

reiterated. But because the evidence comes mainly from official reports and statistics, the extent to which the increased apparatus of the state reconciled inhabitants in Ireland to the increasingly intrusive system is asserted rather than demonstrated. More on the identities of the regiments which were recruited or lodged in Ireland and where subsequently they served, together with the comments and recollections of individual soldiers and sailors, might clarify the degree to which the processes created or strengthened a sense of belonging to an empire, rather than simply to Britain or Ireland.

Dr McGrath's contention that Ireland's contribution, in taxes, manpower and quarters, was vital to the rapid expansion of the British empire is put beyond doubt thanks to the figures that he has meticulously assembled. Yet, the apparent ease with which money was extracted, the lengthening list of commodities that were taxed and the seeming acceptance of a constantly shifting population of soldiers are harder to fathom. There were benefits: regular meetings of the Dublin parliament; more jobs both within and outside Ireland for those who cooperated; the guarantee of greater physical and legal security for the Protestant minority. There are hints that the Catholic majority was not altogether cut off from the benefits: despite prohibitions, they too enlisted in the British forces and found employment in local branches of the state's bureaucracy.

The ready compliance with British requirements could be a prime example of the pragmatism that is seen as characterising the propertied in Ireland rather than any ideological enthusiasm for Hanoverian rule from London mediated through Dublin. The retention within Ireland of an increased proportion of the mounting taxes may have reconciled tax-payers to the system. What is presently unclear is whether, as in so many other European states, the burden fell disproportionately on particular sections of the population. Dr McGrath acknowledges that the soldiery on occasion were used to quell disturbances directed against particular levies and were subjected to violence, not always ritualised in nature. The extent to which routine administration and policing in eighteenth-century Ireland were entrusted to the military is currently being investigated.

A final chapter usefully identifies the principal investors in government loans. The case is advanced that the willingness to invest showed not just financial hard-headedness but an enthusiasm for the regime. At present little is known about the investment habits of anyone in eighteenth-century Ireland, so what proportion of spare funds was put into government stock as opposed to the alternatives cannot be guessed. One implication of Dr McGrath's findings is that Protestant dissenters and Catholics chose to put their surplus cash elsewhere, but this difference (and its implications) has scarcely been explored. These unknowns arise inevitably from the nature of the surviving documentation and, to a lesser extent, from the lack of detailed research into the topic.

The illuminating investigation is incorporated into a series on 'empires in perspective', and, as yet, is the only volume relating to Ireland. It is presumably to make the work accessible to non-specialists that Dr McGrath prefaces it with chapters which cover the political, constitutional and religious background. He is obliged to trudge steadfastly though a landscape now familiar to most readers of this journal. However, the lengthy prologue should not be allowed to dull the impact of the important novelties in the later chapters.

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THE OLD LIBRARY, TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN, 1712–2012. Edited by W. E. Vaughan.
Pp 480, Illus. Dublin: Four Courts Press. 2012. €50

For a commemoration of the tercentenary of the massive 'old' library building at Trinity College, this volume rivals its bulk. Thanks to lavish illustration it is as sumptuous as the library. Forty-nine writers contribute to the miscellany. Understandably they approach the

richly diversified collections from several routes. Some consider particular components such as the depositions relating to the 1641 uprising, the mass of documentation for the educational charity, the Incorporated Society, the maps that came with the Fagel collection from The Hague in 1802, cartoons and caricatures, and memoirs from the First World War. Others look closely at a specific aspect of a manuscript, as with the Book of Kells, a design for a St Petersburg convent and Piranesi's engraved record of classical Rome. Bequests and gifts have repeatedly enriched the collections, often in unexpected areas. Nick Robinson picks out some plums from the cornucopia of late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century caricatures which he had gathered and which have come to Trinity. Joseph Clarke uses similar prints to trace how Napoleon was portrayed. Looks are also the focus of Nicola Gordon Bowe's consideration of the books bound by Sir Edward Sullivan, mixing the modes of the eighteenth-century binders (whom Sullivan had studied) and the arts and crafts revivalists. The latter, through one of their superlative achievements, William Morris's Kelmscott edition of Chaucer, is dealt with separately by Helen Beaney. So, too, are the fortunes of the Cuala Press and the Harry Clarke stained glass studios on the basis of business records and designs. Files of two serials – *Punch* and *The Southern Cross* – have been explored. The first allows variations in English ideas of Ireland and the Irish to be traced. The second, less expectedly, considers how, thanks to the newspaper, a sense of Irishness was preserved or modified by emigrants in Argentina. Archives relating to Michael Davitt and James Stephens are described. Stephens, an increasingly wistful exile from Dublin, is brought vividly to life by Felicity O'Mahony. The haphazard preservation of the records relating to the assorted sports played by collegians is regretted, with the strengths and weaknesses of what has been collected investigated. Curiosities are given attention: the craze for cranial measurement which may explain why Daniel O'Connell's top-hat was willed to the anatomy department and has subsequently migrated into the library. Turning to twentieth-century giants, Jane Maxwell explains the complexities of understanding and cataloguing the Samuel Beckett holdings. Nicholas Grene suggests how the working papers of Tom Murphy, including many drafts and revisions, can elucidate his plays.

