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important because of their excellent contexts. For example, a small bronze brooch pin was found in the bedding area of structure X. Eleven glass beads (mostly plain blue) and the stem of a bronze ringed pin were found in the bed of one of the back houses. Other finds include iron tools, leather shoes, a few fragments of wooden vessels (lathe-turned, stave-built and one-piece) and the hub of a paddle wheel from a horizontal mill. Only three small sherds have come from the lower levels of the rath, but pieces of more than a dozen Neolithic polished stone axes have come from Early Christian levels. The most remarkable single find came from inside an oak trough sealed under the collapsed wall of the house attached to structure X. It was a beautifully carved wooden shoe last, size 51/2, broad fitting!

The Deer Park Farms excavation has given a dramatic insight into the wattle buildings and layout of this small rath in the seventh and eighth centuries. Such excellent preservation of wooden buildings may not occur at another rural dryland site, but if it does the structural remains will certainly also be covered by a mound.

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IRISH LOCAL AND REGIONAL STUDIES: A GEOGRAPHICAL PERSEPCTIVE

Few professional scholars who write about the past in Ireland would consider themselves to be experts in local studies, but anybody who works on the past must be more than merely adept at understanding the local before breaching thresholds into other realms of scale. Scholarly work on the local scale will always remain the coal face for training for investigative pursuits. There is often a yawning gap between such pious assumptions and the realities of local studies in Ireland. Why this should be is unclear, but it raises fundamental questions about who is interested in the past and are those who purport to being involved getting their message across? Evidently, it is not a top-down or bottom-up conundrum, but a more complex set of problems located somewhere at the interface between those studies focused on the local and regional, on one side, and research addressed on national issues, on the other.

The uneasy relationship between local and national perspectives is exemplified by the fact that few local studies journal articles in the Republic carry material imbued with the modern idioms of historical geography ranging from theoretical contexts to quantative methods. Is this because some geographers are perceived to expend more effort in communicating with each other than with the wider public? This elitist charge has recently been levelled by a reviewer at the community of early Irish historians. The robust track record of geographers involved in local studies emphatically rebuts such a charge. Despite the huge increase in the numbers of students electing to take geography as a degree subject in the universities - with many of them opting for courses in historical geography - there appears to be a miniscule number who continue writing historical geography. Few of those who complete their dissertations in historical geography succumb to the temptation to publish their results in any format.

THE RECORD

One might argue that the record shows that Irish local studies were in a healthier condition both in the remote and the recent past. The topographic tradition preserved in the propaganda of Dinnseanchais was a veneer for the meticulous concerns of early property holders and jurists to formulate local and sub-regional property gazetteers. In some ways this tradition has never lost its vitality; like a virus it has mutated and its modern expressions extend from the work of playwright, J. B. Keane, to the genre represented by the output of some musicians. Earlier individualistic map production and the emergence of Antiquarianism, embodied in some of the output of the Dublin Physico - Historical Society, represent other expressions of engagement with the past. Indeed echoes of the same tradition also flowered in the Royal Dublin Society's sponsored series of resource centred Statistical Surveys in the nineteenth century. These kinds of activities were foreshadowed by the sterling efforts of Charles Smith for county Cork in the eighteenth century. Even a century earlier, in the same county, Richard Cox, from Dunmanway, celebrated - almost in the style of an Irish bard - the eccentricities, genius and pleasantries of his home county in his famous *Regnum Corcagiense* of the 1680s.

Other dimensions of the same tradition, evident in the seventeenth century, was Natural History enquiry, flamboyantly exemplified in Gerald Boate's *Natural History of Ireland* which appeared in1652. It was continued by the work of Smith in the eighteenth century and more recently by Praeger, Mitchell and John Feehan, amongst others.

In the later part of the nineteenth century, some degree of convergence is evident between the then different cultural and political persuasions in relation to the involvement with the past. This is surely mirrored in the foundation, consolidation and success of many local and regional journals and the societies which supported them, where people of all shades of opinion wrote about issues of shared concern. It was then that attempts were made, often by members of newcomer society, to link field remains with Gaelic legends, myths and traditions. These developments can be best viewed as part of the ongoing cultural re-evaluation of that time. Earlier, the sterling work of O'Curry and O'Donovan is also relevant, but their output remained unknown to the public at large during the nineteenth century. Geographers, such as W. Fitzgerald, managed to claim a niche in these activities before the end of the century.

INDIVIDUAL, COMMUNITY AND INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSES

In the twentieth century local society foundations intensified but, since the 1960s, rates of establishment became explosive. This phase was consolidated by the foundation, in 1981, of the Federation of Local History Societies. Over the years a number of individuals and institutions have, wittingly and unwittingly, contributed to the cause of local studies, such as the decision of the Cork Archaeological and Historical Society to diversify its activities by holding annual lectures at centres within its membership catchment in the 1980s, as well as at its traditional venue in Cork City.

The publication by Dr W. Nolan, in 1977, of *Sources for Local Studies*, must mark a watershed, although it was foreshadowed by the activities of historian, Thomas O'Neill of University College, Galway. Even more significantly, the appearance of what has been acclaimed as one of the most daring and exciting ventures in local studies, namely the county *History and Society* series, has brought the appeal of local endeavour to a much wider audience. It is an innovation in as much as it represents the first sustained, but very much a la carte, collaboration between disparate sets of individuals who share common goals. Here geographers have taken a lead, but the success of this venture is surely rooted in its interdisciplinary format.

