

the marquis of Dorset on pages 31 and 135, while we are repeatedly told that men were more likely subjects of embalming and autopsy than women (pp 79, 134, 144). Some proofreading errors are evident, and the index is poor. There are other mistakes and misapprehensions; for example, Oliver Plunkett's body rather than his head was brought to Lamspringe, Germany (p. 166); it was not the case in Ireland that 'most parish churches were Catholic' (p. 170); and in Britain and Ireland it is usual to refer to 'High' and 'Low' Church in relation to differences of opinion within Anglicanism rather than describing the new Protestant Churches of the period as 'Low' Churches (p. 55).

It seems a pity that this book was rushed to press in its present form and with the present title. In one's disappointment at what is not here, it is possible to overlook what is. Tarlow writes well, is often inventive and imaginative, and in places shows admirable concision and good turns of phrase in expressing complex topics and theories. The book is at its best where it expounds on new archaeological evidence. Chapter 5 is fluid and confident, and in its display of weird and wonderful ideas manages to entertain while providing some insights into magical thinking up until the twentieth century. Those seeking an account of Ireland, Wales and Scotland will have to look elsewhere, but they are still likely to find here useful comparative material.

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BUSINESS ARCHIVAL SOURCES FOR THE LOCAL HISTORIAN. By Ciarán Ó hÓgartaigh and Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh. Pp 93. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2010. €35 hardback; €14.95 paperback.

One of the few upsides to the recent economic collapse has been the realisation that business/financial history – rather than economic theory – is likely to provide a surer guide to how we might extricate ourselves from the economic mire in which we find ourselves. In this context, Ciarán and Margaret Ó hÓgartaigh's book is a timely and welcome addition, presenting, as it does, a guide to the various business and accounting records at our disposal, as well as guidance on how these might be most profitably exploited.

The book provides a practical guide to the major collections of business archives on the whole island. In recounting the manner in which the various archives have been gathered, they point out the achievements of those such as Brian Donnelly in rescuing business archives, as well as the importance of businesses being encouraged to lodge their often seemingly mundane records with relevant local and national repositories. Perhaps most usefully, the book features an introduction to the authors' electronic database of various accounting and governance archives held at the National Archives of Ireland (N.A.I.) and the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (P.R.O.N.I.).

The three introductory chapters are important in summarising not only the nature and scope of the sources being covered but also in highlighting some of the 'opportunities and challenges to the local historian' that these sources present (p. 50). Given the nature of the material being dealt with and its provenance, the authors are careful to try to balance its usefulness against the potential for misunderstanding or misuse: the material 'should be regarded as the means rather than the end of understanding and findings gleaned from the contents of that archive need to be placed and interpreted in the temporal and geographical context' (p. 49).

The authors point out that the database is not an attempt to produce a complete list of sources for business histories. It is meant, rather, as a resource for those seeking to identify and avail of source material that has too often been ignored, especially in local contexts. The database is biased towards accounting and corporate-governance records, and does not seek to include material specifically relating to taxation or corporate failure. In this

context, the authors make a point of highlighting the potential pitfalls, particularly for those seeking to avail of the accounting records that form such a large part of the database. 'Accounting numbers', they warn, 'have an aura of certainty but readers – historians in particular – should not assume that they are "objective"' (pp 15–16). Likewise, readers are warned that the agency perspective that underpins much accounting information often means that 'Business sources – including financial statements – are not necessarily faithful representations of the past' (p. 16). These are important caveats, reinforced by the authors' long experience in using accounting information for archival and other purposes.

Chapter 3, 'Potential uses of business archival sources for the local historian', points to the many imaginative ways in which these sources can be employed. Using various illustrative case studies, the authors show how topics ranging from the impact of customers' credit ratings on business decisions to the books used in eighteenth-century hedge schools can be informed by a keener understanding of these archives.

The real usefulness of the book, however, derives from the databases presented in the detailed appendices. These list business records available in N.A.I. (appendix 1) and P.R.O.N.I. (appendix 2). Each entry gives a catalogue number, the name of the source organisation, the industry sector to which they belong, the local provenance, the period covered, as well as a very useful summary of the data and types of materials available (ledgers, accounts books, and so on). While most sectors (manufacturers, professions, breweries, and so on) are well represented, it is both interesting and telling that comparatively few records have been lodged by accountants and auditors.

This book will become an indispensable resource for anyone seeking to appreciate the nature and range of the business, accounting and governance materials available in Ireland, as well as their potential for informing not only local but national histories. Part of the excellent Maynooth Research Guides for Irish Local History series, it is concise, well written, informative and insightful. Crucially, given the nature of the material, it is well indexed.

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ULSTER LIBERALISM, 1778–1876: THE MIDDLE PATH. By Gerald R. Hall. Pp 272. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2011. €55.

Gerald Hall's ambitious study seeks to move beyond 'the polarized frame of Irish history' and to trace the development, over the long period 1778–1876, of Ulster liberalism, 'a political tradition ... in which neither nationalism nor unionism was the foremost consideration' (pp 11–12). In seeking to address such a complex topic over a lengthy chronological period, readers might be forgiven for fearing that Hall has bitten off more than he can chew; he has, however, largely succeeded, producing a book that, while necessarily selective, is both wide-ranging and nuanced. Aspects of his story have, of course, been addressed before in the work of scholars such as A. T. Q. Stewart, Finlay Holmes and Frank Wright. But while drawing on this scholarship – although, curiously, not on Stewart's seminal M.A. thesis on the transformation of Presbyterian radicalism – Hall's is an original and thought-provoking contribution to the existing literature, which successfully establishes 'a more complete context for Ulster liberalism' (p. 15); this applies in both confessional and geographical terms. Hall's study encompasses both Catholic and Presbyterian liberalism, and moves far beyond Belfast, the focus of much existing work in this area, to examine developments in a range of Ulster localities, including Coleraine, Derry, Enniskillen, Newry, Newtownards and Strabane.

Drawing on a range of primary-source material, including pamphlets, manuscripts and an array of regional newspapers, the study is chronologically structured, and comprises four