

## Etienne Rynne (1932-2012)

Etienne Rynne was editor of the *North Munster Antiquarian Journal* from 1964 to 1999 during which time he produced 31 issues – those for the years 1973-4 (Vol. XVII) and 1993-4 (Vol. XXXV) appeared as single volumes while that for 1989 (Vol. XXXI) was an index for Vols 1-XXX (1936-88). Three members of the Society pay tribute to him in this issue of the journal which is dedicated to his memory: a photo-essay on his role in the Roscrea Conferences and appreciations of his life and work from two of his distinguished former students.

### Etienne Rynne (1932-2012): an appreciation

I first met Etienne on a damp Thomond Society outing to Lough Gur led by M.J. O'Kelly in September 1967. I had finished first year archaeology at UCG (as it then was) and Rynne who had just been appointed lecturer was well able to recite my failings from his memory of the exam papers about which he had been consulted! Despite this, I took to him immediately. I little thought then how inextricably bound our lives and work would be over the coming decades. It was his youthfulness, his enthusiasm, his quest for the argument that has to be at the heart of archaeology, his humour and humanity that compelled him to students.

The contrast he offered to the academic, desk-bound M.V. Duignan, who was also college Registrar, cannot be overstated. Rynne's practicality and hands-on archaeology were fixated on Ireland and its field monuments in contrast to Duignan's (what I now recognise to be the most unique overview of early Europe then available in Ireland) bookish approach replete with German named chronological bands and placenames. We second-years were seduced by the piper from Kildare Street as he piled groups of us into his two-tone green Austin to speed out on what seemed daily sorties from the college archway to places all over south Connacht and his beloved Burren in north Clare. His enthusiasm was infectious as he challenged us to races to ring-forts, abbeys and tower-houses, expanding our horizons and forever anchoring us to the relevance of the heritage on our own doorsteps.

Sometimes these sorties included small excavations, investigations of cists and souterrains, and once, the survey of a crannog near Castlebar. A lot of this fieldwork was carried out on behalf of the National Museum, from which Etienne seemed to find it impossible to extricate himself and from which he probably should never have departed. Blessed with a remarkable eye for detail, he was a finds man *par excellence*, the true master of the drawers in the Kildare Street crypt to which his agility almost mysteriously enabled him to apply himself rather than having to climb. He knew where everything was and where the best parallels were to be found.

With his cap and gown Etienne cut a rather old fashioned figure as he carried a lantern projector between theatres. On a Sunday evening in June 1968 he introduced me to his father-in-law, A.T. Lucas as we visited sites around Roscam. Always on the lookout for his students, Etienne was anxious that I impress someone before whom someday I might appear in an interview for a job! How right he was! Years later, he introduced me to the great Dan Binchy on St Stephen's Green anxious that I at least meet the great scholar and someone he knew.



Any contributor or thesis writer strong enough to withstand the red biroed rigour of his corrections emerged the better for the experience. The *mol an óig* part of the experience usually outweighed any remaining pain from the editorial slaughterhouse! He helped me hugely with my first article (for *NMAJ* 1971) as well as with my Ardcroney article (1977) and my 'oratories' paper (1982). He also encouraged my 'Southern Cross' note in 1970 and he would have set up my first lecture to the Society in 1970. And he oversaw my doctorate in 1985. He would also have made me apply for my first job at the Museum where, at one stage, I progressed too far (or was it too fast?) for his liking!

Rynne's contribution to the Thomond Archaeological Society and especially to its *journal*, *NMAJ* is unparalleled; his 35 year run as Editor (from 1964 to 1999) will probably never be equalled. He oversaw the evolution of a relatively peripheral local journal into a major regional annual of significance containing articles of permanent scholarly value thanks to his pressurising a network of contacts into producing research and review articles as well as reviews. No wonder the *journal* was occasionally late in those days!

Of even greater importance to Limerick and Clare (how he loved both counties and their history) were three *festschriften* and the general index for *NMAJ* he produced with Carol Gleeson in 1989. *North Munster Studies* in honour of the late Monsignor Moloney was edited for the society in 1967. Running to 535 pages, it contains 35 papers including many which are still referenced: Lucas's 'plundering and burning', Raftery's 'Gortee-reagh hoard', de Paor's 'Cormac's Chapel' and Ryan's 'Brian Boru' are but a sample. Rynne was only 35 years old when this was accomplished; mind you, he had full access to the National Museum's typing and studio facilities and the backing of a learned committee which included people like Bertie Cussen and Tom Pierce.

The MacLysaght *féilscríbin* became the issue of *NMAJ* for 1975 as the John Hunt volume became the 1978 volume. The latter is notable for Harbison on the Antrim Cross and Rynne himself with Gearóid MacEoin on Cragganowen crannog. Etienne's other great *festschrift* was produced in 1987 to honour Miss Helen M. Roe. It contains 28 papers including studies of the Derrynaflan paten, Tihilly high cross, the Carrowtemple grave slabs, Cantwell fada, the Askeaton madonna and the editor's own study on the pagan background to the Sheela na gig.

The General Index (1989) to *NMAJ* covers the first 30 volumes and includes as many as 38 articles by the former editor. Even a browse through the lectures and outings brings a smile: I'm thinking of the 1994 Thomond outing to Malta or Lucas's lecture on cattle in December, 1970 to which Etienne would have ferried a bunch of students from Galway. Typically, Rynne would later see through press (1989) the mature book of this study by his then deceased (1986) father-in-law.

Etienne produced dozens of articles on a myriad of subjects, mainly on archaeology but also on folklore and War of Independence history. His span was too great and originated from his time at the Museum. From the days of his winning a travelling studentship and his thesis on iron weapons he was regarded as one of our main experts on the Iron Age. His greatest fault was also his most endearing attribute: generosity with his time in the service of others. (I instance my own benefit in this regard when on my excavation at Sroove, Co. Sligo, in 1973 he lifted the last of three floors of a cist burial to reveal a ritual deposit of hazelnuts. This was also the day he affirmed the Carrowtemple grave-slabs as Early Christian. He was later to edit their publication).

One of Rynne's main achievements as a teacher and department leader was to instil in his students the importance of finds, collections and Museums, big and small (he was honorary curator of Galway Museum for years). Another legacy relates to his desire to



promote and popularise archaeology using the popular media. Although he preached the necessity for publication, his own generosity with his time (he never refused a lecture invitation, no matter from whom, and he was convenor of the great Ennis Conference for years) meant that his great life's work on the dismantling and conservation of the Ardagh Chalice never got published. When it does, Etienne will get his due recognition. Despite this, generations of his Galway students were privileged to have had the best lectures anywhere on our early historic treasures, as well as on much else.

