

Reply by Peadar Slattery to
Speech by Professor Colm Lennon
launching Peadar's book
Social Life in pre-Reformation Dublin, 1450-1540
in the Teachers' Club on 15/8/2019

Good evening everybody. Thank you for coming. I have been asked a number of times why I attempted to write about late medieval Dublin.

I clearly remember what triggered me into action. I began reading a monumental book on the settlement and economy of the Dublin region in medieval times by Margaret Murphy and Michael Potterton. The book is about the Dublin region and not about Dublin *per se*, and the authors make this clear from the outset – but as I read I gradually became more curious about late medieval Dublin, what it looked like, its people and personalities, and its economy and trade.

Are there original sources available to draw a picture of late medieval Dublin? Yes. Despite the huge losses of our medieval sources, wills, minutes of meetings, deeds, court decisions, lists of citizens, detailed parish accounts, have survived in Dublin, and in England customs records are available. The sources provide information on many topics, including, for example, provisioning the city, the poor state of the city's fabric, the unwanted Irish in Dublin, rented property, corrupt city rulers, citizens, master craftsmen and apprentices, farm life and household life, and elected lay persons managing the Church at parish level.

Another reason that allowed the book to be written was the work and research of many scholars published since the 1880s. There are over 300 published works in the book's bibliography. I am indebted to the authors, the topics of their work including, for example, trade with Chester, defense, food supply, entertainment, the legal status of women, water supply, liturgy, pilgrimages, and trade with France.

In 2016, I was offered advice on my first draft, dominated by Co. Dublin agriculture. The advice was that Dublin was the main story and that the economy of the county should be used as background. At that early stage Dr Terry Barry was very encouraging, and Dr Peter Crooks directed me into new areas which I had not considered.

From the start I had worked with a closing year of 1500, but that year did not make much sense. I wondered should I conclude in 1509, the close of Henry VII's reign. But it was not going to be that easy. In early 2018, both Dr Lennon and Dr Clarke independently suggested that I should continue working out to the 1530s and the early years of the Reformation. A concluding year of 1540 was settled on.

In matters of religion, I am grateful for the guidance of Colman O Clabaigh OSB from Glenstal Abbey, a specialist in the history of religion. In musicology, I was guided by Dr Ann Buckley (TCD) and Dr Frank Lawrence (UCD) in particular about the development of polyphony or church choirs. In drama and entertainment, Dr Alan J. Fletcher of UCD was very helpful on a number of occasions.

I would like to thank Dr Theresa O'Byrne of New Jersey who, in the course of her own work on scribes and notaries, identified Ismaia Fitzwilliam of Dundrum, Co. Dublin, as a practitioner of affective piety, an intense form of prayer, which in turn offered an insight into the prayer life of late medieval Dublin Christians. Discussion with Dr O'Byrne proved invaluable.

Andrew Slattery sought out difficult-to-find books and unfailingly delivered them to my desk throughout the period of the work. I am most grateful to him

Institutions from far and near were generous with the free use of images from their collections – the Uppsala university library in Sweden, permitted the use of a map of Ireland from 1450; the maritime museum in Bremerhaven, Germany, granted the use of a photograph of a ship model; the Victoria and Albert museum permitted use of an image of a Thomas Becket reliquary, and the Carmelites in Whitefriar Street, Dublin, allowed use of their image of a statue of Our Lady, over 500 years old, still seen today in Whitefriar Street.

I am grateful to the anonymous reader, chosen by Four Courts Press, who made suggestions that significantly improved the book, especially in relation to lay participation in and management of parishes in the colony, generations before the Reformation.

A warm thank you to Four Courts Press for accepting the book for publication and to Martin Fanning for the book's editing, design

and presentation. Four Courts Press take the risk of publishing specialised books on so many historical topics, as a glance at their catalogue will show. They deserve to be supported. I would have used many of their books in the course of my work.

I wish to thank Eileen O'Neill for compiling the index, and Kevin O'Brien, an experienced OPW land surveyor and artist, for drawing the late medieval Church Street barn working from archaeological remains. I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to the late Dr Jane Laughton from Cheshire for so generously sharing her detailed knowledge of Irish Sea trade with me. Professor Howard Clarke has been very generous with his time, advice and guidance over a number of years and made a most significant contribution to the final shape of this volume. Thank you Professor Clarke. A heartfelt 'thank you' to my wife Bernie who has been so supportive throughout the course of this work.

A very special word of welcome and thanks to Professor Colm Lennon for his constructive advice, his agreeing to launch the book and for his considered assessment of *Social Life in Pre-Reformation Dublin*. Thank you Professor Lennon.

Thank you all for coming this evening to celebrate the book's publication. Enjoy the conviviality of the evening.