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## Book Reviews

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**John Blake Dillon, Young Irelander.** By Brendan O'Cathaoir. (Irish Academic Press, 1990). 211 pages. £19.95.

Over more than 100 years three generations of the Dillon family gave important public service to Irish life. John Blake Dillon, the Young Irelander and co-founder of the *Nation* newspaper, participated as a leader in the 1848 Rising in Tipperary and was later an MP for the county. His son John Dillon, the last leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party in the House of Commons, who was imprisoned for his activities in the land agitation, was also an MP for Co. Tipperary in the early 1880s. His grandson James Dillon had an equally lengthy parliamentary career, which culminated in his period as leader of the Fine Gael party.

Heretofore John Blake Dillon had been an interesting but somewhat sketchy figure, because there had been no detailed account of his life and times. Now that has been remedied in this welcome biography by Brendan O'Cathaoir who is a historian by training and a journalist with *The Irish Times* by profession. His subject was born in 1814, the son of a substantial tenant farmer in Ballaghadereen, Co. Roscommon. After a typical schooling he spent two years in Maynooth College before entering Trinity College, Dublin in 1834. He graduated B.A. (Mod.) in 1841 and was also called to the Bar.

At Trinity Dillon succeeded Thomas Davis as president of the Historical Society, the college debating society. Davis greatly influenced Dillon with his ideas of Irish nationality. Both Dillon and Davis were also active in Dublin journalism, and together with Charles Gavan Duffy they founded their famous newspaper (with its self-explanatory title), the *Nation*, in 1842. This paper quickly achieved the highest circulation figures of any contemporary newspaper in Ireland, and is now generally acknowledged to have been the most influential nationalist newspaper of nineteenth-century Ireland.

Dillon's contribution to the *Nation* was not as considerable as that of either Davis or Duffy; he concentrated on his Bar career, perhaps because his disposition did not give him any great writing facility. During the great famine the Young Irelanders kept up their demand for a repeal of the union, so that an Irish parliament could resolve Irish difficulties. But this demand failed, states O'Cathaoir, "because the masses were crushed by hunger, while the more prosperous formed an inert mass of lower-middle class Catholic respectability".

In late July 1848 when the habeas corpus act was suspended William Smith O'Brien (whose reputation increases with every new study of the period), Thomas Francis Meagher and Dillon collectively decided that this was the last straw and that, however desperate the cause was, a stand had to be made. There followed the events in Tipperary at Carrick-on-Suir, Cashel, Mullinahone, Killenaule, Ballingarry and The Commons, that led to the "Warhouse", now a national monument enjoying the protection of the state. By 1848 the famine had indeed knocked almost all the spirit out of the people. In that year a priest in Ballingarry described the ravages of the famine as such that if the people continued dying as they were then doing there must be "heaps of unburied dead" in the parish.

The Young Ireland leaders met with many disappointments en route to the "Warhouse", but it is noticeable that despite the famine the Ballingarry men actually marched to Lismalin to meet O'Brien, Dillon, Stephens and their companions as they came up from Mullinahone, where Charles Kickham was left in charge. Mr. O'Cathaoir is perhaps not as familiar as he should be with the local terrain. He states that on 28 July 1848 the Young Irelanders held a council of war at Ballingarry, when it would be more accurate to say that this meeting of the leaders was held in the village of The Commons in the parish of Ballingarry.



The author quotes from Thomas Francis Meagher's pen picture of the scene which greeted his arrival for this meeting:

Approaching still nearer a shout was given - then another and then a third - the pikes, scythes and bayonets being thrust upward in the murky air, amid the waving of hats and green branches, and the discharge of pistols ... Smith O'Brien stood with folded arms a little in advance of the crowd, looking as immutable and serene as usual. Dillon, with large blue military cloak thrown over his shoulders, smiled quietly and picturesquely alongside him, his mild, dark, handsome features contrasting with the plainer and sterner aspect of O'Brien.

Today in The Commons, on a site which the late Cardinal O Fiaich described as "holy ground in Irish history", the Young Ireland, 1848 and national flag monument commemorates the events of that time. Mr. O'Cathaoir lays considerable stress, quoting the comments of Meagher, Mitchel and O'Brien, on the adoption by the Young Irelanders of the tricolour as a comprehensive national flag in 1848.