Never one to make a meal of an investigation, Etienne would fearlessly tackle any site, big or small. My enduring memory of this unique, inspiring, generous and at times exasperating teacher and friend is of him clad in an over-sized, off-white gabardine overcoat, Columbo-style, high up on a ladder slanted against a quarry face somewhere remote in County Galway, retrieving the contents of a recently exposed cist burial, the *Tuam Herald* having already been promised a report that he was mentally preparing. Etienne's only reward would have been to receive an invitation to lecture to the local society, to come and tell them all about the importance of their quarry. He is surely the patron of local archaeology, local societies and their relatives, night students. Ar dheis Dé agus lámh le Senan agus larlath go raibh an tír-gráthóir seo. Ní fheicimid a léithéid arís in ár measc.

**Pat Wallace** (*Vice-President*)

### **Etienne Rynne (1932-2012)**

Etienne Rynne was born in Dublin on 11 Sept. 1932, the year of the Eucharistic Congress in Ireland. He died on 22 June 2012, the next time the Eucharistic Congress was held here, having attended that year's ceremonies in Dublin. An eternal optimist, he led a most eventful life, living for his country, passionately educating, entertaining, irritating and inspiring. He had an infectious, irrepressible, indestructible and conspiratorial (in the nicest meaning of the word), personality. He survived three major heart surgeries at ten-year intervals. He became ill suddenly some days after returning from the Eucharistic Congress ceremonies and died later that week.

He was the second eldest [his twin brother Michael claimed the first-born honour] of the six children of Dr. Michael Andrew Lysaght Rynne, and Nathalie Fournier of Paris and The Auvergne. Following his father's sudden death in Cheltenham in 1908 Michael and his siblings returned to the home of his grandfather Stephen O'Mara, at Strand House, Limerick. Conversations there revolved around politics and history and Michael was later to instil this love and pride of country in his own children and a passion in Etienne. A Doctor of International Law he was a distinguished Civil Servant and later served as Ireland's Ambassador to Spain from 1955 to 1961; he died in 1981. Etienne grew up in Dublin's south side, latterly in Dundrum.

ER was educated firstly by the Religious of the Sacred Heart at Leeson St, at Terenure College, briefly at Belvedere College, from where he proudly admitted later to have 'taken days out', *i.e.*, 'mitched', in 1947 to go into the National Museum of Ireland, Antiquities in Kildare St and Natural History in Merrion St, the National Gallery of Ireland and the Municipal Gallery. It was from this time that his love of art was nurtured, being sent while still quite young to the distinguished artist Mainie Jellett for art classes. He then went on to Clongowes Wood College, Co. Kildare, from where cycling forays were taken to interesting sites in the vicinity. His uncle, the writer Stephen Rynne, lived down the road in Prosperous. Here ER learned much about country traditions and a great bond developed between them. His language skills were developed in Coláiste na Rinne and École des Roches in Normandy. He studied French and Archaeology in UCD, gaining a BA in 1953, and while writing his final exam developed his theory of the two-fold



introduction of La Tène into Ireland. His MA in 1955 was on the weapons of the Irish Iron Age, but in effect he examined all Irish weapons, irrespective of period. The thesis was never published but tasters are to be found in some of his writings, and in the writings of others. He was awarded the National University of Ireland Travelling Studentship which he spent on a museum tour of Europe, noting comparable examples for Irish material but also establishing life-long contacts, contacts which still benefit generations of European archaeologists. In later life, and with four of his children living on the Continent, ER frequently went on the Grand Tour again, reacquainting himself with the museums and sites he had seen in the 1950s.

He joined the Antiquities Division of NMI in 1957 and spent ten years there as an Assistant Keeper. His knowledge of the crypt there was such that after he had left a phonecall to Galway was the most informative way for a researcher to find comparable pieces there. A major aspect of his work in the museum concerned the Ardagh chalice. He recorded it in detail during its dismantling and conservation in the British Museum; that record still awaits publication, and when it does appear, as it must, it will sadly lack ER's personal turn of phrase. His decade in NMI was when museum staff were getting out into the countryside, gathering objects and much needed related knowledge, much more than the staff are allowed to do nowadays. OPW was concerned with National Monuments, but NMI was the hands-on presence to contact if there was a discovery of a find or a site. ER's trips outside of Dublin on behalf of NMI, and his interaction with the Folklife Division, led to a personal understanding of the rapidly changing traditions of the Irish countryside. He passed this on to his students with the emphasis on recording; for him archaeology was also of the recent past, including Folklife, Industrial activity and material aspects of the Gaelic Revival.

The year 1967 was a most eventful one for ER. He married Aideen Lucas, daughter of Dr. Anthony T. (Tony) Lucas, Director of NMI, and his wife Cassie. They moved to Galway when he was appointed Lecturer in Celtic Archaeology at UCG where Professor Michael V. Duignan, essentially a one-man Department up to then, had sought him out as Lecturer, but their personalities and styles were totally different. The Rynnes settled at Lisnareena, formerly Banba House, within running distance of Athenry railway station. The name Lisnareena, given to him by Prof. Margaret Heavey, was transferred across the road to their new house in 2003. They raised their children, Andrew, John, Killian (R.I.P.), Declan, Stephen and Caitríona, in parallel with a never-ending passing entourage of antiquarians of all degrees and none. Aideen took this in her stride having a life-long family understanding of how antiquarians interact at a personal level. ER was known to his seven grandchildren as E.T.

As UCG students, we first met ER in October 1967; he knew more about us than we realised at the time for he had already read our first year exam papers. We were fortunate that he arrived just when we were going into Second Year and had chosen archaeology as a degree subject. Several *unofficial* training events with students took place. In late November 1968 ER brought three of his students, Ann Gannon, Patrick F. Wallace and Martin A. Timoney, to a quarry at Johnstown, Belclare Tuam, where a cist grave had been recently exposed. We arrived before the Gardaí who, on their arrival, immediately made a pincer movement, one to the top and one to the bottom of the ladder, to capture the man on it, namely ER, not desecrating, but recording, the contents of the cist. Another expedition was in January and February 1969 to a cist grave full of disarticulated bones somewhere to the east of Athenry. However, thanks to his meticulous personal diaries we have recently been able to establish that the cist was in Derrynamanagh townland, north-west of New Inn, Co. Galway. ER was very angry with himself for not making better



record of how the many bones of up to thirteen individuals had been placed in that cist. Afterwards we went down a nearby boreen to collect a tanged dagger of Early Bronze Age date from Mr. Michael Higgins of that same townland and this cheered him up greatly; he published the dagger in *JRSAI*, 102, 1972, 240-3. Lydican cashel and Grannagh ring barrow, Co. Galway, were excavated at Easter 1969 with the help of his students. All of these gave us archaeology in practice in addition to the academic content of lectures.

