

God, Kings and Commissioners

150 years later, a multidisciplinary examination of the methods, hurdles and issues involved in the research and preservation of landscapes and places of faith across Ireland.

Royal Irish Academy
13 October 2023

10:00 Registration

10:45 Opening and address

11:00 Panel 1: Landscapes and Histories

Chair: The Right Reverend Adrian Wilkinson (Bishop of Cashel Ferns and Ossory)

Ms Aideen Ireland (Formerly National Archives of Ireland)

The Landscape of the Church of Ireland Records – Destruction and Survival

Dr Patrick Gleeson (Queen's University Belfast)

Benign neglect: the Rock of Cashel from Palace to Ruin

Dr Jonathan Cherry (Dublin City University)

Lands and landscapes of the Church of Ireland: historical geography perspectives

12:45 Lunch break

13:30 Panel 2: Histories and Archives

Chair: to be confirmed

Dr Sue Hemmens (Deputy Director, Marsh's Library)

'For the foundations shall be cast down: and what shall the righteous do?'

Disestablishment observed in Marsh's Library

Dr Raymond Refaussé (Former Librarian and Archivist, Church of Ireland)

Before and After Disestablishment. Some Archival Context

15:00 Tea/Coffee

15:30 Panel 3: Archives and Dialogues

Chair: Dr Jacqueline Cahill Wilson (RIA Historical Studies Committee)

Professor John McCafferty (University College Dublin)
The modernities of the Irish Manuscripts Commission
Professor Alan Ford (University of Nottingham)
From 'Holding On' to 'Letting Go': The Church of Ireland and its Property

16.20 Breakout Session

Session to discuss papers presented.

17.00 Reports Returned and Closing Remarks

Chair: Dr Caitriona Crowe, MRIA

17.30 Reception

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Panel I: Landscapes and Histories

Aideen Ireland, The Landscape of the Church of Ireland Records – Destruction and Survival

The 1867 Act establishing the Public Record Office of Ireland and the 1875 and 1876 expanded legislation had implications for Church of Ireland parish registers consequent on the Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland by the Irish Church Act of 1869. Disestablishment occurred on 1 January 1871. The 1875 and 1876 legislation enabled Church of Ireland records of specific dates to be transferred to the Public Record Office of Ireland or to be retained in local custody under special authority. This resulted in immediate engagement by the local parishioners with their own registers / history / community. However, the end result was loss of engagement with the parish as the registers had been sent to Dublin. The result was the destruction of the family / community and parish connection.

This contribution will hope to explore the trauma in the parishes resulting in the sending of the registers to Dublin and their subsequent destruction in 1922.

Aideen Ireland is the retired Head of Reader Services Division of the National Archives of Ireland. She serves on the Council of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland of which she is a past President. She is a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of London and has served on its Council. She is currently President of the Archives and Records Association (UK & Ireland). She has recently acted as Chair of the Strategic Review Committee for the preparation of the Strategic Development Plan 2023–2027 for the Irish Manuscripts Commission.

Patrick Gleeson, Benign neglect: the Rock of Cashel from Palace to Ruin

The Rock of Cashel represents perhaps one of the foremost icons of Irish identity and landscape globally, with the striking vista of its ruined ecclesiastical buildings atop a limestone outcrop being an internationally recognised symbol of Irish culture and identity. Yet, this romantic image of Cashel, fixated on the extant structures, is a relatively recent by-product of the distinctive history of the Rock and its ecclesiastical functions in recent centuries. This paper will explore the contraction of the Rock of Cashel as a complex, as its role and symbolism was transformed in recent centuries, particularly as a result of the Church Temporalities Act, and the impact that this legacy has on the site and its management today.

Dr Patrick Gleeson is a Senior Lecturer in Archaeology at Queen's University Belfast. His research focuses on the later prehistoric and medieval period in Northwestern Europe, with a thematic focus on the themes of rulership, religion, cult and governance in the first millennium AD. He has led fieldwork projects at a range of royal and cultic landscapes in Ireland and Britain, including large-scale remote sensing and excavation at the Rock of Cashel and Navan Fort. He is recipient of a number of prizes for his research and its international impact, including the Martyn Jope Prize from the Society for Medieval Archaeology in 2020, and a Philip Leverhulme Prize in Archaeology in 2022 from the

Leverhulme Trust. He is a member of the inaugural cohort of the Young Academy Ireland, and a member of the Historic Monuments Council of Northern Ireland.

Jonathan Cherry, Lands and landscapes of the Church of Ireland: historical geography perspectives

A valuation of benefices, printed in 1871, recording the lands held, and let by Church of Ireland clergy across the country provides a unique insight into the geography of one of Ireland's largest institutional landowners, on the eve of its dismantling and reorganisation under the terms of the Irish Church Act, 1869.

While ownership of most of this land was transferred to former tenants under the agency of the Commissioners of Church Temporalities, the Representative Church Body were facilitated in acquiring the glebe houses and some, or all of the surrounding lands that had been held and enjoyed by the resident clergy. Under favourable terms and conditions of purchase, this symbolic component of the built heritage and landscape presence of the Church of Ireland remained largely intact after disestablishment, providing a welcome sense of continuity and stability, at a local level during a period of upheaval. This paper provides a brief overview of the 1871 valuation, before turning to trace through the processes through which the ownership of glebe lands was secured, illustrated by examples drawn from the Derry and Raphoe diocesan archive held by the RCB library.

