first six chapters, the next three chapters are thematic, discussing the literary evidence, genetics and language. He agrees that the creation of origin myths for the peopling of Ireland, undertaken by Irish monks between the seventh and eleventh centuries, were largely modelled on biblical accounts with suitable native additions. Among the latter was the assertion that the Irish language was distilled from all the best elements of the seventy-two languages which resulted from the Tower of Babel; a claim the author points out which might not find favour with students trying to grapple with the complexities of Old Irish. The chapter on genetics demonstrates how uncertain and inconclusive its findings currently are, even if it may ultimately prove to be the most valuable tool in the quest for the origins of the Irish. The complexity of the subject makes the author's structure of providing a bullet-point summary of his points at the end of each chapter particularly welcome here. It is significant, however, that he chooses, or is compelled, to provide two sets of contradictory conclusions in this instance.

Throughout the book, the 'C' word is conspicuous by its absence but in the chapter on language, the Celts finally appear. The author is meticulously even handed in his discussion of this potentially explosive topic. He outlines the case put forward by Celto-sceptics but does not offer any clear opinion on the validity or otherwise of their arguments. He keeps his focus firmly on Celtic languages but acknowledges that language is 'not some trivial veneer, superimposed over one's "real" culture'. Having discussed the various aspects of this topic from Indo-European to Continental and Insular Celtic, as well as the much-debated issue of P-Celtic names in Ireland, he then offers some interesting and challenging conclusions which essentially attempt to provide some answers to the question which has underlain the entire work and is implicit in its title.

He is clear that it is highly improbable that a language related in any close way to Irish was spoken by the initial Mesolithic settlers nor is it likely that it was spoken by the Neolithic farmers, though they probably introduced a new language. It is also probably too early for any form of Irish to have arrived with later Neolithic or Early Bronze Age peoples. He plumps therefore for the period around 1,000 BC as the most likely date 'during this time there is evidence that both Goidelic and Brittonic tribes were settled in

Ireland.' His suggested mechanism for this momentous language shift was the appearance and spread of hill forts by a class of sword-wielding elite warriors: Bronze Age swords as tally sticks for linguistic change perhaps? The apparent abandonment of hill fort construction c.800 BC might explain the retention of the conservative Q version of Celtic due to cultural isolation. Further consolidation of the language, which ensured its dominance, may have resulted from the role of the ritual centres or royal sites like Tara or Emain Macha in the first centuries BC.

In his final chapter, which lucidly summaries his conclusions, he stresses that we should not regard Ireland simply as the passive recipient of all the various peoples and cultures that he has discussed. The Irish or the 'Irelanders' exported goods and products both to Britain and continental Europe and within Ireland made adjustments and developments to the social and environmental challenges they faced. His final area of discussion and conjecture centres on the issue of when the inhabitants of the island might have begun to regard themselves as 'Irish'. On the basis of the medieval concept of a five-province division, clearly implying a vision of a subdivided unity, which he suggests went back to the Iron Age and whose leaders spoke a Celtic language and shared common cultural traits, he regards it as likely, or certainly possible, that a prehistoric 'Irish national consciousness' existed by the first centuries BC. Just in time, of course, for the dreaded Niall to appear again and get the last word – he would have regarded himself as Irish, we are assured, with perhaps a final twinkle?

Liam Irwin

Pádraig Ó Riain, *A Dictionary of Irish saints*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2011. 660pp. ISBN 978-1-84682-318-3. Price €65.

Ireland is a land of saints and Professor Pádraig Ó Riain has spent much of his career surrounded by them. In particular, his work on the genealogies of early Irish saints (*Corpus genealogiarum sanctorum Hiberniae* published in Dublin in 1985) and on early martyrologies (*Feastdays of the saints: a history of Irish martyrologies* Brussels 2006) provide solid foundations for this current work. Almost equally important is Professor Ó Riain's other major field of interest in early Irish onomastics and place-name studies and a key feature of this volume is the careful identification of the part(s) of the country where each saint was active. The influence of the famous Bollandist, Hippolyte Delehaye (*Les légendes hagiographiques*, Brussels 1905; *Cinq leçons sur la méthode hagiographique*, Brussels 1934) and the latter's emphasis on the need to distinguish between the cults of homonymous saints through the clear delineation of their feast day and location is clearly visible in this *Dictionary*. Indeed, these are stated by the author to be his priorities in identifying individuals for inclusion (p. 39).

Though the vast majority of Irish saints are said to have lived in a narrow timeframe between the time of Patrick and the arrival of the Vikings (and this book is deliberately limited to those who died before 1200 – p. 46), they are still a major feature of Irish life today. Travelling through the countryside, you can find a hospital named after St Lommán, a church dedicated to St Nessen, a school named after St Munchin or a road commemorating St Declan. Some of these saints might be relatively well known, others almost unheard of outside their own district. Writing in far away Louvain in the days of the Counter-Reformation, John Colgan wrote letters to Irish diocesan bishops asking that they collect and send him as much local data as they could amass and his magisterial works, *Acta Sanctorum Hiberniae* (1645) and *Trias Thaumaturgae* (1647), are, in

consequence, often peppered with place-names and local lore. There is also the happy coincidence that nineteenth-century Ordnance Survey researchers were collecting data about local saints immediately before the Great Famine swept away much of the Irish-speaking population from large areas of the country. In the same period, too, the Catholic Church was developing a new parochial system, based around new church buildings reflecting contemporary needs and settlements – and those churches needed dedications. The national school system for primary schools introduced in 1831 had been intended to foster a non-denominational education in secular subjects but the effort to separate out religious education was opposed by the three main denominations and already by the middle years of the century, it had evolved into a mixed system in which religion (of whatever denomination) was firmly embedded into the curriculum. The 1838 Poor Law set up a workhouse and hospital system which was originally designed to be firmly secular but the practice of medicine in other contexts was heavily denominational and the growth of the nursing religious orders in the later nineteenth century means that Irish names and dedications became common. Thus today there are many contemporary parish churches, schools and hospitals in modern Ireland which, despite originating in the Victorian period, are named after local holy men and women of the Middle Ages. This book provides those who want to explore a key element in Irish culture and tradition with an immense resource.

