

IRISH HISTORICAL STUDIES

VOL. XX No. 80

SEPTEMBER 1977

The first forty years

Eighty biannual issues, comprising twenty volumes, of *Irish Historical Studies* have now been published. The end of our first twenty years proved to be an appropriate point at which to review the progress of the journal since its foundation in 1938.¹ The completion of our thirtieth year was marked by a series of survey articles, assessing the contribution of the years 1938–67 to the historiography of Ireland.² The end of forty years of publication does not afford a similar vantage-point: historiographically we seem to be in the full flood of developments whose significance it is impossible to assess with any confidence. But forty years is a sizeable stretch in the lifetime of a journal, and still more of an editor; and as one of the two original editors (the other, R. Dudley Edwards, having retired in 1957) who is now retiring after forty years, I am called upon to offer some reflections.

The objects for which *Irish Historical Studies* was founded continue to be pursued, and the ideals of its founders to be upheld, in a situation very different from that of 1938. The small group of enthusiasts who started this journal were convinced that it was highly important to promote the disinterested study of Irish history. They sought to do this by providing a medium for publishing the results of new research and aids for historical scholars, such as bibliographies, guides to research in progress, select documents, and reviews of new publications. They aimed at setting rigorous

¹T. W. Moody, 'Twenty years after', above, xi, no. 41 (Mar. 1958), pp 1–4.

²Revised, updated, and augmented as *Irish historiography, 1936–70*, ed. T. W. Moody (Dublin: Irish Committee of Historical Sciences, 1971).

standards of scholarly excellence, professional technique, and literary presentation, and at encouraging and facilitating cooperation among all engaged in the practice of Irish history. It is not for me to assess what has been achieved along these lines; but it is, I think, beyond question that *Irish Historical Studies* has played a central and decisive part in the transformation of Irish historiography that the last forty years have witnessed. Many new periodicals concerned with Irish history have appeared since 1958,³ most notably *Studia Hibernica* (1961–), *Éire-Ireland* (1963–), *Irish Economic and Social History* (1974–), and *Saothar-journal of the Irish Labour History Society* (1975–), but *Irish Historical Studies* remains alone in its chosen field, research in the mainstream of Irish history in all its aspects. Since 1944 it has had an auxiliary in the two series of monographs, *Studies in Irish History*, which run to seventeen volumes covering various topics and periods in modern Irish history from 1685 to 1969.⁴ The second series was completed in 1975.

The most important recent product of the historical movement that has centred on *Irish Historical Studies* is the cooperative general survey, *A new history of Ireland* under the auspices of the Royal Irish Academy, in which over seventy scholars are involved.⁵ One of its nine volumes has appeared,⁶ and five others are expected within the next few years. The New History organisation has established a series of ancillary publications in such fields as bibliography, statistics, and edited texts, which are a development of the services for historians that have always been part of the programme of *Irish Historical Studies*. One volume appeared in 1971,⁷ and three others, in the press, are planned for publication in 1978.⁸ A

³ See *ibid.*, pp 142–3, for such periodicals down to 1970.

⁴ First series, 7 vols, published by Faber and Faber, 1944–56; second series, 10 vols, by Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960–75. Editors: T. W. Moody, R. Dudley Edwards, D. B. Quinn, J. C. Beckett, and others.

⁵ See above, xvi, no 63 (Sept. 1969), pp 241–57; *Irish historiography*, 1936–70, pp 148–55.

⁶ Vol. iii: *Early modern Ireland, 1534–1691*, ed. T. W. Moody, F. X. Martin, and F. J. Byrne (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976).

⁷ P. W. A. Asplin, *Medieval Ireland: a bibliography of secondary works* (1971).

⁸ W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick (ed.), *Irish historical statistics: population, 1821–1971*; *Giraldus Cambrensis Expugnatio Hibernica; the conquest of Ireland*, ed. A. B. Scott and F. X. Martin; B. M. Walker (ed.), *Parliamentary election results in Ireland, 1801–1922*.

cumulative bibliography, *Writings on Irish history, 1936-75*, based on the series of 'Writings' published annually in *Irish Historical Studies* from 1938, is being prepared by Helen F. Mulvey, P. W. A. Asplin and Linda Main. Designed in three volumes, on a plan standardised for *A new history of Ireland*, it is expected to be published in 1981.