One of the best sections in the book is Dillon's long account of his escape after Ballingarry, despite being a wanted man with a price of £300 on his head. After several difficult and exciting months hiding out, usually with sympathetic priests along the western seaboard and on the Aran islands, Dillon escaped to America disguised as a priest. He was glad to escape the fate of his colleagues at Ballingarry. O'Brien, Meagher, Terence Bellew MacManus and Patrick O'Donohue were captured and sentenced to death for high treason, later commuted to life imprisonment in Van Diemen's Land. In America Dillon set up a law practice with fellow Young Irishman Richard O'Gorman, afterwards a judge of the New York supreme court.

The most interesting part of this biography is its revelation of Dillon's psychological make-up. Dillon had no natural inclination towards political life. In fact his melancholic state of mind, which apparently alternated between bursts of energy and depression, unfitted him for such a career. His introspective intellectual disposition was more suited to a quiet gentlemanly professional life than to the rough-and-tumble of personalised politics, which were then no different from what they are today.

Dillon despaired easily, and for a time after 1848 he lost all faith in the capacity of the Irish people to regenerate Ireland. Thomas Francis Meagher, ever the optimist, though looking a sentence of death in the face, wrote Dillon from Richmond prison after 1848 stating: "I know you are too inclined to despond when things go wrong," and he advised "No, Dillon. You must never give up the old cause - never lose faith in it".

But for a while in America in the 1850s (unlike Michael Doheny and John O'Mahony, who had also escaped to the States), Dillon did lose faith in the old cause, looking on a country which failed to rise as no more than an island of slaves. He wrote: "If I were in Ireland now I would not look at politics. Nothing but the immediate prospect of rebellion could have induced me to remain an agitator." Dillon's happy marriage and several children compensated somewhat for this pessimistic outlook on life. The ubiquitous James Stephens, his colleague from the barricades at Killenaule and Ballingarry, was once employed as tutor to his children.

Dillon returned to Ireland from America in 1856 when it was safe for him to do so. He found it difficult to remain aloof from Irish politics, even if that politics had changed for the worst in his absence. As a product of the pluralist Young Ireland tradition Dillon was a liberal Catholic. Indeed, in New York he had been taken aback by the aggressiveness of the ultramontanes who, he held, needlessly exacerbated the anti-Catholic and anti-Irish prejudices of the nativist and Know-Nothing movements, which were but the strident expression of the prevailing and dominant Protestant ethos of America.

But back in Ireland there was much less hope and scope for an inclusive nationalism in the bitter religious politics of the 1850s and 1860s than there had been even in the heyday of the Young Ireland movement. *Tempora mutantur et nos mutamur in illis*. In the early 1860s Dillon aligned himself with

Archbishop Cullen's National Association and spoke out against mixed education, something he would hardly have done in the 1840s. Furthermore, he changed the emphasis in his politics (influenced to some extent by the experience of middle age and middle class ideas of respectability) from looking for what was desirable for Ireland to what was possible. He became a committed constitutional nationalist and opted for the parliamentary process in opposition to Fenianism.

Dillon was elected as MP for Co. Tipperary in 1865 and contributed significantly to the beginnings of the Gladstonian rapprochement with Ireland. What had the potential to be an impressive parliamentary career lay open before him when he died suddenly from cholera, contracted two days earlier, in September 1866. He was only 52.

Thomas G. McGrath

**William O'Brien and the Irish Land War.** By Sally Warwick-Haller. (Irish Academic Press). 337 pages. £37.50.

His youthful flirtation with Fenianism (which he later ridiculed) aside, was William O'Brien ever a nationalist in the accepted meaning of that word in the Irish context, or indeed in any sense? The question is asked because it continually crops up in this latest study of the controversial Land War figure, a study that is all the more striking coming from the pen of an English historian — albeit one trained by the late great F.S.L. Lyons of Trinity College.

