

Patrick Fagan, historian and man of letters:

AN INTERVIEW

SÉAMUS MAC GABHANN

I S. Mac Gabhann: The National University of Ireland award to you of the degree of Doctor of Literature in the year 2000 in recognition of your scholarly work was a source of deep satisfaction to readers of *Ríocht na Midbe* and to the wider public interested in eighteenth-century history. But before we discuss the work, perhaps you would tell us something of your background and education.

P. Fagan: I was brought up in the hungry Thirties on a farm near Crookedwood in Westmeath. My father married rather late and, at the age of fifty-seven, he died suddenly of pneumonia, leaving my mother with eight children, aged six months to thirteen years. Although we had a farm of 60 acres, my mother found it very difficult to cope. Farm prices were very depressed in the 1930s, particularly in the type of mixed farming we practised, and, while there was no shortage of food, money was very scarce. It added up to a deprived, miserable existence, unimaginable to children, even poor children, of today. We were, however, fortunate to have in our national school a dedicated teacher, Mrs. Bridget Cooke, who over many years, with considerable success, prepared pupils for the County Council scholarship. With an elder brother, Jimmy, I was fortunate to win such a scholarship. It was worth £150 spread over five years as a boarder in St Finian's College, Mullingar. Associating with boys, the vast majority of whom came from comfortable homes, proved a daunting experience for me, and I came to the conclusion that the sooner I could cut loose from St Finian's the better. So in July 1939, after four years there, I sat for the Civil Service Clerical Officer examination and was called in September 1939, but on account of a bad cough my entrance was postponed on medical grounds until February 1940.

2 S. MacG.: You abandoned your studies in St Finian's then without having taken the Leaving Certificate?

PF.: That is so, but at the time this was not at all unusual. The Leaving Certificate counted for very little in those days. Larger bodies, such as the Civil Service, local authorities, the banks, CIE, etc. either

had their own entrance exams or had recruitment methods not requiring a Leaving Certificate. Entrance to the universities was by a Matriculation Examination of a much lower standard than the Leaving Certificate. With a view to improving my promotion prospects in the Civil Service I did later in the 1940s enrol as an evening student in TCD for the degrees of B.A. (Mod) B.Comm. but for various reasons I dropped out in my final year and all I have to show for my years in Trinity is a diploma in Public Administration. The university was good enough, however, to award me an honorary M.A. degree in their quatercentenary year in 1992.

3 S. MacG.: In what subjects did you excel while at school? - was history one of them?

PF.: History and Irish were my best subjects. In fact in the Intermediate Certificate exam in 1938, out of a total 250 marks for history, I succeeded in getting 257 marks by doing the paper through Irish. I was very chuffed with this mark until I entered the Civil Service and encountered another Clerical Officer, a chap from Synge Street CBS, who had secured an even better mark in history that year. It was an indication of how some of the best brains in the country were being wasted in routine jobs in the Civil Service.

4 S. MacG.: Your historical writing commenced after you retired from the Civil Service. I understand that while you were still in the Civil Service you engaged in your spare time in writing of various kinds.

PF.: Like many civil servants, I always had an ambition to write. I recall that when I was only nineteen or twenty I wrote a three-act play of the kitchen comedy variety. I spent a week's wages having it typed and submitted it to the Abbey Theatre. It was, of course, rejected. During the 1950s I submitted a number of short stories to *The Bell*. I got encouraging replies from the editor but nothing was published. It was 1962 before I eventually got into print with an article in *The Irish Times* on the Ombudsman system in the Scandinavian countries, a system which was eventually introduced in Ireland about 20 years later. This was followed by articles in *The Irish Independent*.

As already stated, I had excelled at Irish at school and it struck me that writing in Irish might be the way to publication. At that time *The Irish Press* had a feature called *Aistriucháin* where one wrote a poem in Irish with an English translation. I thought I would try my hand at this and had my first *Aistriuchán* accepted in September 1969 and over the following years I had over 20 such items published. From writing

Aistriucháin I progressed to writing short stories in Irish and had some 16 published in various Irish language journals, some of which were, later, under the Irish form of my name, Pádraig Ó Fagáin, published as a collection entitled *Bíonn an fhírinne searbh* with the aid of a grant from Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge. RTE had a slot at that time for radio plays in Irish. I had my first radio play in Irish broadcast in 1976 and had seven in all broadcast over the ensuing years.