The sheer amount of work and scholarship represented is staggering. There are, for example, by my count, 1,013 identified feast-days which are dispersed throughout the calendar year. There are 1,118 civil parishes indexed where churches associated with individual saints might be found and 850 other place-names. To find, track and classify this material, the list of abbreviations contains some 596 entries delineating the sources consulted. Many of these, such as various Irish language journals, local history and archaeology journals or the Ordnance Survey letters represent many multiples of volumes in their own right. The languages in which this source material is written are Irish (of all phases of the language from the seventh century to the modern era) as well as other sources in Latin and English and a reasonable percentage of these are not available in translation. The secondary literature includes volumes in French and German as well as Irish and English. Some of the sources are not edited at all and abbreviations such as StonyA and StonyB refer to individual manuscripts. As a field, Celtic studies is interdisciplinary by its very nature but the wide-ranging level of expertise displayed here is, unfortunately, likely to disappear as universities evolve away from their traditional focus on the humanities into a brave new world of business and technical know-how.

One of the difficulties in using Irish sources from a wide chronological range is the variation in spelling conventions over time. The author has decided to use Classical Irish conventions (of the early modern period), because 'it represents a happy mean between Middle and Modern Irish, not far removed from the earlier forms preferred by previous commentators, yet easily recognizable by those proficient in Modern Irish.' (p. 47) Unfortunately, the study of Irish church history and indeed of Irish saints is not confined to those proficient in Modern Irish and the scrupulous attention with which Professor Ó Riain formulates these Classical Irish forms may cause problems for some. To find that the seventh-century biographer of Patrick from north Mayo – known throughout secondary literature as *Tírechán* (with or without accents) is listed as *Tíreachán* (p.130) is not a major difficulty but not everybody who wishes to learn more information concerning the character more often known as *Aileran Sapiens* is going to be able to find him under the spelling *Oilearán Sapiens* (p. 520). There is an index for anglicised forms (pp 633-5)

so that those wanting to find saints such as Kevin of Glendalough can find the form 'Caoimhghin' which is the head-word for the relevant entry. At 660 pages in a reasonably-sized font, the *Dictionary* is at the outer limits of binding production for a single volume but a larger index, designed to help those who know saints under the Old Irish spelling of their names, would probably have added to the usefulness of the volume.

For the specialist reader, one of the interesting facets of Professor Ó Riain's approach has been to emphasise the role of high medieval foundations, generally houses of Augustinian canons and canonesses, in writing the lives of individual saints. So, for example, the life of Saint Senan (Seanán) of Scatterry is linked to a 'house of canons regular in south Clare, probably Clareabbey' (p. 559); that of St Brendan (Bréanainn) 'was informed by the mind of a canon regular' (p. 116), that of St Ailbhe of Emly has details that 'argue against an early date' (p. 58) and that of St Íde may be linked to the house of canons at Rathkeale or the convent of canonesses at Shanagolden (p. 377). This is a useful corrective to the often widespread habit of assuming that our information about Irish saints stems from the period to which the (often inserted) death-notice in the annals ascribe them. This is a particularly common problem in many modern Catholic lectionaries, for example. On the other hand, the very popularity of the Augustinian orders in the Anglo-Norman period and the fact that so many of them were located on sites known to have been earlier church centres may well indicate that many canons and canonesses shared a widespread interest in older traditions and possibly even in manuscripts of the pre-Norman period. Thus the lives and indeed liturgies of high medieval date may well be based on a far more extensive early medieval documentary record than has survived to the present day and perhaps what those of the Norman period did in some cases was to add detail rather than to compose works *de novo*.

To be asked to review a volume like this is a real privilege. As it happened, before being contacted by the editor, I had already purchased the book and was using it as a reference work, dipping in and out to find specific entries. As a reviewer, I read the book as a unit and thus learnt such gems as the fact that Pope Gregory the Great was thought to have visited Ireland and was even said by some to be buried on Aran (Grioghóir Béaloir p. 371), that the saints of Thomond, both male and female, came together to defend the southern half of Ireland from a bondage which St Finnian of Clonard attempted to impose (p. 535) and that the Óengus who wrote a magnificent martyrology in 591 quatrains of perfect *rinnard* rhyme as Vikings were first appearing off the west coast of Ireland, is the man commemorated in the Limerick parish of Dysert (Díseart Aonghasa) near Croom (p. 79). I was also taken by the realisation of how often Irish female saints are depicted as mothers – not just in the genealogical tract on the mothers of saints but also as dedicatees in so many Irish churches. Early Irish Christianity enjoys the most detailed early vernacular record of any country in western Europe and it is interesting that, in an era when saints were identified by popular acclaim, the physical dangers and demanding responsibilities involved in motherhood were accorded such respect.

I am not sure that many will peruse this book from cover to cover: it is a rather weighty tome for reading on the beach, even assuming that one has the weather and the opportunities to do so while the consistency of the entries (with the constant reiteration of the saint's genealogy, feast-day and location in each entry) can make it occasionally repetitive for a leisure-time read. However it very much deserves to become an integral element of the research tools available to those studying the regional history and culture of Ireland and it fills a truly vital gap in our current provision. Finally, a particular delight for readers of the *North Munster Antiquarian Journal* and members of the Thomond

Archaeological and Historical Society, many of whom have known Pádraig and Dagmar for years, will be the strength and detail of the coverage of saints from this particular part of the island. Hopefully they will take on board Pádraig's exhortation that it should 'serve to stimulate rather than entirely satisfy' their curiosity.

Catherine Swift

Tadhg Moloney, *Limerick Constitutional Nationalism, 1898-1918, Change and Continuity*, Cambridge Scholars Publishing, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2010, 221pp. ISBN (10): 1-4438-1900-X; ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-1900-8. Price €69.60.

It can be argued that the most formative period in modern Irish history is that which consists of the two or three decades preceding the outbreak of the First World War. During these crowded years, the Catholic bourgeoisie of farmers and shopkeepers wrested ownership of their holdings from the old landed elite, took control of parliamentary representation and local government outside of North-East Ulster and advanced the cause of Irish self-government to the edge of realisation. At the same time, a rich and varied flowering of national life produced a widened and deepened sense of Irish national identity through the activities of the Gaelic Athletic Association, Gaelic League and the galaxy of writers involved in the Irish Literary revival. Simultaneously, the Labour movement achieved prominence; separatism revived through the activities of an invigorated IRB while Sinn Féin and a host of institutions destined to dominate modern Ireland emerged, such as the Abbey Theatre, Pioneer Total Abstinence Association and Irish Countrywomen's Association.

Accordingly, these seminal decades have been favoured with considerable attention from modern historians, exemplified by Paul Bew's *Conflict and Conciliation in Ireland, 1898-1910: Parnellites and Radical Agrarians* (1987); Patrick Maume's *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life 1891-1918* (1999); and *Ireland in Transition* edited by D George Boyce and Alan O'Day (2012). There have also been a number of valuable local case studies dealing with different areas of the country over varying timespans, including *Politics and Irish Life, 1913-1921: Provincial Experience of War and Revolution* by David Fitzpatrick (1977) dealing with County Clare and *Nationalism and the Irish Party: Provincial Ireland 1910-1916* by Michael Wheatley (2005) which looks at Counties Leitrim, Longford, Roscommon, Sligo and Westmeath. Now, thanks to Dr Tadhg Moloney, we have a similar case study of constitutional nationalism in Limerick City for a twenty-year period framed by the 1798 Centenary commemorations and the 1918 General Election.

