

# SAOTHAR 47

## *Book Reviews*

**Irish Labour History Society**

**2022**



*The National Volunteers.  
1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> Battalions, Signalling Company.*

**An Cumann Stair Lucht Saothair na hÉireann**  
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**Saothar: Journal of Irish Labour History**

*Saothar: Journal of Irish Labour History* is a refereed journal, dedicated to the study of Irish working-class history in its broadest sense, including Irish workers abroad and comparative history. We welcome articles; essays; document, film and visual art studies; oral histories; archival and conference reports; as well as letters on the content of the journal or labour history generally. Articles should be of relevance to the history of the Irish working class, or Irish workers abroad, and should not deal primarily with events less than thirty years old. By the 'history of the Irish working class' we mean waged and unwaged workers, their lives, work, economic conditions, social and cultural relationships, leaders, organisations, movements, values and ideas. Studies of anti-labour organisations or anti-socialist groups are also of relevance. We are particularly interested in studies that focus on the 'everyday life' of workers and their families. Features other than articles, such as essays, may be more contemporary in scope.

*Editors:* Dr Mary McAuliffe, Dr Peter Rigney & Dr Mary Muldowney

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**Back cover image:** Autograph Book (partial) filled in Belfast Gaol, 1918, poem by Francis Whitney copyright, OPW/Kilmainham Gaol Museum.

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# IRISH LABOUR HISTORY SOCIETY

*An Cumann Staire Lucht Saothar na hÉireann*



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## Saothar 47, 2022, Book Reviews

*Book Reviews (online at <http://www.irishlabourhistorysociety.com/>)*

Liam Cahill, **From Suir to Jarama: Mossie Quinlan's Life and Legacy** (Dublin, 2021), Orla Kelly Publishing, ISBN 978-1-914225-44-4, 10 pp, illustrated, €9.99 (pb)

On Saturday 19 December 1936, four Waterfordmen made their way to London's Victoria Station and caught the boat-train to Paris. Their true destination was the training base of the International Brigades at Albacete, 264 kilometres south-east of Madrid. It was another step in the making of Waterford's substantial connection with the Connolly Column, the name which has become a blanket term for the Irish who fought for the Spanish Republic. The four – brothers Johnny and Paddy Power, Jackie Hunt, and Peter O'Connor – were followed to Spain by Willie Power (a third brother), Johnny Kelly, Harry Kennedy, Jackie Lemon, and John O'Shea. Two more from Waterford were already in Spain: Frank Edwards and Maurice Quinlan. Only Edwards and O'Connor have recorded their memories of Spain. Brief historical notes have been published on Kennedy, O'Shea, and Johnny Power. Most Waterford volunteers were stereotypical Irish brigadistas: young, single, mobile, urban, working class, in temporary, unskilled occupations, and ex IRA men moving towards communism. Mossie Quinlan was different because of his upbringing in salubrious South Parade, education in rugby-playing Waterpark College, and uncertain economic status as a salesman or commercial traveller; a class of employment which would place him anywhere between traditional middle-class and the lumpen-bourgeoisie. He was also unique in being the only one of the Waterford volunteers to be killed in action. And yet he remained understudied. An obvious explanation is that sources on him are remarkably sparse and his time at the front was tragically short. Prompted by a family connection as a first cousin once removed, Liam Cahill has redressed the neglect with this short biography.

Quinlan arrived in Spain in December 1936 and, like almost all incoming Irish recruits, joined the British battalion of the XV International Brigade as a rifleman. His position on the controversial decision of some Irish to decamp to the American Abraham Lincoln battalion is unknown. Cahill reviews a variety of reasons for the split, and thankfully rejects the canard that the Irish were too nationalist to fight alongside the British, highlighting instead the battalion commissars' stratagem to divide the Irish lest they create a unit under the command of Frank Ryan. As a non-communist, Ryan was simultaneously prized as a propaganda asset and distrusted for not being in the party. Quinlan stayed with the British, but so too did some who had argued for joining the Lincolns, while others who had wanted to stay with the British went over to the Americans. The first, and best, of Cahill's five chapters is a blow-by-blow account of Quinlan's engagement at Jarama, the XV Brigade's baptism of fire. The narrative is written in the present tense, and intentionally dramatic, with as much colour as the facts will allow. It is likely that Quinlan was shot by a sniper on 17 February as he tried to rescue a wounded comrade in no man's land. His father and stepmother learned of his death from a report in the *Irish Press*.

Subsequent chapters take us further and further back into his personal life and family background, giving the structure an odd, reversed quality. Chapter five is a personal reminiscence. Cahill had a vague awareness of his fallen cousin when growing up in the 1950s, and remembered Mossie's father, Maurice, visiting the Cahill household frequently, gazing into the fireplace with a sad and quiet demeanour. Cahill concludes he never recovered from the loss of his son. The loss was all the more complicated by the fact that the Quinlans were a well-known political dynasty in Waterford

with roots in Redmondite Ballybricken. Though his father went over to Sinn Féin after the Easter Rising, Mossie was evidently regarded as a maverick by his kith and kin; his memory respected rather than celebrated and his name mentioned rarely and in hushed and regretful tones.

**Emmett O'Connor**

Cyril Pearce **Communities of resistance: conscience and dissent in Britain during the First World War** (London, 2020) Francis Boutle, ISBN 978-1-8380928-2-5, 54 pp, £30.00 (hb)

EM Forster's 1910 novel *Howards End* is largely concerned with the relationship between two very different families - the Schlegels and the Wilcoxes. The Schlegel's are half German, cultured and progressive whereas the Wilcoxes are conservative, old fashioned and capitalistic. If the novel had been published a few years later it is easy to see the Wilcoxes as becoming pro war and the Schlegels as anti-war. While the more conservative and pro-empire politics of the Wilcoxes persisted post 1918, support for the war was, however, not universal and the more progressive politics of people like the Schlegels also helped shape the nature of post war Britain. Forster himself was a conscientious objector, and the real strength of Cyril Pearce's new book is in highlighting the considerable opposition that existed to the war, and that it manifested among the most progressive sections of British society. For Britain's ally France post 1918 a strong sense of national identity developed around the defence of the Motherland from invasion – which almost seemed to justify the staggering French loss of life. In countries like Italy, Germany and Russia the war produced feelings of sacrifices unrewarded, hurt national honour and desire for fundamental societal change which produced utopian movements on both the left and right. In the countries of central and eastern Europe, and Finland and Ireland the successful nature of the movements for independence, which developed immediately after the war, outweighed any desire to claim 1914-18 as crucial to the identity of these new nation states.

In Britain however the picture was different. Britain was never under threat of invasion, and post 1918 a sense of confusion developed as to what was even the point of the unprecedented slaughter. It has been suggested that the war created a newfound respect for human life in Britain, a growing disdain for aristocratic generals, together with a growing sense of unease with the empire. Indeed, it has been suggested that the atrocities in Amritsar and Ireland were easier to highlight as there was now a larger section of the population willing to be critical of the empire. Of course, this was part of a larger seismic shift in Britain which would bring about the first Labour government of 1924. Accordingly, the memory of World War One became largely defined by feelings of sacrifice, heroism and loss. Whereas, previously the officer class of the Napoleonic and Crimean wars were heralded as heroes the 1914-18 war produced the image of the heroic ordinary working class 'Tommy' as the epitome of the British spirit. World War One remains as a moment for which the loss of life of ordinary people is central to national sense of memory or identity.

This of course not unproblematic – British memory of World War one dead seems almost blissfully unaware that the country's war death toll was startlingly lower than that of France, Germany, Turkey and Russia. The memory of the war has also centred on the island of Britain rather than acknowledging the contribution of colonial or commonwealth countries. And despite the war being defined by a sense of loss, those who opposed the war have been largely written out of the history, and an unhealthy militarism infects any commemoration of the war. This is a narrative which Cyril Pearce challenges in his remarkable *Communities of resistance: conscience and dissent in Britain during the First World War* which examines and seeks to rehabilitate Conscientious Objectors

(COs) to the war. The book acts as something of a sequel to Pearce's earlier volume on COs in Huddersfield, this book adopts a wider prism by examining the phenomenon on the island of Britain as a whole. The book should almost be applauded as the product of painstakingly detailed research.

The book looks at the backgrounds of those in opposition to the war, their motivations, where opposition was strongest, how their resistance manifested and how it was punished. The book examines the variety of reactions of those opposed to the war, from those who were happy to work in a medical capacity for the army, to others who instead engaged in national service work at home deemed necessary for the war. It also looks at with who refused to support the war in any capacity which could result in imprisonment, hunger strikes and even going on the run. The book also looks at the divisions within the trade union and suffragist movements, left wing political parties, and some of the smaller Christian churches over whether to support the war or not. Pearce shows that much of the strongest opposition came from smaller Christian denominations, such as the Quakers. The characters we meet in the book are remarkably modern or representative of a growing desire that the 20<sup>th</sup> century would not be like the 19<sup>th</sup>. COs included Anarchists, Socialists, Christian Socialists, Suffragists, Vegetarians, Atheists and Agnostics along with the followers of the Russian writer and Christian Anarchist Lev Tolstoy (1828-1910) – who in his time was just as well known for his social, political and religious vision as he was as for his novels.

The book is very heavy on detail in terms of different factions within trade union and suffragist movements across Britain, the difference in experience between larger and smaller urban centres, and between urban and rural, and provides detailed biographies of the leading personalities. While this information is fascinating it can be somewhat dense or information heavy leaving a desire for more detailed analytical conclusions. The book is also focused entirely on the island of Britain, leaving some questions in regard to opposition to the war in commonwealth and colonial possessions. Pearce concludes by suggesting that the communities and individuals who opposed the war went on to play leading roles in shaping the politics of post war Britain, and that such people deserve a prominent place in the formation of modern Britain – a fact perhaps which has never been fully recognised.

**Thomas Earls Fitzgerald**

Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh and Liam Weeks (Eds) **Birth of a State: The Anglo-Irish Treaty** (Dublin, 2021), Irish Academic Press, ISBN:9781788551595, 272pp, €20 (pb)

Despite some worthy online and media offerings and a limited programme of events from the Decade of Centenaries programme – the pandemic notwithstanding – the centenary of the signing of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1921 passed with an eerie silence from governments of both sides of the Irish Sea who failed to mark the occasion in any meaningful commemorative sense. That is why a number of new books on the Treaty, including *Birth of a State: The Anglo-Irish Treaty* by Mícheál Ó Fathartaigh and Liam Weeks (Irish Academic Press) are so important in enhancing our understanding of this seminal document in our country's history and its enduring legacy. The authors edited a volume of essays on the Treaty in 2018 which looked at the Treaty from a number of perspectives and the latest book covers some similar territory but with newer perspectives and a call to all of us to engage again with an accord which remains so 'unloved' in Irish history. In this sense, it complements another welcome addition to the historiography of the Treaty by the other Irish Academic Press imprint, Merrion Press, *The Treaty* by Gretchen Friemann, which covers the negotiations and their aftermath.

Ó Fathartaigh and Weeks, coming as they do from different disciplines – history and political science, respectively, and which are bridged here very effectively – set out to deal with the negotiations at Downing Street, the content of the treaty itself and the political fallout which continues to this day. They also successfully set the Treaty in an international context with a chapter devoted to how the agreement was received and perceived in the other dominions. The final chapter of the book is devoted to the text of the Treaty itself as well as a short but insightful analysis of each of the eighteen articles. This chapter could, perhaps, have been better located earlier in the narrative to offer context, but is, nonetheless, of vital importance for understanding the complexities of a document which led to so much political bitterness and turmoil.

The authors are largely sympathetic to the plenipotentiaries, many of whom are not household names in Ireland despite the enormous responsibility which rested on their shoulders. There is also an appreciation for what they achieved during the negotiations except for criticism of a naivety in relation to the Boundary Commission. They were not unique in that respect: Ulster and the Boundary Commission barely featured in the Dáil debates which followed. The lack of a clear game plan among the Irish delegation, their intimidating surrounds in a foreign city, and the realpolitik within which Lloyd George – beholden to conservative unionists – was required to operate make what was achieved all the more remarkable. The republic, the authors clearly explain, was simply never on the cards.

De Valera does not emerge favourably from the pages of this book, not least for his muddying of the waters with Document No. 2 and his attitude to cabinet confidentiality. But De Valera and his supporters were not unique in adopting anti-democratic tendencies when it suited, delaying as both sides did, for example, the 1922 election, which was an attempt, it is argued, to subvert the electoral process. There is also an appropriate acknowledgement that many deputies – selected rather than elected in 1921 – including the twenty-four who did not speak, were unaccustomed to legalese, international relations and high politics. Parliamentary politics was to many of them, ‘an alien practice.’ Personal grudges and a fundamental lack of trust surfaced too often, not least between Griffith and Collins on one side and Brugha and Childers on the other. Within less than a year, sadly, all four would be dead.

Those with an interest in political science will be most interested in a detailed profile of the men and women of the Second Dáil as well as an empirical analysis of the language and words used during the debates, which remain a ‘criminally underutilised resource.’ The clear analysis of what was debated, and how, also emphasises not only the procedural semantics which often dominated but also that the debates were a missed opportunity – a point of national retrenchment rather than a national reawakening. What was not debated is, in many ways, more important than what was. Placing the Treaty in an international context, particularly with reference to India, Newfoundland, Australia, Canada and New Zealand is most informative and is neglected in much of the historiography. The first Cumann na nGaedheal government, it is argued, recognised Ireland’s ‘exceptionalism within the dominion cohort.’

*Birth of a State* offers a cogent argument for commemorating the Treaty in a formal way. That it plunged the country into a catastrophic civil war makes it all the more important that we re-engage with the document and how it came about. Though the centenary of its signing has now passed – against the backdrop of commemorative silence in Downing Street and Merrion Street, not to mention the paroxysms over Brexit – it is not too late for Ireland to institute Ireland’s own Independence Day in recognition of an agreement that, despite all its imperfections, marks the establishment of the Irish Free State. *Birth of a State* is an engaging and stimulating contribution to bringing the Treaty out of the shadows and placing it at the centre of our collective history.

**Owen O’Shea**



Diane Urquhart, **Irish Divorce: a history** (Cambridge, 2020), Cambridge University Press, ISBN: 9781108493093, 285pp, £74.99 (hb), £22.99 (pb)

*Irish Divorce* is an extraordinary feat of historical research; it spans three centuries and several jurisdictions while still retaining a sense of personal empathy with the people stuck in marriages which were abusive, loveless, or simply over. The book spans divorce provision (or lack thereof) for the island of Ireland across the centuries. The twelve chapters have a lot of work to do to paint a picture of this aspect of family life. Urquhart manages to guide the reader through legislative and cultural changes which went some way towards reducing the hardships and stigma associated with divorce and the end of marriage. Chapters one to six deal with pre-independence divorce provision for Irish people (which primarily took place through acts of parliament) while chapters seven and eight map the evolving situation in Northern Ireland and the last four chapters track the legislative developments which finally permitted divorce in the Republic in 1997, and made it easier to attain in 2019. The book demonstrates that ‘moral conservatism crossed religious [and political] lines’ as divorce for the Irish, and particularly the Irish catholic was presented in parliament as something which was both unwanted and unneeded on the island, despite the evidence to the contrary. Drawing together such a long history of divorce succeeds in demonstrating how the sexual double standard was central to the construction of divorce legislation, and the social treatment of divorced persons, until the very end of the twentieth century.

The introduction provides a clear overview of the legal provision for divorce from the period of Brehon law to the modern day, which is no mean feat given the complex array of acts permitting separation and divorce spanning several jurisdictions from pre-Christianity, pre-and post-Act of Union, and post-independence, and the establishment of the Northern Irish state. The book is primarily focused on the period since the establishment of parliamentary grounds for divorce in 1701. The book’s particular strength lies in the careful analysis of early divorce suits (both the successful and unsuccessful). Detailed consideration of the Talbot, Westmeath and Westropp cases demonstrate the legal challenges for women in accessing their children and escaping from violent husbands, as well as the endeavours made to challenge misogynistic laws by women and their legal teams. The reader is left haunted by the injustice faced by such women as Mary Anne Talbot who was divorced on false grounds in 1856 by a husband who wanted a male heir. He had his coachman violently drag her into a water closet and attack her to stage adultery. After the divorce Mary Anne lost access to her daughter and was reduced to ‘harmless imbecility’ as she repeatedly called out for her child’. Meanwhile, her husband was awarded damages for the supposed adultery, kept his daughter, remarried, and got his male heir. The details of these cases, and those discussed in chapter five, demonstrate that while deeply problematic classist views on domestic violence (which left working-class women with no means of escape, and little official empathy) existed, personal and family wealth could not protect women from dangerous violence. As views on marriage and masculinity changed over the course of the nineteenth century it became less acceptable for rich men to hit or flog their wives and definitions of cruelty (for the wealthy) were relaxed to include flaunting one’s mistress and the threat of violence (chapter five). Urquhart also manages to demonstrate that a thread of decency and transparency could exist before the law allowed no-fault divorce. For example, John James Hamilton, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess of Abercorn and the first sitting Lord to divorce in 1799, acknowledging that his wife had a new relationship, encouraged her remarriage, and tried to rehabilitate her into society (something which was possible for divorced men, but not divorced women).

