



Irish Texts Society

- A Main Series of 66 volumes
- A Subsidiary Series of 26 publications
- Annual Seminar in partnership with the Combined Departments of Irish UCC
- Publication of the Locus Project's Historical Dictionary of Gaelic Placenames
- Discounts on ITS and RIA publications for ITS members
- The Noel O'Connell and Breandán Ó Buachalla Memorial Lectures (London & Dublin)

Volume 19 Issue 1

April/Aibreán 2014

CUMANN NA SCRÍBHEANN NGAEDHILGE / IRISH TEXTS SOCIETY

Nuachtlitr - Newsletter

EAGRÁN NUA DE AGALLAMH NA SEANÓRACH FOILSITHE - NEW EDITION OF AGALLAMH NA SEANÓRACH LAUNCHED



In 2013 the family of Nessa Ní Shéaghadha donated annotated proofs of her edition of *Tóraigheacht Dhiarmada agus Ghráinne* (Volume 48 of the ITS Main Series) to the Society, to be placed in the ITS archive in UCC. Nessa Ní Shéaghadha was also the editor of the Modern Irish edition of *Agallamh na Seanórach*, first published in three volumes between 1942 and 1945. This edition, which had been found useful as a teaching text, has been out of print for many years, and a decision was taken by the ITS Council in 2013 to reprint it in a new one-volume edition (without an English translation, as in the case of the previous edition). Reprinting was carried out with assistance from the Royal Irish Academy's Coiste Léann na Gaeilge (Fochoiste na bhFoilseachán). This ITS publication coincides with the publication of *In dialogue with the Agallamh: Essays in honour of Seán Ó Coileáin*, edited by Aidan Doyle & Kevin Murray, (Four Courts Press). Both publications were featured in the book launch and reception which followed the 2014 Breandán Ó Buachalla Memorial Lecture, delivered earlier that evening (see p. 4, ITS EVENTS). It is to be hoped that the publication of both these volumes will increase interest in a text described thus by Gerard Murphy: "In it folk-motifs, mythological motifs, warrior motifs, *senchus...* motifs, *din-shenchus* motifs, lyric poetry, ballad poetry, and learned poetry are found harmoniously united in a single whole; and...cast in the



form of a romantic *dinshenchus*, or place-history, of Ireland..."



Seoladh *Agallamh na Seanórach* i Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hÉirinn ar an 18 Márta 2014:



1. An tOllamh Máire Herbert agus an tOllamh Pádraig Ó Macháin.



2. Isín Kenny, Cairtriona Doran agus Máire Mac Conghail, iníonacha Nessa Ní Shéaghadha.

3. (Thíos ar chlé) An tOllamh Seán Ó Coileáin.

4 (Thíos ar dheis) Baill eile den tinreamh, Aingeal Uí Bhuachalla san áireamh, ar chlé.

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REMEMBERING DAVID ELLIS EVANS

23. ix. 1930—26. ix. 2013

Contribution from Professor Thomas Charles-Edwards, Jesus Professor Emeritus of Celtic, Oxford.

David Ellis Evans (Ellis from now on) was a native of Carmarthenshire and, in particular, of Llanfynydd, a village that lies in the hills north of the Tywi as it flows from Llandeilo to Carmarthen. The district between the Tywi to the south and the Teifi to the north has been one of the strongholds of the Welsh language and its culture. Ellis's parents, David and Sarah Jane, were very much part of this society, largely Nonconformist and Welsh-speaking. David farmed 40-odd acres and was secretary of the Welsh Calvinist Methodist chapel.

For his university, Ellis first went to Aberystwyth, but his father died during his first year, and his mother then sold the farm and moved to Swansea; Ellis therefore transferred to Swansea, where he studied Classics, both Greek and Latin, and Welsh, in all three of which he secured first-class marks in Finals. The combination of Classics and Welsh was crucial for Ellis's path in scholarship. The head of the Welsh Department was Henry Lewis, the most philologically-minded of all the great generation of Welsh scholars in post during the inter-war years; and this suited the young Ellis, with his combination of Classics and Welsh, just fine: in many ways, Ellis was Lewis's intellectual heir.

In the autumn of 1952 Ellis came to Jesus College as a Meyricke graduate scholar. He was supervised by Idris Foster for a D.Phil. thesis entitled 'The Celtic Personal Names in the Celtic Inscriptions of Gaul, the Commentaries on the Gallic War, and La Graufesenque Graffiti'. In 1957, not long after completing his National Service, he was appointed assistant lecturer in Welsh in his old department in Swansea. The D.Phil. thesis was submitted in 1961. Meanwhile he had been promoted to a full Lecturership in 1960 and he subsequently progressed to a Readership in 1968, the year before the publication of *Gaulish Personal Names*; he became Professor and Head of Department in 1974.