Limerick Constitutional Nationalism commences with an introductory chapter which includes a useful literature review and a brief but masterly survey of Limerick City in the 1890s. It is followed by the main body of the book which is divided into three parts. In the first, 'The Shaking of Constitutionalism' which treats of the period 1890 to 1902, Dr Moloney examines the impact of the Parnellite Split, the reunification of the Irish Party (which, interestingly, was instigated by Limerick Board of Guardians), the manner in which 'advanced nationalism' was stimulated by the 1798 Centenary and the Boer War, and the impact of the Local Government Act of 1898 on municipal government in Limerick. For much of this period, public life in Limerick City was dominated by the charismatic and controversial figure of John Daly (1845-1916), Fenian, separatist and Mayor for three turbulent years (1899-1902). Daly personified and led the Labour Corporation, an engrossing period when the city's municipality was governed by an

apparently extreme republican, even socialistic political movement, but Dr Moloney clearly demonstrates that its radicalism was more apparent than real.

The second part, 'The Resurgence of Constitutionalism' deals with the period 1902 to 1910, when the threat posed by Daly and his supporters receded, leaving the reunited Irish Parliamentary Party in firm control of Limerick City, operating through the medium of its constituency organisation, the United Irish League, in close alliance with the Catholic Church led by the formidable and masterful Bishop Edward Thomas O'Dwyer. If Daly was the incarnation of the Labour Corporation, the more moderate and cautious figure of Michael Joyce (1851-1940) was the leading figure of this period, MP for the City from 1900 to 1918, member of the City Council from 1899 to 1920 and twice Mayor from 1905 to 1907.

The final part, 'Challenges to Constitutional Nationalism' covers the years 1910 to 1918 and demonstrates how an increasingly effete Irish Parliamentary Party/United Irish League came under threat from a variety of rival movements, including William O'Brien's All for Ireland League, Sinn Féin, the Gaelic League and (after 1916) the 'New' Sinn Féin party. In addition to these well-known bodies, Dr Moloney also deals with the much more obscure Young Ireland Society and Irish Nation League, one of the most interesting and informative sections in a book packed with useful information.

In a short concluding chapter, Dr Moloney draws together the numerous strands explored in the three parts of the book and concludes that the period was characterised as much by 'continuity' as it was by 'change.' He reminds us that 'there were several apparent breaks with the past that turned out to be false starts, with previous conditions and attitudes returning after an initial flirtation with novelty' and enumerates the municipal reform of 1898, the Labour Corporation of 1899 and the arrival in Limerick of the All for Ireland League in 1910 as examples of this tendency. Even the seemingly more radical changes of 1917-18 are correctly identified as being similar returns to older practices, and the author reminds us that neither abstentionism nor republicanism were new but rather more vigorous and clearly-defined avatars of older ideas.

Perhaps most importantly of all, Dr Moloney highlights the more important and durable features deeply embedded in the base of Limerick and Irish politics, which are apt to be overlooked in favour of the more colourful aspects of its superstructure. Two in particular stand out. The first is personalism which found expression in the period covered by his book in the commanding figures of Daly, Joyce and O'Dwyer who bestrode the City like three colossi. It was a feature that continued long after Independence, with Limerick public life heavily populated by powerful leaders such as Ted Russell, Donough O'Malley, Steve Coughlan, Jim Kemmy and Bishop Jeremiah Newman. Arguably, it continues to the present in the shape of Michael Noonan and Willie O'Dea. The second durable feature is the prevalence of localism over ideology, which was first highlighted by Theo Hoppen in his *Elections, Politics and Society in Ireland: 1832-1885* (1984) and which likewise continues to the time of writing. Michael Joyce seldom spoke in the Commons except on local issues, and the assiduous manner in which he cultivated his constituency finds echoes in the activities of modern Limerick's representatives in the Dáil.

Dr Moloney is to be commended for this very valuable addition to the growing corpus of work on Limerick's history, but it is much more than this. *Limerick Constitutional Nationalism* is a meticulously researched and exhaustive picture of the public life of one of Ireland's leading provincial centres at a time of great significance in the nation's history and as such is a work of national as well as local importance.

Matthew Potter

Peter Pagnamenta, *Prairie Fever: How British Aristocrats staked a claim to the American West*, Duckwork Overlook, London, 2012, xvii +338pp. ISBN 978-0-7156-4372-3. Price €20.

One of the least known and slightly bizarre aspects of nineteenth-century emigration from Europe to North America is the topic of this work. It is a story devoid of financial pressures, forced departure from homelands, coffin ships, struggles for employment or discrimination on religious, social or ethnic grounds. On the contrary it deals with a rich, privileged and selfish elite who were attracted to this 'new world' where large tracts of land were available and in particular scope for large scale hunting, shooting and fishing seemed unlimited. From the 1830s British aristocrats were increasingly drawn to the prairies of the American West and the Rocky Mountains in particular.

The author identifies three phases in this saga. The first involved primarily those interested in hunting, who were eager to shoot buffalo and elk, the second consisted of younger sons who tried to establish large farming estates, especially in Kansas and Iowa while the third phase saw ranchers purchasing land in the hope of profiting from the free-range cattle boom in Wyoming and Montana in the 1870s. By 1886 the American Congress estimated that British (mainly) but also some Irish and continental European aristocrats had bought 21 million acres in the American West leading to a decision to introduce legislation to restrict any future purchases. However such laws were by then hardly necessary as the dreams of wealth were already evaporating as a result of harsh climatic conditions and disastrous overgrazing.

Among the Irish gentry who partook in this enterprise was Sir Horace Plunkett, son of Lord Dunsany and later to be famous in Ireland for his promotion of the co-operative movement. For nearly ten years he divided his life between Ireland and Wyoming. Each April he sailed to New York and made his way across country to his ranch which he ran very efficiently and soon made a profit from. He purchased 135,000 acres, organised irrigation and electricity generating schemes and became a member of a number of cattle companies. On his return home each November he resumed the traditional Irish gentry's pastimes of hunting and attending parties and balls in country houses. He was not particularly popular, as he admitted, among wealthy Americans 'they don't like us naturally and on the whole I don't like them. They are to a certain extent clannish and feel our intrusion.' Neither was he loved by his own ranch hands and workers especially as he discontinued a long-standing practice of giving temporary free board and lodging to itinerant workers and argued strongly for a reduction in pay for cowboys 'they have been talking of shooting me all winter as I have been made the scapegoat of the attempt to reduce wages ... it is unpleasant being scowled at by the blackguards'. Eventually in 1888 he abandoned the ranch and while he retained some commercial interests in Wyoming he rarely returned thereafter.