Yes, ER did drive us all around the bend, literally as well as figuratively, at one time or another. Driving to Sligo at speed, late getting away as usual, we were being shown a ringfort in a field far in off the road when a pheasant had the misfortune to get splashed on the windscreen! He promptly stopped the car, got out, rung the bird's neck and told us that Aideen would cook it when he got back, two days later. That was one introduction to his French culinary tastes! I still have a terrifying recollection of being driven from Galway to Limerick at breakneck speed in May 1970, where he gave a brilliant lecture to the fledgling Group for the Study of Irish Historical Settlement in Cruise's Hotel. The theme of the meeting was ringforts and much of the debate centred on the northern archaeologists insisting on calling them 'raths'. This was the first time I met members of the Thomond Archaeological Society, I recollect Tom Pierce and Capt. Frank Parker. On 18 Jan. 1968, ER brought three students, Patrick F. Wallace, Thomas Fahy and Martin A. Timoney, to Turoe, Co. Galway, on the return of the iconic Iron Age stone from the Rosc 1967 Exhibition. Afterwards, in the Railway Hotel in Loughrea the initial suggestion of a UCG Archaeological Society was made. The Society was established with the three of us having very active roles and it still thrives today. ER, having been Auditor of the UCD Archaeology Society, was the driving force. Even in his first weeks in UCG he encouraged Patrick F. Wallace to go to the Association of Young Irish Archaeologists first Conference in Belfast; John Waddell, later to be ER's successor was one of the founder members of AYIA. The following year a good proportion of the Second and Third Year archaeology students went to the AYIA conference in Dublin where we met many who were to be friends and working colleagues in later life. The Irish Association of Professional Archaeologists later developed from AYIA and ER was a member but when IAPA evolved into the Institute of Archaeologists of Ireland and when the technicalities of excavation and the application of science became dominant subjects it was a little too much for him. To him, science was a crutch for archaeology, and archaeology was an art, not a science - we often heard of 'the man with the wooden leg - a man supported by a wooden leg is not a tree', and so archaeology supported by science is not a science!

We could rightfully say at one time that his former students were running 'half of the museums and half of the archaeological surveys' in the country; the Director of the National Museum of Ireland, the Chief Archaeologist for Ireland and the Director of the Archaeological Survey of Ireland were past pupils of his. He was the driving force behind the small Galway Museum in The Spanish Arch, now grown to being a fully recognised museum, now curated by another past-pupil, Eithne Verling, she of Limerick city stock. Furthermore, with the arrival of development-led archaeology many of his students had a financially gainful career for several years, monitoring, testing and excavating in advance of developments, some establishing their own companies, including the Archaeological Services Unit in UCG. 'Monitoring' was much to his irritation, perhaps because he had done so much freelance archaeology that he never got paid for, but more likely because there was little to be found in most cases; his view was that better assessment should be undertaken before starting and that it was getting archaeology a bad name!

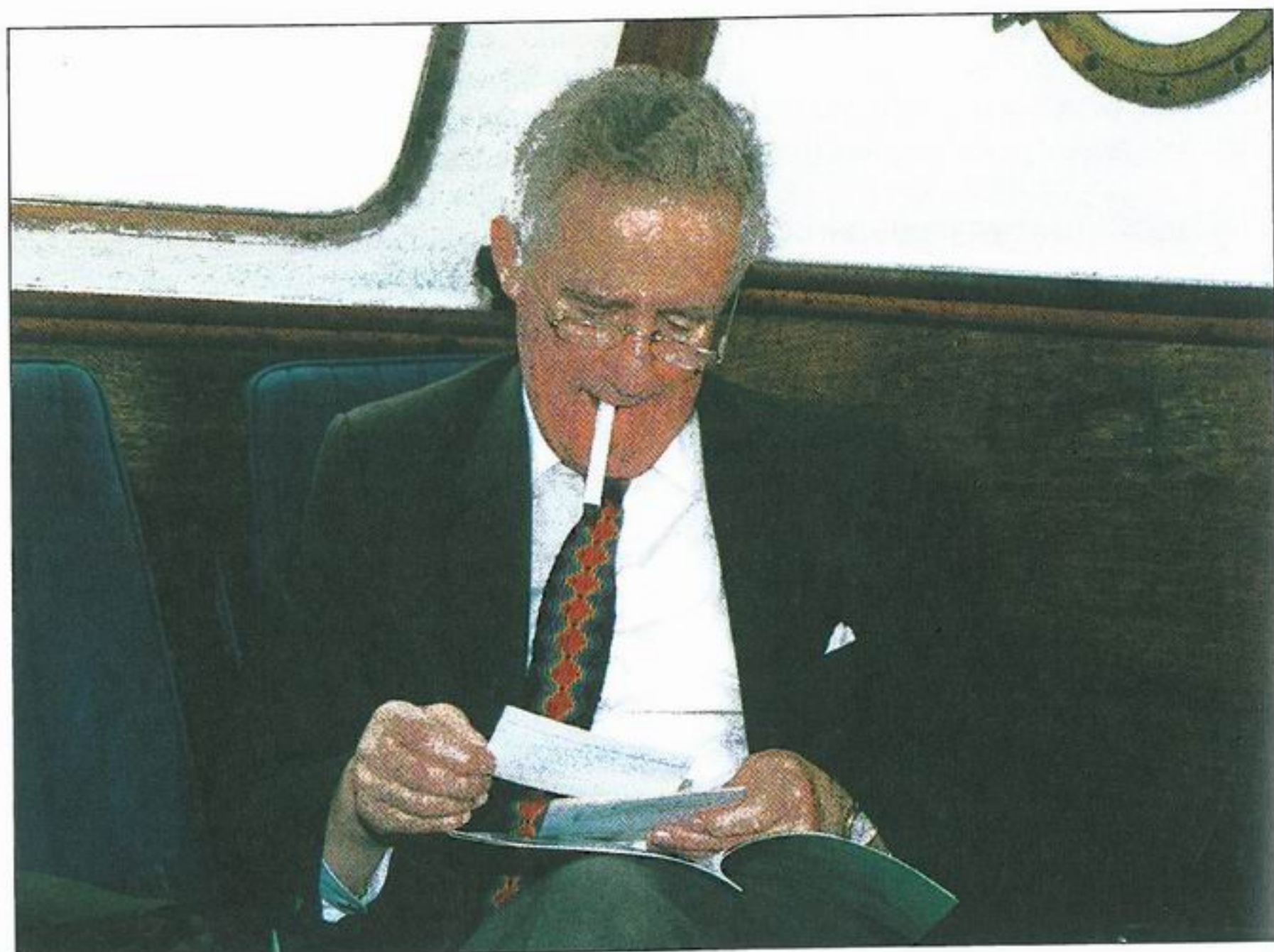
He was always properly dressed when lecturing, wearing not only his standard jacket and woven wool tie but also a gown, at least in College. A tie or a cravat was a must even



on fieldwork and in an early archaeological photo of him stuck in the treacherous Lough Gara muds in 1954 he is seen wearing a tie. There were always a few sentences in Irish to start his public lectures. On one occasion when he was taking students to Normandy he insisted on speaking in Irish to English Immigration Officials in Southampton who were hassling the students. He is known to have preached a sermon in Irish during Mass on Mont St Michel on St Patrick's Day.