As the book moves to focus on the post-1922 era, there are fewer detailed personal narratives which are a loss for the reader. Divorce proceedings fell foul of censorship laws, and once legalised, divorce proceedings in the Republic were held *in camera* (p.239). The foundation of the Northern

Irish state saw divorce proceedings move to the assembly there, and the first divorce bill was brought by Isabella Wright, a farmer's daughter. Some details are provided on these early Northern divorce bills and Urquhart's research shows that Catholics were as eager as Protestants to officially end their marriages.

As divorce was so expensive in Ireland, and out of reach of so many people (even in the twenty-first century, the economic crash saw divorce numbers plummet in the Republic (p.245)), this book is primarily, but not exclusively, focussed on the experiences of the elites in society. In Northern Ireland, Urquhart was able to demonstrate through spousal occupations that the foundation of the Northern Irish state actually made divorce more accessible for couples resident there, as the Northern Irish Assembly was a much cheaper space for divorce. The option for legal aid, and to take divorce cases *in pauperis* is also explored. Legislators north and south of the border had little wish to end class-based restrictions towards divorce. Even though divorce was sometimes presented in the Republic as a means towards making northern protestants feel more welcome in a future all-island state, as Urquhart illustrates, as late as the 1970s in Northern Ireland, unionists introduced amendments to make divorce 'more complex and more expensive than its English counterpart' (p.165) and in 2002, efforts to make divorce quicker failed (p.169). The difficulty in accessing divorce for those less well-off also continued, and even in the modern era 'economics rather than morality often stymied Irish divorce rates' (p.245). As the divorcing class were wealthy, the role of servants as witnesses and colluders is explored, as well as the impact these actions might have on their careers. A little more discussion on the practical arrangements working and middle-class couples came to when divorcing 'Irish style' (living apart, or using desertion, emigration and bigamy, or taking a new partner's name by deed poll (p.215)) would be welcome, though this has been recently discussed elsewhere.<sup>1</sup> The numbers of separated people and deserted wives could finally be counted in the Republic's census from 1986 (p.225) and the reader is shown how the numbers of separated persons grew over the next few years, despite the difficulty in securing judicial separations (14 of 53 applications were successful in 1983, p.226).

The book also emphatically demonstrates the need for feminist historians to critically engage with the family history canon regarding issues around consent and domestic violence. Urquhart's re-evaluation of Lady Westmeath's pamphlet which was a 'feminist lambaste railing against the realities of the sexual double standard' (p.48), and the longstanding suite of Westmeath suits and counter suits (pp.48-62) certainly demonstrates how far the historiography of the family, as well as wider society, has developed since the early 1990s. Urquhart's rebuttal of Stone's interpretation that Westmeath drew domestic violence on herself, and that her wish for fidelity on the part of her spouse was a sign of excessive sexual possessiveness, alone demonstrates the necessity of this work. However, in listing Lord Westmeath's (many) marital faults, perhaps his insistence on financially maintaining the children borne to him outside of marriage should not be catalogued among his misdemeanours. The Westmeaths ultimately could not get a divorce; she because she was perceived to condone his behaviour and he was not deemed cruel enough, and he because she had never committed adultery. A feminist revision is also given to the experience of Katherine O'Shea who was treated to ageist, 'gendered, and at times racial' abuse in the aftermath of her divorce from the MP William O'Shea and her subsequent marriage to Charles Stewart Parnell (pp. 88-93). The treatment of O'Shea as a seducer of Parnell went against the dominant pattern which had developed by the end of nineteenth century to treat erring wives as foolish victim rather than temptresses.

*Irish Divorce* is an essential read for anyone interested in family life in Ireland and Britain. It places Irish divorce law, not just in a British context, but within the context of the British Empire and Western Society more generally. By covering such a long time period, it demonstrates how little attitudes to marriage, property and domestic violence varied across the political and religious spectrum, and through the centuries. At times, the work also intersects with political history;

successfully demonstrating how a combination of inertia and fear prevented any serious efforts at reforming divorce provision for Ireland pre-and post-independence. Ironically, the closest early attempt at reform was thwarted by the fallout from the O'Shea divorce scandal. Through all of the hardship, violence and loss, this is ultimately a human history of divorce which spans the kindness and the cruelty of people labouring under cumbersome and misogynistic legislation.

**Maeve O'Riordan**

NOTE

- 1 M. Luddy and M. O'Dowd, *Marriage in Ireland, 1660-1925* (Cambridge, 2020); L. Calvert, "Her husband went away some time ago": marriage breakdown in Presbyterian Ulster, c. 1690-1830, *Women's History*. 2, 15, p. 6-13 8 p.

Joseph Brady and Ruth McManus **Building Healthy Homes: Dublin Corporation's First Housing Schemes 1880-1925**, (Dublin, 2021), Dublin City Council, ISBN 978-0-9500512-6-0, 312pp, Colour Ills., €22.50 (hb)

On Friday 2 June 1876 a limited liability company for the purpose of erecting artisan dwellings was formed at a meeting in the Shelburne hotel in Dublin.<sup>1</sup> Shareholders in the scheme were told they would receive an annual dividend of five per cent on their investment. Among the backers were Sir Arthur Guinness and his brother, Cecil; Sir Richard Martin, an Irish industrialist and one-time High Sheriff of the city; and Hercules Dickinson, Dean of the Chapel Royal.<sup>2</sup> One of those present, William Digges LaTouche, had argued for an annual dividend of six per cent, saying that five per cent was 'too small an indication to hold out, and that many persons who would invest their money in the undertaking if the rate of interest was higher might be deterred from joining them by fixing so low a maximum'.<sup>3</sup> He was eventually persuaded, however, to go with the lower amount when he was informed of similar schemes in London that paid five percent and reinvested profits in more housing, resulting in higher overall returns. LaTouche was a former partner in La Touche Banking Company, a Deputy Lieutenant for the City of Dublin, and was himself High Sheriff of the city in 1849.<sup>4</sup> The LaTouche family were among the original investors in the Bank of Ireland in 1783 and had previously owned slaves in Jamaica, having been 'compensated' for such in the 1830s.<sup>5</sup> It was not lost at anyone at the meeting that the proposed construction of artisan dwellings in Dublin was to be a thoroughly capitalist venture. 'The Chairman' reported the *Freeman's Journal*, 'had no doubt that the undertaking should not only be a benevolent and philanthropic one, but that in order to ensure its success it ought to be a commercial scheme... and before one would regard it as a commercial success, they should make it pay five per cent and have a surplus to work on (hear hear).'<sup>6</sup>

Not surprisingly, given its remit, the Dublin Artisans' Dwelling Company (DADC), as the company became known, 'did nothing for the very poor, who could not come close to affording the rents to be charged'.<sup>7</sup> It soon became clear that Dublin Corporation needed to intervene directly in the provision of housing, and this is the starting point for Joseph Brady and Ruth McManus' timely and comprehensive study of the first housing schemes undertaken by the council in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century period. This is not to say that Dublin Corporation rejected the underlying capitalist logic of the private schemes and embraced municipal socialism. Far from it. The tenants for the units built under the Bow Lane scheme, for example, which was officially opened in 1890, were carefully vetted 'to ensure that they were people whose income would not sustain higher rents elsewhere'.<sup>8</sup> Many of the early schemes were small in scale for this reason: not because demand was low, but to ensure that the profitability of rents in the rest of the city was not affected by their construction. This is not an anachronistic viewpoint. On Monday 6 February 1888 the DADC held its half-yearly

meeting at its offices at 42 Dame Street. The chairman, Sir Richard Martin, addressed the Dublin Corporation scheme at Barrack Street, and said that ‘this action of the Corporation entering into competition with private individuals and companies like theirs prevented the public, for the last two years, taking up their shares as freely as when they first commenced, and unless there was some authoritative statement that the Corporation did not mean to go on building, he feared it would be difficult for any company to get further capital (Hear Hear)’.<sup>9</sup> As an alternative, Sir Martin suggested that the Corporation should give a tax break in the form of a cut in municipal rates. ‘He knew that some members of the Corporation feared that a loss of income would ensue’ reported the *Irish Times*’ but he was quite satisfied that the number of new houses that would be built would more than compensate for any loss that the Corporation might suffer in the slight reduction on taxes on the existing houses’.<sup>10</sup> There is no problem in the mind of an Irish capitalist that can’t be solved by a tax break.

This is not something that is central to the analysis of Brady and McManus, although they do allude to it throughout the book. They mention how the city’s tax base was undermined by tax evasion by the wealthy and more affluent middle classes, who moved to suburbs outside the two canals but commuted by tram to the city for their daily business and social lives. The ratepayers who remained carried the burden of the maintenance of Dublin. ‘It was a happy arrangement’ they write sardonically, ‘the inhabitants of the townships could continue to use the city for business and recreation but leave it and its problems in the evening’.<sup>11</sup> On top of this, dividends paid out by the DADC were free of income tax.<sup>12</sup> Far from being a net benefit to the fiscal health of the city, the DADC was extracting wealth and moving it outside the bounds of the Corporation while lobbying hard to ensure that any housing schemes initiated by the Corporation did not interfere in any way with the profitability of their ventures.

If there is a small criticism of the book, it is in its wider conceptual assumptions of how capital operated in Ireland at the time. The research and analysis of the schemes discussed are of enormous benefit to historians and indeed anyone interested in the development of public housing in Dublin. For this alone the book is an essential piece of work. But these schemes did not happen in a vacuum. They were shaped and buffeted by the dynamics of Irish capital and its profit-seeking activities. Brady and McManus do not exactly shy away from this, but nor do they provide an overarching analysis as to why the housing of the working classes in Ireland existed as it did. At the start of the book, Brady and McManus fall back on the familiar, mainstream economic argument that Ireland – and Dublin in particular – was underdeveloped, lacking the type of ‘labour-intensive heavy industry of the midlands of the UK’ and that herein lies the reason for its dire housing situation.<sup>13</sup>

The problem is that the evidence presented by the authors does not support this thesis. For example, they briefly discuss Waterford and make the observation that the city’s Corporation consisted mainly of wealthy landowners who ‘showed no enthusiasm for getting involved in housing the working classes, fearing that adopting any of the legislation would inevitably result in taxation’.<sup>14</sup> There is a pattern here regarding the way that wealth and political power are distributed and exercised in Ireland at the time. Similarly, the 1885 Dublin Housing Inquiry found that the flight of capital and wealth to the suburbs – and the resultant lack of opportunity for the working classes to do the same – had left Dublin with an imbalance in its population as regards income and resources. It stated that ‘the poor not only remain within the city, but even those whose work during the day lies outside return at night to sleep in Dublin’.<sup>15</sup> It said that although wages were low, ‘rents are in proportion high, and the profits in Dublin as in London often go to the enrichment of the middlemen or house-farmers. These evils react upon one another. The depressed conditions under which the people live lower their wage-earning power and deprive them of the chance of making for themselves more favourable surroundings’.<sup>16</sup> The report also found that ‘the existing evils of administration are not due to defects in but to the failure of the existing authorities in acting upon legislation, which has

invested them with ample powers'.<sup>17</sup> Time and again throughout the book the reality of capital flight, a low tax base that was resistant to change, a Corporation reluctant to interfere in market rents, and a small but powerful and highly influential group of wealthy investors determined to profit from housing, all worked in tandem to ensure that the city's slums stayed that way save for the most marginal of endeavours. It is only with the Marino estate that was built post-independence that we start to see the beginnings of a response that could genuinely be called systemic in nature. Even here, though, it wasn't until the 1930s that large-scale slum clearance would take place – schemes that are outside the remit of the book and so are not covered here. Brady and McManus have produced a wonderfully researched and necessary book on the first public housing schemes undertaken by Dublin corporation. It is even more timely given the centrality of the issue to Ireland today. It shows that despite all talk of progress, the idea of public housing providing a guaranteed dividend for private investors is as much a part of our world as it was when the great and the good of Dublin met in the Shelbourne Hotel 146 years ago to work out whether they could live with a five per cent or six per cent return on their investment. The world of capital just keeps on spinning through the centuries.

**Conor McCabe**

#### NOTES

- 1 *Freeman's Journal*, 3 June 1876.
- 2 *Freeman's Journal*, 3 June 1876; *Dublin Weekly Nation*, 10 June 1876.
- 3 *Freeman's Journal*, 3 June 1876.
- 4 *Evening Irish Times*, 2 December 1914.
- 5 Centre for the Study of the Legacies of British Slavery. Entry for William Digges La Touche. <https://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/person/view/43378>.
- 6 *Freeman's Journal*, 3 June 1876.
- 7 Joseph Brady & Ruth McManus, *Building Healthy Homes: Dublin Corporation's First Housing Schemes 1880-1925* (Dublin, 2021), p.14.
- 8 Brady & McManus, p.53.
- 9 *Irish Times*, 7 February 1888.
- 10 *Irish Times*, 7 February 1888.
- 11 Brady and McManus, p.11.
- 12 *Irish Times*, 7 February 1888.
- 13 Brady and McManus, p.10.
- 14 Brady and McManus, p.26.
- 15 Brady and McManus, p.24.
- 16 Brady and McManus, pp.24-5.
- 17 Brady and McManus, p.25.

LeAnne Howe and Pádraig Kirwan (eds), **Famine Pots: The Choctaw-Irish Gift Exchange, 1847-present** (Cork, 2020) Cork University Press, ISBN 9781782054290, 260pp, €26 (pb)

Since the sesquicentenary of the Great Famine in the 1990s, the story of a \$170 donation sent to Ireland by the disenfranchised Choctaw Nation in 1847 has assumed a prominent place in popular narratives of the disaster. The Choctaw were one of the tribes forcibly removed to the new Indian Territory in Oklahoma just over a decade before the crisis in Ireland, in what became known as the Trail of Tears. As the unveiling in 2017 of Alex Pentek's sculpture "Kindred Spirits" in Middleton, Co. Cork, demonstrates, the story of their gift continues to resonate, and it is usually represented as a transatlantic act of solidarity and kinship from one marginalised community to another. The Cherokee, who had also suffered forced removal in the 1830s, donated as well, but this has played a less central role in the narrative.

Inspired by the story of this gift, the collection *Famine Pots: The Choctaw-Irish Gift Exchange, 1847-Present*, edited by Choctaw Nation citizen LeAnne Howe and Irish citizen Padraig Kirwan, brings together academic essays and creative writing by Choctaw and Irish contributors, as well as forewords by Irish President Michael D. Higgins and Chief of the Choctaw Nation of Oklahoma Gary Batton. An act of tribute and commemoration, the book seeks to chart “the deep ecology of the relationship between the Choctaw and the Irish” (p. xix) through scholarship and imaginative engagements with historical and cultural convergences between the two nations. As Padraig Kirwan suggests, discussing the gift could bring about “the recognition of, as well as the opportunities to speak both to and about, cotemporal (albeit not conterminous) experiences of colonial rule” (p. 23). Academically, *Famine Pots* builds on the work of scholars like Anelise Hanson Shrouf, and with its mix of scholarly and creative work it also resembles Tom Hayden’s collection *Irish Hunger* (1997).

The scholarly chapters provide a detailed overview of the history of the gift, its reception, and its contexts. Kirwan’s essay uses historical newspaper reports to suggest “points of connection” between the two communities, such as the way they were represented by those in power. Christine Kinealy’s chapter, extracted from her important *Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland* (2013), provides a helpful overview of the initiatives and channels by which people in the United States contributed to Irish famine relief. Phillip Carroll Morgan analyses Choctaw-coloniser relations in the decades leading up to the gift, partly through a noteworthy journal discovered in an archive, while LeAnne Howe’s chapter underscores the historical significance of philanthropy and food aid in Choctaw culture. Eamonn Wall explores connections between Irish and Native American literary traditions, which, he argues, both “emerged from the margins of, and often in opposition to, more refined European cultural orthodoxies and beliefs” (p. 146), focusing in particular on the twentieth-century Choctaw-Cherokee-Irish author Louis Owens. Together, these scholarly essays not only offer insight into the Choctaw gift and how it was received, but also provide a broad contextualisation of actual and virtual parallels between Choctaw and Irish culture and history.