There have been many other inspiring departures in recent years in the arena of place based scholarship. The following instances represent only a limited selection. Here the eclectic and exhilarating publications of Tim Robinson, the fine work achieved by those involved in promoting the Irish Historic Towns Atlas, the lifestyles unearthed by Henry Glassie and the peoples' history presented by Gulliver and Silverman, represent some important milestones. It is of especial relevance to note the interest and achievements of outsiders in these endeavours. Foreign scholars have made proportionately a far greater contribution to local studies in Ireland than is the case in France, Portugal or Spain. Last, but not least, the accomplishments of the Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement should not go unsung but, to judge from the range and remit of papers at some of its recent conferences, its concerns extend far beyond settlement alone.

Others are now re-evaluating local studies, especially its heritage dimensions. Some perceive it as a means to bolster community solidarity and place identification, as a means to counter the ravages of emigration. Some believe that it can be regarded as a marketable commodity. Less mendacious interests contend that local studies can have more life-sustaining implications in that sentiments can be sharpened to promote attitudes which champion stewardship of field remains and written records, which help to deepen awareness of the past in local communities, thereby encouraging people to act as custodians of what is perceived as heritage.

The blossoming of heritage and local and regional studies courses over the last decade is another yardstick of sea-changes in the public arena. St Patrick's College at Maynooth has devised a popular course to meet these new needs and students may now opt for an MA in Local History. University College, Cork has been active in this field over a number of years. It has mounted a successful "travelling course" and now more than six hundred students have received a certificate for their valiant efforts at such locations as Bantry, Cork City, Ennis, Kilkenny, Killarney, Limerick, Mallow, Newcastlewest, Tralee and Waterford. Anchored by the departments of Archaeology and Geography at UCC, contributors are also drawn, from Bealoideas, History, Modern Irish and Music and, at each venue, there has also been a local input. Besides having a formal lecture content, field trips, essays, projects and major research ventures have formed part of the canvass. Over the years the quality of the research has been excellent and many of the projects have been highly original. Most of this kind of work focuses on topics in familiar areas. Almost all have opted for studies of a thematic nature. Topics selected for analysis in Mallow in1995 have included the consequence of long term technological change for a garage, eccentric dwellings and landscapes, the famine in a Poor Law Union and the development of a residential square by an urban improver. Many of these studies have precipitated the 'discovery ' of an exciting range of sources such as business records, estate maps and terriers, diaries and personal memorabilia, besides photographs and even paintings. The participants at these courses come from all walks of life and some have journeyed more than a hundred miles each evening. More recently, a full Diploma course has been initiated at Kilkenny and several new developments are under discussion at UCC .

It is apposite that Geographers should play a leading role in these developments, given the track record personified in the published work and field teaching established at Queens University, Belfast, University College, Cork and University College, Dublin. University geographers, such as Evans, Freeman, Jones Hughes and Andrews and more besides, through their published articles and their field work from the1940s onwards, laid a solid foundation for geographical involvement in these kinds of endeavours. This legacy has been critical. For these reasons, it is worth considering the kinds of contributions that geography can make to local and regional studies. The reactions of people to the kinds of questions geographers ask, the methods they often employ and the sources which they select to pattern the voids of the past, have immediate popular allure. Also, geography's appeal, as an instrument to specify past procesess, endows it with explanatory potential and substitutes for the old capes and bays syndrome, where description reigned supreme. Finally, the question of scale; the parish is often the unit highest in the popular league of esteem. But parish studies tend to be over internalised and too inclusive. Parish based local studies societies have had short life expectancies and a much higher mortality rate than county based or pay based societies. But county-styled journals carry a minority of papers that address county-wide issues. This question of scale is also evident when communities are put under the microscope. There can be no doubt that genealogical inquiries remain at the top of the interest league, but few such studies are so broad as to be aimed at entire communities and even societies are rarely appropriated for analysis. Here a society can be regarded as a collection of communities associated with a particular area which is invariably larger than a parish. West Cork furnishes a good example.

In an Irish context, there are other issues which appear to raise distinctive problems;these include how to address colonialism, ethnicity and political cleavages. Ethnicity is a topic which seems to have been studiously avoided as a theme worthy of examination, especially when it is claimed that local studies can assist in breaking down barriers between different groups.

At the kernel of local studies is that very geographic entity which we call place. Here, perhaps, geographers have been over zealous in defining the distinctiveness of places. But it is important to recall that places like people have multiple identities. There is no such thing as a single sense of place. In this way places cannot be equated with communities because communities do not always share the same place.

Place, then, is simply not a container of internalised history. It is an area defined by a surface of social relations which converge on a particular territory at a particular time. This must mean that place is continually mutating, moving in a series of orbits which we may attempt to track. It is then the relationship between a street or a townland with the wider world which really matters.

Is it more productive, then, to consider place more as the outcome of a process in as much as a series of interactions actually endow it with the semblance of shape? Places are full of tensions which link them together and connect the past with the present. Heritage, then, might be a tangible expression of the residue of these stresses. Sharp boundaries, then, rarely are a characteristic of place. In this way the absence of such distinct boundaries between the disciplines that contribute to local studies stress that place, in the context of local or regional studies, is not the exclusive domain of geography nor of any other particular discipline.

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DISAPPEARING LANDSCAPES: *ARCHAEOLOGY AND THE IRISH LANDSCAPE - AN AERIAL VIEW*

The exhibition 'Disappearing Landscapes' was first held at the ENFO Centre in Dublin, in association with the Group for the Study of Irish Historic Settlement, in May 1993. Comprising approximately 350 colour aerial photographs, it provided a