However for most Thomond readers the main interest of this book is in its coverage of the American career of Adare man, Thomas Wyndham Quin, 4th Earl of Dunraven. His first trip there had been on his honeymoon in 1869 and he made three further trips in the following years before deciding in 1873 to purchase a large estate in Colorado at Estes Park. His land dealings were soon the subject of controversy. He quickly acquired 6,000 acres at a cost of \$38,000 though given the location of the lands he effectively had control for hunting over a much wider area. He built a house for himself on the land and also opened a hotel both for visitors and for his own guests.

Dunraven was widely, and perhaps unfairly, criticised by the local newspapers and by

rivals especially those who had been outmanoeuvred by him in acquiring the land. While charges of having acted illegally were not sustained, his position remained uneasy and was further undermined by the argument that such an area of outstanding natural beauty should not be the preserve of just one wealthy man, an aristocrat and foreigner to boot. Gradually he began to lose interest in his acquisition and noted in his autobiography, written much later, 'people came in disputing claims, kicking up rows; exorbitant land taxes got into arrears; we were in constant litigation ... we were in danger of being frozen out, so we sold for what we could get and cleared out'.

While in Colorado, Dunraven commissioned Albert Bierstadt, a painter widely regarded as the master of great American landscapes, to do a painting of Estes Park. The finished work, eight feet across and five feet wide, which cost the earl \$15,000, was exhibited in New York and London before being delivered to Adare Manor. Later, on the marriage of the Earl's daughter to the Knight of Glin, it went to Glin Castle where it remained until the 1950s when it was sold to the Denver Public Library, at a fraction of its true value, by the mother of Desmond Fitzgerald, last Knight of Glin, to pay for his school fees in England. As the Knight liked to ruefully remark, all of his financial problems would have been solved had it remained at Glin as it is now estimated to be worth millions.

Peter Pagnamenta tells the story of these aristocrats and their ultimately doomed experiments with clarity, sympathy and humour. Drawing on a wide range of sources, letters, diaries, newspapers, government reports and travellers accounts, he paints a vivid picture of the motivations, ideals and desires of this motley group. Ironically, given their original intention of escaping to a wild and untamed world in which they could hunt and enjoy nature, by their involvement, with all the other pioneering adventurers and settlers, in mass slaughtering of the buffalo, establishment of towns, railroads and mines, and use of barbed wire to fence off the land they had acquired, they helped to destroy the Eden that had attracted them in the first place.

Liam Irwin

Gerard Curtin, *Every Field had a Name: the place-names of West Limerick*, Sliabh Luachra Historical Society, Askeaton, Co. Limerick, 2012, x + 134pp. ISBN 9780953332152. Price €20.

Writing in the late nineteenth century the great West Limerick scholar, Thomas J. Westropp, was critical of the Ordnance Survey both for its neglect of minor place-names and its failure to consult local people on their knowledge and pronunciation of such names. He felt that the best information was to be had from people who had lived all their lives in their own area, had not been influenced by antiquarians, teachers or other 'experts' as this often distorted the value and usefulness of their knowledge. Gerard Curtin also laments the limited role of the Ordnance Surveyors and makes sure to follow Westropp's advice on the best sources. Indeed the genesis for his welcome and valuable study was a conversation with local men in a public house in Ballyhahill where their knowledge of the names of fields and places in the locality 'began to bounce off the ceiling' and led to his decision to research and write the book.

West Limerick is defined, as in the author's previous books on the area, as the region west of and including the parishes of Kildimo-Pallaskenry, Adare, Croagh-Kilfinny, Granagh-Ballingarry and Feenagh-Kilmeedy. It is divided into two contrasting geographical and topographical zones, the hill county on the western section and the flat plain to

the east. The survival of place-names, even within this limited area, is uneven with a greater number recorded in the western and southern fringes, not surprisingly also the areas where the Irish language continued to be spoken for longer. The author notes that he has only managed to 'catch the dying whispers of the once rich oral tradition of the minor place-names' of the area and had such a study been done even fifty years ago, much more information would have been available.

The book is organised on a parish basis, listed alphabetically. Each entry starts with a quasi-historical introduction with various eclectic items of information on topography, archaeology, notable events, famous people and, occasionally, contemporary items. This is followed by a list of each townland with suggested translation and the minor place-names. Folklore or other information is also included with each place. The townlands are listed on the basis of the original civil parish in which they were located. In almost all cases the modern Catholic parishes have townlands from a number of civil parishes: Adare, for example now comprises townlands formerly in five different civil parishes, those of Adare, Cappagh, Clonshire, Croom and Drehidtrasna while existing Rathkeale townlands were in six parishes, Croagh, Nantinan, Kilscannel, Ballingarry, Doondonnell and Rathkeale. The civil parishes reflect the medieval church structure in the diocese which became the administrative divisions as well as the Church of Ireland parishes after the Reformation while the Catholic parishes underwent various changes due to population trends, shortage of priests and difficulties of mission. The only modern parishes in the area which are coterminous with their medieval counterparts are Abbeyfeale and Kilcornan.

A map of each parish lists the townland names as well as the minor names: the latter indicated usually by numbers explained in an accompanying legend. Where the former are listed by numbers they are in upper case, the latter always in lower case. Each map is hand drawn from the 1923 Ordnance Survey six-inch maps. For the notoriously difficult issue of translations and meanings of names, the definitive work on Limerick place-names, *Logainmneacha na hÉireann, Imleabhar I, Contae Luimigh* edited by Art Ó Maolfabhail and based on the research of the place-names section of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland, published in 1990, has been used. However given the reticence of that work in offering explanations for so many place names, it is reassuring to find a greater willingness here to suggest meanings based on other sources, especially tradition, local information and analysis of the landscape. No doubt this will annoy some place-name specialists (a notoriously prickly and possessive group) but this initiative is to be welcomed.

Among the more unusual names discovered was 'China Town' in the unlikely setting of Glenagower townland in Athea, apparently so named by a Catholic priest in the 1930s due to the concentration of houses with very large families there. There are two Burma Roads in West Limerick, one, a bog road in Glin laid down in 1942, the other in Killeedy between Glenquin and Dromroe and dating from the same period. Clearly there was no sense of isolation from world events during the 'emergency'. Tournafulla boasts a local place-name 'Limbo' based, no doubt, on its use for the burial of unbaptized children while the same parish has a 'Mermaid's Hole', a pool in the river Feale which suggests extraordinary prowess on the part of the fishy lady to penetrate so far inland.