ER succeeded Michael V. Duignan as Professor in 1978 and during his twenty-year tenure the Department and student numbers increased. This demand for archaeology was in no small way due to ER's influence west of the Shannon. By the time of his retirement in 1998 the Department had a staff of four academics, two technicians and a part-time secretary. He was succeeded by his fellow lecturer and excellent and prolific student of Prof. Duignan, Dr. John Waddell, and he in turn from 2011 until recently by the Nordic Dr. Charlotte Damm. Waddell's *The Prehistoric Archaeology of Ireland*, now in its third edition, gives in great detail 'the view from the west', something that Rynne never gave us in a book. He was greatly touched and very honoured by the *Rynneposium* held in June, 1997, beginning with a feast in Lisnareena and, continuing with a day of lectures and stories from his colleagues and students and concluding with a boat outing to Inchagoill on Lough Corrib, but it was he who was doing most of the talking that day!

'To Look, To See and To Take Note' is the title of a 2003 article to which, considering ER's own prodigious output should have been added 'and To Publish'. The number of his publications, articles in journals and in books of essays and pamphlets, is often given as 'two hundred', but when one considers that there are over seventy in *NMAJ* alone and he



Sunday 8 June, 1997, on a boat going to Inchagoill,  
during the Rynneposium held in his honour



published in the journals of so many Societies and contributed to books in Ireland and foreign publications the real figure must be well more than double that. A reflection of this was his briefcase full of offprints, often further annotated. He kept a list of those he had given offprints to in a copybook, and you had better have read your 'present' by the next time you met him for there would be questions to test you out!

Despite his insatiable desire to publish he never wrote a book but did produce some booklets: *Athenry: a medieval Irish town*, 1992, and a walking tour of Galway booklet, 1977. He complained when others did not do likewise for their town, a task he would have more than assisted. He also finalised his father-in-law's book, A. T. Lucas' *Cattle in Ireland* in 1989. The lack of a book from ER should not be seen as a failure on his part but a reflection of the amount of time he spent editing the work of others and helping fledgling authors to improve content, presentation, proper use of capitals and particularly footnotes. The wealth of information comfortably tucked into them, placed away from interrupting the main flow of the text, could benefit from an index on its own, perhaps even a book in its own right. It was as if he expected to live, well, perhaps forever. Time was plentiful. He was over generous with his time and knowledge; he was happy to get material published, even if under another's name. Some of his ideas are in unacknowledged form in other people's articles and, correctly, this was a sore point with him. Each article has carefully worded acknowledgements, recognising the help of others, saying you will be back needing help again, a lesson that has not been universally learned. We know there are many bulging files, 'works in progress', awaiting our enlightenment but he has left a legion of trained workers to turn some of the files *in our time* into publishable articles.

There are two other manuscript sources for his unpublished thoughts. On outings he would produce from his pocket his 5" by 3" record cards, all with copious additions, references and parallels, and he would weave in comparisons and stories to bring a long-silent site to life. And then there are his thirty-something sketch notebooks. These contain hundreds of quickly made records of something that deserved later study or even publication, and some of them are the only record of an object or site. These too deserve to be published, though an index to this treasure-trove would be a monument to ER's astute observation and our benefit.

ER joined the Thomond Archaeological Society in the 1950s giving him an association with TAS for well over half a century. He had Clare and Limerick family connections, particularly his O'Mara relatives in Limerick, but it seems that his involvement with the excavations at Lough Gur in 1954 and 1955 was the catalyst for TAS. There he became very attached to local families, particularly Lar and Bridget Gorey who lived near the lake. He was Vice President of the Society from 2000 to 2012. We think he would have liked to have been elected President of the Society but it was felt that his location in Athenry would not allow him to be directly enough involved in the day-to-day running of the Society. Some of the more memorable TAS outings which ER organised were weekends on Aran and in Co. Meath based in Bellinter House and, of course, a day outing to his adopted Athenry. He pioneered the overseas trips of the Society - and organised and led two major ones - Malta in 1994 and Isle of Man (Frank Cowan and Ian Cottier were his close friend there) in 1996. His last overseas journey with the Society was to St Petersburg in 2006.

He was Editor of *NMAJ* from 1964 to 1999 though the last volume he actually edited was that for 1996. Prior to his arrival as Editor and for the next two years the issues were quite slim at under eighty pages and were saddle bound; from 1966 onwards the volumes have a spine. He soon lifted the Journal into the top league of antiquarian publication, a



level just below that of *PRIA* and *JRSAI*. In this way, and through his personal contacts, he encouraged many to become members of the Society. For many years it was felt by the committee that the Journal looked dull and needed a new cover design but he always resisted; his map of North Munster, labelled with his felt tipped marker, said so much. The cover was changed from volume 38 in 1997, the new design is based on the LBA Gleninsheen gorget, from Co. Clare which perhaps helped reconcile him to the change!

ER contrived in 1972 to get me onto the TAS Committee, and I was on it until 1975, in the expectation that I would be teaching in Scarriff for many years but with the main purpose of having me keep one Committee member from having ER ousted as editor due to being persistently late with the journal. He turned up each year to the AGM, invariably late, but bearing armfuls of papers *almost* ready for sending to the printer. He always had a myriad of explanations for his failure to produce the journal on time, and was equally charming in promising to have everything up to date by the following year. The Committee were always given tantalising details of articles he had in hand, had been promised, was pursuing or was (planning) himself to write; his editorials, particularly what was to be his last in vol. 37, 1996, always had self-flagellation for being late, yet again. Frequently the Committee would have been ready to get tough with him but by the time he had finished all anger and frustration had vanished, such was his charm, engaging personality and, at worst, 'bold child' appearance. The Committee relented, and the next issue was well worth the wait, the nation got its yearly tonic from North Munster and his editorials brought news of our Society and incisive comment on its interests to the nation and beyond!

Ordinary members of course, especially the women, were always completely won over by ER and, to them, 'The Professor' could do no wrong. The fact that the ordinary members never complained about the late-appearance of the journal was, of course, largely due to the fact that they had only passing interest in its academic content, having joined the Society for the social activities of lectures and outings. Occasionally there might be murmurs about the amount of arcane archaeological articles and not enough history, especially local Limerick history. But Thomond and Irish scholarship benefited and North Munster was firmly on the national stage.

He more than encouraged so many authors to write for *NMAJ*, and to go on from there. It would be a nice project for a bibliographer to examine the fate of those of us who had our first article published in *NMAJ*, having survived several rewritings, adorned by his red biro, black rapidograph drawing pen, or blunted black marker that made those comments unreadable. I still treasure the typescript of my Kilmacowen slab article, published in *JGAHS* 32, 1966-1971; four hours of adjustments were followed by a chase to an east Galway site for his father-in-law and on return another two hours of rewriting. Fellow academics in related disciplines in UCG/NUIG, and that meant most of the staff as all disciplines could be turned to archaeological benefit, were easy targets for his call for articles, but so also foreign authors, Corcoran, Champion, Coles, Flanagan, Powell, Seaby, Talbot, have published in *NMAJ*. If you escaped on the article request you were prone to having a book thrust into your hands, with two requests, a review within a month and the book back! By 1988 there were thirty volumes of *NMAJ* and an index was long overdue. The eight-section index, compiled by Etienne Rynne and Carol Gleeson, was published as vol. 31 [in an effort to get a volume out to the Members]; it also included a reproduction of the 36-page Index to the Society's predecessor's publications, 1897 to 1919, by Dermot Foley.