The different objectives of the Home Rule movement and the agrarian movement (as exemplified in the Land War) make one stop and ask about the depth of the commitment to self-government of not only O'Brien but also Davitt (an international socialist before his time) and — dare one say it — even of the founding father of agrarian agitation, Fintan Lalor himself. One thing that emerges from this book is the need for an in-depth study of the conflicting aims of the two movements. Perhaps, after all, the orthodox (if inflexible) Fenian view held by Kickham and O'Leary, that political independence should precede land reform, may yet turn out to be right?

Nothing, however — not even his massive political U-turn from 1903 onwards — can detract from the achievement of O'Brien. His place in modern Irish history is assured as the man who broke the power of landlordism — not, it needs to be stressed, so much through the Plan of Campaign as through his role in getting the 1903 Land Act on to the statute book. This book shows clearly the extent of the handicaps under which O'Brien worked from 1886 to 1903 — Parnell's "stand-off", Davitt's bickering and jealousy, Dillon's pre-occupation with Home Rule, and (not least) O'Brien's own recurring health problems.

It is a measure too, surely, of the continuing fascination of historians for O'Brien that the spate of books devoted wholly or mainly to his public career shows no sign of abating over a century after his main enterprise, the Plan of Campaign of 1886. The list of distinguished academics with such works to their name includes Paul Bew, Lyons, L.M. Geary, Joseph V. O'Brien and J.S. Donnelly. Even the *Irish Historical Studies* has frequently come down from its ivory tower to publish perceptive studies of O'Brien and the Land War.

This interest is all the more astonishing when one considers — and here Ms Haller pulls no punches — what a difficult personality William O'Brien was. The infighting between himself and Parnell, Davitt and Dillon makes some of the squalid political intrigues since 1922 (and especially those in the last two decades) pale into insignificance. These show too how many of our famous political figures (including some since 1922) have suffered from the serious character defect of personal vanity. To Mitchel, Stephens, Rossa and Davitt one must add O'Brien, perhaps even heading the list; and in every case it seems likely that service to the nation suffered from this vanity.

For readers of this Journal, of course, Ms Haller's treatment of the New Tipperary saga will be carefully scrutinised. This reviewer, who in a sense has lived with that tragic episode all his life, found her account absorbing, not least through her skilful use of the various papers now available



in the National Library, UCC and elsewhere since he first put pen to paper on New Tipperary 26 years ago.

Ms Haller's mild criticism notwithstanding, he obstinately adheres to his 1965 view that O'Brien did abandon New Tipperary when the Parnell Split occurred! Indeed, he confesses to a feeling of smug satisfaction on reading her (naturally perceptive!) comment on p.134 that, with "the total collapse of ... the Tipperary struggle ... overshadowed by the internecine party strife ... Many of the evicted tenants must have been left with a bitter taste".

Mention of New Tipperary reminds one of a curious omission from the otherwise comprehensive bibliography — Dr. Denis Marnane's outstanding book *Land and Violence* published in 1985, which deals in detail with New Tipperary. However, the author has had access to Marnane's 1973 thesis. Another (unrelated) lapse occurs in her two curious references (pp. 45 & 70) to the temporary eclipse of the *Shamrock* magazine. Neither the National Library's list of magazine holdings nor the authoritative Canadian *Waterloo Directory* suggests any break in publication.

The final portion of this book, covering O'Brien's last 25 years of political isolation — he lived till 1928 — makes sad reading. His effective rejection by and of his parliamentary colleagues of 30 years, his teaming-up in 1908 with his former political enemy Tim Healy (Conor Cruise O'Brien's "political scald-crow with the terrible beak"), and his role in World War 1 (in incredible concert with his former opponent in Tipperary, now Lord Barrymore) in organising recruitment for the British Army, all show how far this talented but unpredictable man had departed from his earlier principles.

This reviewer is old enough to have known some of the last journalists on the then defunct *Freeman's Journal*, by then employed by either the *Irish Press* or the *Irish Independent*, and on whom the aged and lonely O'Brien used to call in the 1920s. Their reactions to his eccentric comments on contemporary (post-1922) Irish affairs, to men who had helped to shape those events from 1913 to 1924, were acid in the extreme. Ms Haller's last substantive chapter explains why, and her masterly advocacy in her epilogue does little to explain why not.