This study clearly shows that the area richest in local names is along the hill country where it is also clear that old traditions and the Irish language remained entrenched longer than elsewhere in the county. Even within parishes, this difference is notable between the village or town centre and the more distant hinterlands, a feature discovered

by the author in Dromcolliher and Abbeyfeale. In all more than 1,300 minor place-names were recorded in the research area. Those parishes with the highest number were Shanagolden, Abbeyfeale, Athea, Tournafulla and Askeaton. Within townlands the greatest concentration of local, unofficial, names was in the south-west, with Athea, Acres, Mountcollins and Kinkenlea especially rich. While the main townland place-names are baile, gort, cluain, árd and cnoc only the last one features strongly in the minor names. Among the latter poll, abhainn, tobar, and lios predominate. Few minor place-names commemorate individuals or families and surprisingly farming activities like dairying and tillage are also relatively rare. Apart from churches and holy wells, specifically religious names are also largely absent.

Gerard Curtin is to be congratulated on this major and challenging study. An immense amount of time and painstaking research has gone into its production. An extensive range of primary documentary sources, both national and local, has been consulted. Wide reading in secondary sources, often in hard-to-access local journals and newspaper items, is clearly evident. Above all, oral interviews throughout the region with a huge number of people have been conducted. This involved locating suitable informants, tracking them down, persuading them that they had valuable information and finally recording, assessing and cataloguing their contributions.

West Limerick is already indebted to the author for his major contributions to researching its history, in particular his study of the impact of the famine (2000) and his major investigation of crime, popular protest and society (2008). He has further broadened our knowledge and helped preserve a vital aspect of the heritage of the region in this book. It is a fitting testament to the need for, and value of, this study and the appreciation of the people of the area that, within a short time of its publication, all copies were sold out. But, as he stresses in the conclusion, this study is not an end in itself. Collecting of such place-names should continue, both within West Limerick, and in the rest of the county. The invitation that he issues to people to contact him with further information will hopefully be taken up – not least by members of the Thomond Archaeological and Historical Society and readers of this journal.

Greagóir Mac Cochláinn

James Lyttleton, *Blarney Castle: an Irish Tower House*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2011. xv+157pp. ISBN 978-1-84682-314-5. Price €19.95.

This book is based on an archaeological and architectural survey of Blarney Castle completed by the author in 2006 on behalf of the Historic Buildings Survey Unit in the Department of Archaeology, U.C.C. which was commissioned by the owner of the castle, Sir Charles Colthurst. It begins with a historical survey of the MacCathys, lords of Muskerry, whose medieval home it was. Originally a minor branch of the larger Eóganacht dynasty, the MacCarthys owed their rise to power largely to the great Connacht king, Turlough O'Connor, who in pursuit of his ambition to become overlord of all Ireland, set them up as rivals to the O'Briens and granted them the kingdom of Desmond to act as a counter balance to the power of the O'Briens in Munster. The family lost much of their territory, power and influence in the immediate aftermath of the Norman invasion but much of this was recovered in the fifteenth century.

The castle was reputedly built by Cormac Láidir MacCarthy in 1446. However this is doubtful for a number of reasons. Cormac did not succeed his father until 1461 while the reputed date stone on which this claim is based seems unlikely for such an early period:

such date-stones generally only appear in Ireland in the mid-sixteenth century. A will made in Cork in 1479 suggests that Blarney was then owned by an Anglo-Irish family, the Lombards, so the author suggests that a date in the 1480s for its construction is more likely.

The first chapter, rather curiously titled the 'historical pedigree' of the MacCarthys discusses the rise and fall of the family during the Middle Ages. This is followed by a rather cursory discussion of their attempts to come to terms with the changed circumstances of the sixteenth century and their stance during the Desmond rebellions and Nine Years War. The upheavals of the following century saw Blarney being confiscated by the Cromwellians but restored to the MacCarthys at the restoration with Donnchadh MacCarthy becoming earl of Clancarty in reward for this loyalty to the Stuart cause. It appears that by then their main residence was at Macroom Castle and certainly in the 1680s Blarney was lived in by a Church of Ireland clergyman, Rev, Roland Davies. The 4th Earl of Clancarty supported James II in the Jacobite-Williamite war but was pardoned by William on condition that he go into exile. He spent the rest of his life on an island on the River Elbe near Hamburg.

Blarney Castle was sold after the Williamite confiscation to the Hollow Sword Blade Co. who quickly re-sold it to the lord chief justice of Ireland, Sir Richard Pyne, who in turn equally rapidly disposed of it along with 'the village, mills, fairs, customs and land' the latter amounting to just over 1,400 acres, to Sir James Jefferyes, governor of Cork city. The Castle remained in the possession of this family until 1846 when it passed through marriage to the Colthurst family whose descendants are still there. In 1874 they built the Scottish-baronial-style house, just south of the Castle, replacing a Georgian house erected by the Jefferyes in the mid-eighteenth century which was considered to be the earliest example in Ireland of the neo-Gothic style and which was destroyed by fire in 1820.

A short chapter discussing the origins, chronology, layout and function of Irish tower houses is followed by a detailed description and analysis of the Castle and its surrounding bawn and gatehouse. Each section of the Castle is clearly discussed in a logical format supplemented by detailed drawings and photographs. The author emphasises that the bare walls of this and other tower houses do not reflect their original appearance and takes a side swipe at many of the recent 'restorations' of such structures which feature whitewashed stone rubble walls. This was never, in his view, a normal decorative feature and he cites the strong evidence here and elsewhere for rendered interior walls. This wall finish he suggests was not confined to the main rooms but also in the passages and stairwells. It is also of interest that this plaster would have concealed the dressed surrounds of windows, doors and fireplaces and the punch dressing on these was a key for the plasterwork. While no evidence for polychrome wall paintings survives at Blarney, there is plenty evidence from elsewhere of this practice as well as the use of paint on furniture to embellish the interiors, in addition of course to portraits and tapestries. Documentary evidence from bardic poetry and household inventories is used to give an idea of the comfort which was possible, and even likely, in the towers of the wealthy. The 'young ladies' bedroom of the castle allows a brief discussion of the role of women in early modern Ireland and an attempted modification of the notion of castles as 'masculine' and a metaphor for the masculine identity of the head of the household.

