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# The Local Studies Department of the County Library

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by Martin Maher

The County Tipperary Joint Libraries Committee was set up in 1925, to administer the Library Service on behalf of both North and South Tipperary Co. Councils. It is the only such joint authority in the country. With its Headquarters at Castle Avenue, Thurles, the Committee operates a network of 13 branch libraries throughout the county.

It is at Headquarters that the Local History Department is located. This department has benefitted greatly from the recent relocation to the converted Vocational school premises. This relocation also paved the way for the new Co. Archive building, which stores the Board of Guardians minute-books, rate books, dispensary books and other items of interest to students of nineteenth century history.

The Local History collection consists of printed books (including journals), microform materials (microfilm and microfiche), slides, photographs and prints, maps and newspapers, together with some loose-leaf non-book material — mainly newspaper cut-outs, magazine off-prints, school history projects.

Of all the items stored in the Local History Department, the newspaper collection is probably the most widely used. This section comprises a complete collection of the *Tipperary Star*, from 1909 to date; all the issues of *The Nationalist* from 1968 onward and most issues of *The Guardian*, from the same year. Additionally there are extracts from various late-nineteenth century Tipperary newspapers on microfilm, e.g. the 'Tipperary Free Press', 'Tipperary Advocate', 'Tipperary People', 'Tipperary Leader', the 'Limerick Reporter and Tipperary Vindicator', and the 'Midland Tribune'.

Joseph C. Hayes' 'History of Tipperary Newspapers' (an unpublished thesis, of which a revised and expanded version is published in this issue of the *Tipperary Historical Journal*), is a brief history of the newspapers of the county from the late eighteenth century onward describing their origins, the personalities and policies associated with them, and indicating current locations on surviving issues. Recently the newspaper collection has been of immense benefit to those compiling G.A.A. club histories. Many Tipperary clubs celebrated their centenaries in the last few years, and have produced publications to mark the event. It is hoped (finance permitting) to acquire further microfilm copies of other old Tipperary newspapers. It is also hoped that the complete stock of the *Tipperary Star* files can be microfilmed so as to preserve the hard copies which, due to continual handling, are in grave danger of disintegration.

The printed books collection is also a hugely popular resource. All the major Tipperary historical publications are included here, e.g. 'History of the Ely O'Carroll Territory' (two volumes) by Rev. John Gleeson; 'History of Clonmel' by Canon W.P. Burke; 'Cashel of the Kings' by Rev. John Gleeson; 'The Diocese of Killaloe from the Reformation to the eighteenth century' by Rev. Canon Dwyer; 'History of the Life of James, Duke of Ormonde, 1610-1688' (two volumes) by Thomas Carte; 'Dunkerrin; a Parish in Ely O'Carroll' by Seamus O Riain; 'The Anglo-Norman Advance into the South-West Midlands of Ireland, 1185-1221' by George Cunningham; and 'Thurles, the Cathedral Town', edited by William Corbett & William Nolan.



There is a special G.A.A. collection, comprising yearbooks, match programmes, biographies and histories such as Seamus King's 'Tipperary's G.A.A. Story, 1935-1984'. However, the printed books collection is not limited to solely Tipperary words. Quite a number of books on general historical interest are also found here, e.g. McArdle's 'Irish Republic', Young's 'Tour in Ireland, 1776-1779', the 'Annals of the Four Masters', and Pender's 'Census of Ireland, 1659'.

Those interested in antiquities and archaeology are well catered for, with works such as Leask's 'Castles', Petrie's 'Round Towers', and 'North Munster Studies'. While not specialising in genealogy some useful titles are stocked, such as Dr. William Nolan's 'Tracing the Past'; Burke's 'Peerage', 'Landed Gentry', 'Irish Family Record'. Such works can show a family's line of descent from the Middle Ages to the present day.

The most sought-after item, where general research is concerned, is 'Griffith's Valuation of Land & Tenements, 1850/51'. This is a list of the occupiers and owners of the land, county by county, with a description of every holding, its extent and valuation. Also available are the Tithe Applotment Books (on microfilm), which give information similar to that found in Griffith's Valuations, but compiled, in most cases, about 20 years earlier.