This is a notable addition to the works on William O'Brien and his period, which internal evidence suggests has been no less than 17 years in the making. Not the least valuable part of Ms Haller's book is its prodigious index, which includes a separate detailed two-part section on O'Brien himself.

Marcus Bourke

**The History & Folklore of Killenaule — Moyglass.** Hassett, J. (ed.); Fitzgerald, R. (compiler). (Killenaule, 1990). No price stated. 372 pp.

**Gortnahoe — Glengoole: A Guide.** M. McCormack (compiler). (Glengoole, 1989). No price stated. 82 pp.

These two books belong more to the field of local studies than to local history. They encompass a great variety of things, many of which were the traditional fare of the local historian. The recent upsurge in studies appertaining to our cultural heritage draws much from the downstream influences of the club history scheme launched by the G.A.A. to commemorate its centenary year and, in the context of the books under review, to the various teamwork projects on local areas launched by ANCO and continued by its successor FÁS.

It is a pity that FÁS appears to have no co-ordination policy in either publication or preservation of materials collected under its aegis. Both the Killenaule-Moyglass and Gortnahoe-Glengoole studies were published by local authorities. Neither does it seem that FÁS schemes have any terms of reference which, if established and implemented, could have garnered a store-house of material on country and town as rich as the harvest gathered by the Ordnance Surveyors in the 1840s and the Folklore Commission almost a century later.

The two books are quite different in terms of layout and scope. That on Killenaule-Moyglass has an ambitious 372 pages; that on Gortnahoe-Glengoole runs to a more modest 82 pages. Although



reliant on published sources, both books have much new material collected in the field, as well as fine photographs — the work of Pat English (Killenaule) and Jim Quin (Gortnahoe).

The Killenaule book has a broad canvas. It is particularly good and original in the chapter dealing with the great estates and the houses of 'middling size'. The material on Armitages of Noan and W.P. Hanly of Lanespark is derived from documentary records and interviews. Hanly's history shows that the 'battering ram' crossed religious and political divides with some ease.

The photographs clearly demonstrate the prosperity and solidity of the minor gentry in the eighteenth century and later, and the quality of vernacular architecture in Killenaule-Moyglass. The exploitation of coal, turf and land gave Killenaule an occupational diversity shared with Glengoole but not evident in more agricultural parishes. This diversity is perhaps responsible for the range of sports and social clubs, which gives Killenaule an envious vitality.

Visitors to Killenaule need to be well versed in the sports of hurling, greyhounds, horse-racing and cross-country running. The role of the greyhound in Killenaule and its hinterland is a fascinating topic: it is of particular interest to see the names of the early committees reproduced here. Sport crossed the boundaries of class and helped to cement the community. Who was the poet who coined the name "New Tipperary Rangers" for a hurling team in 1947?

Killenaule-Moyglass provides a very useful synthesis of settlement and society. Flashes of violence light up an otherwise peaceful place, and these are long remembered. The Young Irelanders came here to Walsh's Hotel and for one brief moment in July 1848 it seemed as if the rebellion would begin in Killenaule. The events of 1916-23 are fresher and the names of two men who met violent deaths — Tommy Donovan and George Plant — are forever embedded in the collective memory of Killenaule. Some authorities could have been quoted to support the claims made in the book, particularly for Plant.

John Hassett (the editor) and Rita Fitzgerald (the supervisor) and her team are to be complimented for their work. The various lists of names from Hearth Money Rolls and the Primary Valuation could, however, have been relegated to appendices at the end of the book and, because so much source material has been unearthed, a referencing system indicating the locations of manuscripts and published sources might have been provided.

Three significant names are missing from the list of notable parishioners. The two Dunning brothers were important church and academic figures, and Rev. Dr. John Hackett was as talented a Greek scholar and liturgical specialist as he was modest and humble. The book should (and no doubt will) be in every heart and by every hearth of Killenaule-Moyglass folk, wherever they are.

The Gortnahoe-Glengoole book is more modest, but has a sharp focus concentrating for the most part on the rich archaeological legacy of the parish of the hollows and the hills. There is in this parish an outstanding collection of field monuments, and (dare I say, as a native) their likes are not anywhere else in Ireland.