Their creative counterparts illustrate the volume’s claims of cultural kinship. In his engaging contribution, Choctaw storyteller Tim Tingle describes his first visit to Ireland and the affinities he found between Irish and Choctaw history and oral traditions. Editor LeAnne Howe and Irish poet Doireann Ní Ghríofa offer a number of austere poems compiled as “a collaborative pamphlet in ‘call and response’ mode” (p. xxxii). Particularly interesting is the way they call back to the past by positioning themselves between languages – Irish and Choctaw, and, mediating between these two ancestral tongues, English – to recover voices lost to famine and violence. The book concludes with a poem by Phillip Carroll Morgan that accentuates the call for empathy and solidarity enshrined in the way the story of the Choctaw gift is told. With their ambition to construe deep links between Choctaw and Irish culture, these essays indulge at times in ethnic generalisation, but the collection’s final two scholarly chapters explicitly complicate the narrative. Jacki Thomson Rand suggests that “[t]he romantic version of the gift [...] relies on a narrow bandwidth of Removal history that is striking” (p. 172). While commemorative efforts emphasise kinship, solidarity, and similar experiences of colonialism and disenfranchisement, Rand highlights that many Irish-Americans were complicit in the American expansionist project, which was marked by genocidal violence and flourished at the expense of Indigenous tribes. Peter D. O’Neill’s essay, though not focused on the Choctaw per se, draws attention to the complicated dynamics of the formation of racial hierarchies in the United States, partly through the case of Fr James Chrysostom Bouchard, a popular Catholic priest with an undisclosed Lenni Lenape background who fomented anti-Chinese sentiment among Irish Catholics in San Francisco. As O’Neill concludes, even when extolling acts of solidarity and philanthropy such as the Choctaw gift, we should not “forget the uglier truths that history teaches us” (p. 198).

Inevitably, given the collection's narrow focus, there is some overlap between contributions. Also, due to its desire to establish parallels between Choctaw and Irish culture and history where there are few actual connections, it strays occasionally into conjectural territory. Yet as its editors assert, *Famine Pots* is not meant as "a purely scholarly interpretation of both the circumstances surrounding the gift and the narratives that retell the powerful story of that gift" (p. xxviii). Read on these terms, this is a stimulating collection, and readers interested in the story of the Choctaw gift, or indeed the history of its commemoration, will find the book of interest.

**Christopher Cusack**

Harry F. Martin and Cormac K H O'Malley, **Ernie O'Malley: A Life**, (Dublin, 2021), Merrion Press, ISBN 978-1-78537-390-9, 260pp. €18.95 (pb)

This is not a definitive life of the legendary IRA leader but, as Richard English says in his Foreword, 'It will be enjoyed by sympathetic admirers of O'Malley, and also those who are keen to hear a gently told story of someone who lived at the centre of one of Irish history's most significant periods'. A Commandant General in the IRA at 23, O'Malley could have enjoyed a life of relative privilege and authority in the new Free state or, having rejected the Treaty, taken up the opportunity when de Valera came to power in 1932. The proof of it is that de Valera selected O'Malley to accompany Frank Aiken to the United States to conduct their immensely successful fund raising campaign for the *Irish Press*. O'Malley's name was even mentioned as a likely editor for the newspaper which became the largest selling title in Ireland and helped to change the political balance of power in Ireland.

Instead, he headed for the hills, literally, in the Pyrenees and then in the world of the arts and literature and eventually film, through his friendship with John Ford and involvement with his Irish productions, *The Quiet Man* and *The Rising of the Moon*. He was not alone in this unexpected trajectory, many veterans of the Great War turned to literature and the arts for solace and to exorcise their demons. O'Malley's own contemporaries in the IRA, Sean O'Faolain and Frank O'Connor proposed him for membership of W B Yeats' Irish Academy of Letters and Yeats agreed. His admission to the Academy was of course in acknowledgement of O'Malley's literary achievement, *On Another Man's Wound*. It was to act as a vector for the culture of militant Irish nationalism not alone in Ireland but abroad, and nowhere more so than in Irish-America, where O'Malley could as easily have enjoyed material success as in the Irish Free State, after all he married an American heiress and could count a Rockefeller among his brothers-in-law. But he seems to have had an aversion to Irish American society with its hierarchy based on financial and professional success that reminded him of home and no doubt of his own father, a successful senior career civil servant. The two men were never reconciled. Later O'Malley himself would become estranged from his wife, Helen Hooker and his two oldest children, whom she took with her back to America in a marriage breakup painfully described in these pages of two people from completely different worlds.

O'Malley was always most at home in rural Ireland and with the veterans of the Troubles than anyone else, although he needed constant interaction with the world of art and literature. His last great venture was to capture the oral history of the Troubles, interviewing over 400 Volunteers in a collection that historian Eve Morrison has described as 'uniquely gritty, atmospheric, occasionally profane, punctuated with graphic descriptions of political violence and, in terms of their Civil War content, unrivalled'. After his heart attack in 1953, O'Malley worked virtually every day on the project to record their testimony before he died. It is doubtful if anything remotely its equivalent will emerge from the recent Troubles. His affinity with the dispossessed, be it material, cultural or

ideological, was also captured in his notes while living hand to mouth through the Great Depression in America. This passage, written while O'Malley himself was employed as a 'Transient on Federal Relief' on one Roosevelt's New Deal renovation projects describes the misery and hopelessness of many:

'Can you give me 5 cents for a meal?... Spare a cigarette, mister? Some faces tough and lined, others, but few, with pathetic gentleness, many shifty and cunning. It's hard to live there and not be affected by the terrible want... A shirted crowd mostly, waiting eagerly for a few honest words; instead, they get isms. It's brutal and selfish.'

It was a core contradiction in his character that this man, singled out by Michael Collins as an 18-year-old medical student for his ability to train, organise and lead a guerrilla army could not make ends meet in civilian life. The extension of the Military Service Pension Scheme by de Valera in the 1930s was O'Malley's economic salvation. Without it he would never have had the economic independence, slender as it was to ask Helen Hooker to marry him. Perhaps life was doing him no favours there either. But then a man who believed that the IRA had won the War of Independence only to throw it away in the Treaty negotiations cannot be said to have been blessed with good judgement.

**Padraig Yeates**

Tomás Mac Conmara **The Scariff Martyrs: War, Murder and Memory in East Clare** (Cork, 2021), Mercier Press, ISBN: 9781781177259, 288 pp, €19.99 (pb)

Tomás Mac Conmara book of war, murder, and memory centres on the history of four young men, known as the Scariff Martyrs. Michael Egan, Michael 'Brud' McMahan, Alphonse Rodgers and Martin Gildea, who were shot by Crown forces in Killaloe on the night of November 16, 1920. As Mac Conmara outlines this is a work of long scholarship, he did his first interview on the subject in 2004 and published the book in 2021. He has spoken of his belief that historical research can and should take time, and the detail and depth of local and national knowledge of the event itself, its immediate historical context, its aftermath and impact and its place, and legacy, in memory is in real evidence here. Margaret Hoey (nee Minogue) was 105 when, in 2008, she was interviewed by Mac Conmara. She had been sixteen years old when a knock was heard on the door of her Minogue family home in the townland of Poulagower, near Scarriff. Opening the door revealed a young man in some distress telling the family about the murders by the Crown Forces of four of his comrades on Killaloe bridge. Margaret was sent 'crying like a child', and 'shure' she said 'I was crying for I knew 'em'. Going to a safe house nearby where 'a couple of [IRA] lads' were asleep, she had to tell them about what had happened. Two weeks after the 2008 interview Mrs Hoey died – but she left her vivid memory of that night with Mac Conmara. While a local history, the detailed research and writing of this one incident of the killing of four men, during the period 1919-1921, does serve to give us all, even those outside Clare, a more nuanced and complex understanding of the impact of war, death, trauma, and memory, locally and nationally.

On November 16, 1920, in Co Clare, four young men were shot dead by the Crown Forces in what they said was an escape attempt. Michael Egan, Brud McMahan, Alphonse Rodgers and Martin Gildea, all aged between 20 and 30 years old have been arrested on the word of a spy. McMahan, Rodgers, and Gildea were members of the IRA and Egan was sheltering them in Williamstown House, Whitegate, where he was caretaker. The deaths of three leading members of the East Clare IRA was a dreadful blow; McMahan, Rodgers, and Gildea had been on the run since an attack on the Scariff RIC Barracks the previous September and were given shelter by Egan in Williamstown



House. When the Crown Forces arrived at the house, Egan refused to give the men up and was beaten. Untimely the other three were found, disarmed, beaten, and taken to the HQ of the newly arrived Auxiliary forces at the Lakeside Hotel in Ballina, Co Tipperary, across the bridge from Killaloe. There they were questioned, tortured and later that night walked to Killaloe Bridge, where several shots rang out and four bodies lay dead on the bridge.

This brief synopsis of the story of the Scarriff Martyrs, a story familiar to many parts of the country during the War of Independence, gives lie to the richness of detail with which MacConmara elaborates on the context, impact, and legacy of the deaths of these four men. The awful events in Croke Park on November 21, 1920, 'Bloody Sunday' and the continuing fallout from the death of the pregnant mother, Eileen Quinn, in Galway from a stray Auxiliary bullet, on November 1, 1920, would dominate and, perhaps, supersede the deaths on Killaloe Bridge in the national newspapers, but for the people of East Clare the memory of these four men would remain vivid, talked about and commemorated on for generations. MacConmara weaves a skilful and highly readable history, using oral history, newspapers records, archival resources – especially those from the wonderful Military Archives – to provide historical context to East Clare and its Fenian tradition, the impact of the War of Independence there broadly, and then the killings of the four men – many interviews attest, as he writes, to the 'traumatic effect of the killings on the local population'. One interviewer said that the area was 'tense' as the men were all well known and 'all of a sudden, they were dead and killed very violently'. On the day for the collective funeral and burial of the four men November 20, all businesses in Scariff closed as the local Church of the Sacred Heart received the bodies. One interviewee described the terror of the day; 'the Tans were firing shorts. They were afraid. There was an awful crowd in the cemetery and on the road'.

Who betrayed the men – MacConmara includes an interesting segment on the informer – who was he or indeed she? One possibility spoken of locally was that a 'loose living woman' gave information to an RIC Constable or a sister of one of the men had inadeptly caused his death when she gave their hiding place away in order to 'end their period on the run'. I find it interesting that women were considered as suspects here – and indeed my own research has shown that, despite the loyalty of many women and organisations like Cumann na mBan to the cause of freedom, the fidelity of civilian women, especially younger women, to the 'cause' was often suspect. This suspicion often related to what was termed 'loose living' i.e. immorality, among women. Any young women associated with RIC or other Crown Forces were considered dangerous, many punished with physical or gendered assault (forcible hair cropping) in order to stop their suspect associations.

MacConmara brings us on a journey of detailed research and analysis to pinpoint 'three local people ....identified across my research as potential informers'. Even after a century, given the 'delicacy associated with such information' he names them only as suspect A, B and C. The informer is still a very controversial, indeed, bogey, figure in Irish history. According to MacConmara, A was a member of the IRA, B was a farmer whose son has some connection with volunteer activity, and C was from a family with loyalist sympathies. As Kathleen O'Callaghan, widow of the murdered Lord Mayor of Limerick (killed March 7, 1921) later said later said of her husband's death and those of the 'boys murdered in cold blood on Killaloe Bridge', that one man's 'hand is fouled by pay for such deeds', although she placed more blame on the planners 'in high places', and executors of these murders than the man paid to pass on information.

A monument of the Scarriff Martyrs was erected on Killaloe Bridge in November 1923, only three years after the murders, making it one of the earliest republican monuments on the county. This monument would, as he points out, become an established feature of remembrance and commemoration in ensuing years. In interviews about his book MacConmara speaks about the memory and trauma of the murders which passed through the generations. His wide-ranging research and interviews detail the changing, sometimes contradictory narratives, memories and emotions

generated by the events of the night of November 16, 1920, in East Clare. During this past Decade of Centenaries one of the most positive impacts has been an interest in and a multitude of publications on local events and local revolutionary histories – while all are welcome, few are as assured, nuanced, deeply researched, analysed, and wonderfully written as this book. While it concentrates on the history, context, impact, memory and legacy of one incident in one area on one night, this book is a must buy for all interested in the history of the Irish War of Independence, local histories, memory histories and the history of trauma.

**Mary McAuliffe**

Katrina Goldstone, **Irish Writers and the Thirties: Art, Exile and War**, (London, 2021), Routledge, ISBN 978-0367634988, 220pp, £120-00 (hb)

This original study focusing on four Irish writers, Leslie Daiken, Charles Donnelly, Ewart Milne and Michael Sayers, working on the borders between history and literature, highlights the hitherto neglected radical episode of the 1930s literary history; a decade described by Leslie Daiken as ‘one long continuum of agitprop’. From Ireland to interwar London, the Spanish Civil War and the USSR, the book examines the lives and work of Irish writers and activists through their writings, as part of an international culture of anti-fascism, during those ‘heroic days of dream and struggle’. Goldstone also explores the contribution of women writers and activists such as Margaret Barrington or Stella Jackson who have been largely hidden from history. She highlights the way Leslie Daiken, Michael Sayers and Harry Kernoff engaged with facets of their left-wing Irish Jewish identity through their socialist and anti-fascist allegiances in the context of the antisemitism of the period.

In the way she integrates Irish literary and political endeavours into the international left-wing and radical intellectual milieu, Goldstone provides an insight into the voluminous number of left-wing publications that blossomed in Britain and elsewhere in the 1930s. She also writes of the social and personal connections between Irish writers and their British counterparts such as Ralf Fox, Jack Lindsay and John Lehmann. Of great interest, was the friendship between Michael Sayers and George Orwell who shared a flat together in London. Also, Sayers later career in America exposing the role of the racists and fascists in the late thirties and forties, both in his journalism in *New Masses* and his book from 1942 entitled. *Sabotage! The Secret War against America*. Of the four writers at the centre of this exploration, only the poet Ewart Milne retreated from his political choices during the 1930s. Despite this, his stories and poems forged in the crucible of war, are a key part of that small body of Spanish Civil War writings by Irish men and women, which also perform as acts of witness, memorial, and testament. Collectively, they created a space where the revolutionary and social aspects of art and literature could be explored.

The book is particularly strong in the section on Spain, when in the rush to the barricades and the printing presses there was an outpouring of plays, broadsheets, poetry, novels, essays and journalism. The poets dominated the period, and this sense of purpose gave rise to a new type of poet who tried to change the patterns of injustice by influencing people’s actions rather than their emotions. Charlie Donnelly, from Tyrone, was an extraordinary young man and one of the finest poets to come out of Ireland in the 1930s. Donnelly died at the age of twenty-two at the battle of Jarama in 1937. His small body of poems can stand comparison with the finest of the period, and today, he is the best known of the quartet examined by Goldstone. However, Goldstone refuses to romanticise the events surrounding the Civil War, and cuts against the concept of Spain as ‘a poet’s war’. Such claims do a disservice to the tens of

thousands of working-class volunteers who fought and died there. Nevertheless, the poet, Charlie Donnelly's dying words, 'even the olives are dying' summarised the despair that many felt over the defeat in Spain.

Little remains of the radical literary and artistic movement from the 1930s, and it is mostly forgotten today, hidden in the pages of the *Irish Front*, *Left Review*, or *Ireland Today* and the literary and political treasure trove that is the Leslie Daiken archive in the National Library of Ireland. Yet in that crucial decade they were admired by the likes of Louis MacNeice and Cecil Day-Lewis, but the narrowing moral and political horizon of Ireland in the 1950s made them yesterdays men and women. Goldstone has recovered that tradition and the connections that bound them to a host of international writers and intellectuals in the Thirties. That generation had an extraordinary impact on western cultural life way out of proportion to the Communist Party's political influence. Not all of it was praiseworthy, though all of it, I believe, was sincere, and best deserves to be remembered. If they are remembered at all by the establishment today, it is for their literary achievements rather than their political activism. Goldstone restores that aspect of their lives. They were cultural revolutionaries who laid the foundations for left-wing artists and writers of today who are interested in social change. A number of manuscripts that have lain dormant in the various archives and long forgotten radical publications, accessed by Goldstone, on the evidence of this book, warrant publication today.

This is a very accessible book, written to the highest academic and research standards. The extensive bibliography and footnotes are a pathway into the forgotten literary and political output of that generation. Goldstone explores the political and literary geography of the period and leaves, as she says, the abstract theory to others. Her book is a tribute to the 'dead singers of red songs everywhere'. Despite the outrageous price, for any reader or student who is interested in the 1930s radical tradition, this book is essential; borrow it from the library if necessary.