ER edited at least four honorary volumes of essays: *North Munster Studies* in 1967 for Monsignor Michael Moloney; Volume 17 of *NMAJ* in 1975 for Dr. Edward McLysaght;



Volume 20 in 1978 for John Hunt and *Figures from the Past*, for Helen Maybury Roe published by the RSAI in 1987. He contributed papers to many other volumes and there would have been many more had those editors not lost patience on the non-delivery despite repeated extension of the deadline. Over the last two decades a similar volume dedicated to ER himself was mooted more than once; sadly now it is a volume *in memoriam*, but, however, and no doubt about it, he has already been making corrections!

A Rynne-style footnote here would be appropriate to record that one of my early memories of my first Principal, Paddy Vaughan in Scarriff, was that 'Rynne was all wrong'. This shattering news related to the sheela-na-gig on Cloonlara bridge (*NMAJ* 10:2, 1967). Even worse was when the political Vaughan announced that 'de Valera was all wrong'; later Vaughan stuffed into my hands the early-twentieth century Bentley manuscript with record of several megalithic tombs in the Broadford valley that de Valera and Ó Nualláin of the Megalithic Survey were unaware of. ER had no hesitation in making copies, just in case the manuscript should go missing, and my summary appeared in *NMAJ*, 14, 1971. The research for this was my introduction to the McDonalds and Kellehers of Broadford and Michael and Lil Kelly of Oatfield, all of whom added to the antiquarian record of the valleys of east Clare, and I do confess to having more bulging files on east Clare, but I will not make promises! He was the driving force behind the many Ennis Conferences, Archaeological, Historical and many related topics were covered; the mid-point of his lecture on each occasion was timed by the arrival of his second Irish Coffee, not that he was running out of steam!

He had an infectious interest in Celtic Art, not just in the original Iron Age art but in its many remanifestations and revivals over the centuries, early medieval, high medieval, post-medieval and modern. Celtic Art was his favourite topic for a lecture, in particular how the Celts filled up spaces. Their *Horror Vacui* was a frequent explanation of their way of doing it, and perhaps that phrase summarises his life – inactivity was never on his agenda, there is so much to be enjoyed and discussed from 10,000 years of human activity on this island - he always had to be doing something! ER's lectures on the most recent revival of Celtic art throughout this island, Scotland and the Isle of Man were illustrated with images of modern replicas of the great metalwork, Irish dancing costumes, jewellery and grave memorials. His slide of the serried rows of Gaelic Revival crosses in Mount St Lawrence graveyard in Limerick was accompanied by the challenge to find the earliest example in Ireland. He lectured to TAS on Late Medieval art in 1971 and Gaelic Revival art in 1974, and at every chance on Society outings examples were pointed out. His most beautiful publication was surely that in 1974 of Sr. Concepta Lynch's all-over Celtic interlace decoration of the chapel at the Dominican Convent, Blackrock, Co. Dublin, a publication which no doubt helped make the State see the wisdom of making it a National Monument. His illustrations and way with words on these art revivals secured interest in all periods of archaeology.

Anywhere and at any time, his incredible powers of recollection, description and comment were a joy to behold; admittedly, some found this exhausting, over powering and fled from archaeology forever! His ability to find parallels for objects and sites of all periods was instantaneous. Just three personal ones: While I was grasping for words to describe the ribbed vaulting of the Clonlea medieval double-oped stoup now in Oatfield church (*NMAJ* 14, 1971) he had found a slide of a comparable piece, a statue cover from Athenry. When informing him of the discovery of a Romanesque seated figure with a sword across his lap from Carrowcullen, Co. Sligo, (*Celebration of Sligo*, 2002) he reached to the king in the replica set of the Lewis chessmen on his sideboard and asked 'Is this what you mean'? Once Mary B. Timoney passed a photo of what we had long-



taken to be a 19th century folk-art headstone at Achonry, Co. Sligo, across our table to him. Instantly he said it was Romanesque, because, like the piece from Temple Cronan (*NMAJ*, 15, 1972, Pl. 2:1), it makes better sense the other way around. If ER is correct in this it is the only known Romanesque at that Diocesan site. He had an ability to interpret scant remains of an object or site, the few orthostats of the Breeoge wedge tomb, Co. Sligo, which I brought him to is a case in point. His quickly-drawn 1968 sketch plan was the only one ever made and we jointly excavated the site in 1972 after it had been bulldozed (*JGAHS* 34, 1974-5).

You never ceased to be a student of ER, even long after you left UCG; he was always teaching and we were always willing to learn from the master, and he had a way with words, had he just!, in describing people as much as things and places, and as for one's handwriting, where could one hide when he started down that line! Even worse was when hungry from being on fieldwork and seated with no escape, his quality culinary background, derived from his mother being French, with continuity by Aideen, was way above our standards, and dunking bread into soup was a particular abomination. One could write a novel around his character.

He had his faults, especially his time keeping. There is Greenwich Mean Time, Dublin Time as on a clock in Shop St in Galway, Galway Time in itself and then there was Rynne Time. 'In the fullness of Celtic Time' might be a nice way of putting it. But when he did turn up, as he always did, he gave a lecture or outing to be remembered! Once I was in his office in UCG when he realised he was late again for a Galway AHS meeting. When we arrived to the meeting I realised I had been 'misinformed', it was a Committee meeting, not a lecture; all around the table chuckled in understanding – they knew his style!

From the time he came west of the Shannon all was changed, utterly. Firstly his official students, and then the whole community, from Donegal to Kerry, experienced his lecturing, night classes, outings and handouts. ER thrived on the contacts. At many locations ER would note down the words used in a locality which gave him the opportunity to make the interviewee feel important. He guided tours and lectured to college societies, local societies, and international groups, within and outside of this island, and again making contacts which became life-long friendships, and many of which led to the discovery of lost finds and new sites. After-lecture discussions, extensive and intense but most enjoyable, often lasted well beyond the witching hour and he travelled home when the 'roads were quieter'.

He has left us much work to be done, but he trained us and gave us so much enthusiasm that we can continue. Once you met him, you became a student of his, irrespective of your age or your background, the effect was lasting. He was a welcome guest at the houses of many of his students, and he helped build inter-student friendships that have benefited Irish archaeology to no end. He was an archaeological father in the West to so many of his students, of all ages, and many who only studied at the University of Life.

Emeritus Prof. Etienne Rynne, Past President of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland, Member of the Royal Irish Academy, Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries (London), Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, Past President of the Cambrian Archaeological Society, member of so many local societies and an eternal optimist, died in 2012. He was laid to rest in Athenry, after a celebration attended by family, friends and colleagues from all over this land.