In the meantime my career in the Civil Service, mainly in the Department of Industry and Commerce, had been progressing satisfactorily, culminating in promotion to Principal Officer in 1977. It had always been my plan to take early retirement at age sixty and devote myself fully to writing, and I did just that in March 1982.

5 *S. MacG.*: So at an age when many people would be slipping into a relaxed retirement, you embarked on a scholarly career involving sustained, painstaking research and rigorous and demanding presentation of findings. In your first project, in *Éigse na hIarmhí*, you tapped into a notable literary heritage which had hitherto gone largely unnoticed.

P.F.: Firstly, I would argue that a career in the Civil Service is not a bad preparation for an historian. In the writing of memoranda, reports, etc., and in the preparation of legislation the same requirement for accuracy, precision and reliance on reputable sources and authorities is necessary as in the writing of history. I had been interested in history and biography while I was still in the Civil Service, but the research work involved in writing such works is something one cannot engage in and at the same time hold down a demanding job in the Department of Industry & Commerce. On retirement, finding myself with plenty of time on my hands, my interest in Irish literature led me to investigate the contribution my native county had made in the realm of Gaelic poetry, bardic and otherwise. I found that there existed a considerable heritage which I now set about distilling into a book of 179 pages which I published in 1985, also with the aid of a grant from Bord na Leabhar Gaeilge. Eleven chapters are devoted to the work of up to 20 poets, with introductory notes, samples of their work and translations into English. Further chapters deal with the decline of Irish in Westmeath and with Gaelic manuscripts of a Westmeath provenance. The book was generally well received, although some reviewers were surprised at the extent of Westmeath's contribution to Gaelic poetry. *Éigse* involved a considerable amount of literary and historical research and indeed I

was so bitten by that particular bug that I lost all interest in fiction writing and embarked on a whole new career as an historian.

6 S. MacG.: Your next venture was *The Second City*, a book of 277 pages dealing with various aspects of life in Dublin in the first half of the eighteenth century. What was the genesis of that book?

P.F.: In embarking on a career as an historian I had decided to specialise in the eighteenth century, particularly the first half, as I had always had a deep interest in that period. The choice of Dublin as the subject was, I'm afraid, governed by pragmatic considerations, inasmuch as a book about Dublin was likely to sell much better than a book about, say, Westmeath. *The Second City* aims to be a comprehensive portrait of the city in the period mentioned. It received mostly favourable reviews in the press and on radio, but its main importance to me was that it proved to be a launching pad for future books

7 S. MacG.: Such as your study of the eighteenth-century Irish poets, *A Georgian Celebration*?

P.F.: Yes, in *The Second City* I had devoted a chapter to the literary scene in Dublin during the period covered by that book. I expanded this to comprise the entire eighteenth century and extended it to poets coming from outside Dublin. The resulting volume consisted of chapters dealing with some 31 poets, all of them Protestant (although one or two of them may have been born Catholic), with potted biographies and examples of their work. It can claim to be the first comprehensive study of our eighteenth-century poets. It did not attract much attention from the critics, although Boston College thought so well of it as to include it in their course of Irish studies.

8 S. MacG.: *The Second City* also kindled your interest in Fr. Cornelius Nary on whom you now embarked on a full-length study.

P.F.: Yes, I had devoted a chapter in *The Second City* to Nary and in the course of this necessarily short study, it occurred to me that here was a man who seemed to stand on its head the received wisdom, if that is the word, of the dark penal night in the eighteenth century. Here was a man who, as parish priest of St Michan's from 1698 to 1738, went about his priestly duties quite openly in a city which was then about two-thirds Protestant, had his portrait painted on two occasions, found time to translate *The New Testament* into English, wrote a no-holds-barred rejoinder to the published sermons of Archbishop Tillotson of Canterbury, had a prolonged controversy on doctrinal