After a brief chapter on the 'transition' from castle to country house at Blarney there is a final discussion of the chronology of the castle and its development. This is divided into five separate phases. The first structure was a basic four-storey, slender, tower house

on the north-west corner of a bawn. Its location was strategic, on a rocky outcrop overlooking the meeting of two rivers, the Martin and Blarney. This was later extended to provide much larger main rooms, side rooms and garderobes, all linked by a separate stairwell. This, it is suggested, happened within a generation or so and enveloped the eastern and southern walls of the tower. A multi-storey gatehouse on the south-east corner provided access. The next phase, dated to the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century, involved internal changes and a new bawn. Windows were altered to allow more light and the lower chambers were adapted to become the main living areas. Shortly afterwards, in what is designated as phase IV, the first floor of the castle became the main feature of the castle. Among other indications of this is the classical fireplace which was inserted, which is considered to be 'one of the finest earliest classical representations to be found in Co. Cork'. The final phase involves eighteenth-century building and modification. A new four-storey residence, in a Georgian-Gothic style, was erected while larger window embrasures were made in the castle.

The final section of the book provides a clear, detailed, walking guide to the castle for visitors. This also provides a useful summary of the main points made in the earlier chapters which understandably from the origins of the work, can be detailed and difficult to follow despite the photographs and plans which accompany and enhance the text. There are comprehensive notes and bibliography and a short glossary. Casual visitors to the castle, which sadly, are probably in the majority, will probably not take the time and effort to digest the impressive academic and scholarly details of this work. However for those less interested in hanging upside down on the battlements and attempting to get their lips to synchronise with the famed stone, and who understand and appreciate the fact that this is one of the finest and most interesting of Irish tower houses will appreciate and be rewarded by this valuable and impressive study.

Seán Ó Murchú

Próinséas Ní Chatháin & Siobhán Fitzpatrick with Howard Clarke (eds), *Pathfinders to the Past; the Antiquarian Road to Irish Historical Writing 1640-1960*, Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2012, xvii + 183pp. ISBN 978-1-84682-345-9. Price €50.

This collection of essays derives from the celebration in 1999 of the sesquicentennial of the foundation of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland. Started in Kilkenny by a small group of eight antiquarian scholars, it was initially called simply the Kilkenny Archaeological Society but four years later 'South of East Ireland' was added to the title, the name it retained until 1890 when it moved its headquarters to Dublin and adopted the designation it bears to this day. From 1850 it had published a journal, initially *Transactions* later *Journal*. The first five volumes of *Transactions* were reprinted as a special edition and five seminars were organised to mark the one-hundred-and-fifty years of achievement. An initial launch and seminar was held in Dublin and this was followed over the course of the year by seminars in Kilkenny, Westport, Cork and Antrim reflecting the provincial organisational dimension of the Society. The theme of each seminar was the life and work of noted antiquarians, principally those who were members of the Society, but set in the context of this tradition from the early modern period of Irish history.

Fourteen of the papers delivered at the various seminars are published in this volume. They are arranged on a chronological basis and range from Dubhaltach Mac Fhirbhisigh in the seventeenth century to Séamus Tierney in the twentieth. Nollaig Ó Muraile stresses that Mac Fhirbhisigh, who straddled easily the two worlds of Gaelic and Anglo-Irish

culture, is unique for his time in having translated material both from English and Latin into Irish as well as from Irish into English. His collection, preservation and transcription of these documents saved vital remnants of a lost civilisation and placed future generations of scholars in his debt. For the eighteenth century there are two contributions which discuss Walter Harris, in particular his major work revising and editing the writings of Sir James Ware (1594–1666), and Dr Richard Pococke whose two volumes of travel writing, published in 1743 and 1745, were memorably described by the famous Mrs Delaney as having been written by ‘the dullest man that ever travelled’. Marie Boran contributes a brief account of the life of James Hardiman (1782–1855), best remembered for his history of Galway published in 1820, and stresses his role as a sub-commissioner for records and his work on Gaelic scholarship.

Among the other antiquarians whose lives and work are discussed are well-known figures such as George Petrie, Henry S. Crawford and R.A.S. Macalister as well as those who are not exactly household names such as Belfast-man, Robert MacAdam, William Reeves, born in Charleville and Philip Doyne Vigors, member of a prominent Carlow landed-family. Only one antiquarian in this volume is not Irish: the adequately-named Augustus Henry Lane Fox Pitt Rivers, whose life and Irish career, are discussed by Elizabeth Shee Twohig. Pitt Rivers, as he is conveniently abbreviated, spent only four years in Ireland and as the author points out, he rarely afterwards mentioned his time here and then only in negative terms. An army officer from a wealthy background, further enhanced by a strategic marriage and eventually a massive inheritance from a distant cousin, he was posted to Cork in 1862 as assistant quarter-master general. He was soon interacting with local antiquarians, joining them on outings and working on excavations. The latter point is stressed and details provided due to the general tendency of biographers and writers on archaeology erroneously to state that he only began to excavate on his return to England. He had already become interested in acquiring archaeological artifacts and added to his collection by purchasing Irish material. The canny Cork sellers appear to have ensured he obtained few bargains as a reference in a letter from one of them notes that English collectors ‘should be made pay for their taste’. One item he did not have to pay for was an ogham stone, one of three he discovered, and sent to England, when excavating a ring fort in County Cork, which now adorns the Great Court of the British Museum. While aspects of his career such as his acquisition of antiquities, views on anthropology and racist theories are now universally seen in a negative light, his contribution to archaeology is more positive. Dr Shee Twohig stresses that his period in Cork was critical to his understanding and appreciation of archaeology and probably contributed to his decision to retire from the army on his return to England and devote himself to research and publication.

The article in this collection of most interest to North Munster readers is the excellent account of the life and career of T.J. Westropp by the editor of this journal, Liam Irwin. Born, not in Clare as is sometimes claimed, but in Patrickswell, Co. Limerick, Westropp qualified as a civil engineer but with inherited wealth he devoted his life to full-time research on history, archaeology, folklore and kindred subjects. The author outlines his extraordinary output in terms of archival research, fieldwork surveys, oral interviews and publication. The latter, while based on meticulous research and illustrated with his excellent drawings, plans and photographs, were relentlessly factual, frequently technical and often very lengthy. While this was criticised by contemporaries who saw them lacking in popular appeal and devoid of theories, arguments and conclusions, his reliance on the provision of basic information, either from documents or his surveys are what now

gives his work his greatest significance. Even today, nearly a century after his death, the number of references to his work in scholarly papers is extensive. The author provides a clear, balanced and appropriately empathetic account of his life and work. The final essay in the book looks at the antiquarian scholarship of Séamus Tierney, professor of Greek in UCD whose research and publication on the classical Greek and Roman worlds as well as that of Anatolia, Byzantium and the Aegean is outlined and discussed.