Gaulish Personal Names, subtitled, *A Study of Some Continental Celtic Formations*, is Ellis's principal



publication and exhibits all his formidable virtues as a scholar. Something which strikes any reader of *Gaulish Personal Names* is the richness of the primary material assembled by Ellis under each simple name or element of a compound name; equally striking is the careful attention paid to the full range of scholarship. Ellis hated over-hasty verdicts on difficult issues. He would much rather leave an issue open than cut off scholarly discussion by putting his weight behind just one possible solution.

In 1978 Ellis returned to Oxford as Jesus Professor of Celtic in succession to his old supervisor, Sir Idris Foster. It has to be said that he was just about the ideal person for the job as a Welsh-speaking Welshman whose research extended beyond Wales to the Celtic languages as a whole, above all, in his case, those of Antiquity. Ellis was only a year or two into his time as Jesus Professor when Oxford was chosen to host the Seventh International Congress of Celtic Studies, held in July 1983.

When we remember Ellis, we remember both the scholarship of *Gaulish Personal Names* and the warm person who, through the friendships of both himself and his wife Sheila, supported his students and, indeed, Celtic as a discipline in Oxford.

Contribution from Professor Pádraig Ó Riain, Emeritus Professor, Sean- agus Meán-Ghaeilge, UCC, and former President of ITS:

Ellis Evans began the chapter he wrote for *The Irish Texts Society: the First Hundred Years*, published in 1998, with the following words: 'Belonging to this Society as a member and officer was an enlightening and very joyous experience'. One can imagine, therefore, the distress it caused when he found himself no longer able to attend meetings. The last letter I received from him in October 2006, written in Welsh, as had always been his custom, stressed the fear that he would never again be able to 'follow the old paths and come to the meetings and highly rewarding seminars of the Society'. Up to then, he had always made a point of

SEIMINEÁR 2013, DÍRITHE AR BUILE SUIBHNE - THE 2013 SEMINAR, FOCUSING ON ONE OF OUR BEST KNOWN TEXTS

The fifteenth Annual Seminar, jointly organised by the Irish Texts Society and the School of Irish, UCC, took place at UCC on Saturday, November 9th. The subject this year was *Buile Suibhne (The Frenzy of Suibhne)*, ed. J.G. O'Keefe (ITS Main Series, vol. 12) and the event marked the hundredth anniversary of the volume's publication.

Myles na gCopaleen made much use of this text in his novel *At Swim-Two-Birds* and Seamus Heaney's *Sweeney Astray* (1983), described as 'a version from the Irish' was based on O'Keefe's edition. Seamus Heaney had accepted an invitation to deliver a paper at the beginning of the Seminar and it was with great sorrow that the organisers learned of the poet's untimely death.

Six speakers took part in the event and the topics addressed included 'The Linguistic dating of *BS*' (Patricia Kelly), 'J.G. O'Keefe, editor' (Pádraigín Riggs), 'The Authorship and Transmission of *BS*: a reappraisal' (Alex Bergholm), 'Ó Nualláin-O'Brien and "the cobwebbed armoury of the old-time Gaels"' (Breandán Ó Conaire), 'The Death of the Wildman in the Legend of Suibhne Geilt' (Bryan Frykenberg) and 'The Cult of St Moling and *BS*' (Máirín Ní Dhonnchadha).

Two books were launched in the afternoon, the Proceedings of the 2012 Seminar on *Lebor na Cert*,

edited by Kevin Murray and Fasc. 5 in the *Historical Dictionary of Gaelic Placenames* series, edited by Pádraig Ó Riain, Diarmuid Ó Murchadha (whose death had occurred half-way through the preparation of the volume) and Kevin Murray. Fasc. 5 was dedicated to Dónall Mac Giolla Easpaig, former Chief Officer of Brainse na Logainmneacha who was presented with a copy at the launch.

Once again, the Seminar was very well attended. The proceedings were summarised by John Carey but because of the very full programme, it was not possible to hold the customary question session at the end of the day.

As in the case of other seminars, Michael Burns - the ITS Treasurer - ran the popular bookstall, offering ITS publications at special seminar prices.



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attending meetings in London, bringing with him his beloved 'minder' Sheila, who joined us for lunch, a long established practice from which both clearly derived enormous pleasure. Ellis was then still at home but under medical care, 'holding his own' as he wrote but fearful of the future.