**Paul O'Brien**

**Valerie Cox *Independence Memories: A People's Portrait of the Early Days of the Irish Nation*, (Dublin, 2021), Hachette Books, ISBN 9781529339840, 288pp, £14.99 (pb)**

Valerie Cox has collected memories about Ireland during the First World War, the War of Independence and the Civil War from people whose forebears lived through that period of conflict in the early decades of the twentieth century. Their stories were passed down through their families. The interviewees are descendants of participants rather than protagonists, but some fascinating social history unfolds as the narrators outline the impact of the early years, especially in how their own lives were affected by the development of the independent state. The collection includes testimony from one actual eyewitness, 107-year-old Máirín Hughes, who recalled she was eight years old when there was an IRA attack on the RIC barracks in Killarney. She and her primary school classmates were brought into a nearby convent to keep them safe. *Independence Memories* follows on from Cox's previous book *Growing up with Ireland* (2019) in which some of Ireland's oldest citizens (people born in the 1920s) shared with her their recollections of what life was like in the early years of the Irish state. In her Introduction to *Independence Memories*, Cox refers to the significant difference between writing the first book and the second, even though the concept is almost the same:

Collecting those memories during Covid was a strange experience. There was no chatting over cups of tea or settling in at a cosy fire, no hugs or handshakes with new friends. We couldn't walk the land where these incidents took place

or visit the cottages, thatch collapsed and open to the rain, where ambushes were plotted and people went on the run, the safe houses with their secret rooms and large cupboards. Instead, our interviews were conducted by phone or Zoom calls, the sterility of it the complete opposite of the stories, the colour, the life-affirming efforts of a people determined to survive.

There are 22 chapters in this book, each of them distinguished by vivid storytelling. They start with Noel McPartland, a grandson of John McPartland, who was a judge in one of the Republican Courts. They operated as a deliberate challenge to the existing legal system, for the most part replacing the official courts between 1918 and the commencement of the Civil War in June 1922. The McPartland family's newsagent shop in Drumshanbo was burned out by the Black and Tans in 1922, along with other premises in the town.

The Black and Tans feature in most of the book's chapters. In the story told by Mary Vahey, the report of the death of her uncle Patrick, who had been a runner for the IRA from when he was 16 years old, drew the attention of the Black and Tans to the rest of the family, after which their home was destroyed. Other stories described how ingenuity had been exercised to find ways of evading the British Army and the Black and Tans in transporting messages and weapons. Women's long hair was especially useful in this regard:

This is how it worked. Somebody would write the smallest amount of information on a piece of paper; as small as a stamp, and her mother would do her long hair for her, up in a bun, and she would hide the piece of paper in the bun.

Many of the chapters refer to economic hardship and the difficulty of making ends meet all through the century, not just the early years of independence. The same ingenuity that was exercised in pursuit of independence was applied to life in general. Eileen Scanlon remembered rural life for her parents' generation:

None of the houses had showers or baths or running water. They didn't wash, they just smelled - You can imagine a house with 13 of them, with five of them men out in the fields all day, working. I would imagine they would have worn boots out in the fields, where the women would have been in their bare feet working at home. It would have been a hard life, 13 of them and no electricity.

The role of religious belief, especially in Catholicism, is a recurring theme of many of the stories, as is emigration. Some of the many pleasures in the book are the stories of old traditions and how they were practiced. There are also many stories about well-known figures like Michael Collins and Eamon de Valera and political allegiances that lasted for generations.

The stories collected by Valerie Cox are important reminders of the hardships that were suffered by so many people in the early days of the Irish state but also of the commitment so many of them had to independence. One thing that is missing is an explanation of how Cox identified the narrators and to what extent they were self-selecting or chosen by someone other than themselves. It would also be interesting to have an indication of any secondary research that she carried out in support of the stories she was told.

**Mary Muldowney**

Miriam Haughton, Mary McAuliffe, and Emilie Pine (Eds) **Legacies of the Magdalen Laundries - Commemoration, gender, and the postcolonial carceral state** (Manchester, 2021), Manchester University Press, ISBN 978-1-5261-5080-6, 296pp, £85.00 (hb)

This book serves two purposes, as a valuable reference, gathering a number of threads to relate the real, lived stories of the Magdalen women and their children, and to illustrate that, although there

are distinctly Irish aspects to the Magdalen laundries, the treatment of women and other groups such as migrants as de Beauvoir's 'other' is not unique to Ireland and must be viewed as such. In their introduction the editors explain that it took decades for Ireland to begin facing its institutional history and the legacy of abuse in its institutions during the 20th century, a process marked by delay and denial, with State and Church reluctant to acknowledge their roles in the abuse. They assert that Magdalen history specifically brings to the fore the contested nature of institutional history and the attitudes towards women, and equally gendered attitudes that underpin the ways this history was first expressed and commemorated.

In 'Public Performance and Reclaiming Space,' O'Mahoney, McCarthy, and Culleton maintain that, for the Magdalen Laundries to exist, society co-constructed powerful interpretations of Catholic notions of guilt, sin, silence, and the potential threat of an unrestrained female sexuality. They also exploring the use of live art in remembering and 'reanimating their stories. Simpson-Kilbane debates if the McAleese report, (set up to establish the facts on state involvement in the Laundries) was a document of truth or the selective use of evidence; she argues that it failed to present a comprehensive, accurate and unbiased account the state involvement with the laundry system. She criticises the Department of Justice for its (and others) attitude that survivor testimony is only relevant in providing corroboration, and that despite extensive testimony of the existence of possible criminal wrongdoings, the DOJ maintained that it was not corroborated.

Writing on funeral and burial practices, Sabine recalls Mary Raftery's groundbreaking work 'Restoring Dignity to the Magdalens' which brought into the public realm the discrepancy between the names and numbers of those interred in the High Park, Drumcondra, laundry grounds. She maintains the circumstances surrounding those exhumations and re burials are an edifying example of how the religious order, relevant government departments and state bodies all contributed to maintaining the status quo, perpetuating an official version of history and that Justice for the Magdalen's collation of names dates and burial locations filled in the blanks left by the report, maintaining the need for death scapes as memorials and spaces of commemoration as essential for survivors, relatives and the entire nation. Rousseau illustrates that, in recording history, even though many survivors have related details of forced work in commercial laundries as free labor, of forced hair cutting, being given new names when entering the institution or many other appalling instances abuse, in the public realm their memories are often reported incorrectly or ignored to deny institutional abuse. She further explores themes that emerged from the film 'In Loving Memory' of intergenerational transmission between women's reproductive rights and asylum seekers rights.

Fernandez makes international comparisons citing Brazil, which, though secular, is immersed in Catholicism but has seen increasing political influence from evangelical churches. She illustrates that since 2015 the evangelical lobby have attempted to overturn a law that allows abortion in Brazil. She maintains publicly accessible oral history archives and documentaries are vital to highlight the survivor's credibility. Part 2 focuses on 21st century parallel systems of gendered and class containment and abuse in Ireland and looks back to institutions such as the mother and child homes. In 'From Tuam to Birmingham' Buckley and Grimes undertake a comparative analysis of Irish and English institutions focusing on social class, the homes' culture and treatment of the children and mothers by authorities. They cite Catherine Corless' work on the Tuam home which gained international attention. Along with Fisher they also focus on the concept of 'grieveability' by establishing how shame and stigma fed into the construction of certain lives as more grievable than others.

McGill analyzes how the film 'Philomena' enabled audiences to engage with the history of Mother and Child institutions through an individual's story. While acknowledging its importance in widely highlighting the issue, she argues against its positioning as a comedy when its narrative is

based on the real-life experience of a woman whose child was taken. O’Fatharta illustrates that the experience of women in institutions was not funny and continues to expose histories of institutionalism and abuse specifically from Bessborough, in Cork which falsified records thus denying people the opportunity to access information. In historical and contemporary case studies of Magdalene work, symphysiotomy and forced adoption Enright analyzes the issue of consent which is at the heart of the women in Ireland question, drawing the sobering conclusion that contracts and consent forms, as well. the Constitution has produced women outside the law. Finally, Nedeljkovic considers the current Asylum and Direct Provision processes in Ireland comparing them to the Magdalene laundries and points out that the last Magdalene laundry closed in 1996 and the first Direct Provision centres opened in 1999. In conclusion we are asked to mark the complexities and nuances and remaining gaps in this history and to continue to gather evidence and utilize the knowledge to avoid another wave of this architecture of containment for vulnerable and marginalized people.

**Mags O’Brien**

**Anne Boran, *Challenge to Power: Nixie Boran (1904-1971), Freedom & the Castlecomer Miners*** (Dublin, 2020), Geography Publications, ISBN 9780906602-973, 39 photographs, 236pp, €35 (hb)

In the conclusion of the biography of her father, Nicholas ‘Nixie’ Boran, Anne Boran asks was his life of any significance? She observes that its significance ‘lay in how interconnected the economic and political life’ of a rural area like Castlecomer in County Kilkenny was ‘to national and international ideas and strategies’ which informed the local struggles (p. 201). Comer miners’ actions were informed by a swirl of republican socialist ideas drawn from the legacy of land agitation, Connolly’s Workers’ Republic, Marx and Lenin, a heady mixture in a relatively remote rural location. Born in 1904, Nixie Boran was an active Republican and IRA member, a soldier who joined and deserted the Free State Army and went ‘on the run’, and – without a passport – a visitor to the Soviet Union that confirmed his commitment to socialist ideals. He became the tribune of the Castlecomer miners, a pariah to the church and someone who generated a folklore of exaggeration and myth, a heroic figure even to those who spread falsehoods about him. When joining the Irish Transport & General Workers’ Union (ITGWU) in 1974 – four years after Boran’s death – he was presented to me as a significant figure who held Annual Conference in thrall, an indomitable class fighter, a comrade held in the highest esteem. I worked with his son, George, who was ITGWU Kilkenny Branch Secretary. He brought me to the remains of Deerpark Colliery and set in motion a memorable Irish Labour History Society day trip to Comer. We visited the abandoned colliery site, heard from Tom Brennan Roe and the remarkable Jimmy Walsh – both characters appearing throughout *Challenge to Power* – as well as the reflections of local historian Tom Lyng who had delivered Nixie’s graveside oration. My impression of Nixie was of a remarkable man marked by a dogged determination, unquestionable integrity, considered intelligence, strategic thinking and – if required – physical and moral courage. This book answers all the questions that arose and confirms those impressions.

While Nixie is the main seam, Anne Boran provides contextual commentary throughout on the economic, social and political conditions in Ireland generally and the Kilkenny coalfield particularly, together with a family history of the Borans and the coal owning Wandesfordes. Throughout his life, Nixie mourned his mother’s death when he was only four. He claimed to see her and was noted for a ‘heightened sensitivity to psychic incidents’ (p. 7). Clan and community were central to Nixie’s

life values. Family trees are provided for both clans. Class politics are inherent in mining and Anne traces the existence of a Miners' League in the 1880s, Coal Carters' Association in 1905 and Kilkenny Miners' Federation in 1907 – its title echoing the huge Miners' Federation of Great Britain – as short-lived attempts to organise a union. Many miners – Borans included – were simultaneously small farmers and, as with other rurally-based local unions, they combined land agitation with trade unionism. When Nixie first went below ground as a 'tram gunner' in 1918, his life was already shaped by 'workplace strife and insecurity, by the inflow of socialist ideas ... and nationalist organisation and action at local level' (p. 15). He held to Connolly and Larkin's belief that the world order could be changed. Despite supporting the struggle for national self-determination, Nixie joined the Free State Army in June 1922, significantly eight days before Civil War erupted. It proved a difficult experience, his story capturing the 'mental conflict and consequences of taking sides' (p. 34). He saw action but deserted in December 1922, went underground with the IRA and survived capture and imprisonment in Spike Island, Kilkenny and Clonmel. He escaped in August 1923, discovering the value of his community's friendship and solidarity until the amnesty of November 1924.

He spent time in Scotland and Wales – although little detail of these times survives – before returning home and re-joining the IRA. He was critical of 'Dan Breen's approach to killing' and disgusted by Free State executions of republicans and rejection of the Republic, as he saw it. He struggled 'to make sense of why he fought in the first place' but rejected de Valera and Fianna Fáil's compromise to enter the Dáil. His views were now determinedly left-wing, his influences being the Cahir revolutionary David Fitzgerald and the Small Farmers' and Workers' Republic platform of Peadar O'Donnell. He was active, in turn, in the Irish Worker League, Revolutionary Workers' Groups and Republican Congress, his 'communism' stirring the wrath of the local clergy and the unthinking faithful's deep suspicion. Nixie stowed away to travel to attend the Red International of Labour Unions in Moscow in 1930, spending three months in the USSR, touring extensively and visiting the Lenin School. This adventure was 'stimulating and exciting beyond any experiences to date' and he readily imbibed the slogan 'to the factories, to the workshops, to the masses' (p. 68). He returned to the Soviet Union in 1967 and –by then a practising Catholic and 'sad to find [churches] closed and religion not practised' – 'still thought of Russia as symbolic of a nation that put labour at the heart of its value system' (p. 192).

On his return, he founded the Irish Mines & Quarry Workers' Union (IM&QWU), its constitution drawn on that of the United Mine Workers of Scotland after Bob Stewart visited Ireland on behalf of the CPGB. The IM&QWU campaigned for house coal for miners, improved living and working conditions, and better wages. The union's leading figures were constantly harassed by Gardaí and there were stories that it was funded by 'Russian gold'. Ironically, some clerical attacks came from the pulpit of Clogh parish, a church essentially paid for by miners' donations. Blacked by coal owners, Nixie was elected Checkweighman by the miners in February 1931. He defeated long-standing ITGWU Secretary Tom Campion, less a reflection on Campion and more a belief in the new possibilities under Boran's leadership notwithstanding that he had 'adopted an unambiguously communist interpretation of the conditions of workers in Ireland'. (pp. 77-78, 88). After arrest in November 1931, Boran gave an undertaking not to participate in any 'proclaimed organisation', an example of his practicality rather than a denouncement of beliefs (pp. 97-98). Significant figures like Seán Murray and Shapurji Saklatvala, former Communist MP for Battersea, spoke in Castlecomer and the IM&QWU continued to battle. A six-week strike was won in 1932 after a support effort across eight neighbouring counties that foreshadowed Irish efforts for Welsh miners in 1984-1985. Speaking in Castlecomer in 1984, Penrhiwceiber collier Emrys Bevan observed that the 'people have our dispute under their fingernails'. The town hosted miners' children for a week's holidays and raised substantial funds (p. 186). Clerical attacks were constant, however, and even ITGWU

Organiser J.F. Gill participated in an anti-IM&QWU march. After the IM&QWU collapsed, Nixie led his members into the ITGWU.

Under the ITGWU, miners secured a wash house, cheap coal and, together with James Gilhooly and Oliver McMorrow from Arigna, Nixie became an impressive presence at union conferences arguing for improved conditions and effective legislation. The atmosphere improved and clergy were supportive of a ‘stay-down’ strike in 1943 and a bitter, eleven-month strike from March 1949-February 1950. Take home pay rose by 100% after the latter and Nixie was elected to the ITGWU and Congress of Irish Unions Executives. Wandesforde was a moderniser and the 1950s were a heyday for the mines. Boran succeeded in getting pneumoconiosis recognised as Prescribed Occupational Disease, rights under the Holidays (Employees) Act, 1963 and a ground-breaking Mines & Quarries Act, 1965. The Medical Research Council of Ireland screened all miners and a Welfare Society and co-operative were started. Nixie put union values at the heart of miners’ families’ lives.

Despite his increasingly national profile, Nixie failed to gain election to Kilkenny County Council for Labour in the Ballyraggett area on three occasions. He displayed a certain ambivalence and Anne reflects that the ‘world of electoral politics was perhaps surprisingly not a comfortable environment for him’ (pp. 161-162). The union commanded his attention. He represented it at three International Labour Organisation assemblies in Geneva. He gained a Diploma in Social Science in 1955 – a fellow graduate being Dan Shaw who became an ITGWU Group Secretary. Nixie constantly promoted education as a means of social advance and to improve miners’ standing – while ‘workers had cash, farmers had property’ (p. 170). The 1960s witnessed a losing battle against closure. Nixie sought alliances across political parties and persuaded the ITGWU to fund a counter survey to employer and Government findings that the pit was exhausted. Closure came in 1969 but Nixie ensured that the Castlecomer Development Plan brought alternative employment in yarns and metal work. Arigna survived feeding a local power station until 1990 when commercial Irish coal production effectively ended.

