

“A little remnant of the work of the ancients” 23 N 10: The Book of Ballycummin’

Librarian’s Opening Address

A chairde, fáilte romhaimh inniu. Tá súil agam go mbainfidh sibh sult as ár gcomhdháil, go mbeadh eolas nua le fáil agus go mbeidh seans agaibh casadh le bhur gcomhghlacaithe.

Welcome to our 4th Irish Manuscripts Conference at the Academy Library. To those of you who have travelled to be here, we wish you a very warm welcome and hope that you will enjoy your time with us. Since we initiated the series in 2012, with a landmark conference and exploration of *Lebor na hUidre*, chosen because it is a flagship manuscript and also because we wished to commemorate R.I. Best’s groundbreaking 1912 paper in *ERIU*, volume 6, this conference has gone from strength to strength. As you are aware, subsequent conferences dealt with The Books of Ballymote and Uí Mhaine. The research which has fed the series has been hugely enabled by the existence of Irish Script on Screen (ISOS), a pioneering development of the School of Celtic Studies, of which the Academy has been a proud partner since 2001 — we now have 97 manuscripts accessible on ISOS. Prof. Pádraig Ó Macháin unfortunately cannot be with us today but I should like to publicly salute the seminal work of Pádraig and all the Institute colleagues on this resource, a resource which we hope will be supported and sustained long into the future. Building on the research papers presented at each of our conferences to date, the Academy has published an important new series, *Codices Hibernenses Eximii*, of which two volumes, edited by Prof. Ruairí Ó hUiginn, are available thus far. Named by our stalwart supporter and Academy member, the late Donnchadh Ó Corráin, the series will stand as testament to the dedicated work of our twenty-first century scholars and as a worthy successor, I hope, to the Academy’s Irish Manuscripts and Todd Lecture Series, of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, which featured the work of the greats of Gaelic scholarship of the period. The series also, by dint of its association with ISOS, reflects the mission of the longest-serving Academy Librarian, Sir John T. Gilbert, who made it his mission to enable publication in facsimile form of a series of Irish manuscripts which stood us in good stead until the advent of the digital era. As part of a continuum, the onus is on us to progress the mission of our predecessors and endeavour to add meaningfully to the knowledge bank of Gaelic scholarship at a deep but accessible level. I hope to shortly open a fund to make the conference and ensuing publications sustainable into the future and to enable us to maintain a relatively modest conference registration fee in order to ensure accessibility. I would be delighted to discuss this anyone with anyone who would like to consider contributing so please spread the word.

This series was really the idea of our good colleague and conference partner, Ruairí Ó hUiginn and I should like to thank both Ruairí and the third member of our triumvirate, Lizzy Boyle, for their loyalty to this series, their programming, their advice and practical support and the sponsorships of their parent institutions. I should like to thank also all of the contributors who so willingly engage with us and whose papers we are really looking

forward to hearing today and tomorrow. Thanks also to our colleagues in the Library, particularly Sophie, Dymphna and Konstantin for their trojan work ensuring that everything is in tiptop order. Thanks too to our IT colleagues and to the Publications Department for their involvement. Especial thanks to our two student assistants from Maynooth, Chelsey and Ellen.

This year's theme is an old favourite of many, MS 23 N 10, recently named 'The Book of Ballycummin', (although somehow I think that the shelf number will stick), an important repository of story and more. I'm hugely looking forward to hearing the various papers – there is just so much to learn — but I know you are too and so, without more ado I should like to introduce our first speaker, Professor Ruairi Ó hUiginn, Director of the School of Celtic Studies, who will set the scene with his paper 'RIA MS 23 N 10 and the transmission of the Ulster Cycle of Tales'.

Siobhán Fitzpatrick
Academy Librarian
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