

Book Reviews

By William Nolan, Marcus Bourke, Mary E. Daly, Seamus J. King,
Gabriel Cooney*

Portrait of a Parish: Monsea & Killodiernan, Co. Tipperary. By Daniel Grace. (Relay Books, Nenagh). 346 pp. £12.00.

This book is the product of a decade of formal research in archive and library, filtered through the rich oral histories which the author inherited from family and neighbours. Although the book is conventionally presented, it carries the texture of the tracing hearths of this quiet limestone land.

Such a book has obvious appeal to the parishioners whose past worlds are so faithfully chronicled; but what is in it for those who may only know Lough Derg's water edges or the village centre of this north Tipperary parish? Local histories must cater primarily for local people, but the better ideal studies will situate locality within its wider geographical setting and attempt to establish how the general dynamic of national history is revealed in the more intimate parish setting.

Danny Grace achieves this balance. One is struck by the conformity of Monsea-Killodiernan to the general models of landscape formation and political history we are familiar with. Local studies should also interweave the detailed ground knowledge of the author with the rich *corpus* of documentary source material available in Ireland. The author is most successful in this respect.

The authority with which he interrogates a variety of primary sources is for me the great merit of this book. He is particularly strong on material pertaining to land ownership and occupation such as the seventeenth-century ledger books, estate papers and the Registry of Deeds. The discovery of the Minnit papers gives authority to his discussion of the estate system; this collection may merit more comprehensive analysis.

What do we learn of this Catholic parish which has subsumed the older pre-Reformation entities of Cloughprior, Dromineer, Killodiernan, Knigh and Monsea? It is relatively level limestone countryside, with its high points such as Knigh Hill (443 feet) capped with monuments and is one of the few parishes in Co. Tipperary to have islands, points, quays and bays in its toponomy.

Some one-third of its recorded 40 ring forts have been destroyed, but fortunately its most important prehistoric site at Ashleypark – a neolithic burial mound – has been excavated and published by the archaeologist Con Manning. Danny Grace outlines the origins of the earlier medieval parishes as the church pulled together knight's fees, manors and monastic lands to create a parish network.

Some excellent photographs of their central church remains are included; similar coverage is given to ten tower houses. One is struck by the scale of the various buildings – churches, tower houses, mills, big houses – which implies a good supply of building stone, a skilled workforce and a solid economic base for the prosperous. This was Hogan, Kennedy, Grace and Butler land, cattle and corn country; but the seventeenth-century plantations changed the signatures on the landscape.

*Reviewers' names are given in order of appearance. – *Editor.*

The author moves confidently among the Big Houses of Monsea-Killodiernan and helps explain why this part of Tipperary had such a high density of relatively small estates. He chronicles various family histories and reveals the present status of the sixteen Big Houses in the parish. Danny Grace is particularly good, as we might expect, on population resource relationships and especially on the Famine decade.

Potato ground rented by ridge supplemented landlord income; but neither ridge nor pit escaped the scourge of blight. Prices doubled for this staple essential product, from six shillings in 1846 to 12 shillings in 1848, and the parish lost 37 per cent. of its recorded 1841 population by 1851.

The author reveals some fascinating local responses to hunger and the allocation of state financial assistance. There was wholesale jobbery in the public works; nepotism prevailed in the allocation of positions as relieving officers; the local miller was ostracised for exporting large quantities of grain.

Strong farmers and landlords believed in the orderly inter-generational transfer of land, preferably to a male heir. In 1853 William Moloney married Ann Carroll, who brought a substantial dowry of £70. On his premature death two years later his father sent the widow and baby daughter (together with the £70) back to her own people and gave the farm to another son, Dan.

One gets the impression that the parish priest, generally from the large farm community, was the prevailing influence in the second half of the nineteenth century; all of them get biographical sketches. The stern sexual code imposed by a resurgent church is evident in the comparatively low numbers of children born outside wedlock in the decades 1834 to 1843 (29 of 2,072) and 1864 to 1873 (6 of 494). Such figures do not reveal those either forced to flee and give birth elsewhere or the numbers who concealed births.

There are some insights on economy and society, and in particular the movement of agricultural commodities on road and water through Dromineer port. Hanly's woollen mill at Ballysatella is a rare example of an enterprise persisting through the generations, and the availability of account books and access to family memoirs informs the author's analysis.