A teetotaler after he promised a priest in exchange for his intervention on behalf of a seriously sick daughter, Nixie’s social activity was largely indistinguishable from his union work, although family remained central. He joined the Local Defence Force/Fórsa Cosanta Áitiúil (FCA) in 1940, rising to Captain in 1968, enjoying the camps and exercises, perhaps re-living his youthful experiences of soldiering. He died on 5 November 1971, the graveside and press tributes testifying to the respect in which he was held. To answer Anne’s question as to the significance of his life, she recognised that he may ‘have changed his position’ on communism and the church ‘but never his socialist values or his views about the dignity of workers, especially miners’. His practical legacy was the enactment of protective legislation, one of many gains that, in his mind, simply helped ‘construct platforms’ for the next challenge. His life demonstrated that social change does not ‘just happen, it takes people to make them do so’ (p. 202). His leadership of a mining community showed that ‘you don’t have to have perfect conditions to make a difference: stubbornness can be transformed into tenaciousness, wildness into courage, mistakes into learning and friendships into brotherhood, as long as love and a sense of justice is at the heart of man’. These qualities are falling into short supply.

Anne Boran’s biography is a fine example of family, social, economic and labour history, unafraid to ask questions of its subject, question motivation or acknowledge fault – no mention now of Nixie’s prowess behind the wheel of a car! Nixie’s life was a truly a challenge to power: the power of employer, church and State.

**Francis Devine**



Joep Leerssen (ed.) **Parnell and His Times** (Cambridge, 2021), Cambridge University Press, ISBN 9781108861786, 324pp, €42 (hb).

An evocative image of Charles Stewart Parnell's striking visage, depicted as the centre of a constellation of political men espousing 'The cause of Ireland' adorns the cover of this impressive volume edited by Joep Leerssen. The compilation of papers from former Parnell Fellows at Magdalene College Cambridge, this volume boasts an array of major scholars on modern Irish history, language, and literature. It makes for an intriguing book. Parnell could famously (infamously?) be a font for many possibilities after his passing in 1891, and this book provides a rich canvass to consider these angles. Essay collections bring together diverse perspectives, but this one draws the reader in due to the richness of analysis. In a book which aims to broaden considerations of Parnell in terms of breadth and length, Part I addresses 'the temporalities of Parnell's Ireland'. Leerssen's introduction sets the tone. It introduces the volume but also serves as a valuable essay on charisma — persuasive and passionate in its articulation of a Parnell legacy looming over modern Ireland.

The first three chapters focus on politics. Oliver McDonagh's elegant essay on O'Connell and Parnell is teasingly cast in the compare and contrast form so familiar to those who experienced the Irish school system. Paul Bew offers a close analysis of Parnell's political philosophy and use of tactics, building on decades of research on the subject. Dealing with his relations with Irish republicans and British parliamentarians as well as what Bew terms 'Parnellism without Parnell' under Redmond, he reiterates Francis Hackett's view that Parnell was 'utterly immune from liberal sympathies'. Roy Foster's chapter 'Parnell to Pearse' calls to mind the memoir of the Cork home ruler and latter-day *Round Table* correspondent J.J. Horgan, but really deals with the Yeatsian idea of the 'long gestation' after 1891. On this occasion, however, the poet's biographer rejects Cruise O'Brien's notion that Parnell 'deviated into literature' and shows how Parnellism remained political in these years. While the cover image is male dominated save for the personification of the nation as a woman, Foster draws attention not just to sons of Parnell's voters, but the daughters too, highlighting as Margaret Ward has done, the enduring significance of Anna Parnell, the Ladies' Land League, and their feminist successors in the 'shift to radicalism'. An insightful reflection on multiple legacies, this chapter highlights the diversification of Parnell studies away from the high-politics concentration of previous decades while still arguing the case for Parnell's centrality in understanding the independent Irish state.

The following chapter on race, state, and nation by Denis Donoghue, originally published a decade ago, weaves literature, language and culture into politics from Parnell up to the Northern Ireland Peace Process. Raymond Gillespie provides a fascinating overview of religion in Ireland of 1891, utilising the census to impressive and sometimes surprising effect, identifying subtleties in religious and political identities and attitudes to Parnell as well as finding 'two Buddhists, three Hindus (two of whom were Brahmins), a Zoroastrian and three Muslims' among the returns. Oral tradition is explored in Angela Bourke's thoughtful examination of storyteller Éamon a Búrc. Mixing biography with cultural history, Bourke draws skilfully on the example of Búrc and Walter Benjamin among others to highlight the richness of the story in constructing meaning. Leerssen's own chapter on the subject of anthologies is excellent. Assessing Irish literature in European context, he provides a very useful schema for understanding literary production, circulation, reception, and 'recycling' alongside appendices detailing canonicity and the production of Irish anthologies. While scholars of the Irish revolution have utilised the county study to good effect for some time, the final chapter in this section by Nicholas Canny calls us to consider county studies completed in Parnell's era. According to Canny, such an approach was likely to be less politicised than others and this chapter provides a meticulous analysis of W.G. Wood-Martin's three-volume study of Sligo, and the histories

of Clare written by James Frost and Canon Patrick White respectively. While White's approach differed, all three encapsulate what Canny calls the 'efflorescence' of contemporary county-history writing.

Part II of this collection looks to the post-Parnell period with a slightly more literary flavour to the essays. Frank McGuinness's short piece on *Dubliners* analyses the 'tyrannical, timid male' James Duffy and the tragedy of Emily Sinico in Joyce's 'A Painful Case' against the backdrop of the Parnell-O'Shea affair. Edna Longley draws on Walter Pater to problematise notions of Yeats and Joyce as opposites while language itself is the subject of Helen Vendler's subtle, erudite analysis of Yeats's adjectives. Declan Kiberd's 'Modernism in the Streets' adopts the perhaps surprising comparison of Joyce and Pearse. Both admired Parnell and Kiberd considers how both sought to reduce the 'sense of felt distance between street and stage' before reflecting that ultimately Pearse's 'theological radicalism [was] retrofitted to a conservative Catholicism' and *Ulysses* 'reduced to an excuse for an annual Dublin drinking festival'. Parnell's Belfast speech of 1891 serves to initiate a change of perspective in Terence Brown's contribution on modernism and the city. Brown highlights how Belfast largely escaped the imagination of Irish modernists, but provides rich insights here, analysing in particular the work of Richard Rowley, Louis MacNeice, and the urban setting of modernist texts. Contrasting it with the cherished ancient Ireland, he also considers Belfast in east-west perspective in the context of what he terms 'North British capitalism'. Claire Connolly's expertise on matters maritime presents another consideration of connections across the Irish Sea tracing a history of crossings from Jonathan Swift to Edna O'Brien.

Thomas Bartlett's essay on F.X. Martin moves the focus firmly back to Dublin, offering an entertaining account of how Martin got the chair of medieval history at UCD before assessing his contribution to the historiography of the Rising. The penultimate chapter of the volume by David Fitzpatrick offers an iconoclast critique of the Rising centenary before Clair Wills analyses 'literary belatedness' drawing on Edward Said's work on late style in her concluding examination of Mahon, Muldoon, and Heaney. Probing the idea of 'productive anachronism', Wills's piece covers much intellectual ground, encompassing Irish and international concerns while also providing a suitable bookend, musing like Foster, 'was Parnellism the end of something or a beginning?' While readers will be left to debate this question, this collection provides ample intellectual food for thought for anyone with an interest in modern Ireland, and the history and literature of Irish nationalism.

**Martin O'Donoghue**

Patrick McDonagh **Gay and Lesbian Activism in the Republic of Ireland, 1973-93** (London, 2021), Bloomsbury Publishing, ISBN 9781350197473, 9 colour illus., 240pp, £76.50 (hb)

To date, most histories of the Irish gay rights movement center around David Norris' High Court legal battles in the 1980s. But when we center Norris, the fight for gay rights seems purely legal, and the 1980s are overshadowed by setbacks. Patrick McDonagh's work shows that the 1980s were actually a watershed period in Dublin, Cork, and Galway for gaining recognition and visibility, forging partnerships, and starting conversations about homosexuality in Ireland. Beyond changing the law, gay rights organisations had to fight social norms. Their missions to create community for gay and lesbian individuals in Ireland while also raising awareness about "homosexuality" in Ireland were dangerous, contested, and absolutely essential to the social and political changes of the 1990s. McDonagh lays out that groundwork in this meticulous study. The first two chapters focus on the Irish Gay Rights Movement and the Gay Liberation Front in Dublin. McDonagh emphasises the internationalism of the IGRM and GLF, and their community-building activities. In the isolating

silence of twentieth-century Ireland, McDonagh stresses the necessity of these organisations and the services they provided. But McDonagh also decodes the rivalry and non-cooperation of the IGRM and GLF. This tension is significant in the context of the rest of the book, because while in Dublin there was almost a big enough population to support two at-odds organisations, that was not the case in smaller communities like Galway and Cork.

Provincial Ireland is the focus of the third chapter, where social activism organisations had no choice but to work together to be able to serve their communities. In Cork, for example, the Cork Gay Collective had to band together with groups like Women Against Violence and Friends of the Earth to pool resources so that they could open the Quay Co-op. In the end, that space was formative in Cork lesbian organizing and socializing. McDonagh's study shows that provincial Ireland shifted the national narrative towards acceptance and decriminalisation, and that in those smaller communities, intersectionality was key to success. Intersectionality is a key theme in Chapter Four, where McDonagh emphasizes the partnerships that gay rights groups forged with the Students Union, the Irish Council for Civil Liberties, and the Irish Congress of Trade Union. Interestingly, while in the first chapter McDonagh notes the transnational connections of the gay rights organisations, in Chapter Four he shows the Irish government at odds with Europe. Irish politicians blatantly ignored their obligations to uphold European standards of human rights when the European parliament passed Recommendations and Resolutions opposing Ireland's anti-homosexual laws in the mid-1980s and would continue to ignore the European Court of Human Rights decision on Norris' case in 1988.

The government really failed its citizens when dealing with the AIDS crisis in the 1980s. As in the US, the UK, and elsewhere, it fell to the gay community in Ireland to both combat stigma of the "gay disease" and provide the entire country with accurate information. Gay Health Action--with no government support--spread correct and up-to-date information, pushed for better STD clinics, and provided support for those living with AIDS, including non-gay citizens. In the end, the GHA's role in providing the public with accurate and up-to-date information made their organisation - and the gay community in Ireland more broadly - all the more visible and appreciated. It will be useful to familiarize oneself with twentieth-century Irish history before picking up *Gay and Lesbian Activism in the Republic of Ireland*. For some readers, much of the magnitude of the described activism will be harder to see without reminders about what was going on in Ireland in the 1970s and 1980s. Without a firm grasp on Irish politics and economics, for example, few will understand the difference between Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, or the significance of appealing to "pink pound" tourists. McDonagh provides a clear sense of when and where the state, Catholic church, and individuals pushed back against queer visibility and representations in media, but not always with the depth of twentieth-century Irish history spelled out. And yet this might be a strength of the work if it drives readers to seek answers to these questions themselves.

In the final chapter, McDonagh argues that the decision and law to decriminalize homosexuality came not from outside pressure, but from within. The efforts of all the small and large gay rights organisations, the work that the Gay Health Action put in on behalf of all those at risk of HIV/AIDS, the community-building in Dublin, Galway, and Cork, and the partnerships with unions across the country created the conditions for the Dáil to finally put forth and pass a decriminalization bill. McDonagh introduces many activists by name. A general reader will likely recognize David Norris and Mary Robinson and know a bit of their biographies without explanation, and a historian of Ireland probably knows a bit about Grainne Healy, Tony Walsh, and Kieran Rose. But McDonagh is almost too generous here, listing the names of the many who gave their blood, sweat, and tears to fighting for gay and lesbian rights in Ireland. In just listing those names, we learn little else about these folks. Occasionally he drops little biographical details, like "Deirdre Walsh, who returned to Ireland in 1982 after moving to Berlin to 'come out,'" (78) but those tidbits are infrequent. With

revelations about the inner-workings of social activism groups, insights on the intersectionality of Irish activism, and a framework for understanding the shift in Irish social attitudes towards same-sex desiring people, *Gay, and Lesbian Activism in the Republic of Ireland, 1973-93* will be useful in many classrooms.

**Averill Earls**

Timothy Bowman, William Butler, and Michael Wheatley **The Disparity of Sacrifice: Irish Recruitment to the British Armed Forces 1914-1918** (Liverpool, 2020), Liverpool University Press, ISBN 978-1-789-62185-3, 298pp, £85 (hb)

While Ireland escaped conscription in World War One, the memory of the Irishmen who served in the British Forces has been conscripted into the history wars waged over the past three decades. The experience of Irish servicemen has been described as forgotten (although this is questioned by Pádraig Yeates). The elision of the memory of the great war is not unique to Ireland. For Poland, the Great War preceded the nation state and is a ‘forgotten war’ to this day. Recent years have witnessed a re-evaluation and this work is the latest manifestation of this process. It is a comprehensive and detailed study of British policy towards army recruitment in Ireland. The phrase disparity of sacrifice goes to the heart of the book's arguments: that Irish recruitment levels were much lower than in Britain and that within Ireland, recruitment levels were much higher in Ulster than in the rest of Ireland, and much higher in urban rather than in rural areas.

Irish recruitment levels were a source of political controversy with Redmond always taking an optimistic view of recruitment levels in the South and West, while Carson and Ulster Unionists generally took an opposite view and stressed the higher levels of recruitment in Ulster. This work bears out Carson's viewpoint, but in a highly nuanced manner. Higher recruitment levels in Ulster were due in part to the efforts of Joe Devlin, one of the few IPP MPs to take an active pro recruitment stance. Low levels of recruitment in Ireland were a concern to the allies throughout the war, and even led the exasperated French to propose the formation of an Irish brigade in the French Army. This bizarre proposal illustrates the depth of the problem the British faced (and would have been worthy of a more extensive treatment than the passing reference it receives). The book consists of six chapters. In the opening chapter, the authors examine how the army reforms of 1908 created the Territorial Force in Britain, but not in Ireland. The British government was reluctant to put arms into the hands of Irish civilians for fear of IRB infiltration. The authors argued that this weakened the development of an amateur military culture in Ireland which had consequences in the period after 1914. Chapters two and three deal with the contrasting experience of recruitment in Ulster and in the remainder of the country. The authors describe how there was a delay in endorsing enlistment in Autumn 1914 until Unionists and Nationalists had secured their differing short-term objectives on the Home Rule 1914 Act.

Chapter 4, ‘Bureaucracy Propaganda and the Conscription Crisis’ is the best chapter and describes the failure of official recruitment in Ireland, of publicity by the recruiting authorities, notably the successful if short lived campaign of Hedley le Bas in 1915. Chapter 5 deals with the recruitment of officers, a matter which is often neglected. It outlines the failure to establish OTC units in Catholic secondary schools. The final chapter compares Irish and British recruitment rates and demonstrates that while recruitment in Ireland was an overwhelmingly urban phenomenon, the level of recruitment in rural Ireland was much lower than in agricultural areas of Britain. This chapter draws the reader to the conclusion that from a UK perspective the significant point is not how many Irishmen served, but how few. The work is focussed on the abundant British sources, unsurprisingly given the role of one of the authors in the British National Archives. However, this has meant that

Irish sources receive much less attention. The elephant in the room - anti conscription activism - receives scant attention. The BMH witness statements contain frequent reference to Anti conscription sentiment and activities. Ecclesiastical archives will document the anti-recruitment activities of the bishops of Dublin and Limerick; Archbishop Walsh of Dublin disciplined a curate for speaking at a recruitment meeting. The work underplays the labour market effects of recruitment and how Irish employers reacted. There are notable omissions in the bibliography such as Padraig Yeates' Dublin Trilogy, Paul Taylor's *Heroes or Traitors* and Jérôme Aan De Wiel's work on the Catholic Church during World War One.

Notwithstanding these reservations this is a valuable work which clarifies and amplifies our understanding of Irish service in the British forces. The work is even more valuable because of the detached and forensic approach to a subject which has attracted too much polemic and not enough analysis. It deserves a wide readership which it probably won't receive due to the rapacious cover price.

**Peter Rigney**

Catherine Corless, **Belonging; A Memoir of Place, Beginnings and One Woman's Search for Truth and Justice for the Tuam Babies** (Dublin, 2021), Hachette Books Ireland, ISBN 9781529339765, 352pp, € 23.74 (pb)

*Belonging* documents Catherine Corless' work on behalf of the children who died in Tuam Mother and Baby Home and their surviving families. Though written for a popular audience, it will be of interest to academics and researchers. Corless retells in some detail the well-known story of how her unpaid local history project prepared as coursework for an adult education class eventually provoked a state investigation into abuses in Ireland's network of mother and baby homes and county homes. We know now that the Mother and Baby Homes Commission of Investigation paid little heed to survivors' and adopted adults' testimony, reaching limited findings which in turn grounded a narrow redress scheme. This book is a timely intervention because it returns our attention to the campaign for justice that began in Tuam, and to the people the state is all too willing to ignore. Corless insists that the harms suffered in Tuam are ongoing; that people live with them still, that we are not yet ready for commemoration.