Jonathan Cherry is a lecturer in Geography at the School of History and Geography, DCU. He is an historical geographer and his research interests lie in the evolution and transformation of the Irish landscape over the past four centuries. His research examines the influence of the landowning elite on both rural and urban landscapes; the demise of this elite and their legacy in the form of planned towns and villages, 'big houses' and demesne landscapes during the period. His current research projects include the compilation of the Cavan fascicle of the RIA Irish Historic Towns Atlas series and a digital humanities project entitled 'Mapping the Ulster Covenant, 1912' with Dr Arlene Crampsie, UCD.

Panel 2: Histories and Archives

Sue Hemmens, 'For the foundations shall be cast down: and what shall the righteous do?' Disestablishment observed in Marsh's Library

Marsh's Library, established by Act of the Irish Parliament in the reign of Queen Anne, could be seen as essentially a bystander in the processes of Disestablishment, although those prominent churchmen and officers of the state governing the Library reflected a range of opinions on the status of the church. As Disestablishment gathered pace and eventually came into being, the dilapidated state of the fabric of the Library also necessitated action. Accusations of plots were made in the macrocosm of the politics of church and state, and the microcosm of the Library. This paper will explore the personalities and events within and without Marsh's Library over the decades surrounding the passing of the Irish Church Act in 1869.

Sue Hemmens is Deputy Director of Marsh's Library. Originally qualified as a biochemist, she holds a master's degree in library and information science and a PhD in the area of early modern natural philosophy. Research interests include the history of natural philosophy in the early modern period, with a particular focus on Ireland; and the dissemination of music in print and manuscript in eighteenth-century Ireland. She has served for many years as a lay vicar choral of Christ Church cathedral.

Raymond Refaussé, Before and After Disestablishment. Some Archival Context

For much of its existence the Church of Ireland was the established church and its record keeping practices tended to follow those of the civil administration – that is, those parts of government which created records also retained custody of them. However, this began to change in the 19th century as government began to take charge of activities which had been the preserve of the Church – matrimonial matters, registration of births and deaths, testamentary jurisdiction, and in preparation for disestablishment, records relating to property. The destruction of the records relating to these activities in the fire in the Public Record Office in 1922 prompted the Church to begin a process which would lead to the establishment of the Representative Church Body Library in Dublin as the Church's official record repository, and the gradual transfer from local custody of non-current parish, diocesan cathedral, and central administrative records.

Raymond Refaussé was appointed as the Church of Ireland's first archivist in 1981 and from 1984 combined that post with responsibility for the Representative Church Body Library. He has written widely on Church of Ireland records. He is a former Chairman of the Irish Region of the Society of Archivists and of the Irish Society for Archives, and served two terms on the National Archives Advisory Council. He retired in 2016 and is now Honorary Keeper of the Archives of Christ Church Cathedral, Dublin.

Panel 3: Archives and Dialogues

John McCafferty, The modernities of the Irish Manuscripts Commission

Established in 1928 the Irish Manuscripts Commission was one of a suite of bodies established by the new Free State. The political and cultural milieu within which the IMC was conceived had a significant bearing on its attitude to the Church of Ireland and its records. The IMC's very concept of what properly constituted the sources of Irish history and where the dividing line could be drawn between medieval and 'modern' history changed quite rapidly within the two decades of its foundation. Records generated by the Church of Ireland after its establishment in 1536 and its disestablishment became drawn into the IMC's increasingly capacious sense of its chronological remit. This paper will show how the gradual professionalization of Irish history writing which was stimulated by IMC members nudged this body towards Church of Ireland records in very particular and unforeseen ways.

John McCafferty is a Professor of History at University College Dublin. His research and writings are concerned with religious change in late medieval and early modern Ireland and beyond. He is Chair of the Irish Manuscripts Commission and Director of the Mícheál Ó Cléirigh Institute at UCD. With James Kelly (Durham) he is general editor of the five volume Oxford History of British and Irish Catholicism (2023).

Alan Ford, From 'Holding On' to 'Letting Go': The Church of Ireland and its Property

From the moment that the Christian church allied itself with the Roman state under Constantine in the 4th century, and began to take over the pagan temples and build its magnificent churches, the extent of church property has proved problematic. On the one hand it supported clergy and bishops and enabled them to minister and preach to their congregations. But it also brought with it all the financial and legal responsibilities of property ownership, dangerous distractions from the church's spiritual mission. The Church of Ireland, established in 1536, inherited the cathedrals, churches and land of the medieval Irish church. But failing in its mission to win over the mass of the Irish people, there was an obvious disjuncture between its endowment and its limited membership. Determined to hold on to what it had, it took decisive action from Gladstone in 1870 finally to disinherit it, and strip it of the lands and churches and endowment it had acquired. The subsequent decline of the church, especially in the south, ensured that tensions between the material and the spiritual persisted. Despite the efforts of the Commission on Church Buildings in the 1980s, giving up churches and church property proved to be a very difficult challenge.

Alan Ford taught in the Theology Department of the Universities of Durham and then Nottingham for 35 years, and served as Pro Vice Chancellor for Teaching and Learning in the University of Nottingham. He is the author of *James Ussher: theology, history, and politics in early-modern Ireland and England* (Oxford, 2007). His most recent publication is 'The Church of Ireland: Power and Distance in the Early-Seventeenth-Century Atlantic', in *The Seventeenth Century* (2023). He is currently writing a book on the writing of Irish religious history from 1600 to 2000.