Owner occupancy was established on the farms of Monsea-Killodiernan in the early twentieth century. Landlord families gradually retreated to demesne farm and then faded from the parish memory. Workmen dependents of the Big House went to war in 1914 alongside their landlords; other parishioners stayed at home to participate in the War of Independence and the revival of nationalism. Public-house, crossroads platform, card games, *Muintir na Tíre* and the GAA enlivened rural life.

Hurling dominated. For many it was their public stage, a chance to encounter foreign lands beyond townland and parish boundary. Teams with colourful names such as Lahorna De Wets – De Wet was a Boer War general *not* on the British side – battled through Tipperary, and hurling artists like Jimmy Kennedy made their own immortality. The saga of Kennedy's early retirement in his prime at 25 and the GAA's failure to give him an All-Ireland medal in 1951, when he apparently participated in the championship, demands retrospective reparation.

There is no easy formula for writing a local study. Sometimes the weight of information can be overpowering, particularly for those outside familiar parish boundaries. But doubtless the primary purpose of a book such as this should be to satisfy the people for whom it is written, the parishioners.

Perhaps the book could have benefited from a tighter structure, with chapters organised chronologically rather than thematically. However, it brings with it an intimacy and chattiness which a dry formal structure might have destroyed. I would have liked more information on

the political landscape of the twentieth century; Fianna Fáil, Fine Gael, Labour or any other party features nowhere in the index!

The community who sponsored it deserves credit for this book, which will take its rightful place on the bookshelves of all interested in this complex county.

William Nolan

A History of Hurling. By Seamus J. King (Gill and Macmillan, 1996). 355 pp. £17.99.

This is a timely, well written and authoritatively researched book. Apart from two qualifications to be mentioned in the final paragraph of this review, it is a credit to all involved in its publication, but above all to its author, a well known officer of the GAA in Co. Tipperary. It manages to be at the same time an up-to-date history of our national game (mainly from 1884, the year the GAA was founded) and, through its substantial records of major hurling competitions, an invaluable reference source to the end of 1995.

Running to 18 chapters, the book is cleverly planned. After three chapters dealing with the origins of hurling, its take-over by the landlord class in the 17th and 18th centuries, and the rules of the game, there follow eleven principal chapters covering the inter-county championships for the period ending with Clare's victory in 1995. The titles of the remaining four chapters tell their own story – Other Hurling Championships, The Geography of Hurling, Hurling Styles, and The Future of Hurling. Between them, however, these four chapters occupy a mere 49 pages compared to 136 for the previous eleven chapters.

Nor is this by any means all. A four-page Epilogue describes the 1995 inter-county championship, and an 80-page set of no less than 17 Appendices gives over a century of hurling results and team personnel. There are also four maps, source footnotes, a bibliography, an index and 64 pages of photographs – the latter inserted in four blocks of 16 pages each. No purchaser of this book can reasonably complain of its price by current standards.

The chapter headings themselves are minor works of art, all ingeniously designed (by an astute Kerryman, perhaps?) to please or tempt the lazy or partisan reader – Cork's Era, 1926-1931; The Rise of Wexford; Tipperary's Time, 1958-1968, to mention only three, each of which will catch the eye of readers in three of the five leading counties! For, as his publishers have doubtless impressed on the author, if there is one unchanging fact of life about the GAA, it is that (outside of well-heeled supporters, mostly in the towns and cities) the ordinary member rarely buys a book about his or her Association. If the remainder-merchant is to be kept at bay, presentation is everything; and in this regard Gill and Macmillan have got it spot on.

Inevitably, a book like this is largely subjective in choice of material and in emphasis. Yet despite the modest tone of his preface, Seamus King admits in advance to imbalance; but he has achieved the near-impossible, by giving a fair account of a controversial topic while not hesitating to inject his own personal opinion at appropriate moments. If anything, for a man who has devoted his life to the GAA in Tipperary, he is restrained in his views. But reading between the lines one cannot, to give two random examples, fail to observe both his admiration for Cork hurling and his private assessment of 'Babs' Keating!

In other ways too, perhaps unwittingly, he reveals personal preferences. This reviewer has no problem in guessing the author's age-group when (on p. 115) he reads the dogmatic statement that "These were epic days, when men were larger than life and hurling games were unforgettable experiences"! To this reviewer it was to a decade earlier that such an infallible comment applies. Even in his use of journalistic sources Seamus King gives the game away, if one may pun. The inimitable "Carbery", Pádraig Puiréal and "Winter Green" all get mention;

but where are "The Recorder", John D. Hickey (of Thurles, incidentally) and "Fear Ciúin"?

