Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society

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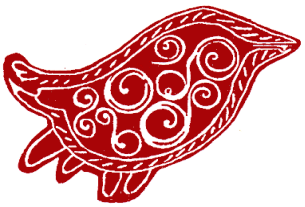

Title: Review: "Analecta Hibernica", No 29 (Dublin: Irish Manuscripts Commission, 1980)

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Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society, 1982, Vol. 87, No 246, page(s) 156-157

Published by the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society

Digital file created: December 9, 2016

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poem as being 'substantially Old Irish'. Two comments need to be made on the *apparatus criticus*. Ó Ríordáin should read Ó Conghaile *passim*, since the former's function was to versify translations made by the latter. Also, the source of the extensive quotation from the Martyrology of Donegal on p. 51 is a passage in the tenth-century Irish Life of Adamnán (*Anecdota from Irish manuscripts* 2, 17 §11) which, as M. Herbert and I show in a forthcoming edition, is in turn based on a similar passage in Adamnán's *Vita Columbae*. There, however, Íusucán's place is taken by the Holy Ghost.

In a closely argued and very well-documented article on 'the Cornish background of the Tristan stories, (pp 53-81), O.J. Padel, who has already established himself as an authority on Cornish matters, argues very convincingly in favour of a Cornish derivation for all the Continental Tristan stories. Rejecting the orthodox view of the story's origin in Pictland, whence it was transmitted *via* Wales to the Continent, Padel re-examines J. Loth's case for a Cornish background to Beroul's text of Tristan, vindicates it and, by drawing attention to other evidence, considerably strengthens and elaborates it.

The final article, H.W. Bailey's 'Bisclavret in Marie de France' (pp 95-7) discusses and attempts, very unconvincingly, to explain the Breton name *Bisclavret*. The journal concludes with a number of short reviews.

Pádraig Ó Riain

Analecta Hibernica, No. 29. Irish Manuscripts Commission, Dublin. 1980. Pp 248.

The later Middle Ages remain the period of Irish history least touched by the historiographical revolution of recent decades. This is not to ignore or belittle some extremely valuable work but one has only to compare the section on Ireland 1169-1534 with those of every other period in the recently published *Irish Historiography 1970-9* to be forcefully reminded of the uneven distribution of work. Three valuable contributions in this volume relating to late medieval Ireland are therefore particularly welcome. The first item underlines the paucity of work as it is a reprint from a book which originally appeared nearly twenty years ago. *The Administration of Ireland 1172-1377* by G.O. Sayles and H.G. Richardson has not been superseded and the indispensable introduction outlining the structure of Anglo-Norman administration is now available to a wider audience. Professor A.J. Otway-Ruthven has been the most notable of the lonely pioneers in such studies and it is appropriate that her name should appear in this volume. She presents a document from the London Public Record Office relating to the arrest of Sir Christopher Preston in 1418 which, as she acknowledges, K.W. Nicholls discovered and K. Downs transcribed for her. Her introduction is all too brief and one cannot but regret that a fuller discussion of the valuable light it sheds on many aspects of fifteenth century Anglo-Irish life is not provided. The scarcity of source material is underlined by the revelation that this document contains the only record of a great council meeting in 1417 and an Irish parliament held in 1418. S.G. Ellis provides the third contribution to medieval Irish studies with a selection of notes and extracts concerning Irish parliaments and great councils in the period 1483-99. This is intended as a supplement to an article in a previous issue of *Analecta Hibernica* where D.B. Quinn listed the Bills and Statutes of the Irish parliaments of Henry VII and Henry VIII. A list for the reign of Richard III can be found in H.G. Richardson and G.O. Sayles *The Irish Parliament in the Middle Ages* (1952). Ellis shows that the practice of Henry VI and the Yorkists of calling a parliament or great council each year in Ireland was fully maintained until 1494. The stultifying effect of Poynings' law on the Irish parliament, which in recent years has been questioned, is thus shown to have been significant. In stark contrast during the period 1495-1536 the Irish parliament met rarely and briefly, often simply to vote a new subsidy.

K.W. Nicholls presents a report on the Lynch Blosse papers, a private collection from Shrewsbury, relating to the Lynch family originally from Galway and later of Co. Mayo, and the related families of McHugh and Moore. The documents reported on are the residue of a formerly much larger collection some of which is in the National Library of Ireland, MS 3111. Correspondence, wills, deeds, miscellaneous legal papers, rentals, accounts and maps are included. The letters are mainly seventeenth and nineteenth century; a letter book of a land agent in Co. Mayo 1810-6 is particularly interesting. The legal material, including one original, apparently unproved, will is mainly seventeenth and eighteenth century. Among the accounts and rentals, the Lynch Blosse estate is shown in 1840 as having a gross rental of £9,200 out of which £4,524 went to pay interest on the total encumbrances of £81,559. There are forty-six maps dated between 1736 and 1819 of lands in the Barony of Clanmorris, Co. Mayo, and two tithe composition maps of 1834 relating to Carra Barony, Co. Mayo.