Their names and locations make a litany of impressive proportions — Buolick with its motte, tower house and deserted medieval town, Clonamicklon, castle stronghold of Ikerrin Butlers; Derryvella; Fennor, the medieval parish centre; the Cistercian gem of Kilcooly; Longfordpass; Mellison castle and church; the planned settlement of New Birmingham; a stone circle on Quinlan's hill, and the legacy of mining which shaped the hills. The text is supplemented by some fine photographs from the Cambridge University Collection and more recent ones taken for the publication by Jim Quin.

The story of the building of New Birmingham by the philanthropic Vere Hunt makes compelling reading. Hunt tried his utmost to temper harsh laws and intermittent poverty. His diary recounts the tribulations he met in building his new town, both from local lowlanders and highlanders, and also from the administration in Dublin — "imbecile and evasive"! For the first time Mary McCormack and her team identify most of Vere Hunt's foundation streets and we can clearly envisage the town beneath the hill. The problems and possibilities of rural development are no less



troublesome in our day. The book bravely chronicles Slieveardagh's recent mining history, which does not make pleasant reading.

Because the Gortnahoe-Glengoole book is not as comprehensive as that on Killenaule-Moyglass, practically no living people feature in it. From the absence of people in more recently taken photographs one deduces that Jim Quin is an early riser. It would have been appropriate to include a photograph of the old church in Glengoole (New Birmingham), as its mature trees, 'penny-house', external walls with rings for 'parking' horses and staircase to the gallery gave the village a link with its founding father, Vere Hunt, and an impressive focal point. Perhaps no photograph could have been unearthed.

The late Michael O'Carroll (Michéal Ó Cearbhaill), who taught for many years in the village and then in Clonamicklon, would have been pleased with this book. He deserved mention, he who, through hard work and commitment, gave the children of the parish a pride in their heritage and the chance to compete on equal terms in the examination halls of Ireland.

Both these books are important contributions by young people to making sense of their past in the hope of securing their future. At a time when millions of pounds are canvassed for heritage schemes of dubious authenticity, we should realise that the real heritage lies in the fields of Killenaule-Moyglass and Gortnahoe-Glengoole; generally unmarked and unsigned — but after these publications no longer unknown.

*William Nolan*

**The Cavalier Duke: A life of James Butler, 1st Duke of Ormond, 1610-1688.** By J.C. Beckett. viii +155pp. (Pretani Press, Belfast 1990). £5.95 sterling.

This is a book so modest in its aspirations and so successful in attaining its limited objectives as to give rise to serious regret that the author had not been rather more ambitious in his enterprise. Prof. Beckett begins with something like an apology: since there are already two lengthy biographies of Ormond in existence, the provision of a third, much shorter one, 'may seem unnecessary'.

He does not, however choose to mention that the first, Thomas Carte's three-volume life, was compiled as early as the 1730s as part of a campaign to rehabilitate the fortunes and reputation of the Butler family in the wake of disgrace, attainder and exile of the Jacobite second duke. Nor does he comment on the deficiencies of the second, Lady Burghclere's two-decker (1912), which (though based on a few sources other than those uncovered by the diligent Carte) is even more overtly biased in its Macaulayesque assumptions and style.

Both works have been long out of print; the former indeed is extremely rare. Thus, apart from a few scholarly articles and unpublished theses bearing upon specific events in Ormond's career, and an important contextual essay on the character of the Restoration viceroyalty by Prof. Beckett himself, little new light has been cast on the great duke over the course of this century.

For this reason the present book will be of interest not merely to 'the general reader' for whom it has been clearly intended, but to all scholars of 17th century Ireland. And it is as a largely silent exercise in correcting, modifying and modernising older accounts of Ormond's life that it is most to be valued. Time and again Beckett unravels and recounts the tangled events of the duke's public career with admirable clarity and elegance. His account of Ormond's conduct as King Charles's man in Ireland in the 1640s will not please everyone in its interpretation of disputed issues or in its conclusions, but it is a model of compression.

The fascinating sketch of his time in exile in France in the 1650s provides a fine example of Beckett's ability to extract the most from scanty sources. The account of Ormond's first viceroyalty nicely balances a careful exposition of the complexities of the disputes surrounding the Restoration land settlement with a dramatic narrative of the murderous conspiracies of Captain Thomas Blood. The concluding chapters deal deftly with the crisis of the Popish plot and Ormond's retirement from public life.