Most contributions are brief and many avowedly slight. One or two – Kenneth Milne's and Charles Holland's – are primarily autobiographical and attest to the help they have received from the librarians as well as the library itself. A few essays, notwithstanding the restricted form, tackle larger questions about the intellectual and social life to which the college and its libraries contributed. Notable in this regard are the discussions by Elizabethanne Boran of the patterns of lending at the turn of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, who borrowed books and the genres to which they belonged, Robert Armstrong's account of Revd Claudius Gilbert, a generous but obscure benefactor, and Patrick Kelly's analysis of two surviving catalogues of the auction in which books and papers belonging to William Molyneux were dispersed, some of them to Trinity. The account of the opportunities afforded by the on-line catalogue shows how much more easily the dates and places of publication of the volumes can be classified. The fluctuations decade by decade raise questions for others about purchasing policies. Lynda Ferguson celebrates both the far-sightedness and beneficence of Paul Pollard, who, as the presiding librarian, having guided the college into shrewd purchases of Irish-printed rarities, left her own collection of children's books to the library. Thereby Trinity has been turned into the best-stocked repository of such material in Ireland. If the importance of alumni in enriching the collections is frequently shown, so is the vision of individual librarians and archivists in securing deposits and gifts, and in ensuring that often exiguous funds were spent constructively. In succession, Paul Pollard and Charles Benson applied their knowledge and hunches to building up stocks in areas that were appropriate but then unfashionable. Benson's modest survey of what was achieved – much of it during his time as head of rare books – reminds forcefully that imaginative and well-qualified people can accomplish more than even the most sophisticated systems. Similarly, the editor pays tribute to the proficiency of the conservation department as established under the

inspirational Anthony Cains and, incidentally, to the persistence of the then keeper of manuscripts, William O'Sullivan, in securing Cains's appointment. In this generation, the absence of vain-glory, the clear-sightedness of the objectives and the fervour and effectiveness with which individuals fought for values which benefited so many readers and researchers suggest a golden age. In practice, Pollard, O'Sullivan and (no doubt) their successors were infuriated and scarred by ignorance and obstruction among superiors in the college hierarchy. Budgets were tight so that every improvement and many accessions had to be fought for. There are hints that at Trinity, no less than in other copyright and scholarly libraries, the tension between access and satisfying the everyday requirements of students and staff, together with the growing throngs of visitors, and the maintenance of curatorial excellence has become an acute one. For any library that unites the functions of serving a large undergraduate community and exigent scholars from across the globe, the juggling with priorities is a Sisyphean task. The tart warnings in the concluding chapter from Charles Benson, lately retired as keeper of early printed books, have applications far beyond Trinity. Present-day library committees and custodians, expert in information technology rather than palaeography, diplomatic or bibliography, may prefer suites of rooms furnished with comfy sofas and buzzing with chatter rather than hushed reading-rooms. Neither eye-catching coups nor a profusion of data-bases and water-dispensers should displace carefully-planned purchasing and cataloguing and elucidating what the generous bequeath. In the end, as this constantly entertaining and instructive collection demonstrates, a library's holdings – printed, manuscript and miscellaneous – will outlive evanescent technologies.

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BLASPHEMERS & BLACKGUARDS: THE IRISH HELLFIRE CLUBS. By David Ryan. Pp 320. Dublin: Merrion. 2012. €45.

Hellfire clubs have long held a public fascination and whether the activities of these clubs are real or imagined they are linked with geographical locations all over Ireland. While the English Hellfire clubs have undergone investigation in several studies, David Ryan's is the first in-depth look at the Irish clubs. *Blasphemers & blackguards: the Irish hellfire clubs* is an investigation of the Dublin and regional hellfire clubs but also undertakes an analysis of later rakish clubs active in Dublin such as the Cherokee and Pinkindies.

Ryan puts forward three reasons for the emergence of these Hellfire clubs in the 1730s; the country had a strong drinking culture, Protestants were insecure despite the military success of the previous century and Ireland was a violent society. 'Faced with these realities, sections of the elite manifested "a certain savagery of mind", engaging in excessive and abandoned behaviour, particularly when it came to socializing.' He adds that 'Anglo-Irish gentry proved to be more willing to engage in violent altercations and encounters than their English counterparts.' Unfortunately, the evidence he provides for this is contemporary comments and he does not embark upon a comparison of English society and manners. While the Anglo-Irish elite were undoubtedly still dealing with the after-effects of the violence of the seventeenth century the extent to which this made Ireland, and the Anglo-Irish community in particular, more violent than other societies is open for debate.

The weakness in this book is that in drawing his conclusions, Ryan treats the Anglo-Irish community in too simplistic a way. He concludes that 'members of the Protestant elite of eighteenth-century Ireland were rooted in a culture of drunkenness, dissipation and violence. Possessing large disposable incomes and considerable leisure time, these gentlemen and noblemen chose to divert themselves through hedonistic indulgence and