

Some Famine Books

By Marcus Bourke

The Irish Famine: A Documentary History. By Noel Kissane (National Library of Ireland, 1995). 184 pp. £9.95. – The NLI's Education Officer, Dr. Noel Kissane, the unsung hero of that overused but underfunded institution, has produced another minor masterpiece with the help of his hard-working staff. The compiler of the popular series of NLI historical "packs", he produced in 1991 a documentary history of Parnell and in 1994 the award-winning *Treasures of the National Library of Ireland*. In many respects this source book on the Famine is his best yet, and when the dust has settled on the avalanche of recent books on the Famine, this book will still be in demand by both academic and amateur historians. Arranged both chronologically and thematically under twelve headings (including relief works; fever and disease; emigration; aftermath), this handsome book is distinguished by its wealth of contemporary illustrations, many from the National Library's own vast collection. As befits a book from such a national institution, Dr. Kissane's account is neither old-fashioned nationalist history, nor new-fangled revisionism nor even fashionable post-revisionism – only cold sober facts.

The Famine in Waterford 1845-1850. Ed. Des Cowman & Donald Brady (Geography Publications, Dublin, 1995). 344 pp. £9.95. – No other county affected by the Great Famine can (so far) boast of a better book than this to mark the 150th anniversary of that event. In every sense a local effort independent of outside academics, it concentrates on specific aspects of the Famine as they impacted on one county and represents the fruit of much genuine and original research. Edited by a local historian who has twice contributed to this Journal and by the Waterford Co. Librarian, and published in association with Waterford Co. Council (where was the Corporation?) by the vice-chairman of the society which publishes this Journal, the book comprises 13 chapters, all but one by a different local historian. Among the diverse topics covered are an overview of the Famine in the county, Quaker relief, local responses, press coverage and events in Lismore PLU and on the Devonshire estate.

In addition, Donal Brady has compiled a 26-page bibliography which extends far outside Waterford and covers not only books, articles and theses but also works of fiction, manuscripts and newspapers. There are two separate indexes (of places and personal names) and a foreword by Ambassador Jean Kennedy Smith, also some excellent illustrations, which curiously have not been listed. Amongst the contributors, most of them well known in adjoining counties, are Jack Burtchaell, William Fraher (another contributor to this Journal), Tom Nolan and John M. Hearne.

Of special interest, perhaps, to readers of this Journal is the last chapter (by Dermot Power); it describes the forgotten "rising" of 1849, which spilled over into adjoining parts of Co. Tipperary. Some of the participants later took part in the Fenian movement and had previously been at Ballingarry in 1848.

The Famine in Newport. By Michael Collins (Newport Historical & Archaeological Society, 1996). 56 pp. £3.00. – This is a revised version of two lectures given by a teacher to a local society in this remote corner of the county. The author's account of the Famine in Newport

parish is cleverly interwoven with information about the national scene, placing the local scene in the national background and thus making the book more interesting for the general reader. The result is a fine example of what one scholarly local historian with knowledge of the sources can achieve. An anonymous local artist has enhanced the book with appropriate drawings.

Famine in the Valley. By Edmund O'Riordan (Galty Vee Valley Tourism, 1995). 89 pp. £5.00. – This attractively produced book was the source of its author's article on the Famine in Clogheen published in the 1996 issue of this Journal. While the author deserves the main credit for his research, he also received expert advice from people such as Dr. Rose Cleary of UCC. This is a competently written and at times poignant account of the Famine in a corner of the county which suffered more than many other regions. Mr. O'Riordan covers pre- and post-famine periods as well as the actual famine years. His book is well planned and professionally footnoted, and includes a map and a bibliography.

Estate Records of the Irish Famine: A Second Guide to Famine Archives, 1840-1855. By Andres Eiriksson and Cormac Ó Gráda (Irish Famine Network, TCD, 1995). 68 pp. £4.50. – Modelled on the same group's guide to local archives of three years ago, this book arrived too late for mention in the 1995 issue of this Journal. It comprises two main sections – a 50-page list of records in Irish repositories and a 12-page list of Incumbered Estates Auctions for the period 1850-1855. The former is done by county, with proprietor's name, period, location and reference number for each case. The latter is done by county and barony. An Appendix lists additional material received since the publication of the 1993 guide.