No doubt, having examined the art and architecture of The Pearly Gates he rounded up his many archaeology and other colleagues who had predeceased him, Seán P. Ó Riordáin, Joseph Raftery, Liam de Paor, Barry Raftery, Hartnett, Corcoran, Roe, Scott,



Giot, O'Kelly, Dolley, Powell, Lucas, Fanning, Ní Chinnéide, Mac Aodha, *et. al.*, and having gone to interrogate those who designed the earthly monuments and created the artwork he then proceeded to tell them how they could have done it better! May they enjoy his lecturing abilities, as we did, in the great celestial house, for certainly he can not be silenced and we await many heavily-footnoted articles from the skies. *Is cinnte nach mbeidh a leithéid — ná aon ní cosúil leis — ann arís go brách. Fear ar leith ab ea é. Tous les jours vont à la mort, le dernier y arrive* (Montaigne, *Essais*).

**Martin A. Timoney** (*Member*)

### Acknowledgments

Martin A. Timoney thanks, as ER would have us do, Aideen Rynne for family history and information from ER's diaries and also Siobhán de hÓir, Liam Irwin, Mary Cahill, Ann Gannon, Patrick F. Wallace, Jim Higgins, Nollaig Ó Muraíle and Patricia O'Higgins.

### Roscrea and the Professor

I was aware and knew of Professor Rynne's passionate interest in all heritage Irish matters long before I met him. We had our first encounter in 1975/76 when I looked to him for help following the episode near Leap Castle where I stood in front of a bulldozer at Aghancon hillfort to prevent its destruction.

The only one breaking the law at that time was me! No one in authority wanted to know. In desperation I contacted Etienne and he arranged for Tom Fanning to come down from the archaeological survey office at Mullingar to inspect the site. It was quickly declared a national monument, and I was vindicated in my actions. Etienne visited Roscrea shortly afterwards and a lifelong scholarly association ensued, helped too by a joint interest in the Burren. He reviewed many of my books in *NMAJ* and was always supportive of 'spreading the archaeological good news.'

When the Roscrea conferences at the Cistercian Abbey of Mount St Joseph started in 1987, he became a loyal supporter, both as lecturer and participant. I was always delighted to hear that he was coming as he ensured a lively debate, no matter what the topic under discussion. His attendance added to the folklore of the area on more than one occasion. At one early conference, when the drink driving laws were not as severe, the night-time proceedings were adjourned to the 'Post Office' (well you couldn't announce every night in the monastery that you were going to the pub). Returning alone, late at night to the monastic guesthouse, the professor, driving at his usual speed, realised that he was not going to make the double 'S' railway bend on the Monastery Road. Seeing the gate of the adjoining field open, he went straight in. Instead of surveying the situation, he continued further into the field to turn, and of course bogged down. He walked the rest of the way to the Abbey, finally gaining admittance, at 3.00 AM, by throwing stones at John Bradley's window. Next morning at breakfast, he handed the keys to the Guestmaster as if it was a common occurrence, and 'asked' that someone retrieve his car as he had lectures to attend! Rynne's Bridge always gets a little nod now whenever I pass by.

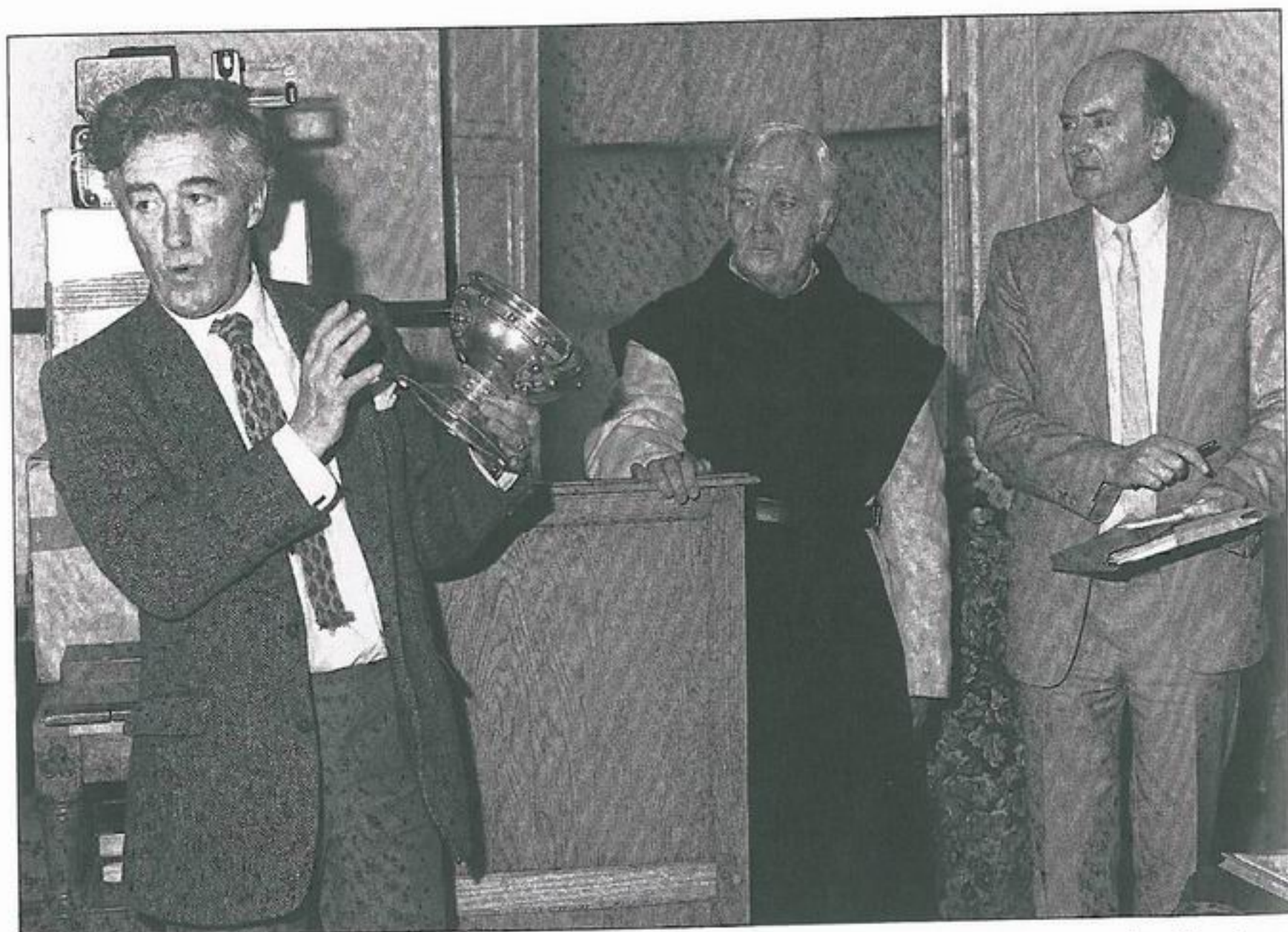
I am very proud that Etienne's last article was for the book in my honour for the 50th conference, *A Carnival of Learning*. President Michael D. Higgins honoured it at a private audience in the Aras. Before we met the President, his aide-de-camp, knowing we had archaeological interests, asked, 'Do you know Professor Rynne? I was one of his students.' Yes, indeed, his legions of students will always fondly remember him. I hope that the photos in the following pages reflect some of the joy of learning and scholarship which were synonymous with him.