Research activity in Irish history, as reflected in *Irish Historical Studies*, continues to be unevenly distributed over periods and topics. But medieval and sixteenth-century Ireland has lately been attracting some lively young scholars, and social, economic, and demographic history has been making remarkable advances, of which the new journal, *Irish Economic and Social History*, is the spearhead. The nineteenth century is still the period most intensively worked, but the twentieth century is coming into prominence as a field of research, with the growing availability of manuscript sources, exemplified by the introduction of a thirty-year rule (with qualifications) for British archives and the opening of the Irish cabinet records down to 1944. The time-limit on the subject matter of articles in *Irish Historical Studies*, originally fixed at 1900, has been successively brought forward, and has this year been converted into the rule that no article shall be published on any subject later in date than thirty years before the publication of the article. Development in another area is exemplified by the Annual Report of the American Committee for Irish Studies, which records the activities of this new body, founded in 1960 to stimulate and encourage in America research and writing on Irish folklore, history, language, and literature. Since 1968 the ACIS report has taken its place with the Annual Report of the Irish Committee of Historical Sciences, which first appeared in 1940, as a regular feature of this journal.

It was one of the original purposes of *Irish Historical Studies* to establish and maintain contacts between new historical scholarship and the writing and teaching of Irish history at school level. The series 'Historical revision' has in part fulfilled this purpose, but since 1956 a vigorous new body, the Dublin Historical Association, founded by T. Desmond Williams, Maureen Wall, and others, has made the interests of schoolteachers one of its special concerns. Two pamphlet series, similar to those of the Historical Association in Britain, have been of great value as brief, up-to-date, and authoritative reports of the state of historical knowledge on many varied

topics in Irish history. Together the two series now comprise thirteen paperback pamphlets.⁹

Irish Historical Studies was, and has continued to be, the joint journal of the Irish Historical Society and of the Ulster Society for Irish Historical Studies, which, since 1936, have been focal points, in Dublin and Belfast respectively, of scholarly interest in Irish history on the part both of academic historians and other historically-minded people. Cooperation between these two groups, which has always been a vital principle in the conduct of this journal, has remained unshaken and unimpaired by the ravages of political violence in Ireland of the seventies. The two societies were formerly almost the only channels through which original articles reached the journal. But the disinterested study of the Irish past by Irish scholars has increasingly been shared by others, in America, Britain, and elsewhere, and this has created a distinctive new source of material which *Irish Historical Studies* has felt a responsibility to publish. Both in Ireland and beyond, the number of scholars actively engaged in Irish history has been expanding rapidly, and it has been a characteristic of our second twenty years that the quantity of papers submitted for publication has increasingly exceeded our capacity to publish it. A waiting-list that has tended to lengthen has become a perennial problem at a time when production costs have been increasing at a much higher rate than the increases in price we have felt it right to make.

It has always been our aim to keep the price of *Irish Historical Studies* low, and because all editorial and management services have been unpaid and because we have always had a small annual subsidy from three Irish universities we have contrived until recently to maintain the annual subscription rate unaltered for long periods—at 10s. from 1938 to 1951, at 20s. from 1952 to 1966. During the past ten years we have been compelled to change this policy: in 1967 we increased the rate to 30s., in 1973 to £3, in 1976 to £5, and a further increase is impending. These changes have, of course, been caused largely by inflation, but also by our response to

⁹ The Irish History Series, nos 1–8 (Dundalk: Dundalgan Press¹ 1961–8 is listed in *Irish historiography, 1936–70*, p. 144, n.23; two titles have been added since 1968: (no. 9) J. L. McCracken, *The Irish parliament in the eighteenth century* (1971), and (no. 10) Richard Davis, *Arthur Griffith* (1976). For the Medieval Irish History Series, nos 1–2 (1964–70), see *ibid.*, p. 145, n. 25; since 1970 no. 3 has been added: Gearóid MacNiocaill, *The medieval Irish annals* (1975).

the increasing demand for space from young scholars. The average extent of the first fifteen volumes (1938–67), each comprising four issues, was 415 pages; for the last five volumes (1968–77), the corresponding figure is 565 pages. That we have succeeded in doing this despite the fact that the rise in production costs — from £1.50 per page for no. 1 (March 1938) to £25 per page for no. 79 (March 1977) — has greatly exceeded the rise in the price of the journal — from 10s. a year in 1938 to £5 a year in 1976—is due partly to good financial management and partly to increases in the amount of the subsidies we receive from the universities and to support from the New History of Ireland, which has sponsored certain items of urgent importance to Irish historiography, such as ‘Writings on Irish history’. It is an index of the changed conditions for scholarly publication since our first issue that in 1938 we fondly hoped that the university subsidies would only be needed for an initial period, after which *Irish Historical Studies* would become financially self-supporting. We are happy to acknowledge our gratitude to the universities for their constant support throughout these forty years, and to the New History of Ireland for timely help in a difficult decade.