The book is full of fascinating details and reminiscences. We are reminded of the day when the whole country held its breath for hours after RTE (then, as now, out of touch with rural Ireland) cut off the broadcast of a final to make way for the 6.30 news; of the fact that Michael O'Hehir's father trained a Clare hurling team some 80 odd years ago; of years when All Ireland hurling finals drew bigger crowds than did the football final; and of the bizzare explanation of Cork's red-and-white colours. Tipperary readers will reflect with amusement that, but for the action of the British forces, Cork would now be lining out in Semple Stadium in royal blue and (wait for it) saffron!

Nor is Seamus King afraid to advance what purists – if there are any left in the GAA of the 1990s – may feel are heretical views. He points to the oft-overlooked similarities between the rules of hurling in the 18th century and those of modern rugby. He suggests that, but for the patronage of the landlords in the 1700s, hurling might be extinct now, before it nearly became so after the same class withdrew its support. Even more startling is his suggestion that this quintessentially Irish (Celtic surely?) game is a Norman import.

To readers put off by much of the current journalistic jargon, Seamus King's style can be recommended for its clarity, and may remind readers of Seamus Leahy's recent book on 'Babs' Keating's era, reviewed in this Journal in 1995. So "reader-friendly" is the author's English that a rare lapse sticks out; one recalls a Leinster hurling final that was "a pedestrian affair" (p. 156), and an anonymous writer to a Cork newspaper back in 1876 being called "a scribe" (p. 220).

This reviewer felt that the short chapter on the geography of hurling – almost a non-topic, at least until more research is done – fell flat. It is curious to find Seamus King subscribing to the purely speculative views of Dr. Kevin Whelan. It might have been more instructive had the author of this book given us a little more of Prof. Liam Ryan's views, which appear to have gone some way to demolishing those of the Wexford geographer.

For those concerned about the future of hurling, Seamus King has kept his best chapter to the end. In nine tightly argued, and at times angry, pages "The Future of Hurling" mounts a devastating criticism of the GAA for its neglect of this superlative field game. Coming from inside the Association – for King is a divisional chairman in Tipperary, a potential county chairman, even perhaps destined for higher office – his indictment of GAA bureaucracy is all the more authoritative.

In a foretaste of what comes 238 pages down the line, he points out in his preface that "... attempts to expand [the hurling area] have come to naught". Rules on personal fouls are ignored by referees, and a decision to experiment with 13-a-side teams in colleges games was never implemented. The future of hurling is bleak, he argues convincingly. Notable figures like Tommy Barrett and Con Murphy agree with his assessment that playing numbers are in decline and skills disimproving. He believes that the official GAA policy of trying to expand the hurling area is misguided; far better, he pleads, to try to hold on to the existing 10-county area. While accepting that social circumstances (like the spread of soccer and the expansion of third-level education) are partly to blame for the present state of affairs, the Association Cusack founded to "bring back the hurling" King believes to be the main culprit for hurling's near-terminal condition.

Astonishingly, he advocates a separate body to control hurling, and even suggests experimenting with professionalism to emulate the success of the landlord game of the 1700s. One suspects, however, that his arguments will not be heeded. After all, a separate body would involve dropping the prized Guinness sponsorship, criticism of which on moral grounds by the GAA's episcopal patron was met with silence.

Two minor blemishes in an otherwise outstanding book deserve mention. First, it is a pity that modern printing techniques did not permit the inclusion of Wexford's 1996 revival. Secondly, the publishers must be faulted for not including details of the contents of the substantial Appendices.

Marcus Bourke

The College: A History of Queen's/University College Cork, 1845-1995. By John A. Murphy (Cork University Press, 1996). 469 pp. £18.95.

This volume, which commemorates the 150th anniversary of the founding of Queen's College Cork, can perhaps also be seen as marking the end of UCC's status as a mere university college, because the 1996 University Bill will finally grant autonomy to the College and to the other constituent colleges of the National University of Ireland. As Murphy shows, there were many occasions when College presidents, academics or students expressed their resentment at being subjected to control from Dublin, and Cork made a strong push for an independent university when the National University of Ireland was being established and again on the eve of Irish independence.