**George Cunningham** (*Hon. Life Member*)





Conference on Altar Vessels of the early Irish Church, Spring 1988: Dr John Feehan is front left; Cistercian historian, Fr Colmcille Conway is in the centre

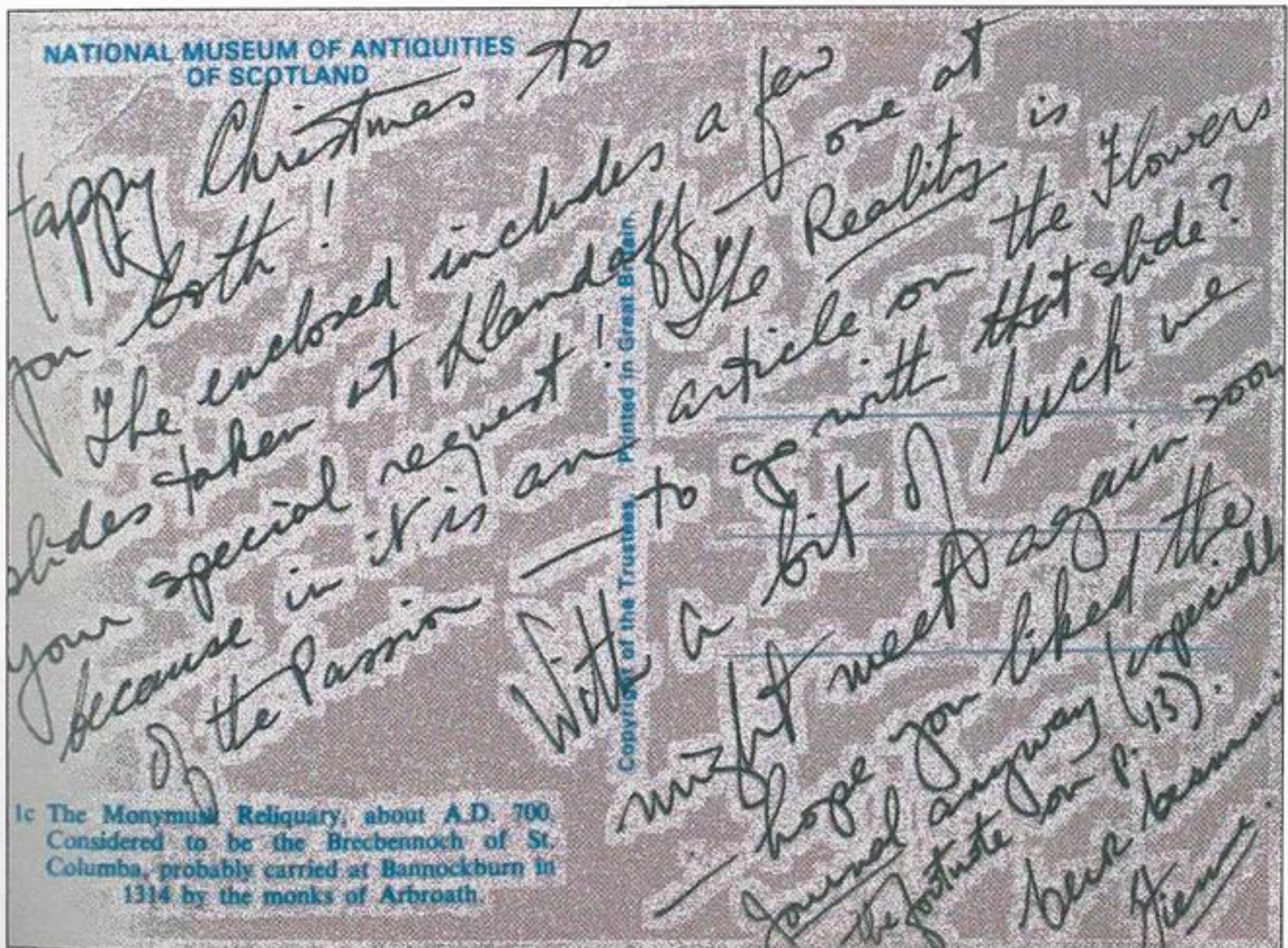


Showing the Hunt replica of the Ardagh Chalice, which was used at Mass on the Sunday: afterwards a monk enquired 'Where did we get the Sam Maguire'? 1988





Conference on High Crosses, Spring 1991, at Mt St Joseph Abbey, Roscrea: Prof. E. Rynne, UCG; Fr Laurence OCSO; Dr P Harbison, Bord Fáilte; George Cunningham, Organiser; An tOllamh E Ó Carragáin, UCC; Billy Martin, Bank of Ireland, Roscrea sponsor; Fr Ciarán Ó Saibhais, OCSO; Prof. R Stalley, TCD

