

TIPPERARY HISTORICAL JOURNAL 1999



IRISLEABHAR STAIRE THIOBRAID ÁRANN

Tipperary Historical Journal 1999

Irisleabhar Staire
Thiobraid Árann

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3. This grant-in-aid was towards the publication (in Pat Holland's article) of the colour portrait of Cornwallis Maude.
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1. Contributions must be typed and on one side only of a page. Preference will be given to those typed on A4 paper and in double-spacing. Every page should be numbered and margins of approx. 1 inch left at both sides. Last-minute changes should be made in a margin only, NOT in the text. Contributions in computer-disk form (accompanied by a print-out) are welcome, provided the disk is Apple or Apple-convertible.
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3. Contributors are asked to suggest possible illustrations. If illustrations are required to be returned, this should be made clear when they are first sent to the Editor. All editorial decisions regarding illustrations are final. Contributions accompanied by illustrations may get preference over others. Contributors are responsible for clearing copyright of illustrations, quotations, etc., and the Editor is not responsible for any fee or other charge for illustrations.
4. Because of the volume of material offered in recent years, and because of a widespread tendency by contributors to ignore deadlines, contributions are now being accepted on a "First Come, First Served" basis. Intending contributors who set their own deadlines and then fail to meet them risk being postponed to a later issue.
5. From 1999, only books with a substantial Tipperary content will be considered for review. Except for books of major importance, reviews will generally not exceed a half-page of the Journal. Publishers are asked to appreciate that, once a book is given to a reviewer, the Editor has no effective control over the reviewer, whose sole responsibility it is to ensure that a review reaches the Editor in time for the next Journal.
6. Contributions should be sent to the Editor or, where appropriate, to an tEagarthóir Gaeilge.

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Guest Editorial

By Professor R. Vincent Comerford

The opportunity to write a guest editorial for a journal that is a recognised success and – just into its second decade – still relatively new is probably a good occasion for some reflections on the current state of historical studies. The fortunes of the *Tipperary Historical Journal* are an indication of a broad base of researchers at work and of a public eager to read the results of their endeavours. Indeed, throughout the country, north and south, local and county history has been thriving in recent decades. While the subject may have to struggle to hold its ground in terms of Leaving Certificate numbers, history is still very much in demand in the universities. As with scholarship generally and with so many other areas of life, the study of the past is going through an era of change and uncertainty. More people than ever before have the time and opportunity to do research and write up their findings for publication. Formerly universities may have seemed to support an attitude that tended to confine history writing to a “licensed” elite. It has now become their duty and privilege to make formal instruction in the techniques and principles of historical research available to practitioners who do not have the time or opportunity to become full-time students.

With the dramatic rise of “video” culture the written word is losing ground in relative terms as a means of communication. Some of the consequences are positive. Writing has to be to the point in order to retain the attention of a generation with a low boredom threshold, accustomed to the opportunity of switching channels at will. Numerous aspects of the history of the twentieth century captured on newsreel can be presented effectively on the screen. Interpretative centres constitute one of the most powerful of recent developments in popular awareness of history. The best of them provide a very effective and memorable educational experience. Like videos – and indeed many of them are focussed on video presentations – they can bring a subject alive even for a previously uninitiated audience. But in some cases immediacy is achieved at the price of simplification or worse. Exercising local influence to ensure that new interpretative centres have a high standard of historical content and presentation is a serious duty that is liable to fall on the local historian at any time.

It remains true that only engagement with the written word can secure a really worthwhile entry into the comprehension of history. We cannot recreate the past, but the closest we come to recovering its complexity and detail is in writing and reading. Insofar as the written word is diminished in the general culture of our time, history stands in danger not so much of abandonment as of dilution in that general diminishment of communication so succinctly conveyed by the term “dumbing down”. Whatever vicissitudes may threaten over time, it seems safe to predict that a considerable proportion of the population will continue to turn to history as one of the most effective modes of coming to terms with the needs of human existence. It offers neither a theory nor a formula nor any kind of conclusiveness at all, but a form of immersion in the endlessly varied and profuse experiences of those who have gone before that is both intellectually stimulating and emotionally satisfying. The prosperity of history, especially local history, depends not only on an eager audience and dedicated researchers but on indefatigable individuals who are prepared to go through the thankless organisational tasks involved in running societies, arranging conferences and publishing journals. Marcus Bourke is an outstanding example of such devotion. He had already contributed impressively to historical studies before assuming responsibility for the *Tipperary Historical Journal*. His labours as editor place us all perpetually in his debt.

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