The book is a research story, rooted in archives, libraries, records, databases, and interviews. At times it is a meticulous guide to methods developed in helping others to trace the family relationships sundered by Irish institutions in the twentieth century. Anyone seeking to recover their family history from available records could do worse than start with Chapters 56 and 57 of *Belonging*. Corless often expresses anxiety about her lack of formal research training, but she is thorough and careful. She is an informed critic of obstacles to truth-seeking in Ireland; we follow her as she deals with Tusla and as her research is needlessly supervised in a local archive. She always supplements what she finds on paper with the testimony of people who were mothers and children in the Tuam Home; presenting individual narratives at length and in the words of the people who told them to her. We share her wonder in Chapter 34 when, after dogged efforts to access local memory of the Tuam home she finds and restores the recorded words of Julia Carter Devaney, who had lived and worked there. What emerges are rich, full stories which stand in contrast to the anonymised and partial fragments reproduced in the Mother and Baby Home Commission Report. Chapter 80 is a brief but insightful critique of the Commission's account of what happened in Tuam.

Corless generously shares her own motivations for the research and shows how her search for other people's family history becomes entangled with her own. Hers is not a simplistic search for

truth; she has a deep understanding of families' capacities to cling to their secrets. In Chapter 59 she ruefully acknowledges that she may never truly know her own mother's story. Some stories can never be uncovered. Corless clearly sees her research as of a piece with wider campaigns for recognition of the 'Tuam babies', and she charts those campaigns from the inside, bringing readers with her into RTE studios, political meetings, a community ceremony staged as a counterpoint to the Pope's state visit, and one difficult encounter with the Bon Secours nuns. She is frank about the frustration and exhaustion involved in taking on the state. I was struck by repeated accounts of being left out of state processes; finding out about key developments on the radio or being interviewed about the Mother and Baby Home Commission Report before she could possibly have had time to read it. Despite that, she repeatedly expresses sympathy for key government figures, hoping always for progress.

This is not a self-consciously feminist book, but it does broach clear feminist themes, including motherhood, marriage, class, and faith. In the last decade, Ireland has been repeatedly shaken by women of Corless' generation and older; survivors of symphysiotomy, Magdalene laundries and homes, tireless advocates for gender equality and reproductive justice. Catherine Corless' is another urgent elder female voice. The book will be a useful companion to other women's research stories (think Doreen Ní Ghríofa's *A Ghost in the Throat*) and campaign histories (think *Ireland and the Magdalene Laundries: A Campaign for Justice*) and deserves a wide readership.

**Máiréad Enright**

Thomas Earls FitzGerald, *Combatants and Civilians in Revolutionary Ireland, 1918-1923*, (London, 2021) Routledge, ISBN 780-0-367-33352-2, 256pp, £95 (hb)

Do we need yet another well written and researched local history of the War of Independence that locates it in its' wider national and international context? Probably not, but books such as this one on the War of Independence, Truce and Civil War in Kerry are necessary to us as social animals because history is memory and memory is identity and we need all three to function. It is a pity that pricing policy for academic publications means that the information in it will only percolate slowly into the wider body politic. This book is obviously a work of love, if you can apply that term to a forensic examination of violence. There is very little in it on social history, beyond some examples of agrarian agitation overlapping with IRA activity during the Truce period, especially among Volunteers who opposed the Treaty. The only significant mention of the labour movement is the Tralee Trades Council, which joined other public bodies in calling for the IRA to take over policing in the town in April 1920 after a demoralised and intimidated RIC had given up. By now the Trades Council had a well-established reputation for militancy and support for the independence movement.

The British Government's solution to the policing problem was to introduce the Black and Tans incrementally, augmented by the Auxiliary Division of the RIC, better known as the Auxies. That these developments saw an escalation in violence should not have come as a surprise to anyone; the violent repression of the Civil Rights movement by the state in Northern Ireland half a century later saw a resurgence of republican and loyalist paramilitarism. The function of armed organisations legally constituted or otherwise may ostensibly be to maintain the existing order or replace it with another, but their real purpose is to dominate the territory in which they operate and above all the host population. The quickest way to control people is through fear. It is a powerful and a contagious emotion, of which Covid has given us a sharp contemporary reminder. In the constant tug of war between historians FitzGerald belongs to what might be called the pro-IRA camp. It's not that he absolves it of committing terrible acts, but he makes a strong case for saying that the Crown forces

were far worse. I don't think that has ever been seriously contested but bringing attention to the crimes of the IRA as opposed to the Crown forces has always been controversial in a society where the majority of the population sides with the 'Patriots' as opposed to the 'Traitors', to borrow Evelyn Waugh's convenient terminology from *Scoop*.

Regardless of one's perspective on the legitimacy of the rival combatants, FitzGerald's account demonstrates yet again that those at greatest risk in a conflict zone are non-combatants. These are the people in the middle without the means to defend themselves, not least from their self-appointed defenders. Those most at risk are those who do not to accept the communal consensus. In Kerry a century ago it was loyalist businessmen and landowners who were the targets. In the more recent troubles, it was disruptive youth in the ghettos. Deploying soldiers to police communities doesn't work and neither does using paramilitaries to do it. Even police and soldiers answerable to the courts can slip the leash, while paramilitary forces have no leashes. As FitzGerald shows, when he examines attempts by Dail Eireann and the IRA GHQ to investigate allegations of widespread intimidation, theft and even murder by IRA members during the Truce these were largely ignored in Kerry while the anti-Treaty IRA leadership was far too preoccupied with military matters to attempt the creation of a civil administration. If we can't thank the British Government for anything else in the Troubles it did limit the amount of munitions its opponents could import to a trickle, avoiding the levels of slaughter generated by similar ethnographic conflicts elsewhere in Europe. And in case readers are tempted to feel sorry for themselves spare a thought for their contemporaries in Former Yugoslavia where successor states are busy rewriting their histories.

Compared with them, our history and its problems are breathtakingly simple. We only have to contend with the legacy of one imperial power and two native populations. In former Yugoslavia you have three nationalities with three religions and the legacy of four Imperial powers. All are now involved in a competition to achieve victim hood because that will give them more status and influence within the international community, and above all the EU than any amount of chest beating. With Croats having to explain away concentration camps like Jasenovac from the 1940s and Serbs the Srebrenica massacre from the 1990s this is proving quite a challenge. Unfortunately, books like this can ignite as many legacy rows as they resolve. All those engaged in such battles need to remind themselves that studies such as this are useful for helping communities understand where they came from, but the past cannot heal us.

**Padraig Yeates**

Margarita Cappock (ed.), *Sarah Cecilia Harrison: Artist, Social Campaigner and City Councillor*, (Dublin 2022), Four Courts Press & Dublin City Council, ISBN 978-1-8384635-1-9, 266pp, Ills. Full Colour, €20.65 (pb)

Published by Four Courts Press, this new collection on Sarah Cecilia Harrison (1863-1941) brings together four essays on different aspects of her life and work, along with a detailed chronology and listing of artworks. Richly illustrated in full colour throughout, it is a welcome volume on Harrison's artistic and political careers and will bring her into the sight and minds of many for the first time. Although Harrison is well represented in Ireland's cultural institutions – for example, in the National Gallery of Ireland, the Hugh Lane Gallery, and the Ulster Museum – and appears in the standard reference works of Irish art history, there is still much to be revealed and understood about this rather enigmatic artist and politician. As editor of the volume, Margarita Cappock contributes the leading essay, outlining the span of Harrison's life from birth to death. Born into a Protestant, nationalist, and politically active family in County Down, Harrison's home life was somewhat

unconventional: for example, her mother's second husband was younger than Harrison herself - and this, along with other family anecdotes set the tone for the subject's independent, creative, and political life. After her father's death in 1893, Harrison's mother relocated the family to London, and while this is where her formative education took place, she retained close links with Belfast and Dublin. The strongest sections of this introductory essay are those dealing with Harrison's support of and involvement in Hugh Lane's campaign for a gallery of modern art in Dublin, reflecting Cappock's deep knowledge of the gallery and its foundation. Having become acquainted with Lane in the early years of the twentieth century, Harrison raised funds, campaigned for a suitable building, and wrote the first catalogue of the collection. They evidently worked well as a team, and Cappock's narrative is bolstered with snippets from the rich archive of letters in Lane's papers at the National Library of Ireland.

Perhaps the most surprising section of this essay is that which outlines Harrison's association with Lane's Dublin project following his death on the *Lusitania* in 1915. While the facts around the discovery of an unsigned codicil to Lane's will and the protracted battle to retain the collection of paintings for Dublin (as spearheaded by his aunt, Lady Gregory, and W. B. Yeats) is a cornerstone of twentieth-century Irish cultural history, Harrison's reaction to these events is not as well-known. This is, perhaps, because of the difficulty in understanding or finding motive for her behaviour: as Cappock outlines, following Lane's death, Harrison was adamant that both the will and codicil were forgeries, and that she, as Lane's publicly unacknowledged fiancé, was privy to another final will and testament that bequeathed the paintings to Dublin, rather than London. This was repudiated by Lane's family and supporters, isolating Harrison from the cultural circles which sought to retain Lane's important collection of modern paintings for Dublin. Although Cappock offers some speculation on why Harrison reacted in this way, and on the validity of the possible betrothal, the reader will find little satisfaction in these. Undoubtedly Harrison's erratic behaviour at this time poses a conundrum for her biographers as they must navigate between championing their subject, offering a full account of her life, but also to some extent protecting her reputation, especially when so many of her contemporaries were quick to castigate her.

Cappock's account of Harrison's life is followed by three much more tightly focused essays: Hannah Baker delves into Harrison's artistic training at the Slade School of Art, London; Senia Pašeta locates Harrison within the campaign for women's rights and suffrage in Dublin; and Ciaran Wallace highlights her priorities during her time in the city council. Baker, who is currently undertaking doctoral research on Harrison, offers a lucid account of her time as a student at the London art school and how this influenced Harrison's practice as a portraitist. Her works, as Baker rightly highlights, are quite different in style to her Irish contemporaries – such as Walter Osborne, for example – and Baker's positioning of Harrison in relation to her teachers, particularly the French painter Alphonse Legros (1837 – 1911) is enlightening. Readers interested in the technical aspects of Harrison's artistic work will find much to relish in this essay. Pašeta and Wallace's accounts of Harrison's activist and political work flesh out her undertakings outside of the studio and connect nicely with themes that have come to the fore elsewhere during the Decade of Centenaries. In her essay, Pašeta shows how the women's movement in Ireland encompassed many shades of political opinion, and it is interesting to read how women – including for familiar figures such as Hannah Sheehy Skeffington and Kathleen Lynn – navigated a complex associational network. Wallace brings the reader both into the council chamber and the hearing rooms of the Local Government Board, and Harrison's dealings in this sphere with William Martin Murphy add important texture to her involvement in the gallery project, of which Murphy was a staunch opponent. Perhaps it is in the confluence of her artistic and political careers that a more nuanced exploration of Harrison's actions after Lane's death might be found. In the same year as her close friend and collaborator died so suddenly and tragically, Harrison lost her seat on the city council and a busy, active period of her



life was drawn to a close: the combined effect of this on her health and well-being was surely not insignificant.

Perhaps inevitably for multi-authored collection there is some repetition between the contributions, and a more thorough editing may have eased this for the reader. It is also a shame that many of the artworks are reproduced without their frame: for example, the intricate carved and stepped frame of Harrison's 1890 self-portrait in the Hugh Lane Gallery is an intrinsic part of the artwork, and the reader who cannot visit the gallery easily is the poorer for this. These are small quibbles however, and this volume is certainly not the last word on Harrison. It can only be hoped that in time it will be joined by a book length study by Hannah Baker, drawing on her doctoral research to add another layer of colour and tone to Harrison's fascinating life.

**Kathryn Milligan**

Shay Cody (ed) **Tom & Marie Johnson; Seeking No Honours**, (Dublin 2021), Irish Labour History Society, ISBN 978-0-9560529-9-5, 136pp, €15 (pb)

*Seeking No Honours* is an aptly titled and thoroughly crafted compendium on the lives of the most underappreciated figures in the history of the formation and evolution of modern Ireland, - Tom and Marie Johnson. Unquestionably, their contribution not only influenced, but laid the basis for all that is most inclusive, democratic, and best in our current condition. The pamphlet contains a central main piece by Shay Cody. This is complemented by a superbly incisive analysis by Padraig Yeates and a profound appreciation by Brendan Howlin. It concludes with a deservedly empathetic review dedicated almost exclusively to Marie Johnson by Charles Callan. The core document is a thoroughly researched short narrative by Shay Cody. Painstakingly drawing on several sources including new material from the files of the Bureau of Military History 1913 – 1921, the author traces the journey travelled by the Johnsons through our formative years influencing, and at critical junctures determining the route as they went. Employing the use of deftly selected quotes the text highlights the critical intersections at which the intervention of Tom Johnson and the Labour Movement was to dictate the direction of things.

This approach results in a concise summary of the chain of events leading to independence for the twenty-six counties through the wilderness years of the counter-revolution and theocratic state, to the late 1960's and the initial indicators of our progression to an as yet incomplete modern secular democracy. Skilfully the epic is encapsulated within an eminently accessible seventy pages. Conciseness is facilitated by reliance on one hundred and sixty supporting footnotes and four appendices conveying the extensiveness of the depth of research conducted. It comprehensively explores the character of Tom Johnson's personality. Devoid of any scintilla of egoism or self-interest and ingeniously industrious, he was a person of keen intellectual prowess. All of it was completely deployed on the challenge of incrementally progressing the struggle for egalitarianism. While this is deeply interesting, its most important aspect is elaboration of the role played by the Labour Movement in the national liberation struggle and in the establishment and preservation of our democracy. At the outset, the slander that Johnson was ambivalent about the struggle for national independence is highlighted, dissected, and debunked. Indeed, the entire publication repudiates this aspersion which was conjured up by the competing brands of narrow nationalism, eager to dispense with the irritation of the aspirations of the working class, as they struggled to assert their claim to their perceived inheritance during the immediate post- independence period.

The narrative then takes us through the Johnsons' initial engagement with Belfast Trades Council and the infant Socialist and Political Labour Movement here. Then we go on to the Great Belfast

Dock Strike of 1907 and their introduction to Jim Larkin and later James Connolly. In both cases the initial relationship was of a warm comradely nature, even to the extent of being one of patronage. With the passage of time, it would drift and change: to physical and political remoteness - though never antipathy - with Connolly; but to bitterly destructive conflict with Larkin. Unfortunately, the requirement for brevity limits the analysis to the interpersonal differences, thus precluding exploration of the underlying wider global ideological confrontations within the Second International, which they manifested. On then to the Lockout - the defining confrontation between Capital and Labour. Here we are introduced to the ever-pragmatic role played by Tom and Marie, from fundraising across the North of England, to helping in the soup kitchen in Liberty Hall, to crucially conciliating with the TUC and the Movement in Britain.

Next the journey opens out onto Home Rule, the founding of the Labour Party, the tragedy of WW1 and then to 1916, the loss of Connolly and the transformed environment of the aftermath. The author delves authoritatively into the immensity of the challenge which faced the leaders of Labour. They had to navigate a coherent course through the gigantic torrents of the competing nationalisms, Orange and Green. For some of them it was solely about preserving the fragile unity of the industrial arm and avoiding Connolly's 'carnival of reaction.' For Tom Johnson, who had already emerged as a key figure in the leadership, it was about all that, but it was also about seizing the opportunity to assert the egalitarian vision signalled in the Proclamation of 1916 which would be scoped out in the first draft of the Democratic Programme. Consequently, under Johnson's guidance Labour opted against a passive minimalist 'wait and see, servile pay and conditions' role throughout those tumultuous years. Ever since the advent of the Home Rule debate 'the Englishman' actively supported the full independence of all of Ireland, vigorously opposing partition and bringing most of the Movement with him. It strained industrial unity, but ultimately division was avoided.

The Labour Party and Trade Union Congress seized the initiative in the anti-conscription campaign declaring the General Strike of 23<sup>rd</sup> April 1918, offering as the narrative puts it, "...a class-based opposition to conscription instead of a nationalist one". They abstained from contesting the General Election giving way to the national interest but insisted on asserting the claim of the working-class and the dispossessed to their rightful stake in a new Ireland through the Democratic Programme, which was skilfully crafted by Tom Johnson. This signature blueprint for a truly inclusive Republic went on to serve as the platform on which the war of independence was fought. Organised Labour played a key, though grossly underacknowledged, role in that historic confrontation. It included winning the first global recognition of our Independence at the Bern Conference of the Socialist International in February 1919 and the successful General Strike of April 12 /13<sup>th</sup> 1920 in support of the prisoners, followed shortly afterwards by the munitions strike which crippled the British war effort for months. The author correctly highlights the sheer brilliance of Johnson's planning and execution and most importantly his political direction from a class as distinct from a nationalist perspective.

