



JOHN BRADLEY, 1954–2014

but really this question epitomised John's constant search not just for knowledge but for the bigger picture. While the tours were led by the supervisors, John always encouraged the newest and youngest recruits to speak up, listening carefully to what they had to say.

Whether on site, on campus or elsewhere, John was a stalwart supporter of his students. He lectured at UCD and then, from 1996, at what is now Maynooth University. An eloquent speaker, he delivered finely crafted lectures that brought his subject to life. He was a popular presenter at conferences worldwide—a favourite was the annual trip to Kalamazoo in Michigan, where he presided over some of the most informative panels and orchestrated the most wonderful evenings. As a postgraduate supervisor, John was exceptionally generous with his time and knowledge—as well as with his books. He would climb the ladder to a high shelf in his office and return, blowing the dust off an old tome, saying 'Borrow this; I think you'll find something of interest'.

A consummate conversationalist and a kind host, John took great pleasure in introducing to each other people whom he knew would get along well, and in organising memorable dinners (always a round table, preferably for eight people). Evenings often ended in song and John might contribute 'She moves through the fair' or 'The Knowth Troweller' (to the tune of 'The Bard of Armagh').

Opera was one of John's true loves and he looked forward to the Wexford Festival each year. He encouraged new recruits to read carefully the libretto before going, and when he was eventually persuaded to attend a rugby match (Italy against Ireland in Rome) he ordered the programme a week in advance. After the match, dining *al fresco* in the Piazza Navona, John admitted that 'rugby is perhaps not so bad after all'.

John was a film buff and delighted in presenting friends with DVDs of his favourite movies—*Some Like it Hot*, *The Maltese Falcon* and especially *The Godfather* ('I believe in America' was a favourite line). He watched every episode of *The Wire* because, he said, 'it explains the Middle Ages brilliantly'. He frequently commented that something or other was 'straight out of Balzac'. John's favourite essayists were Michel de Montaigne and Gore Vidal, and he knew Hubert Butler as a child in Kilkenny.

John was a compassionate and sympathetic man, a gentleman in every sense. Many will remember him for his good humour, rapid wit and clever wordplay. Few who met him could fail to be impressed by the breadth of his knowledge. Nobody could ever doubt the depth of his scholarship or his commitment to the understanding and preservation of Ireland's heritage. Having been actively involved in the campaign to 'save Wood Quay', John was dismayed and deeply affected (he said it made him physically ill) by the damage caused by recent developments at Carrickmines, Tara and especially Kilkenny.

John Bradley died at the Beacon Hospital in Dublin on Friday 7 November 2014 after a short illness. He was buried in his parents' grave at Foulkstown, Kilkenny, after a funeral Mass in Maynooth.

Michael Potterton

John Bradley, who has died aged 60, was an eminent archaeologist, a fine teacher, an unpretentious polymath and a true friend. An only child, he was born in Kilkenny on 11 January 1954 to Anastasia and Daniel Bradley. At school he excelled in geography and history and by the age of ten knew every capital city. He wasn't keen on sport, preferring to spend childhood evenings exploring the medieval buildings of Kilkenny, reading and playing chess (he would later represent his country). As a student at UCD, he chose archaeology as his 'third' subject, intending to give it up after first year. Instead he dropped geography and one of Ireland's greatest archaeologists was born. He could now fit the development of medieval Kilkenny into a much bigger picture and he began to make links between everything he read and heard. He had a remarkable capacity to retain information and sort it in his mind in meaningful ways. At 21 he published a brilliant essay in the *Old Kilkenny Review* on the town's medieval walls, seamlessly merging archaeology, history and architecture in a foretaste of the almost 200 essays, articles and books he would write in the following four decades.

His research on Kilkenny and his MA on Ireland's walled towns made John the ideal person to direct the Urban Archaeological Survey (1982–95). He became the foremost expert on Ireland's medieval towns and was a founding member of the Friends of Medieval Dublin and, later, the American Society of Irish Medieval Studies.

Having served an apprenticeship at Knowth under George Eogan, throughout the 1980s and 1990s John directed the excavations at the multi-period wetland site at Moynagh Lough in Meath. Many of Ireland's professional archaeologists honed their skills and developed their interests at Moynagh during those summers. After-work visits to monuments, sites and other excavations across north Leinster were educational and entertaining, creating firm bonds within the team. Each Thursday afternoon at Moynagh there would be a site tour during which the entire crew would move from one area to the next and the supervisor of each sector would explain what had been uncovered there that week. At the end of each tour John would say 'Yes, that's all very interesting, but what does it all *mean*?' There would be a laugh,

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