

OUR LOSS

The study of Limerick's history has enjoyed a welcome and long overdue revival in the past decade. Earlier decades, however, saw a different attitude. In the bleak days of the 1940s and 50s the cause of local history was championed by a small but enthusiastic few. Foremost among this group were Dolly Stewart and Pdraig O Maidin.

Since the publication of the winter 1981 edition of *The Old Limerick Journal* death has taken Pdraig O Maidin and Dolly Stewart. Their passing is a great loss to local historical studies.

Dolly Stewart was one of the founder-members of the first Old Limerick Society. She was also one of the Society's most prolific writers. Scores of her articles on various aspects of local history were published in the *Limerick Chronicle*. Her pamphlets on Kilmurry and St. John's Church are rare and valuable works, as are all of the other papers she presented to meetings of the Society.

She grew up in Plassey and retained a lifelong affection for that lovely place. Up to her death she had been engaged in writing a study of Plassey and the passing parade of people along its verdant waterway through the centuries. She was well fitted for such a task.

Dolly Stewart was an emancipated woman long before that term became fashionable. She bore her cruel, painful illness with the characteristic courage and fortitude she displayed throughout her life.

Pdraig O Maidin was a librarian, poet and historian. Like Dolly Stewart he spent much of his youth in Plassey and wrote poems in its praise. He was a founder-member of the Limerick Poetry Circle more than thirty years ago and edited its last edition of "Castle Poets" in 1977. His verse-play "Barebones" is a much neglected work and is well worthy of a revival in Limerick.

But his greatest contribution was to historical studies. Through the years and up to a short time before his death his daily feature in the *Cork Examiner* was a successful venture in bringing history "to the masses". He spent more than twenty years in Cork as its county librarian and had many works published in his adopted city.

Limerick historical studies are the poorer for the passing of Dolly Stewart and Pdraig O Maidin. Both were loyal friends of *The Old Limerick Journal* and contributors to its pages. We salute the achievements of two modest historians who did much to enrich all our lives.

The *Journal* lost another friend by the untimely death of Sean Bourke in January. Sean Bourke did not claim to be a historian though he made his own unique contribution to local history through his brilliant character sketches of "Gurky" McMahon, his uncle "Feathery" and many of his neighbours in Bengal Terrace.

A generous man of endless talents, he was, above all, a masterly writer. He had a love/hate relationship with Limerick, as he had with so many other relationships. He was a sensitive man haunted by the pain of his past. He was tortured by the bitter memories of his poverty-stricken boyhood and by a restless, sometimes perverse spirit that all too often propelled him into stormy waters. As a tribute to his memory we publish in this edition the first part of his searing childhood chronicle "Daingean Days".