Nor is the Local History collection limited to works on historical interest only. Many works by or about Tipperary people in general are kept, including works of fiction and poetry.

Many of the printed books are periodicals. These include *Studies* (current affairs), *Béaloides* (Irish folklore), *The Irish Sword* (military history) *Analecta Hibernica* (journal of the Irish Manuscripts Commission), *The Irish Ancestor* and *The Irish Link* (family history journals), the *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* (history series), the *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, the *Capuchin Annual*, *Irish Historical Studies* and from 1988, of course, the *Tipperary Historical Journal*.

Most of the microform material consists of old newspaper extracts. One such extract deals with the rise and fall of John Sadlier, M.P. and banker of the mid-nineteenth century. This reel was kindly donated by Dr. James O'Shea of Thurles. Local historian, Mr. Jim Condon, donated a microfilm of the transportation registers to Tasmania, 1839-42.

Other microform items include *Treasures of Ireland*, and the rentals of the Thurles and Thomastown Estates, 1819-1899, (microfilm), rentals and maps of the Cole Bowen Estate in Tipperary (microfiche), *A Carrick-man's Diary, 1797-1809*, The Devon Commission, the *Landowners of Ireland, 1876*, and an annually up-dated index to 'Writings on Irish History.'

Additionally, the Local History Department has a small collection of photographs, prints, slides and maps. Included here is a fairly comprehensive stock of Lawrence photographs showing scenes of the chief towns of Tipperary as they were around the turn of the century. Clonmel has the biggest single representation, with forty scenes, including the chapels of St. Peter and Paul's St. Mary's and Marlfield Abbey, the military barracks and the industrial school.

Nenagh is also well covered, with 'shots' of the court house, castle and barracks. Roscrea has the round tower, churches, Damer House, kastle and old Main Street — complete with market house and fountain. The castles of Carrick-on-Suir and Cahir also feature, and in the Tipperary town collection are the Glen of Aherlow and St. Michael's Church.

The Thurles collection shows, among others, photographs of New Street (now Parnell Street), Garryvicleheen Street, (now Friar Street), the Main Street, (now Liberty Square). The older photograph of Main Street shows almost all the buildings with thatched roofs.

There are in all several hundred slides in the Local History Department. The biggest single



block of these is the Irish Heritage collection. Others include a Roscrea Heritage Centre collection and the 'Our Town' and 'Our County' series.

Included in the map collection are the Ordnance Survey 6" sheets (1841). There are 91 sheets, covering the entire county; sheets 1-46 cover North Tipperary and the remainder South Riding. At the beginning of each book is an explanatory key to the colour code and the symbols used. These maps contain a wealth of information about landscape, agriculture, houses, and many other details of interest to the geographical historian.

Some original estate maps are also available, e.g. the Thurles and Thomastown Estates, and the Co. Tipperary Estate of Captain Robert Cole Bowen. These maps, along with those items mentioned earlier, such as the Board of Guardian minute-books, comprise the archive collection.

The Board of Guardians met every week; the minutes contain all the details associated with the running of the work-houses — purchase of provisions and bedding, hygiene arrangements, numbers catered for, type of accommodation provided construction and maintenance of the buildings, etc. These minute-books, along with the Outdoor Relief Registers and Register of Deaths in the workhouse, give a graphic picture of the quality of life of nineteenth-century paupers.

The Poor Law Rate Books appear to have survived only for the Unions of Nenagh and Thurles. Whereas the Tithe Applotment Books and Griffith's Valuations can locate people only for the years in which they were actually published, the rate books give a fairly continuous picture of occupancy for the latter half of the nineteenth century. Another similarly useful source is the card index to depositors in the Thurles Savings Bank, 1830-1870, compiled by Dr. James O'Shea.

Most of the non-book printed matter is card-indexed. This material consists of folders containing magazine articles and newspaper features on areas of Tipperary interest. The index cards are colour-coded (green — journal article on South Tipperary, pink — journal articles on North Tipperary) for ease of identification.

Essential for any good reference library is R.J. Hayes's 'Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation'. Comprising 23 volumes (including supplements), it is divided into 'Manuscript Sources for the History of Irish Civilisation', and 'Articles in Irish Periodicals'. These are further subdivided into persons, subjects, places and dates. For local reference, there is an added source in Mrs. Mary Murphy's 'Bibliography on Tipperary History and Antiquities', which has an author, subject and a title index.