The history of Queen's, or University, College Cork has often been turbulent. The College's first president, the distinguished scientist Sir Robert Kane, was an absentee who quarrelled with many members of the academic staff, among them George Boole, the professor of mathematics, who is now probably better remembered than Kane. In 1862 during Kane's presidency a fire, which was believed to have been started deliberately, destroyed the West Wing. Kane was among the suspects, though nobody was ever held accountable.

For many decades the College and its administration were at odds with the local community and out of step with the changing political views of Irish society. In 1882 a deputation of Cork students presented Parnell with an address and enlisted his sympathy with their grievances. The students actively supported the nationalist candidate in the 1884 Cork by-election. Yet when W. K. Sullivan, who had succeeded Sir Robert Kane as President, invited Parnell to meet the College staff in 1885, only one professor actually turned up.

Protests, suspensions and near riots appear to have been regular features of Cork student life at the end of the nineteenth century, and Murphy suggests that these students were much less conformist than UCC students in the years of the Irish Free State, perhaps because they had braved clerical wrath to attend Queen's College Cork. Yet many demonstrations reflected student weakness rather than strength. By the end of the nineteenth century Queen's College Cork was little more than a medical school, with medical students accounting for 138 of the total student body of 185, and morale was poor.

The 1908 Act which changed the College's name to University College Cork – a constituent College of the new National University of Ireland – marked an important turning point. Student numbers began to rise; the formerly "godless" College gradually became more catholic. From 1909 catholic holy days became college holidays; the so-called red mass – from the colour of the doctoral gowns worn by many academics – now opened the academic years and the first governing body of the new UCC included one Catholic and one Church of Ireland bishop, two Catholic and one Church of Ireland clergy, and one Christian Brother and one Presentation Brother.

Although some people had expressed the view that the foundation of the National University of Ireland would open the way to "the poor man's university", the lack of scholarships enabling poor children to attend secondary schools meant that the scholarships provided by county councils often failed to benefit the "poor man's son". County councils were also extremely parsimonious in the number of scholarships on offer.

South Tipperary County Council was determined that its scholarship holders would not fall by the wayside during their college years. The Council's scholarship scheme included the requirement that

To safeguard the morals of its scholars and to preserve them from the license and vice to which they would be exposed by lodging in the city under no proper supervision the Co. Council shall require all its scholarship-holders to reside in a hostel duly recognised by the University which [was] supervised by a religious order.

After 1922 UCC became a microcosm of the moral and religious ethos of the Irish Free State – or perhaps more accurately of Cork city and county. In 1944-45 half of the students came from Cork City, a further quarter from County Cork. A statue of St. Finbarr was erected to replace one of Queen Victoria (which was disinterred with considerable publicity during 1995). Students and academic staff marched annually in the city's Eucharistic procession. By 1943 one-third of history students took their examinations through the medium of Irish. The College's diploma in adult education was dominated by catholic social teaching. Yet, rather surprisingly, perhaps reflecting the social background of UCC students, the College was regarded as a hostile environment for the GAA.

According to John A. Murphy, change was slow in coming; the UCC student revolution of the late 1960s was "belated and therefore muted". He seems to regret this, and also bemoans the fact that the "heady days of the Maoists and the red-flag waving of the fall of Saigon (1975)" soon gave way to the "new conservatism" of the 1980s and 1990s. All, however, is not lost. In 1945, he notes, the centenary of the "godless" Queen's College Cork went unmarked, although the College "made quite a fuss about the centenary of the death of Thomas Davis". By 1995, UCC "had reached that stage of civilised maturity where it was content to read the pages of its history and then turn them over instead of tearing them out".

As a Senator and Professor of Irish History, John A. Murphy played a significant role in helping Irish society to arrive a "stage of civilised maturity" towards the past. On this occasion he documents the process of change in an institution close to his heart.

Mary E. Daly

Literature in Ireland. By Thomas MacDonagh. (Relay Books, Nenagh, 1996). 202 pp. £7.95.

The reprint of this book on the eightieth anniversary of its first publication and of the death of its author is both a tribute to the Cloughjordan-born patriot and scholar and a service to the general reader. The new edition is enhanced by the inclusion of an introduction by Gerald Dawe, a lecturer in English at Trinity College, Dublin, who has a high regard for MacDonagh's artistic intelligence and understanding of literature, and by a lengthy profile of the writer by Nancy Murphy.