To its credit the narrative also ensures that Johnson's critical work as the Secretary of the Irish Labour Party and Trade Union Congress is not neglected amidst the tumultuous events of the period. It outlines his efforts to bring about the restructuring of the Movement in 1919 to optimise its latent potential. These were to be frustrated by a mentality afflicted by a poverty of ambition among most of his contemporaries. Tragically, it would not be the last time that was to happen. Despite its brevity, the text comprehensively reveals Johnson's and Labour's pivotal role in the foundation of the new State, decisively laying the foundation for its ultimately democratic character. Efficiently it takes us through their response to the Treaty, their successful campaign in the General Election of 1922 and their subsequent insistence on a functioning Dail, the principle of accountability and the primacy of the rule of law. The latter is superbly illustrated by the simple technique of quoting Johnson's seminal address following the institutionalised murder of Rory O Connor, Liam Mellows, Joseph McKelvey

and Richard Barret after the reprehensible assassination of Deputy Sean Hales. Parallel with this we learn how he laboured tirelessly to mediate between the warring factions of nationalism throughout their brutal and utterly pointless civil war, whilst suffering harassment and derision from both. Ultimately, the narrative relates how he selflessly navigated the route to Dail participation for Fianna Fail and by doing so consolidated our parliamentary democracy. Then it continues to the roller coaster year of 1927, which saw him fall from the pinnacle of the precipice of office to the tragic loss of his seat.

Thereafter it deals with the advent of Fianna Fail's dominance and the housing and social programmes they promoted initially, as conditions of Labour's support. Then the narrative descends into the marginalisation of Labour and the dark age of economic misery, emigration, and suffocating theocracy, when the aspiration of cherishing all the children of the nation equally gave way to the sordid reality of the mother and baby homes. Following a comprehensive appraisal of their immense, perhaps unparalleled contribution to the foundations of modern Ireland, the author closes with a poignant portrayal of the plight of this heroic Socialist couple, impoverished and unacknowledged in the winter of their lives. In many ways their depleted condition reflected the experience of those whose cause they always selflessly served and for whom Ireland had become a cold place. They never killed anyone or advocated killing anyone. Their only offense was to remain unequivocally on the wrong side, - that of the working class, the poor and the dispossessed while 'the winners' wrote history. Some of us would demur on the treatment of Jim Larkin and the unequivocal endorsement of the separation of the Labour and Trade Union wings in 1930. Nevertheless, *Seeking No Honours* is a superb exquisitely accessible brief narrative which is essential reading for all who aspire to a truly democratic, socialist, equal, and secular society on this island.

**Jack O'Connor**

Owen O'Shea, **Ballymacandy: The Story of a Kerry Ambush** (Dublin, 2021), Merrion Press, ISBN: 9781785373879, 272pp, €14.95 (pb)

We have been very fortunate that during the Decade of Centenaries, so much new research has been done on the events in Ireland between 1912 - 1924. But rather than examine or retell the national story, tremendous work had been undertaken by historians in writing of events from the local perspective, showing that the national story cannot be told without looking at the local story. *Ballymacandy: The Story of a Kerry Ambush* by Owen O'Shea is one such example. The Ballymacandy ambush took place on 1 June 1921, just weeks before the War of Independence ended. It was a victory for the Kerry IRA, five RIC and Black and Tans were killed, the IRA suffered no losses, yet it is little known outside of Kerry. O'Shea, a native of Milltown, County Kerry, grew up hearing stories about the ambush, the site of which was a short distance from where he lived. As he says, 'Ballymacandy meant little to me as a child', but 'As the centenary of the ambush approached, however, Ballymacandy took on a whole new meaning for me and I was determined to find out more about what happened there a century ago'.

Thanks to the release of new material from Military archives and other institutions and having had access to personal collections, O'Shea has definitely achieved that. This book is not a straightforward IRA versus the Crown Forces story. He shows exactly how complex the War of Independence was, certainly in towns and villages across Ireland, the IRA knew the members of the RIC who they were attacking or vice versa. Nor does O'Shea take sides. This story is told with a great deal of humanity. The key figures like Dan Mulvihill, Adjutant, 6<sup>th</sup> Battalion, Kerry No. 2 Brigade, who played a central role in the ambush, or RIC Sergeant James Collery, one of the five who was

killed, are not two-dimensional figures. Collery was a father of nine, his family was devastated by his death, so much so that they left Milltown, their home, never to return. O'Shea not only names the twelve men who were in the cycle patrol that was ambushed, (three RIC and nine Black and Tans), he tells who they were, where they were from.

But this is neither the story of two men on opposite sides, it is the story of a whole community, a community divided in its loyalties and also a community deeply affected by the events that took place on 1 June. Through his forensic research, O'Shea places Ballymacandy in the long narrative of Kerry's role in the fight for Irish freedom. This ambush did not happen by chance, the IRA were only waiting for the opportunity to strike and when it came, they acted swiftly. Nor did it involve a handful of Volunteers, scores of men and women of the Kerry No.1 and 2 Brigades and local Cumann an mBan were involved from the planning to the aftermath. O'Shea vividly portrays the violence that was carried out by both sides during the War of Independence. Giving an example of the reprisals carried out by the Black and Tans and Auxiliaries in towns and villages, he writes: "When Constable George Howlett was murdered as he walked to the RIC Barracks in Ballylongford at the end of February, the retaliation saw the village 'almost wiped out' as many buildings were reduced to ashes." But intimidation was not just the weapon of the Crown Forces, the IRA were just as capable of carrying out acts of violence on civilians including the cropping of women's hair. Surprisingly, the Crown Forces did not carry out reprisals following the Ballymacandy ambush.

The book benefits from the inclusion of many photographs of the participants, IRA veterans and Cumann na mBan including the sisters Nora and Nellie Corcoran, the victims, including RIC Sergeant James Collery and witnesses, Thomas O'Sullivan and Denis Sugrue, who were schoolboys and saw the aftermath of the ambush. O'Shea is one of those gifted writers who, knowing the landscape so intimately, makes the reader feel like they are there, witnessing the events as they unfold. Nor is his language sentimental, which can so often be the case in studies such as this. O'Shea has sought to tell the story from all perspectives, the IRA, Cumann na mBan, the RIC and Crown Forces and very importantly the civilians, who's stories are so often overlooked. Owen O'Shea is to be congratulated on his book, *Ballymacandy: The Story of a Kerry Ambush*. Ultimately, this is a book which puts people at the heart of the story, there is no glorification of the events. Through his writing O'Shea has shown the reality of conflict on those who fight and those who witness it. But also, he has shown that all history is local, our communities are all part of the national story, without them there simply would not be a national story.

**Liz Gillis**

Barry McLoughlin and Emmet O'Connor, **In Spanish Trenches: the minds and deeds of the Irish who fought for the Spanish Republic in the Spanish Civil War** (Dublin, 2020) University College Dublin Press, ISBN-13 978-1-910820582, 412pp, €25 (pb)

This is the most comprehensive book yet on Irish involvement in the Spanish Civil War. It builds on Fearghal McGarry's *Ireland and the Spanish Civil War* (1999) which prior to this was the most complete book on the subject, and on earlier publications by both authors. But to describe this as a book about the Irish who went to Spain is to undersell it. It is really several books in one; a study of Ireland, north and south, during the 1930s; of the Irish left and right; of the Irish diaspora; of global communism; and of memory and identity. It is comparatively long but is an easy read while packed full of ideas. It is attractively designed and well-illustrated with some original photographs (notably those of Frank Ryan). The Irish who fought in Spain came from five different countries; this book

is based on research in Irish, British, German, Spanish and crucially Soviet archives. It is by turns social, military, diplomatic and cultural history, which takes the reader from unemployment protests in Canada to the battlefields of the Ebro, via contemporary Irish literary representations of the Spanish war. There are few history books where the narrative shifts effortlessly from Kate O'Brien to Andre Marty, or from Leslie Daiken to Harry Midgley. It shows how the Spanish war reinvigorated a weak and beleaguered Irish left, which then arguably punched well above its weight. It also illustrates how a small but vocal liberal middle-class current emerged to challenge clericalist dominance. It brings to life a myriad of Irish connections to Spain, explaining why for example Kildare woman Jane Browne, working as numbers of young Irish women did as governesses in that country, could end up providing evidence against Frank Ryan. The importance of British media representations of the conflict (including that of Pathe News) is noted.

Then, as now, many Irish people read British newspapers. The book has new things to say about national and ethnic tensions within the International Brigades and their importance. It is sympathetic to those who fought for the Spanish Republic but not myopic. There are revealing discussions about desertion and insubordination as well as the methods to ensure discipline employed by the Brigade leaderships. In many cases this was not too different from that of the Great War but was sometimes inspired by the paranoia of the Moscow Trials. The authors convincingly argue that the idea that southern Ireland was insulated from international trends until the 1970s is nonsense. In fact, there is a case that Ireland was more European in the 1930s than it is now (with American popular culture probably more significant these days). The idea that Ireland 'a station on the highway between Europe and America, speaking the most global of languages, practising the most catholic of religions, with a large and far-flung diaspora touching almost each of its families' was 'introspective and isolated' is thus bizarre. O'Connor and McLaughlin suggest instead that 'the opening up of North America in the eighteenth century shifted contemporary Ireland from being a cul-de-sac on the edge of Europe to being on one of the great global highways of trade and ideas. The English language, chronic emigration, the British empire and the Catholic Church then made it one of the most globalised countries in the world. Since the Volunteers of 1778, every political movement of any significance has been an echo of things happening elsewhere, and all major wars ... have impinged on Irish politics.' The book contains numerous fascinating but revealing factoids; that the major RTE documentary series *Seven Ages*, did not mention organised labour once, for example, or that Fr. Francis Shaw, arguably the originator of modern revisionist takes on 1916, was a prominent critic of the Basque anti-fascist priest Romón Laborda.

FSL Lyons's patronising claim that the Irish who went to Spain were simply re-fighting their own Civil War is convincingly rebutted. This view is still echoed however, (even in some commemorative publications), but it cannot explain how some men who had served in the Free State army could fight for the Spanish Republic, or how a few anti-Treatyites could end up in O'Duffy's brigade. Joe Lee's smug assertion that 'fascism was far too intellectually demanding for the bulk of the Blueshirts' is similarly given short shrift. Indeed, the book gives significant attention to the Irish right and their use of Spain. The choice of Eoin O'Duffy to lead the pro-Franco Irish Brigade was surely a mistake, however. A less contentious figure, particularly one less associated with the Civil War, would surely have recruited wider numbers given the popular atmosphere in the Free State. As it was a few Belfast republicans managed to follow O'Duffy to Spain, as of course did many former Blueshirts. But while a significant number of his recruits were politically naïve and largely inspired by anger at news of massacres of Spanish clergy, there was also a coterie of committed fascists such as Thomas Gunning. Things were different north of the border of course, and the book suggests that by the 1930s Northern Ireland was a more 'liberal' place in many ways than the Free State. Both communities saw the war in Spain through communal lenses, though there were complexities on both sides.

The author's account of the trial and captivity of Frank Ryan is perhaps the most comprehensive yet. It is convincing, but perhaps also reassuring; it is after all, what we would like to believe of an attractive and heroic figure like Ryan. But at times their irritation at Ryan's critics leads to the use of strange and slightly contemptuous phraseology. It is legitimate to ask how an icon of the republican left ended up in Nazi Germany, where yes, there were 'lots of swastikas.' However, unlike the man he was supposed to return to Ireland with, Seán Russell, Ryan appears to have had little choice in the end. But there remains more to be said about republican attitudes to fascism in 1940 and 40 years ago Seán Cronin's biography of Ryan made some important points about the trajectory of the Dublin IRA leadership in this period. But these are minor criticisms of a richly detailed and masterful study, which is not only essential reading for those interested in Spain, but anyone who wants to understand interwar Ireland.

**Brian Hanley**

Diarmaid Ferriter, **Between Two Hells: The Irish Civil War** (London, 2021), Profile Books, ISBN 9781788161749, 328pp, £20 (hb)

*Between Two Hells: The Irish Civil War*, the latest work from the prolific pen of Diarmaid Ferriter, picks up some of the themes first described in the concluding chapters of his 2015 monograph, *A Nation Not A Rabble*, which adroitly used material from the then recently released Military Service Pension archive to explore the aftermath of the years of revolutionary upheaval, as well as raising pertinent questions regarding commemoration. Six years later, with the Decade of Commemorations nearing the end, and with the archives still releasing vital material, Ferriter sets out to explore key issues of the civil war in order to examine in more detail the importance and limitations of commemoration. The first half of the book focuses on the origins and conduct of the war while the second part uses correspondence and claims, particularly from dependents such as bereaved parents and wives, to examine the future, often poverty-stricken fate of many of those who fought in the Civil War, including those from the 'winning side'.

He also discusses the impact of civil war divisions on Irish politics in the decades afterward and the extent to which such divisions have been laid to rest in an Ireland that sees the opposing civil war parties now in coalition government and with a new generation developing an agenda for political transformation that transcends the limited horizons of two centre right parties. It is a highly readable book, that leaves the reader with an impressionistic account of the particularly brutal nature of a civil war conducted in a small country where the leading figures on both sides knew each other well; a factor which increased the bitterness of feeling and led to some ferocious acts of inhumanity. This is not the book to turn to for a chronological understanding of the conduct of the war. The first chapters, examining the role of Britain and the pressure mounted upon the provisional government to act assertively against the anti-Treaty parties, are unambiguous in underlining the continued malign role that Westminster played, urging and demanding military action at a time when conflict was not inevitable. However, Ferriter deliberately avoids a military history approach, preferring an episodic style that examines specific issues, such as lost leaders; experiences of hunger striking; how writers and former combatants recalled past events; the influence of the Catholic Church; attitudes towards republican women prisoners. Although clearly aimed at the general reader as well as historian, there is an assumption that one would have some familiarity with the large group of diverse characters within the narrative.

To date I have been unable to locate any female reviewer of *Between Two Hells*. Is that significant? Is there an assumption that women are less likely to be interested in research concerned with the conduct and legacy of war? Would women have a different perspective? In some quarters

Ferriter has been praised for his inclusion of women within his narrative. There are two chapters devoted to women. In part one we have ‘God’s Law and Joans of Arc’, which focuses mainly on Mary MacSwiney, described somewhat flippantly as ‘top of the republican faith class’ and including the jailing of women, with brief mention of the testimony of Dorothy Macardle. In part two, with ‘Ideal specimens of womanhood’, Ferriter delves into women’s pension applications to draw a picture of their lives in the aftermath of the war when many former Cumann na mBan members struggled with a male bureaucracy in attempts to verify their active service claims, with many suffering ill-health and poverty, forced to emigrate in search of work. The claims made by family members on their behalf are even more revealing, with mentions of rape, sexual assault, mental insanity and premature death. Ferriter also mentions the plight of women in the north, where even making claims for a pension could jeopardise their safety in a state that continued to regard republicans as a threat.

Despite these inclusions, what we do not have is a sense of women’s agency during this period. Other than repeated references to MacSwiney and the scattering of names like Maud Gonne to provide a sense that other prominent women could also be regarded as ‘furies’, we have little indication of the activities in which women were engaged or the reasons why they were in jail. The assertion that ‘republican women achieved equality at last in September 1922’ because the government decided that they were to be treated on the same basis as the male prisoners tells us nothing of what women had done to merit such treatment. A truly gendered account could have included women’s efforts to be included on the electoral register so that young women over 21 who had been active in the war of independence could have had their say on the Treaty. It could have included the valiant efforts by the women’s peace delegations to both sides in the period before the shelling of the Four Courts. In the Dáil, the protests made by Johnson, leader of the Labour Party, regarding unlawful executions and other barbarities are rightfully mentioned, but on the streets outside the women of the Women’s Prisoners Defence League were often the only visible opposition, despite Cosgrave’s threat to execute women also. Some mention should surely have been made of the activities of women who volunteered for duty in the Four Courts and in the various outposts along O’Connell Street as the fighting in Dublin began in earnest. There are many accounts from activists such as Maire Comerford, Leslie Price, Eithne Coyle, Bridie O’Mullane and Sighle Humphries which would explain why the Free State imprisoned over 500 women. Serious consideration of their roles would also have helped to explain why men from both sides, their masculinity threatened, once in political power agreed on the necessity of removing women from political and public life. Can civil war politics truly be said to have ended without women gaining equal status within the Irish state.

