

AUDREY WOODS, *Dublin Outsiders, a history of the Mendicity Institution 1818-1998* (Dublin: A. & A. Farmar, 1998. Pp. 240. 21 tabs. 19 pls. IR£12)

This is a meticulous and substantial commissioned study of what Dubliners have always termed 'the Mendicity', covering its founding principles and the social context of late eighteenth-century Dublin, the search for a permanent home, staffing over time, recurrent financial crises, its role in famine relief, and the varying needs it met over 180 years of social and political change. Both chronological and thematic divisions have been employed by Audrey Woods to good effect, with for example, chapter 6, titled 'The institution, the Poor Law and the famine, 1838-49', followed by detailed studies of two of its major innovations: the first public baths in Dublin 1848-1909 (chapter 7) and the institution's transmission service 1818-1969 (chapter 8). Continuing the story to the annual radio appeals (from 1940), the construction of new premises fronting Island Street (1954), and their ongoing good work in providing free hot meals for all who present themselves, at set hours, without need of name or recommendation, brings this study up to the present moment.

The opening claim by Woods that the work of the institution was broad, visionary and innovative, adapting to changing needs among its clientele, is more than amply justified. By combing the archival material of the institution (deposited from the 1980s in the National Library of Ireland) Woods builds up a picture of its ambitions and immense difficulties over time. Successive managing committees were obsessed with accounting for the way in which every penny entrusted to their care was disbursed, and documenting the admission, employment, and care of the hundreds of thousands of persons who resorted to this charity (daily average attendance of 1,335 persons in 1825; 148 persons in 1906). In pursuit of its chief objective, 'the prevention and suppression of mendicity in Dublin', the founders formulated a master-plan for the support of beggars at a meagre subsistence level while training them for simple employment, encouraging industrious habits and the desire to support themselves independently (p. 13). They would be provided with food while occupied in training or work, returning to their lodgings only at night (p. 56) and so clearing the streets of 'crowds of unfortunate and clamorous beggars, exhibiting misery and decrepitude in a variety of forms' and 'frequently carrying about in their persons and garments the seeds of contagious disease', the subject of countless contemporary reports (p. 10). Selling their plan to an incredulous and predictably tight-fisted public required endless persuasion, while operating a system that would support industry but not undermine the political orthodoxy of *laissez faire* required keen balancing. It also led to important data collection, as the personal information supplied by potential beneficiaries was then double-checked by intrepid field-workers (pp. 18, 199-204). The archival material relates both to policy formulation and hands-on management, allowing Woods to situate this study within the broader international field of ideas of 'managing' the poor, while at the same time maintaining the closeness to the individuals in crisis who applied to the Mendicity for help. It is the case-study detail, expertly intertwined with the main lines of argument, that makes this an arresting study.

While this is firstly an institutional study, it is in practice much more. It provides an excellent starting point for a study of society in nineteenth-century Dublin, introducing the researcher to some of the more prominent thinkers and social activists, whose work for the Mendicity was but one of their commitments (for example, Samuel Bewley, Thomas Orpen, Thomas Pleasants, and members of the La Touche, Guinness and de

Vesci families). Members of the middle ranks may be met in numerous roles, as employees, suppliers, tenants, constables, and supporters, while the association's clients become real people, not merely statistics, through Woods' constant use of case-study material. This text is also a valuable contribution to economic history, as it considers the types of employment that were the mainstay of the poorer sections of urban society. Researchers in public health will welcome the account of the public baths (chapter 7), while those working in migration studies will find excellent leads in the chapter on the transmission service (chapter 8). This is also an absorbing study of some of the classic questions in social policy: the problem of 'classifying' the poor; the role of voluntary effort *vis-à-vis* the state; networking (or the lack of it) among similar organisations; long-term management of a voluntary organisation; responding sensitively to changing client requirements.

Further exploration of the issue of religious tolerance could be undertaken; as the author notes, the Mendicity operated 'a strict policy not to interfere in the slightest degree with the religious opinions of the poor' (p. 24) and had representatives of the three main denominations on board. How it managed to stay outside the sectarianism of Dublin's charity scene especially in the period 1850-80s is worth further study, while there is also need for more detailed consideration of the interaction between the various social service providers. To be fair, however, these are tasks for another day. Audrey Woods has provided the research community with an outstanding introduction to the records and history of this important institution, and brought many of Dublin's outsiders in from the cold.

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DONAL J. O'SULLIVAN, *The Irish Constabularies 1822-1922: A Century of Policing in Ireland* (Dingle: Brandon, 1999. Pp. 410. IR£30)

JAMES BALL (ed.), *A Policeman's Ireland: Recollections of Samuel Waters, RIC* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1999. Pp. 114. IR£8.95)

JIM HERLIHY, *The Royal Irish Constabulary: A Complete Alphabetical List of Officers and Men, 1816-1922* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999. Pp. 488. IR£45)

Donal O'Sullivan's contribution to what was once a scandalously neglected area – the history of policing in Ireland under the Union – is to be welcomed for its wealth of detail. The author, a retired Garda Síochána chief superintendent, draws on more than 30 years of research to offer a wide-ranging survey of one of the most important institutions in nineteenth and early twentieth-century Ireland: the constabulary, in its various guises as County Constabulary (1822-36), Irish Constabulary (1836-67) and Royal Irish Constabulary (1867-1922). While his book offers hardly anything that is new to specialists in the area, it should nevertheless help to enlighten non-specialists and the general reader about the colourful history of the constabulary and its huge impact on Irish society. His book makes abundantly clear that there is much more to the constabulary's story than the familiar snapshots of policemen suppressing or attempting to suppress rebellions and attending at evictions, even though a large amount of the book's content focuses on the constabulary's role in the violent events of 1848, 1867, and particularly 1919-22.