In *Literature in Ireland* MacDonagh sought to establish the linguistic and quasi-cultural factors which define the separate identity of Irish literature, as distinct from English or American literature. He spelled out his aims in the Preface:

1. That an Anglo-Irish literature, worthy of a special designation, could come only when English had become the language of the Irish people, mainly of Gaelic stock, and when the literature was from, by, of, to and for that Irish people.
2. That the ways of life and the ways of thought of the Irish people – the manners, customs, traditions and outlook, religious, social and moral – have important differences from the ways of life and of thought which have found expression in other English literature.

3. That the English language in Ireland has an individuality of its own, and the rhythm of Irish speech a distinct character.

In defining Anglo-Irish literature MacDonagh tells us that at its weakest and poorest it is a weak and poor imitation of the poor contemporary work of Englishmen. "At its richest and strongest it has qualities of its own not to be found in the work of any Englishmen of the time. And it is distinctly a new literature, the first expression of the life and ways of thought of a new people, hitherto without literary expression, differing from English literature of all the periods not with the difference of age but with the difference of race and nationality".

From this literature he excludes the work of what he calls the Hiberno-English writers of the eighteenth century. According to MacDonagh, writers like Swift, Steele, Sheridan, Burke and Goldsmith do indeed form a band apart in English literature and have a common characteristic of adventurous and haughty individualism but, "for all that they have in common and for all that they owe to their Irish birth or upbringing, it is an attitude rather of dissent from an English orthodoxy than of consent in an orthodoxy of their own or of Ireland". They occasionally introduced into their work what would now be called a little local colour, tinted with memories of their early days in Ireland, but for the rest they were as much out of Ireland in spirit as in body. Occasionally too they introduced to their readers English-speaking Irishmen, but these were either caricatures or were obviously only half articulate in their new speech.

As well as defining the nature of Anglo-Irish literature MacDonagh also tries to arrive at definite conclusion with regard to the language to be found in that literature. In the course of this discussion he has an interesting comment on J. M. Synge who was "very often merely 'Celtic' in his phraseology though far more often rich and right". According to MacDonagh, Synge's fault was that he crammed his language too full of rich phrases. "He said that he used no form of words that he had not actually heard. But this probably means that he took note only of the striking things, neglecting the common stuff of speech".

In his Introduction, Gerald Dawe writes: "*Literature in Ireland* is a classic of stating the cause for the separateness and integrity of national literary and cultural traditions. Whether or not we agree with MacDonagh, his collection of studies has an historical significance in the development of what is known worldwide as 'Irish Literature'".

Nancy Murphy's comprehensive profile of MacDonagh is full of facts about the patriot's literary and political progression, which were running in tandem during the last month of his life. She quotes an observation made by his university colleague, Michael Hayes (another Tipperary man, who became Ceann Comhairle, and later professor of Irish in UCD), that MacDonagh gave no intimation of the imminent insurrection.

"To those of us who knew MacDonagh and saw him daily, even in the rising, he seemed quite different from Pearse; . . . he did not appear to have the idea that he was going to sacrifice his life to restore the soul of Ireland. He never lost his interest in literature, in teaching, in poetry, in drama. Up to the very end when he knew the rising was coming he was helping his brother in the production of a play at the Hardwicke Theatre . . . He had made conscious and very arduous preparations to fit himself for a university post. He was not a dabbler in literature or criticism . . . He hoped to succeed Robert Donovan as professor of English here at University College".

Seamus J. King

From Public Defiance to Guerilla Warfare. By Joost Augusteijn. (Irish Academic Press, 1996). 381 pp. £45 and £17.50.

This is an important new book on a topic that has featured prominently in all ten issues of

this Journal. It is based on a doctorate thesis for the University of Amsterdam, from where the author hails, and uses, as much of its raw material, information researched and gathered in the past decade in or relating to this county, where the author has become well known during that period.

The book breaks new ground for studies of the period 1913-1923, and its sub-title explains why – “The experience of ordinary volunteers in the Irish War of Independence 1916-1921”. For the first time a professional historian has concentrated almost exclusively on the ordinary rank-and-file amateur (and mostly part-time) soldiers, whose activities forced the British to the conference table for the first time in Irish history and led directly to the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921, imperfect though many of those same soldiers thought that to be.

This is the first book which describes and analyses the experiences of Volunteers at local level. Taking five counties – Derry, Dublin, Mayo, Tipperary and Mayo — for which reliable records have survived and in which reliable survivors had recorded their experiences, it explains how and why ordinary people joined the pre-1922 IRA and what they did once they joined. More importantly, it shows how and why, from merely demonstrating public defiance of the Dublin Castle administration, some (but not all, perhaps indeed only a minority) moved into participation in guerilla warfare – a transformation vividly depicted in the two contemporary photographs on the cover, one of which features the late Sean Sharkey of Clonmel.