matters with the Anglican Archbishop Synge, involved himself in politics with a pamphlet titled *The state of the Roman Catholics of Ireland* in 1724, and a draft oath which he thought would be acceptable to Catholics and which he submitted for the consideration of government in 1733. It was a life far removed from Mass Rocks and Catholics being chased by Redcoats. There was sufficient material available to warrant a full-length study and I set about doing the necessary research. However, I was determined to find myself a publisher on this occasion. Publishing one's own work is all very well, but it entails spending a great deal of time on sales and promotion, time which could be better spent on writing and research. Besides, self-publishing is looked upon with disdain in some quarters. So, I duly sought out the editor (and owner) of a Dublin publishing house and outlined my project to him. He promised to give serious consideration to the completed work and he did just that, to the extent of referring it to a professor in TCD for assessment. I learned afterwards that the professor recommended publication of my work but, nevertheless, the publisher felt constrained to reject it for the reason, I believe, that he might lose money on the venture. I then submitted the manuscript to two other publishers with a like result. It was at this point that The Royal Irish Academy announced their first competition for the Mary Alice McNeill prize for historical writing. Ms. McNeill had bequeathed a sum of money, the accumulated interest on which would from time to time be sufficient to provide funds to cover the cost of publication of a worthwhile historical work. I duly submitted a chapter of my Nary work for consideration and it turned out to be the successful entry. My biography of Nary, *Dublin's turbulent priest: Cornelius Nary 1658-1738*, was published by the Royal Irish Academy in 1991. Incidentally, some important information not known to me at the time of writing the original work, I later published in an article in the *Journal of the Kildare Archaeological Society* for 2002-03. David Hayton in *Irish Historical Studies* said of the Nary biography:

What makes Nary important is not any intrinsic merit in his writings, but the light his biography casts on the Catholic Church in Dublin during the period of the imposition of the Penal Laws.....Unlike so many of his contemporaries, he [Nary] was clearly able to separate in his own mind matters theological from matters political, a quality which doubtless facilitated his successful adaptation to difficult and potentially dangerous circumstances.

David Dickson in *Studia Hibernica* commented

This biography represents a real enrichment of our knowledge of the practical implications of the Penal Laws on early eighteenth-century Catholicism, and strikingly reveals the hidden side of Swift's Dublin.

The award to me of the Mary Alice McNeill prize signaled the breakthrough I had been looking for. It meant that I encountered little trouble in being taken on by Four Courts Press who in the ensuing years published five books of mine. I owe a debt of gratitude to Michael Adams of that Press in recognising the importance of my work in the reassessment of the Catholic position in the eighteenth century, and in sticking with me when it cannot have been profitable to do so. As an editor, Michael is a joy to work with and it is uncanny how he can fast-track his way through reams of galley proofs. The only quibble I would have with Four Courts is in the matter of publicity, which I'm afraid does not receive sufficient attention.

9 *S. MacG.*: Research on Nary brought you into contact with the Stuart Papers in Windsor Castle, which formed the basis for your next work, a biography of the Franciscan, Sylvester Lloyd.

P.F.: The Stuart Papers, housed in Windsor Castle, are in effect the official correspondence of the Stuart Court-in-exile throughout the eighteenth century. The entire collection contains in the region of 80,000 items with two or more pages to some items. While the originals are held at Windsor Castle, the Papers are more readily available to historians on microfilm held in the British Library Document Supply Centre. Although there is not a great deal relevant to Nary in the Papers, it became clear to me that there was a great deal of material on a contemporary of Nary, Sylvester Lloyd, the Franciscan who was successively bishop of Killaloe and Waterford & Lismore. There were here some 40 letters written to the Stuart Court by Lloyd between 1724 and his death in 1747, as well as other relevant documents throwing considerable light on the Catholic church in Ireland in the first half of the eighteenth century. These I used as the backbone of a 207 page biography of Lloyd published in 1993 under the title *An Irish bishop in Penal Times: the chequered career of Sylvester Lloyd OFM*. The blurb presented the book as a fascinating, behind-the-scenes look at the life of an Irish Franciscan friar and bishop of the early eighteenth century. Against a background of periodic repression of Catholics by the authorities, Lloyd emerges, says the blurb, as a

kind of Pimpernel figure, gravely in cahoots with the Jacobite plotters on the Continent and plying them continually with reports on the current scene as he flits between Ireland, Britain and the Continent, presenting us with new insights into the events over the quarter of a century from 1723 to 1747 and serving to illumine a hitherto neglected period of Irish history.

Adrian Kenny in *The Sunday Press* commented rather surprisingly:

Leaving down this excellent book, I felt great sympathy for the English government. Set against them was a papacy which still claimed the right to appoint and oppose governments, and a Stuart king with notions of himself just as extravagant.

'This excellent book' for want, I believe, of an official launch and because of a general lack of publicity did not sell very successfully and was remaindered after a couple of years.