Four Courts Press have, as usual, produced a valuable and attractive publication. The dust jacket, by Anú design is particularly appealing and there are a number of illustrations which illuminate and enliven the text. It has to be said that there does not appear to have been a great sense of urgency in publishing these papers, given that the seminars on which it is based were held thirteen years ago, but its appearance even belatedly is to be warmly welcomed.

Tom Kelly

Roger Stalley (ed.), *Limerick and South-West Ireland: Medieval Art and Architecture, British Archaeological Association Conference Transactions XXXIV*, Maney Publishing, Wakefield, 2011, 270pp, 8 Colour, 159 b & w figs. ISBN 978 1 907625 08 4.

No price given.

This volume contains papers delivered at the conference of the British Archaeological Association held in Limerick in July 2008. It is normal practice for this association to hold their annual conferences in a major cathedral city and while St Mary's cathedral fulfilled that requirement it was the existence of the Hunt Museum that was the decisive element in the decision to choose Limerick as the venue. The editor also notes in his introduction that Dublin with its two medieval cathedrals was ruled out both because of the large amount of study already devoted to them and the exceptional factor of their location within a few hundred metres of each other. While he ungallantly tells us that it rained every day, the decision to come to Limerick was deemed a major success.

St Mary's is the focus of a major paper in this volume on the theme of the Irish Cathedral in the twelfth century. On the much disputed issue of the date of its construction, Richard Gem argues for a surprisingly early date. On the basis of its design he suggests that it belongs 'in the stylistic period between the 1150s and the 1170s. It was, he argues, both an assertion of the revitalised reformed Irish church and the power and ambition of the Ua Briain dynasty, which was a symbiotic relationship. Clearly modelled on Cistercian architecture, with its plain, simple plan and limited decoration, it is nevertheless more elaborate than most such contemporary monastic churches with its tall nave, wall passages at clerestory level and transverse arches over the aisles. Its unique, in an Irish context, medieval misericords are discussed in a paper written by Christa Grossinger, who sadly died before the conference, and this draft of her proposed talk is supplemented by an additional note by John Cherry. Given the strong English influence in their design and decoration, he suggests that they may in fact be imports from there though he also allows for the possibility that they might have been carved locally by English craftsmen who were brought to Limerick for the purpose.

Tomás Ó Carragáin discusses the building of churches and Round Towers in the dioceses of Killaloe and Limerick in the period 950-1050 and suggests they were commissioned by Brian Boru and his son Donnchadh as part of their strategy of taking direct control of important church sites. The main sites he discusses are Killaloe, Iniscealtra, Tuamgraney, Scattery, Lorrha and Ardpatrick. Jenifer Ní Ghrádaigh, in a study of

the Romanesque sculpture at Dysert O'Dea, dates their carving to the 1140s and the nearby High Cross to the same period. She regards this as directly linked to the erection of the Cross of the Scriptures at Clonmacnois being an O'Brien response to, and imitation of, the Uí Néill patronage there.

In his discussion of early Gothic architecture in the archdiocese of Cashel, Roger Stalley considers whether its introduction was simply part of the Norman conquest and settlement of the area. The fact that some of the buildings which are clearly influenced by English models were actually endowed by Gaelic Irish patrons suggests that it had, by then, become the fashion for such foundations rather than merely being a reflection of colonial attitudes. Aisling O'Donoghue analyses and discusses six Franciscan medieval cloisters in counties Clare, Limerick and Kerry. In each case the cloister was relatively small, was located north of the church and was integrated into the surrounding buildings. Those constructed in the early fifteenth century (Ennis, Quin and Askeaton) were more elaborate while those erected later in the century (Ardfert, Adare and Muckcross) were markedly austere, a reflection perhaps of the growing influence of the Observant movement within the Order. In terms of their purpose, it was clear that all the cloisters functioned as covered walkways linking the various buildings within the friary and the survival of images of St Francis in both Adare and Askeaton suggest they were also areas for private prayer. The function of the open garth is less clear and the author is doubtful regarding any horticultural use given the lack of sunlight and amount of water draining into them: she somewhat surprisingly suggests that they may have been left idle with scattered building debris eventually covered over with wild grasses and weeds. This may appear unlikely to many especially as there is a clear reference to the garth at Adare being consecrated for burial and the later removal of piers there, as well as at Askeaton and Muckcross, indicates that interments did take place in them though at what precise period is uncertain.

In a paper on the architecture of the Cistercian abbey at Holycross, Danielle O'Donovan shows that by English standards it was 'out of date' and used the 'architectural language' of fourteenth-century England for a mid-fifteenth-century structure. The various grave slabs in the ruined cathedral on the Rock of Cashel are discussed by Rachel Moss. They functioned as indicators of the status of the individuals and also asserted the rights of their descendants to be buried there also. The forms of crosses and dress shown on the slabs are of an 'antiquated nature' and she suggests this was deliberate to add additional historical sanction to such claims.

Limerick's greatest surviving medieval treasures, the O'Dea mitre and crozier, are discussed in a short paper by John Cherry. While we know that they were made in 1418 for Bishop Cornelius O'Dea, it is not clear why. It is suggested here that it might have been to celebrate the anniversary of the canonisation of St Bridget of Sweden (a long shot surely?) or to provide his successors with impressive regalia: he resigned the see in 1425 though he lived for a further nine years. It is more likely however, as the author concedes, that Ragnall Ó Floinn's suggestion that it was self-aggrandisement on the occasion of the investiture of the Archbishops of Dublin and Armagh which took place in 1418. It is also noted that O'Dea, who may have been a lawyer and married prior to taking up episcopal office, probably also founded a manuscript library in St Mary's cathedral. Whatever his motives, Limerick is indebted to his legacy however extravagant and self-serving it may have been in his lifetime. Two other croziers, an Irish one from Aghadoe, Co Kerry, now in a Hanover museum and a continental one, now in the Hunt museum [fair exchange?] are discussed by Ragnall Ó Floinn.

The conference was not devoted exclusively to ecclesiastical subjects and castles also feature prominently. Colm Donnelly summarises the conclusions from his 1995 doctoral dissertation on the Co. Limerick Tower Houses. The locations of 174 examples are known, mainly on the fertile lowlands, and it is suggested that wealth from pastoral agriculture was the economic basis for their construction. While they show a general conformity of appearance, there is also considerable variety and the author uses this to classify them into groups and which may be the work of regionally based masons. The threat facing many of the county's tower houses is highlighted by the stark statistics that of the surviving ninety-eight structures, only forty-four are in relatively good condition.