**Margaret Ward**

Aodh Quinlivan **Vindicating Dublin The story behind the controversial dissolution of Dublin Corporation in 1924.** (Dublin 2021), Dublin City Council, ISBN 978-0-9505488-3-8, 253pp, €22,50 (hb)

This beautifully produced edition is one of a series of publications by Dublin City Council which include a history of Dublin’s Mansion House and Dublin City Council and the 1916 Rising. Quinlivan begins by outlining the involvement of many Dublin Corporation Councillors and staff in the 1916 Rising and records the subsequent growth in hostility towards the British authorities as demands grew for the release of prisoners. The conscription crisis and the ‘German plot’ arrests only increased the drift to new loyalties. By May 1920, the Corporation had pledged allegiance to

the Dáil, breaking with the Local Government Board in the Custom's House.

During the Civil War, despite a clear pro-treaty majority, the Corporation was described as displaying 'marked neutral tendencies'. Relations with the victorious Free State Government soured as the Corporation became a platform for voicing prisoners' complaints. In particular, the Corporation antagonised the Government in providing a political platform for a minority of anti-treaty republicans, including T.D's, who were otherwise boycotting Dáil Eireann and refusing to recognise the Free State. The Corporation entered into further conflict with the Government as it sought to resist demands for limits on road workers' wages and preference in hiring former National Army soldiers as a condition for the award of road improvements grants. Legislation was introduced in 1923 allowing the Minister to dissolve individual local authorities and replace them by centrally appointed Commissioners. Very quickly, Dublin Corporation was in the firing line and its traditional enemies in the Dublin business sector and 'rate payers' political groupings in the Citizen's Association were quick to seize their moment. Their complaints were what they perceived as high rates, municipal mal-administration and, tellingly, the claim that Corporation labourers were paid more than their equivalents in other cities. Not surprisingly, they identified Labour councillors as their main opponents.

In February 1924 the Government ordered an inquiry into the performance of the Corporation with potential dissolution as its outcome. Quinlivan takes us through a day by day account of the evidence and cross examinations in March and early April 1924. The evidence provides a useful historical snapshot of social conditions in the City and, generally, the elected councillors and senior management gave a good account of the role and performance of the Corporation. The strongest charge levelled against the Corporation was the lack of business capacity amongst the elected officials. As the inquiry concluded, councillors were happy with the inquiry but feared the likely outcome as they suspected that the process was a charade, with a decision to dissolve the Corporation already taken.

They were correct in that assumption. In May, the Minister for Local Government, Séamus Burke, dissolved the Corporation and appointed three Commissioners in its place. (The Lord Mayor, Laurence O'Neill was offered one of these posts but he declined). The decision was supported by the national newspapers who continued to denounce the Corporation for mis-management. There was no significant public opposition as post-civil war citizens remained indifferent. When an edited account of the report of the inquiry was published, it was hard to find justification for such a significant step. One aspect of the report did criticise councillors for not pursuing pay cuts for workers in line with pay reductions generally applying in the economy. When the Commissioners pursued the issue, seeking a reduction of six shilling a week, they faced a strike by the Irish Municipal Employees Trade Union. When sewage flowed into the Liffey and lights weren't turned on, the cuts were deferred and the eventual reductions amounted to two shillings per week. The Irish Times reported that the strikers were 'completely satisfied'.

Outside the area of industrial relations, the Commissioners had a freer hand. They closed manufacturing in the much-criticised Stanley Street Workshop and introduced a range of administrative changes. The most significant development during this period was the introduction of the concept of a City Manager. The Town Clerk, Gerald Sherlock, was appointed as the first Manager to coincide with the restoration of an elected Corporation in 1930. One interesting aspect of this election was captured by the Roscommon Herald, which noted 'The old Corporation was abolished for fear one Jim Larkin would get into it, and now, when it has been revived after a long period of incubation, it produces not one Jim Larkin but two'. (Jim Larkin Senior was elected for the Irish Workers' League while his son, Young Jim was elected under the banner of 'Revolutionary Workers'). Ultimately, the question must be asked why the Corporation was abolished. Quinlivan concludes that 'Cosgrave and his colleagues in central Government were well versed in how the



local councils across the country had successfully undermined British rule. They now felt that local autonomy had to be curtailed so that the local authorities could not defy the Free State Government in the same manner’.

Two final points. It is surprising that Quinlivan makes no mention of the various (rival) Labour Councillors elected in the 1920 local elections or the Labour TD’s elected in Dublin in the 1922 General Election, limiting his account to the outcome for Sinn Fein candidates. He doesn’t generally identify the political affiliations of the councillors, treating them in a generic manner as if they held no distinct political views on municipal matters. A notable absence from his bibliography is Martin Maguire’s ‘Servants to the Public - a history of the Local Government and Public Services Union, 1901-1990 (IPA 1998). Any history of Irish Local Government would benefit from consulting Maguire’s study of the main trade union in the sector, particularly for the revolutionary period and its immediate aftermath. The account of the 1924 strike would also have benefited from a reading of Sean Redmond’s centenary publication ‘The Irish Municipal Employees Trade Union 1883 – 1983’(Dublin 1983).

**Shay Cody**

## Notes on Contributors

**Francis Devine**, with Mike Shuker, is author of *'To Make a Universe of Love, Not a Universe of Hate' - Leicestershire Labour & the Dublin Lockout, 1913-1914*, (ILHS Studies in Irish Labour History 16, 2020) and recorded, with Steve Byrne & Friends, the CD *An Ownerless Corner of Earth*, [www.francydevine.bandcamp.com](http://www.francydevine.bandcamp.com)

**Patrick Breen** studied History and French at University College Dublin and, afterwards, taught in Waterford and, later, in France. He became interested in the Irish Neutrality League when working on a pre-thesis research project (DEA) in 1998-1999 in Caen University under the supervision of the late Professor Paul Brennan.

**Dyuti Chakravarty** is a final year PhD candidate at the School of Sociology in University College Dublin. She is completing my dissertation titled 'Break the Cage: Women's Body Politics of Respectability and Autonomy in India and Ireland' through a comparative analysis of two movements - Pinjra Tod (right to mobility in India) and Repeal the Eighth (reproductive rights in Ireland). She is currently working as a Research Assistant on an Irish Research Council funded project titled, Negotiating Difference on a shared island: Agonism, commonality or Critical Constitutionalism, led by Professor Jennifer Todd at UCD.

**Shay Cody** is a former General Secretary of Fórsa, is a member of the Central Bank Commission and is the current President of the Irish Labour History Society. He recently published a study of the life of Tom Johnson in 'Seeking no Honours', published by the ILHS.

**Christopher Cusack** is a postdoctoral researcher and lecturer at Radboud University in the Netherlands. He has published widely on the cultural memory of the Great Famine.

**Francis Devine** has recently published *The Man in the Middle: Bill Attley, Trade Union Leader*, (ILHS, Studies in Irish Labour History 16) and, with Steve Byrne & Friends, issued the CD *An Ownerless Corner of Earth* available on Bandcamp

**Terry Dunne** graduated with a PhD from the Sociology Department of Maynooth University in 2015. He podcasts at [peelersandsheep.ie](http://peelersandsheep.ie) and is currently editing a volume, entitled 'Spirit of Revolution', on the Irish Revolution 1917-23, along with John Cunningham.

**Thomas Earls FitzGerald** is a historian of modern Ireland. His book *Combatants and civilians in revolutionary Ireland 1918-1923* was published by the Routledge Press in 2021

**Máiréad Enright** is Reader in Feminist Legal Studies and a Leverhulme Research Fellow at the University of Birmingham

**Averill Earls** is a historian of same-sex desire in modern Ireland. She is currently the Executive Producer of *Dig: A History Podcast* ([digpodcast.org](http://digpodcast.org)), the Layout Editor of *Nursing Clio* ([nursingclio.org](http://nursingclio.org)), and an Assistant Professor of History at Mercyhurst University.

**Hugh Gault** is an independent writer and historian. A recent book '1900 Liverpool Lives: The Threads That Bind' compares and contrasts two streets in different parts of Liverpool and the people who lived there at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

**Liz Gillis** is a historian from the Liberties and is the author of six books on the Irish Revolution including *The Hales Brothers and the Irish Revolution* and *Women of the Irish Revolution*. She is the Historian in Residence for South Dublin County Council Decade of Centenaries and is a Researcher on RTÉ Radio 1's *The History Show*.

**Brian Hanley** is Assistant Professor in Twentieth Century Irish History at Trinity College Dublin. He is currently researching the global aspects of the Irish Revolution.'

**John Horne** is emeritus Fellow and former Professor of Modern European History at Trinity College Dublin (until 2015), where he was also founder of the Centre for War Studies (2008-2016). He specialises in the history of nineteenth and twentieth century Europe, especially France, and of war in the modern world.

**Paul Hughes** was awarded a PhD in History from Queen's University, Belfast in 2018. His thesis was entitled 'The Irish republican activism of Laurence Ginnell, 1916-23'. He is currently working on a biography of Ginnell. Dr Hughes is Westmeath County Council's Decade of Centenaries Historian in Residence for the period April to July 2022.

**Mary McAuliffe** is a historian and Director of Gender Studies at UCD. Her latest publications include as co-editor with Miriam Haughton and Emilie Pine, *Legacies of the Magdalen Laundries; Commemoration, Gender, and the Postcolonial Carceral State* (Manchester University Press, 2021) and as sole author, *Margaret Skinnider; a biography* (UCD Press, 2020). She is currently researching and writing on gendered and sexual violence during the Irish revolutionary period, 1919-1923, which will be published in 2023.

**Conor McCabe** is an historian and author of *Sins of the Father: Decisions that Shaped the Irish Economy* (2013) and *Money* (2018).

**Alan McCarthy** was conferred with a PhD by UCC in 2019. He published his first book, *Newspapers and Journalism in Cork, 1910-23: Press Politics and Revolution* in 2020 with Four Courts Press and was awarded a Special Commendation by the NUI Publication Prize in Irish History. Presently, he is ACE Postdoctoral Research Fellow at UCC where he is writing a history of adult education in the south of Ireland from 1946-2021 to mark the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Adult Continuing Education (ACE) Department in UCC.

**Kieran Jack McGinley** is Principal of Umiskin Press, Immediate past President ILHS, and President of the Dublin District Council of SIPTU. He has edited *Cluskey: The Conscience of Labour*, along with *Left Lives in 20<sup>th</sup> Century Ireland Vols 1&2* (with Francis Devine). His PhD was on the subject of 'Neo-Corporatism, New Realism & Social Partnership in Ireland, 1970-1999'.

**Seamus Martin** is former member of the National Executive, Cathaoirleach of the Irish Executive and Father of the *Irish Times* chapel of the NUJ. He is a retired Moscow Correspondent, South Africa Correspondent and International Editor of *The Irish Times*.

**Kathryn Milligan** is an art historian specialising in nineteenth and twentieth century Irish art. Her first monograph, *Painting Dublin, 1886 - 1949: Visualising a changing city*, was published by Manchester University Press in 2020, and other recent publications include essays on James Malton, Nano Reid, Jack. B Yeats, and artistic culture in nineteenth-century Dublin.

**Eve Morrison** is an Irish historian specialising in the revolutionary period (1916-23) and its social and cultural memory. Both her doctoral research on the Bureau of Military History (Trinity College Dublin) and a postdoctoral fellowship on the Ernie O'Malley notebook interviews (University College Dublin) were funded by the Irish Research Council. From 2018 to 2021, she was Canon Murray Fellow in Irish History at St Catherine's College, University of Oxford.

**Mary Muldowney** is Dublin City Council Historian in Residence for Dublin Central. She is a member of the ILHS organising committee and recently joined the Saothar editorial team. As a member of the Grangegorman Histories Expert Working Group she is directing an oral history project with former staff of St Brendan's Hospital. Mary has published widely on labour and social history.

**Mags O'Brien** is former trade union tutor SIPTU. She is an activist on human rights and social issues and has an interest in feminist and social history and editor of *Left Lives Four*, 2021, focussing on women in the labour movement.

**Paul O'Brien** writes on the relationship between literature, history and politics. His publications include 'Shelley and Revolutionary Ireland', 'The 1913 Lockout'. He has just completed 'A Political Biography of Seán O'Casey (forthcoming 2023).

**Aindrias Ó Cathasaigh** edited 1913, Micheál Ó Maoláin's memoir of the Dublin lockout, and wrote *An Diabhal in Uachtar in Áth Cliath: Frithdhúnadh 1913 trí shúile na nGael* (both Coiscéim, 2013). His current research on Ó Maoláin is part of a study of Irish-speaking socialists in the early twentieth century.

**Emmet O'Connor** lectures in Ulster University. He is a former co-editor of *Saothar* and has published widely on labour history' including *International Brigades for Ukraine? The lessons from Spain* <https://www.rte.ie/brainstorm/2022/0311/1285743-ukraine-international-brigades-spanish-civil-war/>

**Martin O'Donoghue** currently teaches modern Irish and British history at The University of Sheffield. He is the author of *The Legacy of the Irish Parliamentary Party in Independent Ireland, 1922-1949* (Liverpool, 2019) and a committee member of the Irish Association of Professional Historians.

**Owen O'Shea** is the author of several books on history and politics in his native Kerry, most recently *Ballymacandy: the Story of a Kerry Ambush* (Merrion Press, 2021) and he is currently writing a history of the Civil War in Kerry (Merrion Press, 2023). He co-authored/edited books on Kerry and the 1916 Rising and a political history of Kerry over the last century. Owen is an Irish Research Council-funded PhD student at University College Dublin, researching electioneering and politics in Kerry in the decade after the Civil War

**Maeve O'Riordan** is lecturer in Women's and Cultural History at University College Cork. She is author of *Women of the Country House in Ireland, 1860–1914* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2018) and other research on privileged women in Ireland.

**Steven Parfitt** currently teaches history at a state secondary school in the UK. He is the author of *Knights Across the Atlantic: The Knights of Labor in Britain and Ireland*, as well as upcoming books on the Knights of Labor around the world and on trade union women Emma Paterson and Leonora Barry. He has also written numerous scholarly articles on labour history and articles on historical and current events for magazines and newspapers including the *Guardian*, *Jacobin*, *Tribune* and *In These Times*.

**Emma Penney** is a leading scholar of Working-Class Studies in Ireland and has played a central role in efforts to decolonise Irish Studies through conferences, events and publishing. She is co-creator of the Working-Class Writing Archive, an online digital repository of self-published poetry, prose and memoir collected in working-class communities over the past five years. Currently, Emma is a Fulbright-NUI Visiting Scholar at Howard University in Washington DC where she is consulting the archives of the National Welfare Rights Organisation.

**Peter Rigney** has a doctorate in history from TCD. He worked as an industrial officer for the Irish Congress of Trade Unions. His work can be found at <https://tcd.academia.edu/PeterRigney>

**Margaret Ward** is Honorary Senior Lecturer in History at Queen's University, Belfast. Her pioneering book *Unmanageable Revolutionaries, women, and Irish Nationalism* first published in 1983, was published in a revised and updated edition by Arlen House in 2021.

**Helga Woggon** is a historian, philologist and curator, a biographer of *James Connolly* (1990) & *Winifred Carney* (2000), an ILHS member since 1975, a Research Fellow QUB and GHIL (both 1979-81) & NUIG (Moore Institute/ ICHLC, 2017). She has published widely on Irish labour, Afro-Central America and Holocaust studies (Topography of Terror, Berlin, and Visual History Archive, USC Shoah Foundation at FU Berlin, 1993-2011). She is currently working on a new Carney biography

**Padraig Yeates** is a journalist and historian. His books include *Lockout: Dublin 1913* and *A City in Wartime: Dublin 1914-1918*. He is also secretary of the Truth Recovery Process CLG, [www.truthrecoveryprocess.ie](http://www.truthrecoveryprocess.ie).

EVELYN OWENS (1931-2010), was a formidable trade union activist and politician.

Initially a member of the Irish Local Government Officials Union (ILGOU), she was the first woman to be elected President of the union, which was later renamed the Local Government and Public Service Union (LGPSU). It's now a part of Fórsa.

A trailblazer in the fight for equal pay for women, Evelyn fought against the public service marriage bar and, in the early 1960s, took on her own union leadership when it agreed differential pay scales for men and women in local councils.

Evelyn and her colleagues formed the Association of Women Officers of the Local Authorities of Ireland (AWOLAI), which Evelyn chaired. But victory wasn't fully achieved until the 1970s brought legislative changes.

Nominated by ICTU, Evelyn was elected to Seanad Éireann from the Labour panel in 1969. She became the first woman to be elected as Seanad Leas-Cathaoirleach in 1973, and served there until 1977.

She was appointed deputy chair of the Labour Court in 1984, and became its first woman chair a decade later.



of Realm Act

Oh "Dora," dear! I often think.  
How naughty you have been  
To lock me up where I can see.  
No blue-eyed sweet colleen  
One small request I have to make  
(Oh Dora! please give ear)  
Arrest some pretty little girls.  
And lock them up in here.  
.....

Francis Whitney

Dumlish

Co Longford

Belfast.  
Jan 13-9-18