10 *S. MacG.*: Your next venture into print was the publication of a selection of letters and documents from the Stuart Papers which related to Ireland.

P. F.: While researching the Stuart Papers for material on Lloyd, I got the idea early on of publishing material of Irish interest generally from those Papers. While working on the Lloyd book, I first came in contact with Fr. Hugh Fenning OP, the eminent historian. It appears that some 20 years previously he had gone through the Papers, noting items of Irish interest on index cards with the intention of eventually transcribing the relevant documents and correspondence with a view to publication, but pressure of work in other directions precluded him from putting his design into effect. He now very generously put these index cards at my disposal and I set about examining the entire archive of the Papers from 1719 to the Pretender's death on 1 January 1766. The reason for starting in 1719 was that the Royal Commission on Historical Manuscripts had in the early 1900s published the entire Papers, including the Irish content, up to that date in full or in calendared form. My examination of the Papers entailed microfilm reels held by the British Library Document Supply Centre being sent, 10 at a time, on inter-library loan to the Gilbert Library, Pearse Street, Dublin who were good enough to provide me with facilities to examine them and extract relevant documents. There were necessarily long periods between the return of a batch of reels and the arrival of a further batch and this meant that the entire operation stretched out over a period of about three years. A significant

proportion of the letters and documents were in Italian, Latin and French and it was decided to publish translations into English of these. Fr. Fenning undertook the translation of those in Italian and Latin and he also helped with the translation of some of the letters and documents in French. The result of our labours was a two-volume work totaling 659 pages, handsomely produced by Four Courts Press and putting in print what can be claimed to be the most substantial repository, with the possible exception of the Vatican Archives, of Irish Catholic correspondence during the first half of the eighteenth century. Once again, I would like to put on record my appreciation of Fr. Fenning's contribution to the production of this work.

Patrick Kelly in *Parliamentary History* stated:

In publishing these documents Patrick Fagan has made a very significant contribution, not merely to Irish eighteenth-century studies but to the general understanding of the nature of Jacobitism.

Eamonn Ó Ciardha in *History Ireland* was of the opinion that 'this edition of letters is arguably the single most important edition of primary-source material published for the eighteenth century in years'.

II S. MacG.: From your concern with the Stuarts there emerges your next volume, in essence a study of the conflict within the Catholic body between loyalty to the Stuarts and loyalty to the English Crown.

P. F.: Yes, my next work, *Divided Loyalties: the question of an oath for Irish Catholics in the eighteenth century* explores the dilemma for Irish Catholics posed by the presence in Rome, for the most part, of the Pretender, claiming the allegiance of adherents in Britain and Ireland, and acknowledged by the pope until his death in January 1766 as the rightful king of Great Britain and Ireland. The situation was further complicated by the fact that the Pope had accorded the Pretender the right, on the occurrence of a vacancy for bishop in an Irish see, to nominate a candidate for appointment, the Pretender's nominee being accepted as a matter of course in nearly all cases. In this situation, of course, it behoved any cleric with episcopal ambitions to demonstrate his loyalty to the Pretender or at least not to support oaths requiring the abjuration of the Pretender's right to the throne. The many attempts of the Irish parliament to impose an oath of loyalty to the English king, incorporating an abjuration of the Stuart claimant, were invariably opposed by a faction loyal to the Pretender.

The question of what kind of oath should be applicable to Catholics, lay and clerical, was to dominate Irish Catholic politics, such as they were, up until 1774 when an act of that year incorporated an oath which proved acceptable to Catholics. *Divided Loyalties* seeks to chronicle the various attempts by the government and others to formulate such an oath. Reviewing this book in *American Historical Review*, F.W.Harris stated:

Fagan has produced an admirable exposition of the history of the oath of allegiance in eighteenth-century Ireland, while clearly demonstrating that the lines for and against it were not nearly as unwaveringly drawn as popular belief would have it.

12 S. MacG.: Your belief in the need for a reassessment of the Catholic position generally in the eighteenth century prompted your next book, *Catholics in a Protestant country*.

