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Bertram Windle

Clíona Ní Ríordáin



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REFERENCES

Ann Keogh, Dermot Keogh, *Bertram Windle : The Honan Bequest and The Modernisation of University College Cork 1904-1919*, Cork, Cork University Press, 2010, 368 p., ISBN 978-185918-473-8

- 1 This collaborative work by Emeritus Professor of History at UCC, Dermot Keogh, and his wife Ann, developed from an MA thesis written by the latter on the subject of philanthropy and the construction of the Honan Chapel. Although the chapel bears the name of its benefactor, Isabella Honan, there is no doubt but that Bertram Windle, President of Queen's College, later University College Cork from 1905-1919, had a fascinating part to play in the construction of the iconic building. The focus of this work is Windle himself and the role he played in the development of the university at the beginning of the twentieth century; he was responsible, as David Gwynn suggests in his centenary tribute (*University Review*, Autumn/Winter 1960), for its transformation from "the old moribund Queen's College, into the vigorous University College".
- 2 A graduate of Trinity College Dublin, Bertram Coghill Alan Windle was a Renaissance man : Professor of Medicine, archaeologist extraordinaire, and one of the founding fathers of Birmingham University in its modern incarnation. Through his father he was connected to the Cadbury family and to the manufacturing clans of Wolverhampton; through his mother, he was linked to notable Anglo-Irish families such as the Bushes, the Greenes, the Cramers and the Somervilles. He was also a high profile convert to Catholicism and, as the Keoghs point out, this fact had no small bearing on his ability to bring the Catholic hierarchy in Ireland onside and convince them that Catholics should be allowed to attend the college. In nine chapters, the Keoghs briefly examine his early life, before concentrating on the battles he fought in Cork. They highlight Catholic opposition to the "godless" Queen's Colleges and outline the negotiation Windle undertook to obtain an independent University of Munster. Impeccably researched,

drawing on archival sources in Ireland, Rome, Canada, the United States and Britain, Windle's diaries, as well as the earlier work of Sr Monica, first biographer and friend of Bertram Windle, the book charts the increasing disillusion of UCC's President and his departure for Canada, where he spent nine very happy years before his death in 1929.

- 3 Windle's path intersects at various stages with those of prominent Irish and British citizens (Chief Secretary Wyndham, Patrick Pearse, the "strumpet" Markiewicz, Neville Chamberlain, Erskine Childers, Douglas Hyde). We also encounter a certain Edward de Valera, who is an unsuccessful candidate for the professorship of Mathematical Physics in Cork, and a post office clerk who voiced fierce opposition to Windle's removal to the University of Ogham Stones from Farran, Co. Cork. The postal clerk was none other than Michael Collins.
- 4 The Honan bequest and the subsequent construction of the Honan Chapel, allowing a Catholic place of worship for the students of the university, show how Windle was an able politician negotiating between various interest groups; mindful of the non-denominational nature of the National University, the railings around the chapel separated it from the non-denominational institution.
- 5 Ultimately, Windle failed in his mission to obtain an independent university for Munster. He was hugely critical of the National University structure, which he saw as weighted in favour of UCD, and he resented the time wasted in travelling to Dublin for frustrating meetings. A convinced Home-Ruler and supporter of Redmond, he was also horrified at the 1916 Rising (his diary is very blunt with regard to the executions of the signatories of the proclamation). The increasing encroachment of nationalism on his everyday life led him to retire from the presidency and leave the Ireland to which he had so gladly returned in 1905.
- 6 This book makes a vital contribution both to the history of education in Ireland and to the historiography of UCC, continuing the work undertaken in John A. Murphy's history of the college and in the volume devoted to the Honan Chapel itself. With its contemporary resonance, the volume also serves as a cautionary tale for all those who are interested in the notion of a university, and the politics of university development.