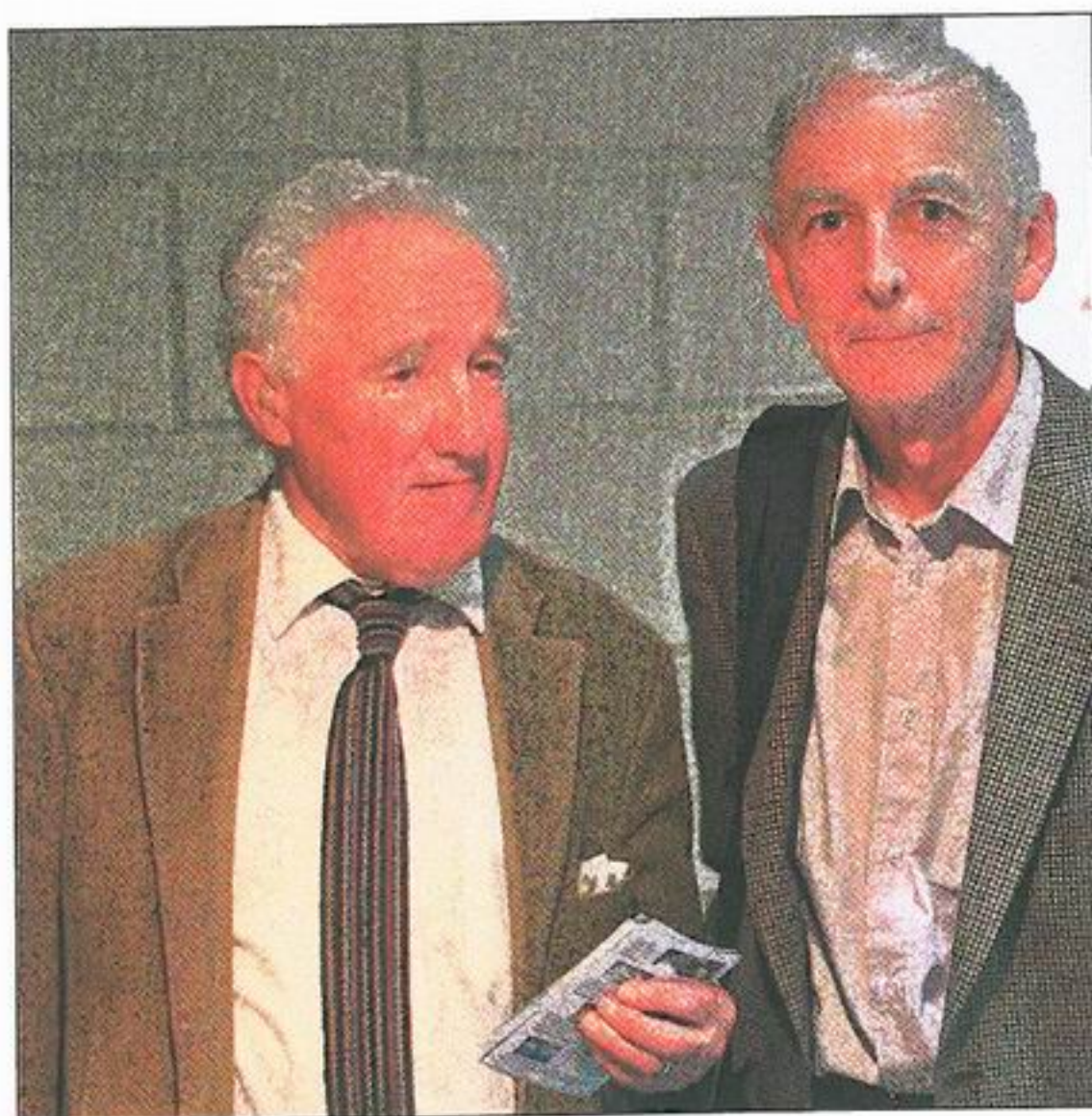


Etienne's postcards and notes were always interesting





At Roscrea Castle during the 48th conference 2011 with Tony Candon (NMI Castlebar), Mons. Reamonn Ó Muirí (Armagh), Prof. Peter Harbison, George Cunningham, Ragnall Ó Floinn (now Director NMI), Dr Betty O'Brien, An tOllamh Dáibhí Ó Cróinín and Aideen Ireland (National Archives)



With calligrapher and historian Tim O'Neill 48th Conference





In the Blackmills Roscrea pointing out some detail on the High Cross of St Cronan

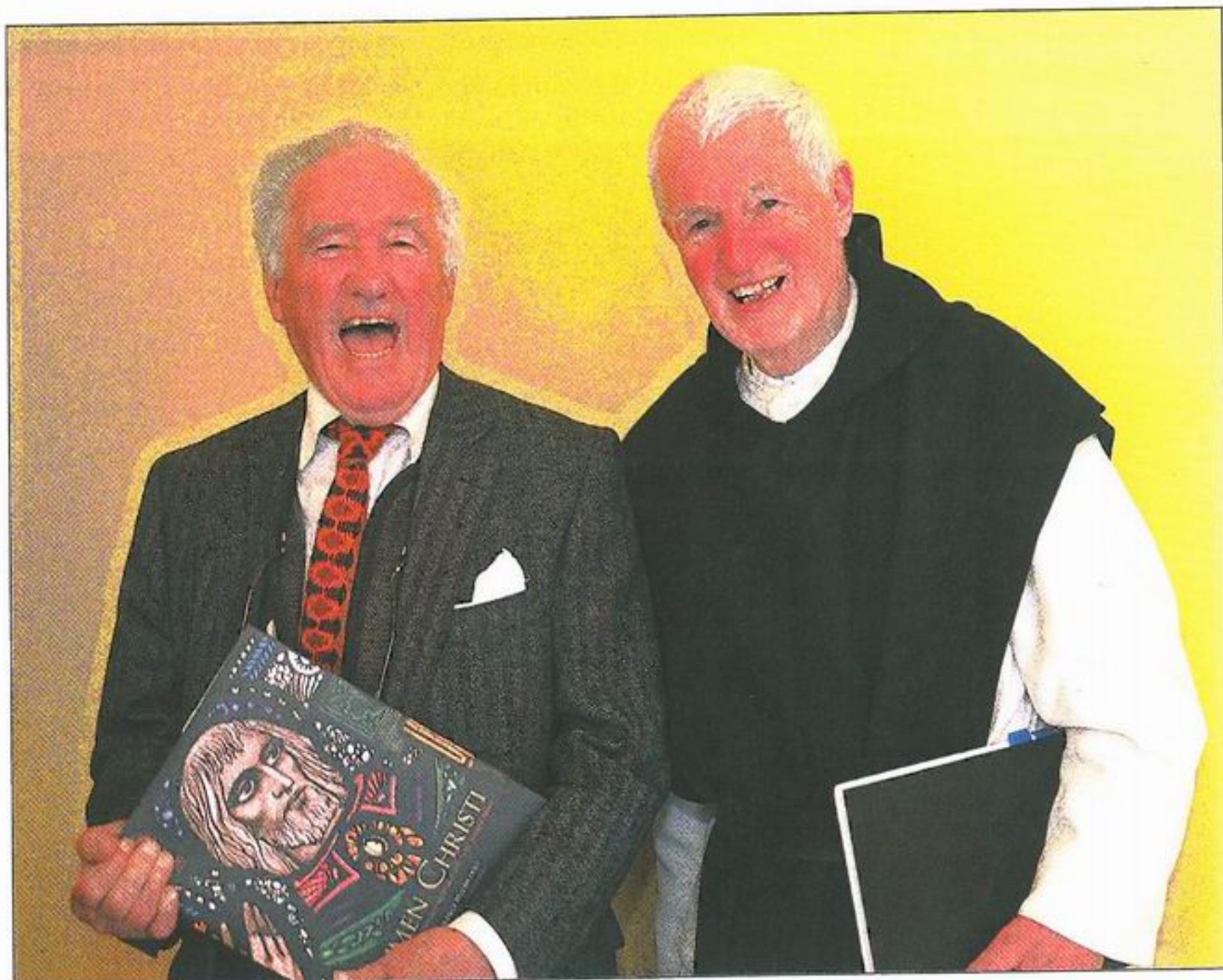


Taking a back seat at the opening of the 50th Conference, Spring 2012





No soup at the 50th conference! with Aideen, Tomás Ó Cofaigh (former Governor of the Central Bank), his wife, Joan and Colette Ní Mhoitleigh



In great form after purchasing Dom Laurence Walsh's book *Lumen Christi*, at the 50th conference, Spring 2012



At the 51st Conference at Roscrea, 2012, George Cunningham paid tribute to Etienne with a PowerPoint presentation which was attended by Aideen and their son, Stephen



Some of those inducted into the Order of Rynne pictured above at the 51st Conference, each wearing one of Etienne's ties, (front): Dr Frank Ludlow, Breandáin Ó Ciobháin, Gearóid Ó Cléirigh, Tim O'Neill, Professor Raymond Gillespie, (back): George Cunningham, An tOllamh Dáibhí Ó Cróinín, Dr Christy Cunniffe, Jerry Cahir and Dr Dan McCarthy