P. F.: My experience in writing biographies of Cornelius Nary and Sylvester Lloyd pointed in the direction of a reassessment of the effect of the Penal Laws and the Catholic experience generally in the eighteenth century. Many other historians of the period had in the past 30 years or so been engaged in a like pursuit. *Catholics in a Protestant country: the Papist constituency in eighteenth-century Dublin* was the result. The title is taken from a letter from Charles O'Connor of Belanagare to his son in regard to the role the latter would be required to play as 'a Roman Catholic in a Protestant country'. Confining myself to the city of Dublin, I sought in this book to quantify the contribution of Catholics in various walks of life. Chapter 1 charts the course by which Dublin city changed from being about 70% Protestant in 1700 to being about 70% Catholic in 1800. This is followed by a chapter on the extent to which an *ad hoc* Catholic lobby in the first half of the century operated to oppose, and sometimes to frustrate, anti-Catholic measures by the Irish parliament. There are chapters on the Catholic presence in the medical professions throughout the century and on how Catholics fared in the legal profession. There is an illuminating and revealing chapter on Catholic involvement in Freemasonry in Dublin, while a final chapter explores the extent of Catholic involvement in trade and manufacture in the city.

Donald Caird in *Church Times* welcomed the book as 'a gem of precision and conciseness', while Marianne Elliott in *English Historical Review* commented:

Patrick Fagan has single-handedly contributed more to this reassessment [of the Penal Laws] than anybody else, with a string of books which examine different aspects of the laws' enactment and implementation.

13 *S. MacG.*: Having started your career as an historian with a book about your native county's Gaelic heritage, it seems appropriate that your latest book should be about your native diocese in the eighteenth century. Having written several books mainly about Dublin, in this latest book you returned to your native heath.

P. F.: Over the years I had been contributing articles to *Ríocht na Midhe* on ecclesiastical subjects, articles on Bishop Stephen MacEgan and Bishop Luke Fagan and an article on the building of two chapels in the parish of Clonmellon about 1788. Cogan's history of the diocese is so vast in scope - from monastic times to the 1860s - that he could not be expected to give an adequate account of a particular century. My book, then, is the first to attempt a comprehensive account of the diocese in the eighteenth century. This I did mainly through the lives of the various bishops, but the part played by the religious orders and the laity also receives attention. The articles I had written about Bishops Fagan and MacEgan formed the nucleus of this work, although the article on Fagan required considerable extension. It was a matter then of writing chapters on the other bishops, Cheevers and Plunket, and on the period 1692 to 1713 when there was no bishop, with a chapter on the religious orders and a chapter mainly about how the Catholic nobility and gentry fared.

Fr. Hugh Fenning OP in the course of an excellent and substantial review in *Ríocht na Midhe* was of the opinion that 'this workmanlike book will stand the test of time, for it summarises all that is currently known of the diocese of Meath at this period', and concluded with the hope that the people of Meath, Westmeath and northern Offaly will give the book the welcome it deserves, the author having given 'the story of the diocese of Meath its proper national and even at times international setting'.

14 *S. MacG.*: How far has the reassessment you speak about succeeded in counteracting the received wisdom of other times?

P. F.: The apologists of the past, such as Cardinal Moran, Canon William Burke, Fr. Reginald Walsh and our own Dean Cogan, have had such a headstart in the matter of propagating their own partial views and interpretations of the operation of the Penal Laws and the

Catholic experience generally in the eighteenth century, that the reassessment which has been undertaken by historians over the past 30 years or so, has encountered great difficulties in overtaking them. It is surprising to what extent the old verities still persist among people of all ages. Part of the trouble is that the text books used in primary and second-level schools, necessarily simplistic and generalised since they must cover a lengthy period in a limited space, do not seem to have caught up, to any great extent, with the scholarship of more recent years in this regard.

15 S. MacG.: To have made such a significant contribution to this major debate on what is, after all, the emergence of Irish identity, must have been a source of satisfaction to you.

P.F.: The award by the National University of the degree of Doctor of Literature in recognition of my published work was, of course, a source of great satisfaction to me. To be considered for such a degree, one must submit one's published work to a committee appointed by the university who determine whether one is worthy of a doctorate on the basis of such work. The NUI are quite sparing in the award of such degrees. Despite the award of this degree and although my books have been hailed, as the excerpts from various reviews indicate, by some of the foremost scholars in the field of eighteenth-century studies, the reality is that, as far as academia in the round is concerned (I know there are exceptions), I do not rate at all, or very little, as an historian. There appears to be a great stigma attached (by the academics, of course,) to those historians who come in by the back door, as it were, although it should be obvious to all that a blast of fresh air from outside should do a power of good to the narcissistic world of academia. But I need not labour the point unduly for I find that no less a stalwart of academia than Professor Joe Lee, has already made my case succinctly in an article in *The heritage of Ireland*, in the course of which he decries the notion that the writing of history should be the preserve solely of academics. He states that 'the only valid criterion of authentic historical writing is whether evidence is used professionally or not. History is professional where evidence is used professionally, amateurish where evidence is used amateurishly. ... By no means all non-academics are amateurs, and, perish the thought, not all academics may be professionals'.

