

ST PATRICK'S CATHEDRAL, DUBLIN. Edited by John Crawford and Raymond Gillespie. Pp xv, 424, illus. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2009. €50.

This large book tells the story of Ireland's largest medieval cathedral. It is an impressive volume, a worthy successor to William Monck Mason's monumental *History of the antiquities of the church of St Patrick* (1819), and a fine companion to Kenneth Milne's sister volume on Christ Church Cathedral.

The story of St Patrick's Cathedral is told through three complementary strands: architectural, musical and a more conventional historical strand. The architectural essays are the work of Michael O'Neill. He deploys a wealth of architectural plans, drawings and photographs (several of which are printed in colour in the book) to great effect to complement his detailed discussion of the building. The cathedral dates from c.1225, and, though there were several changes made to it over the centuries, O'Neill reveals that more of the original fabric survives than had been thought. His 'overall impression of the building in the middle ages is of a well maintained and furnished cathedral adhering to the daily rhythms of the Sarum Use and providing a flagship of liturgical and architectural excellence' (p. 119). The Reformation brought disruption to the life of the cathedral, and a collapse of a significant portion of its fabric. A number of repairs were made to the building before the massive restoration of the nineteenth century funded by Benjamin Lee Guinness. O'Neill highlights the work of the restoration architect, R. C. Carpenter, which, he suggests, was even 'more important than the Guinness munificence'. He concludes that, 'while the newly-restored structure impressed, the cost was the loss of late medieval detail and Georgian splendour and in its place a homogeneity that did not reflect the piecemeal evolution of a complex and grand building' (p. 349). One of O'Neill's achievements in this book is to record a very great deal of what has otherwise been lost.

Although the documentary evidence has been 'heavily depleted' over time (p. 120), Alan Fletcher provides a strikingly vivid study of the liturgical life of the medieval St Patrick's. He points to architectural as well as documentary evidence of St Patrick's faithfulness to the Old Sarum Use from its inception as a cathedral (p. 122) right up to the Reformation. Kerry Houston takes up the story from 1550. He states that the Restoration witnessed a 'renaissance' in church music in the cathedral. Generous salaries attracted British musicians to Dublin, and a conscious effort was made to keep abreast of developments in England, and particularly with the Chapel-Royal. The quality of the music in St Patrick's is judged to have been 'of a comparable standard with cathedrals of the first rank in England, and far ahead of the more provincial ones' (p. 286). Handel was impressed by the quality of Dublin's choristers who sang the premiere of his *Messiah* in 1742. 'Paddy's Opera', as the Sunday evensong was commonly called, attracted 'huge crowds' in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, more for the music than for the prayers, according to one contemporary observer (p. 300). The opulence of the musical establishment at St Patrick's was pruned by the Church Temporalities Act (1833), and more profoundly following disestablishment (1871). Yet Houston concludes with the very positive observation that 'St Patrick's unique position in Ireland of providing choral worship six days per week [during school terms] is as secured as it is treasured' (p. 382).

Howard Clarke revises significantly the long-accepted accounts about the elevation of St Patrick's to collegiate and then to cathedral status in the early thirteenth century. He analyses the workings of the cathedral, the influences that shaped its form and operations, and the relations between its staff and the wider community. He is careful to base his conclusions on the evidence available, and gives us an extremely convincing account of his subject. Raymond Gillespie concurs with Clarke's very positive assessment of the good order at St Patrick's at the close of the Middle Ages. However, the cathedral was temporarily dissolved by Henry VIII, before being restored by his daughter Mary. James Murray's thesis that St Patrick's played a key role in thwarting the Reformation is not referred to by Gillespie, who instead shows us an institution that was beset by simony, absenteeism and nepotism on an unprecedented scale during Adam Loftus's tenure as Elizabethan archbishop

of Dublin. The most significant achievement of the period was ‘simply the survival of the institution’ (p. 173). Gillespie traces the troubled transition of the cathedral towards its position as a bastion of the Protestant ascendancy at the end of the seventeenth century. The passionate Protestantism of the institution is reflected in Gillespie’s second essay, and in those of Toby Barnard, Kenneth Milne and John Crawford. Each of the authors grapple with the available evidence to present impressions of the day-to-day life of the cathedral at various points through time, and they succeed in providing vivid sketches of the institution and of those members who left the greatest imprint in written form. The abiding impression created is of an establishment that was staffed by men who were very privileged in terms of money and social status but isolated from the vast majority of the people scratching a living in the cathedral parish.

Robert MacCarthy, the current dean, continues the story of St Patrick’s into the 1960s. It was not an easy time, and the cathedral community struggled to adjust to the ongoing ramifications of disestablishment and Irish independence. MacCarthy observes that ‘in many ways the cathedral acted as a focus of loyalty to the Crown throughout the first half of the twentieth century’ (p. 389). Victor Griffin became the dean of St Patrick’s in 1967, and effectively re-formed the cathedral. He injected massive energy into an institution that showed signs of atrophy: crumbling cathedral fabric, a decayed deanery, and schools on the verge of collapse. He raised funds, negotiated with the state, and generated revenues from visitors to the cathedral. He relocated the faded military banners to the north transept, helped with the controversial but necessary parish reorganisation in Dublin, and, above all, spoke out on a range of social and moral issues, giving voice to a liberal Church of Ireland perspective that made a very positive impact on (Southern) Irish society. Griffin’s postscript makes a very apt conclusion to the volume. John Crawford and Raymond Gillespie are to be congratulated on yet another major contribution to Irish historical studies.

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LORDS AND LORDSHIP IN THE BRITISH ISLES IN THE LATE MIDDLE AGES. By R. R. Davies. Edited by Brendan Smith. Pp xiii, 253. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 2009. £55.

The death of Sir Rees Davies in 2005, at the age of sixty-six, deprived historians of medieval Britain and Ireland of a pivotal, and inspiring, influence. He was revising this, his last book, during the final weeks of his illness. Brendan Smith has handled an awkward editorial task with skill and sensitivity. He explains in his preface that a complete text existed but with sections that would have been expanded and reorganised, and passages that might well have been adjusted had the author been granted more time. *Lords and lordship* revisits many of the themes that shaped Davies’s first book, *Lordship and society in the March of Wales 1282–1400* (1978), a model analysis of a multicultural region that should be on the bedside table of every Irish medievalist. Among those themes are military leadership, power over men (or ‘tributary lordship’), demesne exploitation and judicial authority. The present book also addresses other topics, such as noble identities, family structures, domestic arrangements, conspicuous consumption and fashions in piety; and, of course, it explores the wider sphere that Davies, as a patriotic Welshman, felt no qualms about calling ‘the British Isles’. In that respect, it is also a sequel to his much-admired Ford Lectures, published in 2000 as *The first English empire: power and identities in the British Isles, 1093–1343*. But Davies’s horizons were never bounded by the archipelago: one of his earliest published essays was on Marc Bloch. *Lords and lordship* contrasts a Crown-centred English historiography, shaped by the unique abundance of surviving royal records, with a Continental tradition more at ease with *seigneurie* and *herrschaft*. Davies found the latter approach more useful, especially for understanding societies beyond the