A letter received from Sheila, in November 2009, in response to a card signed by Council members, while expressing her own 'sadness and distress' at the deterioration in Ellis's condition, repeated the value he had placed on his association with the Society, and the enjoyment he had always taken from 'the company and friendship' of Council members. Ellis was President of Council for ten years (1982-92) in succession to a fellow Welshman, Idris Foster, who

had also held the Jesus Professorship of Celtic in Oxford. Ellis had the highest regard for his predecessor, subject to one qualification only, Idris's acceptance of a knighthood, an honour which the Society 'rightly and deliberately' never acknowledged. Ellis himself was 'totally averse to royal honours'.

On my assumption of the Presidency in 1992, Ellis wrote to say that I should avoid taking on too much work, because 'excessive weight tends to be placed on the shoulders of good workers'. Alas, Ellis himself clearly never followed this advice and the onerous responsibilities attached to his position in Oxford will no doubt have hastened the decline that ultimately led to his sad passing. Equally sadly, Sheila predeceased Ellis by a number of years.

Cumann na Scríbhneann
nGaedhilge/Irish Texts Society

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For orders of books, applications/queries re membership, contact the Honorary Treasurer; for other matters contact the Honorary Secretary.

We're on the web at:
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ITS EVENTS 2014 - IMEACHTAÍ NA BLIANA

ITS NOEL O'CONNELL MEMORIAL LECTURE (LONDON)

The Noel O'Connell Memorial Lecture for 2014 will be given by Dr Pádraigín Riggs on Thursday, 29 May 2014. at 7.30 p.m.

The title of the lecture will be 'Who was who in the London Irish societies?'

The following is a brief summary of the contents:

The London-based Irish Literary Society, Irish Texts Society and Gaelic League, all founded at the end of the 19th century, had many members in common though each organisation had its own aims and activities and each had a particular London focus. This talk will present brief portraits of a number of persons involved in one or in all of these organisations, some of whom were prominent in Irish cultural circles and some whose association with such circles was unexpected.

This lecture is organised in conjunction with the Irish Literary Society and will be hosted by the ILS.

It will take place at The Doubletree West End, 92 Southampton Row, WC1B 4BH
<http://doubletree3.hilton.com/en/hotels/united-kingdom/doubletree-by-hilton-hotel-london-west-end-LHRLBDI/maps-directions/index.html>

ITS/UCC SEMINAR

The Sixteenth Annual Seminar will take place on Saturday, 8 November 2014 at University College Cork.

This year's seminar will focus on ITS Main Series Volume 47,

The Poems of Blathmac Son of Cú Brettan, edited by James Carney (1964).

The discovery and preparation of an edition for the Irish Texts Society by James Carney of this unique collection of early Irish poetry represented one of the most significant developments in Irish studies of the twentieth century. The verse provides an unrivalled insight into the early Irish reception of Biblical narratives, and into the religious *mentalité* of the early centuries of Christianity. *The Gospel of Thomas* text is of particular value to the history of the spread of apocryphal writings in Western Europe.

Further details about this event from Dr Pádraigín Riggs: p.riggs@ucc.ie

ITS AGM

The 2014 AGM of the Society will take place at University College, Cork, on Friday, 7 November at 5.00 p.m.

REPORT ON THE ITS BREANDÁN Ó BUACHALLA MEMORIAL LECTURE (DUBLIN)

The Lecture was delivered in The National Library of Ireland at 6.30 p.m. on 18 April 2014.

The lecture was given by Dr Nollaig Ó Muraíle, Roinn na Gaeilge, NUI Galway, who spoke on the subject of 'The Irish genealogies – Irish history's poor relation?'

The lecture began with an account of the early and medieval Irish/Gaelic genealogies, before looking at the pioneering efforts to edit genealogical texts, beginning with John O'Donovan in the nineteenth century. It was noted that the Irish annals have fared better in editorial terms than the genealogies and consideration was also given on how the genealogies are viewed by historians. The lecture concluded with an overview of the genealogical texts produced over the past century and of what remains to be done in an area of scholarship that has been neglected and misunderstood,

There was a good attendance at the lecture and at the drinks reception, book stall and book launch which followed.

THE HONORARY TREASURER REQUESTS THAT MEMBERS WITH E-MAIL ADDRESSES SUPPLY HIM WITH DETAILS OF THEIR E-MAIL ADDRESS AND INFORM HIM PROMPTLY OF ANY CHANGES.

ITS MEMBERSHIP: Individual Annual Membership Subscriptions are as follows: £15 stg., €23€, US\$25. Where payment is made by Banker's Standing Order a preferential rate of £9 stg. and €12 shall continue to apply - this is in recognition of the reduced administration involved, For details of Library Membership and details of both types of membership please see p. 3 of the ITS List of Publications. Annual subscriptions are due on 1 January each year.