Historical study is a continuing process of reappraisal, reassessment and revision, being constantly asked to be open to new

facts, to adjust our earlier conceptions, modify our views and learn anew about our country and its past. This is a process of reappraisal which should of course involve the universities but also the general public. Operating outside of the universities, I could claim to have had in some ways a freer hand to carry out research and was unencumbered by teaching and other duties.

16 *S. MacG.*: What other disadvantages does an historian like yourself working outside the academic loop, have to contend with?

P. F.: Firstly, on the plus side, I have been very fortunate that Michael Adams and the Four Court Press have supported me over the years and recognised what I was about. For me the disadvantages have been mainly on the publicity side. I never had an official launch of any of my books for the simple reason that being outside the charmed circles of the history departments, I could never hope to muster sufficient support to warrant such a launch. An academic, on the other hand, publishing a book, can count on friends and acquaintances in academic circles to make a launch a successful venture. In the matter of reviews, the academic is in a position to exercise some clout, firstly as to whether the book will be reviewed at all, and, secondly as to whether it will receive a favourable review. It should also be mentioned that academics, in the production of a work, can count on the support and advice of their colleagues.

There is a further point I should mention in this connection. From time to time books are published which are the joint work of several historians. Again, you will find that in the choice of authors in such cases, what amounts to a closed shop operates, and unless you are, or have been, an academic of some kind or other you have little chance of being asked to contribute.

The Public Orator of Trinity College, in introducing me for an honorary M.A. degree in that university in 1992, prefaced his remarks with a quotation from Horace: 'Loyal silence also reaps a secure reward.' I wonder does it.

17 *S. MacG.*: Although the national and indeed international dimensions of Irish history have absorbed so much of your research time, I have been much impressed by your generous attention to the local region, to Meath and to your native Westmeath, especially in your deeply illuminating articles over the years in *Ríocht na Midhe*.

P. F.: *Ríocht na Midhe* is, of course, among the best of the local

history journals and I regard it as a great honour to be numbered among its contributors. While I have contributed to other journals and publications, including 10 pieces in the new *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, the items I contributed to *Ríocht na Midhe* about various aspects of my native county of Westmeath have given me particular pleasure, because I felt I was working upon a terrain and among people I knew intimately and it was a delight to share fresh insights with readers on the subjects treated. Among these, the article on my native parish of Taghmon in the eighteenth century springs first to mind. I also edited, in another article, some letters written from the U.S. in the 1840s by a native of that parish which give an entirely new slant on emigration to America during that period.

My article on Michael Fagan and the part he played in the Phoenix Park murders in 1882 and his connection with the Barbavilla (Collinstown, Westmeath) murder the same year, was a long time in gestation, for the reason that I was reluctant to write it bearing in mind that the sensitivities of descendants and relations of those involved had to be considered. After all, in the communal memory the events mentioned were relatively recent. I can recall seeing one of those who did time for the Barbavilla killing walking the road when I was a boy. An article on the Catholic Thomas Nugent, fourth earl of Westmeath, a contemporary of Nary, is yet another exercise in reassessment. Research on an article on the building of two chapels in the parish of Clonmellon in 1788 was of particular interest to me since my father came from that parish and it gave me some pleasure to note that an ancestor of mine, another Patrick Fagan, contributed 7s-6d to the building fund on that occasion. Articles on two bishops of the diocese, Luke Fagan from Lickbla, Castlepollard and Stephen MacEgan, I have already mentioned above.

18 S. MacG.: In conclusion, I wish to thank you warmly for giving this interview to *Ríocht na Midhe* and also to record my appreciation of a further splendid contribution to the journal, your article in this edition on Thomas Dease, bishop of Meath (1622-1651). Finally, I have great pleasure in informing you that the Council of the Meath Archaeological and Historical Society has voted unanimously to confer you with Honorary Life Membership of the Society as a small token of their great regard for your distinguished contribution to historical enquiry at both the regional and national level. Gura fada buan i mbun pinn thú, a Phádraig.