The succession of honorary treasurers to whom I paid tribute in my report of twenty years ago has been continued by four dynamic young scholars who have rendered invaluable service to Irish history in an onerous and exacting office, two of them for a decade each—F. S. L. Lyons (1952–61), D. A. Thornley (1962–5), L. M. Cullen (1966–75), W. E. Vaughan (1975–). The late C. B. Kennedy, for many years accountant to Trinity College, Dublin, served us devotedly as honorary auditor from 1944 to his death in 1966, since when we have been indebted for similar services to the generosity of C. Russell Murphy.

In the editorial sphere the highest praise is due to the dedicated work of Tarlach Ó Raifeartaigh, formerly secretary to the Department of Education, Dublin, and first chairman of the Higher Education Authority. For the past twenty-five years, besides constant support in other ways, he has read all the proofs of every successive issue. J. G. Simms, a scholar who took up history comparatively late, and who has made a large and distinguished contribution to Irish historiography, has also given valued cooperation over many years.

E. G. Quin, associate professor of Celtic languages in Trinity College, Dublin, a veteran supporter of this journal, has for many years compiled the volume-indexes with quiet efficiency. We are

grateful to him and to K. B. Nowlan, associate professor of modern history in University College, Dublin, who has been a most helpful member and officer of our organisation since 1953.

To three distinguished librarians *Irish Historical Studies* is specially indebted for their contribution to the establishment and continuance of 'Writings on Irish history'—James Carty (assistant librarian, National Library of Ireland), who compiled the first two issues and was a member of the committee of 'Writings' for twenty years; Kenneth Povey (librarian of Queen's University, Belfast, 1930–38; of Liverpool University, 1938–58),¹⁰ who was a tower of bibliographical strength as a committee member from the beginning till his death in 1965; and Patrick Henchy (assistant librarian and later director of the National Library; now curator of the Chester Beatty Library), who as compiler of 'Writings' (1942–8) and convener of the committee (1949–76), played an indispensable part in our annual bibliographical campaign for thirty-four years. Others who rendered valued service in the same field are R. Dudley Edwards, R. B. McDowell, T. P. O'Neill, F. X. Martin, Ludwig Bieler, John Barry, Anne MacCabe, Esther Semple, Monica Henchy, Clara Cullen. Dr Henchy has been succeeded as convener of the committee by Gerard J. Lyne, assistant librarian in the National Library.

Of those who have been actively involved in, or associated with, *Irish Historical Studies* since its early years, Aubrey Gwynn, R. Dudley Edwards, David B. Quinn, J. C. Beckett, and R. B. McDowell—eminent historians all—continue to flourish. But many of their contemporaries to whom also this journal is indebted have died since my report of 1958—D. A. Chart, Rev. Leo McKeown, M. A. O'Brien, Rev. Patrick Rogers, David Kennedy, B. A. Kennedy, and Samuel Simms (of the Ulster Society for Irish Historical Studies), James Carty, Very Rev. N. D. Emerson, Rev. John Ryan, R. J. Hayes, G. A. Hayes-McCoy (of the Irish Historical Society). They are remembered with gratitude and affection.

The deaths of Gerry Hayes-McCoy and of two other gifted historians of a younger generation, Maureen Wall and Kenneth Connell, are specially grievous because they died before their time. The other younger historians whom I mentioned in 1958 as bringing new talent to the service of *Irish Historical Studies*—T. P. O'Neill, Kevin B. Nowlan, Oliver MacDonagh, E. R. R. Green, William O'Sullivan, David Large, F. X. Martin, Hugh Kearney—

¹⁰ See above, xiv, no 56 (Sept. 1965), p. 348.

have all risen to eminence in their profession; and F. S. L. Lyons, with a quiverful of authoritative books on modern Irish history culminating in his masterly biography of Parnell, has returned to Ireland after ten distinguished years as professor at Canterbury to become provost of Trinity College. Since 1958 a further infusion of young scholars has reinforced or replaced older members of our organisation: it is a pleasure to acknowledge the services of L. M. Cullen, F. J. Byrne, J. R. Fanning, W. E. Vaughan, J. I. McGuire, and Jacqueline Hill, of the Irish Historical Society, and of Con O'Leary, Michael Dolley, W. H. Crawford, J. A. McClelland, Miriam Daly, and D. W. Harkness, of the Ulster Society for Irish Historical Studies. One of these, Ronan Fanning, college lecturer in modern Irish history at University College, Dublin, succeeded T. Desmond Williams as joint editor nominated by the Irish Historical Society, after an interval of two years, in 1976; and another, David Harkness, J. C. Beckett's successor as professor of Irish history in Queen's University, Belfast, is to succeed me in January 1978 as the joint editor nominated by the Ulster Society for Irish Historical Studies. Under their direction *Irish Historical Studies* will hopefully enter its fifth decade.

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