Examination of the index reveals much about this book. Collins for obvious reasons has 13 entries, but de Valera only 8 compared to Sean Tracey’s 9 and Eamon O’Dwyer’s 10. More significant are the appearances of many Tipperary names, known by now to readers of this Journal but who have never before featured in any book on this period published outside this county. Among them are Frank Drohan, Maurice Crowe, Tom Donovan, Paul Merrigan, Ned McGrath and John Barlow. The same remark might be made of the placenames dotted throughout this book – Rosegreen, Rearcross, Laffansbridge, Goolds Cross, Knockavilla, Hollyford and Kilnamanagh, to mention a few at random.

Dr. Augusteijn has divided his study into three main themes – the nature of Volunteering, Volunteers and the (British) authorities, and Volunteers and the local community. A 14-page introduction serves both to provide the necessary background to his main text and to explain his scientific approach to his subject, covering in succession the origin and growth of the Volunteers, their activities and their achievements (including non-achievements).

For Tipperary readers the book has the added advantage (as it has for readers of the other four counties which provide its raw material, as it were) that it is possible to pick out the portion in each chapter dealing with this county. As a result, the book is amongst other things a scholarly account of the Tipperary Volunteers (later the IRA), as seen through the eyes of an objective foreign historian with no hang-ups or prejudices.

Each of the nine chapters ends with conclusions summarising its content, and there is a final “Summary and Conclusions” section of 18 pages which ties up the facts and comments of the previous 322 pages. An Appendix contains a detailed statistical analysis of the social composition of the pre-Truce IRA. Readers of the analysis of Tipperary historiography by Denis Marnane elsewhere in this Journal will be struck by the fact that Augusteijn has unwittingly (but with remarkable success) followed two theses emphasised by Marnane – the need to tell about the lives of ordinary people, and the hitherto neglected emphasis in so much Irish historical writing of the awkward problem of social class.

One of the praiseworthy features of this book is Dr. Augusteijn’s insistence on making his own independent valuations of people and events. Although he has relied extensively on the

unpublished research of Peter Hart (who has specialised on the pre-Truce Cork IRA) and although he has worked under Prof. David Fitzpatrick of TCD (who has specialised on Clare in the War of Independence period), he does not hesitate to disagree with some of both Hart's and Fitzpatrick's conclusions when his own research so warrants. In this connection it is worth pointing out that Augusteijn's sources include many never previously used, as well as interviews he himself conducted with survivors.

In other respects too Augusteijn ventures into new fields of speculation. As the audience at a talk he gave in Thurles in 1995 (incorporating material later published in this Journal in 1996) may recall, he advances a plausible theory to explain the dominance in 1919-1921 of IRA units in Co. Tipperary, compared to the comparative inaction of units in some of the other counties on which his research is based. He has skillfully interpreted the mass of archival material in UCD in the light of new material he himself uncovered, particularly in Tipperary.

Complete with sophisticated graphs, tables and maps, and rounded off by a comprehensive bibliography, this book is certain to remain an essential source for students of this formative period of this State, in which interest has recently been revived by events like the controversial Michael Collins film.

Marcus Bourke

Colonialism, Religion and Nationalism in Ireland. By Liam Kennedy (Institute of Irish Studies, Belfast, 1996). 231 pp. Stg £9.95.

He has been so long resident outside the Republic – at least 20 years – that the author of this book might fairly be called Tipperary's forgotten historian. Compared to the names of Vincent Comerford and Cormac O Gráda, Liam Kennedy's rarely seems to hit the academic headlines south of the Border. Born 52 years ago in Borrisoleigh and educated at Mount St. Joseph's, Roscrea, he graduated in science in UCC in 1970, progressing to an M.Sc. (from NUI) before acquiring a doctorate in York in 1978, where he had in 1975 joined the Economic and Social History faculty.

Since then, apart from a two-year spell as a visiting lecturer in history in Missouri-Columbia, he has never left Northern Ireland. From 1978 to 1981 he lectured in the New University of Ulster, returning to Queen's University, Belfast (where he had been a Resident Fellow after York) in 1981. He is now a Reader in the Economic & Social Dept. in "Queen's". In 1985 he co-authored an economic history of Ulster and in 1989 was sole author of *"The Modern Industrialisation of Ireland 1940-1988"*. He is currently working on a study of social change in modern rural Ireland, built round a parish history of his native Borrisoleigh.