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Jerrold Casway has transcribed thirty-five letters written by Owen Roe O'Neill, the majority from the period 1643-9. There is a further list of thirty-one letters and papers addressed to O'Neill indicating the name of the correspondent, date, place of origin and present location of the manuscript. This valuable contribution thus covers sixty-six of the known total of two hundred and fifty-three documents relating to O'Neill still in existence. Of the material either printed in full or noted here, forty-nine items are located in the Bodleian library, Oxford, six in the British library, four in the London P.R.O., five in the Archivo General, Simancas, and one each in the Franciscan Library, Killiney, and Bibliotheca Apostolica Vaticana, Rome. Like all its predecessors this volume of *Analecta Hibernica* fulfils a valuable function in making source material for Irish history more widely available. In this regard the Reports of the Irish Manuscripts Commission to the Taoiseach for 1978 and 1979 which are included should be required reading. The unnecessary difficulties and constant struggle which the dedicated members of the Commission are forced to deal with can clearly be seen. They deserve our utmost gratitude for what they have managed to achieve to date.

Liam Irwin

A Bishop of Penal Times. The Life and Times of John O'Brien Bishop of Cloyne and Ross 1701-69. By James Coombes. Tower Books. Pp 134. IR£6·00.

During recent years some valuable genealogical and sociological studies of historical import have appeared over the name of Father James Coombes. In his latest work he has presented a life-sized portrait of one of the least known bishops of Cloyne and Ross in modern times. Thus, Brady (*Episcopal Succession*) dismisses O'Brien in three lines. In biblical terms Father Coombes has searched Jerusalem with lamps. At last John O'Brien stands revealed.

We learn that he was born 1701 at Ballyvoddy in the modern parish of Kildorrery. He studied for the priesthood in the Irish college at Toulouse where he was ordained in 1727. Later he was awarded academic accolades by the university and by the Sorbonne, Paris. He spent the next decade acting as tutor to the sons of ennobled Irish émigrés in France and Spain. In 1738 O'Brien returned to his native diocese and was appointed parish priest of Castlelyons and Rathcormac.

The transfer from the broad toleration of the continent to the dismal scene in penal day Ireland was deeply moving. On all sides O'Brien saw ignorance and superstition. Thatched cabins open at both ends were Mass Houses and there was a complete absence of schooling. Worse still was the erosion of clerical morale and discipline. Much in Co. Cork was out of joint; Hamlet-like, O'Brien felt called upon to set matters aright.

January 1748 the opportunity presented itself. After much episcopal heartburning and on the nomination of the exiled Stuarts John O'Brien was appointed bishop of Cloyne and Ross. The omens were forbidding: the penal oppressors closed down at least twenty Mass houses in the diocese of Cloyne. Undaunted, the bishop determined to press forward with reform. The obvious panacea was the implementation of the reforming decrees of Trent. Difficulties from within and without beset the path of the reformer. He dealt decisively with recalcitrant priests and promulgated a series of statutes framed to eliminate abuses and shortcomings amongst the people. Despite the law's contumely he established several schools. Diocesan missions were organized and put into operation throughout Cloyne and Ross.

Apart from his pastoral endeavours John O'Brien gave ample evidence of scholarly attainments. To help priests preaching to an Irish-speaking population he compiled an Irish-English dicitonary. Although he was well versed in continental cultural tradition his first allegiance was to the Irish language. He had a close association with the *dámhscoil* of poetry at Carraig na bhFear. And there was literary kinship with Seán na Ráithíneach. Controversy, however, has been focussed on the so-called *Dublin Annals of Inisfallen*. John O'Donovan and other eminent scholars have made harsh comments. The confusion has been explained by the late Professor Cormac Ó Cuilleanáin (*Féilscríbhinn Tórna*, 1947). O'Brien and his collaborator made a recension, chiefly of MS. sources of Irish history. The misappropriation of the title *Annals of Inisfallen* cannot be laid to the charge of Bishop O'Brien.

We read of visits to the Irish colleges at Bordeaux and Toulouse where the bishop ordained students for the dioceses of Cork, Cloyne and Ross. When health began to fail he returned to France. He died at Lyons in March 1769 and was interred in the church of St Martin D'Ainay. We are grateful for the lifestory of an heroic Irish bishop — told with a wealth of scholarship and painstaking research.

T.J.W.

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