As a result of the very positive approach to local history taken by Dr. Thomas Morris during his tenure as Archbishop of Cashel and Emly, the letters of many of his predecessors have been catalogued and indexed. Starting with the Butler archbishops, they comprise also the papers of Archbishops Bray, Slattery, Leahy and Croke.

Apart from the body of local studies material in the County Library, there are smaller local history files in each of the main branches throughout the county. These consist of a loose-leaf folders or 'packs' of information on all the major towns and their localities. Thanks to the generosity of Mr. George Cunningham, the local history collection in Roscrea Branch Library is particularly impressive.

Exhibitions, lectures and day-tours are vital factors in the promotional activities of a local history department and/or society. In the last few years many exhibitions have been staged to coincide with the commemoration of historical events, e.g. the G.A.A. 1884-1984, the life and times of Michael Doheny, author of 'The Felon's Track'. In addition the Local History Department has been generous in its involvement and co-operation with historical societies



throughout the county in mounting exhibitions and displays to mark local events of historical interest.

Recently the County Library has taken on a new role as headquarters of the County Tipperary Historical society. This means, among other things, hosting more events of the type mentioned above, as well as meetings of the society. The first Historical Society lecture to be held here took place on 3 June, 1989, when Professor Richard Davis from the University of Tasmania spoke about Irish deportees to Van Diemen's Land after the 1848 Rising.

It is hoped that this brief article will in some way highlight the extent of sources available locally for those who wish to become involved in the study of local history. There is something here for everyone, from serious researchers to casual browsers. For those wishing to re-live the enjoyment of a county hurling final of some years ago, it is all there in the *Tipperary Star*. If one wants to see how the fields and boundaries around one's own area have changed over the past century-and-a-half, a browse through the Ordnance Survey Sheets will help.

Persons proposing to research a specific topic are asked to write and/or phone 0504-21555 before dropping in. They will find the staff eager and willing to help in every way possible.

The Local History Department is open from Monday to Friday, 9.30 a.m. - 1.00 p.m., and 2.00 p.m. - 5.30 p.m.

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**KICKHAM COUNTY WEEK-END  
Lectures & Lecturers  
(1982-1986)\***

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| 1982 | Why is Kickham Remembered?<br>1829 in Tipperary<br>History of Area & Tobin Family<br>Knocknagow: A Geographer's View                                     | <i>Dr. R. V. Comerford<br/>Dr. P. C. Power<br/>Fr. Colmcille, O. Cist<br/>Dr. William Nolan</i> |
| 1983 | Education in 19th-Century South Tipperary<br>Tipperary's Role in the GAA<br>Social History of 19th-Century Tipperary (Pt I)                              | <i>Dr. P. C. Power<br/>Marcus de Búrca<br/>Fr. Colmcille, O. Cist</i>                           |
| 1984 | Settlement & Society in S-E Tipperary 1650-1850<br>Social History of 19th-Century Tipperary (Pt II)<br>John Sadleir-Politician, Banker, Swindler         | <i>Prof. W. J. Smyth<br/>Fr. Colmcille, O. Cist<br/>Dr. Jim O'Shea</i>                          |
| 1985 | 1848 Rising: Social & Economic Background<br>1848 Rising: Young Irelanders in Mullinahone,<br>Ballingarry & Killenaule<br>Mullinahone Families 1700-1900 | <i>Dr. William Nolan<br/>Dr. Thomas G. McGrath<br/>Dr. Kevin Whelan</i>                         |
| 1986 | The Tipperary-Kilkenny Border Country<br>Newfoundland: Connections with S-E Ireland<br>Newfoundland: Impressions Today                                   | <i>Col. Eoghan O Néil<br/>Dr. Kevin Whelan<br/>Michael Coady</i>                                |

\*It is hoped to publish a list of lectures and lecturers for the five years 1987-1991 in the *Tipperary Historical Journal* for 1991. Any information required regarding the above list will be supplied by Sheila Foley, Parkmore, Mullinahone, Co. Tipperary.