Like Comerford, Kennedy is unashamedly (if at times more subtly persuasive) revisionist in outlook. Like O Gráda, Kennedy's forte is economic history; but much of his work strays into the overtly political field which Comerford occupies. Curiously, none of the three Tipperary historians has lectured in the county in recent years; perhaps economic history is not popular here?

This book consists of eight essays of about 30 pages each in length, on diverse subjects ranging from Parnell's economic thought, the Protestant community in Co. Longford over a 266-year span, Catholic clerical reaction to the co-operative movement, agricultural politics in pre-independent Ireland, to the relationship between the Catholic Church and economic growth in 19th century Ireland. All but one of these essays have appeared before, two as long ago as 1978, but two others as recently as 1993 and 1996.

Understandably, a unifying theme of Dr. Kennedy's essays is the relevance of the economic

factor in historical interpretation, an emphasis still somewhat novel in this country. Another feature of his political analyses is that, as one would expect from an academic of his standing, his revisionist conclusions invariably come after a fair evaluation of both sides of the argument.

What readers on this side of the Border cannot fail to observe, however, is the subtle, perhaps unconscious, impact which two decades' residence in the North have made on the author. This may take various (often minor, but revealing) forms – a benign picture of the effect on the RIC on everyday life, the use of the phrase "British and Irish Isles", and the use of the adjective "Gaelic" when referring to the language still spoken in parts of his native county up to the mid 1920s.

Two of these essays attracted more of this reviewer's attention than the others – that on the impact of the Union from 1801 to 1921 (first published only last year) and the final essay, which argues that, if Ireland were looked at in the context of European history, it would be seen that our historical experience is not as uniquely catastrophic as the traditional nationalist picture claims. On the impact of the Union, Kennedy concentrates on economic factors almost to the exclusion of all others, but is convincing on the proposition that a modern analysis of the Union in its own right is long overdue.

The most original (not to say provocative) of Kennedy's arguments in favour of the Union having been beneficial to Ireland is his startling suggestion that an independent Ireland would not have handled the Famine of the 1840s any more effectively than did Trevelyan and his superiors. The rural poor would not have had much clout in an Irish parliament; the middle classes would not have tolerated a ban on food exports; successive harvest failures would have weakened the public finances; relief operations would have been on an inadequate scale; and so on. All this is, of course, pure speculation, the "ifs" of history that academics usually discourage! But it makes a strong case for a post-revisionist analysis of the Union on a scale not so far attempted.

Marcus Bourke

The Funerary Bowls and Vases of the Irish Bronze Age. By Brendan Ó Riordáin and John Waddell (Galway University Press for the National Museum of Ireland; Galway, 1993). 289 pp. IR£31.50.

Mount Gabriel: Bronze Age Mining in Ireland. By William O'Brien (Galway University Press, 1994). 371 pp. £45.00 and £32.00.

In 1995 there were celebrations across Europe (including Ireland) of the Year of the Bronze Age, and these books (part of a series of Bronze Age Studies being published by Galway University Press) are a significant and timely contribution to our knowledge of the earlier part of the Bronze Age in Ireland. Ó Riordáin and Waddell deal with two of the main types of pottery vessel found with burials in Bronze Age graves. In this sense this book is linked to *The Bronze Age Burials of Ireland* by Waddell, published in 1990. A discussion of the history of research is followed by an outline of the characteristics of bowls and vases and the origins of these ceramic traditions.

Alison Sheridan, in a chapter on the manufacture, production and use of bowls and vases, raises interesting questions about the scale and nature of pottery production and about social identity as expressed in pots of similar form or decoration from different areas. Her conclusion from petrological analysis of a sample of the pots that they were locally made is an important observation with wider implications for our ideas about the way in which earlier Bronze Age

society was organised. The greater part of the book is taken up with a gazetteer, organised by county, giving details of the pottery and the contexts in which the pots were found. For this reviewer it was striking that there are only four sites recorded from Co. Tipperary as producing either bowls or vases. Yet is clear from other sources that there was substantial Bronze Age activity in the area now covered by the county.