Tom MacNeill points out that Limerick has four of the most impressive large castles of the later-medieval period. Three of these, Adare, Askeaton and Newcastle West, were Geraldine while the fourth, Carrigogunnell was built by the O'Briens. Interestingly they were not constructed to be particularly defensive and it is their living accommodation rather than their military aspects that is most impressive. Their curtain walls were generally low and thin without mural towers and gatehouses, where present, were also modest. This, it is argued, suggests that the popular image of late-medieval Ireland as a war-torn society may be inaccurate.

Two essays are devoted to Bunratty Castle. Rory Sherlock points out that despite its being one of the finest Irish castles, it has never received a comprehensive survey. He provides a historical introduction and a clear outline of its main features, set in its architectural context. Heather Gilderdale Scott discusses the stained glass installed in the castle by Lord Gort during its restoration in the 1950s. In total there are almost 100 panels of glass, many made up of multiple different fragments and from different periods – from the 14th to the early 20th centuries. Most of the glass is heraldic and comes from England, Germany, the Low Countries and Switzerland. The Bunratty glass raises the interesting question of whether it is appropriate, in the restoration of a medieval castle, to insert material that never originally existed there even if it enhances the appearance and visitor appreciation of the 'recreated' interior.

This varied and valuable collection of essays is introduced by the editor with a description of Munster in the later Middle Ages and by Brian Hodgkinson with a similar piece on Medieval Limerick. Overall the volume provides much new information and stimulating insights into a wide range of topics relating to the history, archaeology, architecture and artwork of medieval Thomond and of Limerick in particular.

Greagóir Mac Cochláinn

David Fleming and John Logan (eds), *Pauper Limerick: The Register of the Limerick House of Industry 1774-1793*, Irish Manuscripts Commission, Dublin, 2011, xxxvi + 109pp. ISBN 978-1-906865-10-8. Price €45.

This valuable source, now in the Limerick City Archives, was formerly in the family papers of the Earls of Limerick at Chiddingly in Sussex. It was presented to the city in 1989 by the 6th Earl, Patrick Edmund Pery. It consists of 198 pages, of which all but 7 contain text. It covers the years 1774 (when the House of Industry opened) to 1793 at which point space in the ledger had run out. Presumably there were later registers and it is clear from internal evidence in this volume that other record books were also kept: none of these has survived or at least has ever been located.

The register has been transcribed and published with minimal changes. The latter are mainly the rendering of superscripted letters as normal text and the omission of colons,

dashes and dots to indicate abbreviations. The details of each person admitted are on a single line and include the name, age, religion, occupation and address. The dates of admission and discharge, death or elopement where relevant are also included. The health of each pauper is noted both on admission and discharge and whether they came to the House voluntarily or were compelled to do so is also recorded. A final column contains observations, usually related either to the circumstances of their arrival or departure.

Apart from the useful detail of the entries, now available in an accessible format for anyone to consult, either to gain an insight into the lives and condition of the poor in late-eighteenth-century Ireland or search for a possible ancestor, there is a valuable introduction and analysis of the material by the editors. The background of the Poor Law system is briefly explained and a short history of the House from its establishment in 1774 to its closure in 1841 is provided. It had sixteen rooms in the main building and a separate structure in the rear garden containing an infirmary and cells for the mentally ill. Accommodation for the later was increased in the late 1820s by the addition of a wing to the House. This is somewhat surprising, given that a district lunatic asylum was opened in the city in 1827, but it appears that the House of Industry continued to be used to house those considered 'incurable'. All the inmates were transferred to the new 'Union Cross' workhouse in 1841 and the House of Industry closed.

The analysis of the register provides fascinating reading and valuable information on the lives of the poor and their treatment in this era. An almost equal number of men and women were admitted in the period covered by the register. In age they range from a baby born in the House to those claiming to be over 100 with the majority being under twenty or over sixty. Far more women than men were represented in the age group from twenty to forty. Over 80% were Catholic and Protestants were not defined by denomination except for the one Quaker recorded. The majority of inmates came from one of five occupations, labourer, servant, housekeeper, weaver and beggar. There were also some surprising backgrounds, including a priest, lawyer and fencing master. Sixty women were described as harlots, strumpets, whores or 'bad women' but interestingly nearly half of them had entered the House voluntarily.

Over 80% of those admitted came from Thomond and North Kerry though twenty-six counties are listed as places of residence. There were also English, Scottish, French, Italian, Swedish and American inmates as well as three from Jersey and one from the West Indies. Most of these were sailors, beggars or wives of soldiers. In terms of admission the majority (64%) entered voluntarily. An equal number of men and women were compelled to enter and the greatest proportion of these was those aged over eighty. Beggars and idlers were also generally forcibly admitted. People with mental illness formed the largest category of those with health problems while those labelled as disabled or infirm were also, as might be expected, numerous.

The average time spent in the House was 279 days. Those in their 20s had the shortest stays (average of about five months) while those in their 80s usually spent over a year there. Interestingly the majority were discharged rather than escaping or dying. This high rate of discharge would appear to be due to a definite policy of providing only temporary respite and the editors suggest this was to maximise the numbers who could be accommodated. In fact death rates were surprisingly low: 13.5% of those admitted in the period died in the House. The cause of death is not recorded but it tended to be the longer-term inmates who died and the majority were aged fifty or over. Seventy-four instances are recorded of deceased who had no relatives to arrange a funeral and coffins were provided for them.

The column on observations provides some interesting insights. Some were released on promising not to beg or on agreeing to leave the city; others were given a job or an apprenticeship or joined the army. Brief glimpses of sad lives are also provided. Elinor Walsh, a thirty-seven-year-old Catholic housekeeper from Nenagh, was evicted on Christmas Day 1781 because 'she came in drunk, and was turned out, being in labour'. Catherine Brien, also a housekeeper, 50, from County Limerick died a few weeks earlier due to drinking too much whiskey 'by accoiunt she drank 29ts of it'. Margaret McCoy, a twenty-eight-year-old servant from Limerick city was 'prosecuted and convicted for the murder of her child'. In other cases, those who left actually paid for their release and there is the amusing case of John Macantire, a Protestant, aged 54, who had entered voluntarily while in good health in August 1780 and when leaving in the following January 'took the House Scissars', for which he might be forgiven as his occupation was that of 'tailor'.

The editors are to be congratulated for their work in preparing this fascinating social document for publication and for the excellent analytical introduction they have provided. It will be a valuable source for a variety of scholars with its insight into social conditions, medical history, urban life, gender and attitudes to the poor in the late eighteenth century. Genealogists will also find it useful and for the general reader it offers an opportunity to access a primary source document which allows a direct contact with the past and facilitates an empathy with the lives and struggles of the marginalised in the society of that time.

Liam Irwin