Here and in a number of earlier sections in the book Beckett writes warmly of Ormond's domestic circumstances. But the discussion of the duke's private affairs is throughout rather thin and patchy. Little is said, for instance, about the management and development of the Butler's landed estate despite the profound changes visited upon it by the family's varying political fortunes since the death of the tenth earl.

Similarly, Ormond's dealings with his own extensive network of relations is rarely considered, and his success or otherwise in asserting his leadership over the cadet branches of the family — a time-honoured headache for the house of Ormond — is not discussed. Such matters are of more than specialised local or genealogical interest, for they provide an important context against which Ormond's actions on a larger public level must be seen.

The young peer's remarkable allegiance to Sir Thomas Wentworth, a topic touched upon only tantalisingly by Beckett, was clearly linked to the difficulties and opportunities which he faced in the re-organisation of his estate and his family's affairs upon his return to Ireland in 1633. The peculiar personal problems presented to him by the actions of the Confederacy based in Kilkenny was equally a factor influencing his conduct in the 1640s.

The fact that so many of the Butlers were supporters of the Confederates and remained committed Catholics after 1660 in no way affected, as Beckett affirms, Ormond's loyalty or his staunch Protestantism. But it certainly influenced the attitude of his own dependents toward the duke as well as the attitudes of his friends and enemies in government and at Court.

On this last subject — Ormond's career as a courtier — Beckett has several shrewd observations to make. But his assessment of several crucial events in the duke's life — his negotiations with the Confederates, his difficulties with the acts of settlement and explanation and the circumstances surrounding his two dismissals — would have been further refined by a larger consideration of the structure and function of the Stuart court and of the particular problems it raised for the Anglo-Irish nobility of which Ormond, whether he wished it or not, was seen to be a principal representative.

Such questions, which are the frequent concern of more recent studies of the early modern peerage in both Ireland and England are, however, beyond the scope of Prof. Beckett's self-imposed terms of reference. Instead, he has set out to offer a brief and dependable *resumé* of the political life of a figure whose importance is generally acknowledged but about whom much has yet to be learned. If his aim has been to place Ormond once again on our agenda of study, then he has succeeded fully.

Ciaran Brady

**And the Harvest is Done.** By Harry Howard. (Geography Publications, Dublin 1990). pp. 110. £4.50.

The author of this slim volume, now in his 80th year and having devoted his life to farming, records here his reminiscences of life on the land in two counties. He was born near Belmont in county Offaly in 1911, one of a family of six boys and two girls living in Strawberry Hill House, a rambling building on a comfortable farm.

When he was 20 years Harry Howard struck out on his own and rented a 100-acre farm at Elmhill, midway between Cloughjordan and Nenagh. Settling in this area, he eventually purchased Donnybrook farm, where he still lives.

He was always an innovator, even as a schoolboy. When he received two ten-shilling notes as a reward for honesty, he bought a bonham with the money; when it was fit for sale, he got over £6 for it. He bought two more bonhams with the profit and gradually increased the number to ten, which he eventually sold to Donnellys in Dublin.

He saw plenty of excitement as a young boy during the War of Independence. A nearby mansion was garrisoned by the British Army; the Black and Tans raided homes; the Volunteers conducted mysterious activities. During the Civil War Strawberry Hill House was taken over by a company of Republicans opposing the Treaty, until they were dislodged by the National Army.





The Howards were progressive and resourceful farmers. When the respective claims of Ferbane and Belmont were advanced as sites for a new creamery, Harry and his brother tipped the scale in Belmont's favour by increasing their cow-herd by one-third.

They were among the first group of farmers to grow beet for the Carlow factory in 1927. Each stage of the inaugural beet "campaign" is described here, from ploughing to standing in the November mud and rain, wrapped in 'proskeens', and crowning beet with an improvised cutter.

There were happy days fishing for bream in the Grand Canal, sliding on the ice with steel-cleated clogs and, when snow came, making one's own sled. There were outings to the seaside and to the fair in Leenane, where they once bought 150 horned sheep and brought them home in four stages.