In contrast to the book on bowls and vases, which follows a well-established format, O'Brien's book is more innovative in the approach used and the material considered. Through survey and excavation and collaborative work with specialists, he establishes the nature of the mining carried out to extract copper at Mount Gabriel in the Mizen Peninsula in West Cork during the Bronze Age, and dates the excavated mine sites to between 1700-1500 BC. This industrial activity is linked to the wider context of contemporary activity in southwest Ireland.

Some of these links are obvious, such as to the range of metalwork objects, particularly axes, that were the end product of the mining and ensuing production processes. Indeed, there are interesting suggestions as to the extent of distribution of the products from the mine sites. However, some of the other links drawn, for example with the megalithic monuments of the region, might at first appear less relevant.

Alongside these linkages, however, one is struck by the few physical links or associations between different sets of Bronze Age material; for instance, metal objects are rarely found with contemporary burials. Yet objects such as axes are often deliberately and formally placed or deposited in other contexts, such as bogs. There were clearly complex ideas about the proper way of doing things, and traditions about the way, for example, different types of objects were to be produced, used and deposited. In quite different ways both these books bring us further along the path of discovery.

Gabriel Cooney

Short Notices

By the Editor

Cloughjordan Heritage, Volume IV, 1996. Edited by Daniel Grace and Canon Edward J. Whyte. 104 pp. £5.00. – This is a mixed bag of history, poetry, folklore and sport, with a large number of attractive and evocative old photographs of people, places and events. There are articles on local episodes in the War of Independence, biographical sketches of local clergy, two items on Thomas MacDonagh and an account of the tragic death a century ago of a female member of the local gentry in a hunting mishap. We learn which Ryan the stand in Thurles is named after, and we ponder on the likelihood of Jimmy O'Dea having been born in Modreeny. The industrious editors feature prominently – the score this year being Canon Whyte 7, Danny Grace 5!

Tales from the Deise. Ed. Michael Hallinan (Kincora Press, Dublin, 1996). 144 pp. £8.95. – This slim but highly-priced booklet comprises an anthology of prose and verse, mainly on the history and heritage of Newcastle and the Nire Valley, edited by a leading member of the society that publishes this Journal. There are 40 short chapters, of which 17 are anonymous and

eight by the editor. The Famine, the school, the creamery, the sports club, placenames and Big Houses are all covered. Some of the material has appeared before, but a short autobiographical article by Very Rev. Robert McCarthy of the Church of Ireland is original.

Decies 1995 (Waterford Archaeological & Historical Society). 141 pp. £10.00. – Not content with publishing an outstanding book on the Famine, Waterford has re-vamped *Decies*, now in its twentieth year, using the same printing firm that has produced the *Tipperary Historical Journal* for most of its short existence. A 66-page famine section includes a 14-page article on religious controversy in Waterford 1847-1850 (by Eugene Broderick), a 12-page article on Quaker relief (by Joan Johnson), another of the same length on agricultural prices (by John M. Hearne), an 8-page list of passenger shipping (by Tony Deegan), and another of the same length on famine public works (by Dermot Power). Six articles in a general section include two on Waterford maps and a biographical memoir of the playwright Teresa Deevy. There is also a review of a recent evocative book from Lismore.

Decies 1996. (Waterford Archaeological and Historical Society). 192 pp. £10.00. – This second number of the new *Decies*, the 52nd in the series as a whole, contains eleven articles ranging in length from a four-page note on rope-making in Waterford and a four-page set of old (but undated) photographs of the city, to a scholarly 36-page study by Donnchadh O Ceallachain of temperance movements in the country over 150 years ago. Fr Mathew (from an adjoining county!) figures prominently, and so do a few less abstemious Tipperary folk of both sexes: but the real find is a Fr Foley from Clashmore, who became a serious rival to Fr Mathew. Archaeology is covered by an 18-page article on Killea church, and there is also a 22-page history of the 140-year-old People's Park by Dermot Power, as well as another (also of 18 pages) on Little Island, now the site of a luxury hotel.

Cultural Identity & Tolerance. Ed. Terence Brown (Cultures of Ireland, 1996). 105 pp. No price charged. – The publishers of this book comprise a group of persons who believe that cross-cultural debate is desirable in Ireland despite political divisions. The book reports the proceedings of a conference on this theme, held in March 1995 and addressed by President Robinson. Participants included the noted political philosopher Ernest Gellner (since dead), the constitutional lawyer Gerard Hogan (of Clonmel origin) and the literary critic Proinsias O Drisceoil (of Thurles origin), who has been prominent in this Group since its foundation.