The author's 60 years' farming in Tipperary saw remarkable changes in agriculture, and he played a leading role in promoting these changes. Not content with drawing water from a spring-well, he sank a pump to bring a piped supply to his home, and extended it to form a group water-scheme for the locality.

Starting with a small quantity of milk for the creamery in Toomevara, he carried the single can on the carrier of his motor-cycle. As the yield increased he used his pony and cart, and agreed to take some neighbours' tanks as well. As the demand for this service increased, he bought a pick-up truck that carried about a ton of milk daily.

The author, who comes across as a Christian gentleman, was a member of the Select Vestry of the Church of Ireland for 56 years, and can refer naturally to the Rosary and the Angelus without any self-consciousness. Although an innovator, he looks back with regret at the passing of the social occasions of his younger days - the house dances, the threshings, the turf cutting and the chats at the creamery.

Harry Howard's book is pleasant both to handle and to read. The title is taken from *Harvest Song* by Austin Clarke; the cover carries a well-chosen illustration; the maps are a valuable addition to the text. This attractive publication is well up to the standard one comes to expect from its publishers.

Séamus Ó Riain

**Irish Megalithic Tombs.** By Elizabeth Shee Twohig. (Shire Publications, Buckinghamshire, 1990). 72 pp. £3.50 sterling.

This book is No.63 in the Shire Archaeology series, and the first of the 53 so far published to deal solely with an Irish topic. The author is a native of Clonmel and has been for 20 years a lecturer in archaeology in UCC; her major work, *The Megalithic Art of Western Europe*, appeared 10 years ago.

Dr. Shee Twohig's aim in writing this book was to help make the results of archaeological research on megalithic tombs available to the lay person, in the hope that increased awareness of these sites might contribute to their conservation. Although passage tombs alone (only one of four categories dealt with here) number 230 in Ireland, new sites are still being discovered, even by interested amateurs.

In an illustrated and illuminating talk to the Royal Society of Antiquities in Ireland last April, Dr. Shee Twohig argued that Irish megalithic tombs should not be treated in isolation but rather as parts of a group of such sites in northern and western Europe, a view that provoked stimulating discussion from other academic archaeologists in her audience. In this book she repeats this argument in greater detail, with several references to sites in Brittany, Wales and even Portugal.

This book succeeds admirably in summarising for the non-professional archaeological reader the latest state of knowledge on all aspects of Irish megalithic tombs. It is well planned, lucidly written and beautifully illustrated; on a quick count, one found some 23 pages of illustrations of various kinds in a book of about 55 pages. A short glossary, a detailed list of sites to visit (county by county), a bibliography and an index account for most of the remaining 17 pages.



This reviewer can dimly remember being brought to Newgrange in the mid-1930s, when his childish attention was rivetted on the proximity to her unruly greying hair of the guide's candle, sputtering as she switched it from hand to hand when the wax dribbled on to her arthritic knuckles. She awaited our arrival in the burial chamber, from which in those days (before rural electrification) there was no escape, before she told us of the day in the 1890s when her late father had heard ominous rumblings in another passage in the mound. Here she turned round to point in the direction of the other passage, leaving us in total darkness.

Today a dazzling (in more senses than one) Newgrange draws 100,000 visitors in a season, and so dedicated are the guides that one spent her 1991 vacation (at her own expense) on a "pilgrimage" to Carnac. So much for the explosion of public interest that this fascinating book can only help to increase. Yet a spot check last Summer of three major Dublin bookshops showed that none stocked it, although one had some 35 to 40 Shire books on its shelves. For interested readers of this Journal, the "Northern Ireland and Eire" agents of Shire Publications are Butler Sims, 55 Merrion Square, Dublin 2.

*Marcus Bourke*

**A History of Templemore and its Environs.** By Paul P. Walsh. Published by the author in Templemore, 1991. 141 pp. £0.50.

This, the first-ever attempt at a history of Templemore, is by a founder-member of the Society which publishes this Journal. While not purporting to be comprehensive in scope, it should serve to stimulate more research into a town that has for too long been neglected by local historians — and which is, one suspects, of much greater antiquity than Mr. Walsh would have one believe.

Understandably, perhaps, he concentrates on the most recent two centuries of Templemore's past and skips lightly — too lightly, possibly — over the previous millenium. As if to capture the interest of the non-academic reader and younger readers too — a laudable aim — he has selected a number of headings, under which he gives an account of life in Templemore from the start of the 19th century.

Predictably, the Cardens get ample treatment, indeed perhaps more than their due considering how, despite their 225 years' presence in the area, they are now forgotten. The military barracks, which made its mark firmly on the town from 1810 to 1922, is also generously treated. So too is the influx in World War 1 of German prisoners-of-war. The valuable diary kept by Rev. James O'Carroll in the 1860s, a veritable goldmine of information on social life only recently being fully exploited, is used to cover the topic of faction fighting.

The author, a sprightly octogenarian with an excellent memory, draws on personal knowledge to deal with such subjects as the impact of the War of Independence on his native town and the influence there for 55 years of the Christian Brothers. Other chapters treat of the effect of the Williamite Wars and the Fenian Rising; George Borrow's local links are also covered.

A good bibliography is supplied, though it shows signs of hasty compilation that harassed librarians may regret, and there are many rare photographs. Mr. Walsh's printer, J.F. Walsh of Roscrea, has done a fine job, including an attractive cover design.

*Marcus Bourke*

## Shorter Notices

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**Irish Convicts: The Origins of Convicts Transported to Australia.** Edited by Bob Reece. (Dept. of Modern History, UCD, 1989). 191 pp. £5.95.

**The Irish-Australian Connection.** Edited by Seamus Grimes and Gearoid O Tuathaigh. (No publisher specified, 1989). 159 pp. £9.95.

These two books, clearly 'spin-offs' of the Australian bicentennial celebrations of 1988, arrived too late for review in the 1990 issue of this Journal. The first, edited by Bob Reece, then of UCD and now of Murdoch University, Western Australia, who contributed to this Journal in 1990, is a student project and contains seven papers. Readers of this Journal may be interested to compare the 33-page account of the 1815 Ballagh riot by Niamh Brennan, herself of Tipperary origin, with that of Fr. Max Barrett in this issue of this Journal.

The second book comprises the proceedings of the Irish-Australian Bicentenary Conference held in UCG in January 1988. It consists of eight scholarly essays, mostly by recognised academics, with Bob Reece figuring again. Beidh suim fé leith ag leitheóirí o Chonndae Thiobraid Arann in aiste le Tomás de Bhaldraithe ar na Connerys, triúr o Phortlairge a bhí fé reim idir 1833 agus 1838 ins na sléibhte in aice le Cluain Meala. The book is distributed by Irish Academic Press.

**Placenames of Townlands in Tipperary North.** (North Tipperary Federation of Irish Countrywomen's Association). 93 pp. £3.00.

The aim of this attractively produced booklet appears to be twofold — to make the area it covers more interesting for visitors, and to encourage residents to take an interest in the origins of their native townlands. Stripped of the technical details such as acreage and electoral districts available in the official Townland Index of the mid-19th century, this new list concentrates on the Irish language roots of each townland and includes relevant historical data where it is known.

**Retrospect.** Edited by James O'Donoghue. (Irish History Students' Association). 57 pp. £2.00 — This annual journal of the IHSA makes a welcome re-appearance after a two-year lapse, and is edited by young Tipperary historian. The seven principal articles range over Irish political and social history, European history and educational history, and are of an astonishingly high standard. For those with good eyesight or a strong magnifying-glass there is also a good book review section. Readers of this Journal in 1989 will read with some interest a revised version of the editor's excellent article on the Scullys of Kilfeacle.

**Blessed Charles Meehan, O.F.M.** By Patrick F. Meehan. (Leinster Express, Portlaoise, 1990). 16 pp. £1.

This short booklet gives a biographical account of a Leitrim Franciscan priest who was executed in Wales in 1679 at the age of 34 on a technical (not to say trumped-up) charge of treason. Fr. Meehan, who was beatified in 1987, was a collateral ancestor of Edmund Meehan, who in 1766 was hanged with Fr. Nicholas Sheehy in Clonmel.

The booklet may be obtained from the author, whose family were prominent in the Home Rule movement, at 94 Main St., Portlaoise.

