

Robert E. Ward, *An Encyclopedia of Irish Schools, 1500–1800*. Lewiston: Edward Mellen Press, 1995. Pp. 251. US\$89.95 cloth.

An Encyclopedia of Irish Schools covers the period from 1500 to 1800. It is intended as a “research tool for both specialists in Anglo-Irish culture and the generalist who would like to know something about the variety of schools that existed in Ireland before the installation of the Irish state schools in the 19th century.”

Robert E. Ward is a teacher of British literature. He was motivated to write the book by his need to know what kind of schools and school masters stimulated Jonathan Swift, William Congreve, George Farquhar, John O’Keeffe, and Thomas Moore. The book is a documentary history and covers a wide range of aspects of Irish education during the three centuries in question. These include the Bardic Schools, Charter Schools, Hedge Schools, Huguenot Schools, Quaker Schools, and Roman Catholic Schools. There are also short sections on “Significant Other Students—The Big O’s Educated in France and Ireland” and “Pupils Who Made It; Pupils Who Faked It,” and “Vindictive Views of the Irish and Their Education.” These titles give some indication of the author’s unusual approach to presentation of the educational history of the period.

Ward draws on a wide range of sources, both primary and secondary. As would be expected for a volume covering this period, it relies more on secondary sources than on primary. Many of the quotations are predictable. For example, the chapter on Catholic Schools draws heavily on Fr. T. Corcoran’s publications—*State Policy in Irish Education 1536 to 1816*; *Education Systems in Ireland from the Close of the Middle Ages*; *Some lists of Catholic Lay Teachers*; and so forth. It also draws on Patrick Corish’s work *The Catholic Community in the 17th and 18th Century* and on Fr. Martin Brennan’s publication *Schools of Kildare and Leighlin*. The section on Quaker education quotes generously from Michael Quane’s article on Ballitore School. A chapter on European influences from the Jesuits and other orders benefits from Louis McRedmond’s book *To the Greater Glory: A History of the Irish Jesuits* published in 1991. However, primary sources are also liberally used.

The unusual classification of chapters adopted in the book leads to duplication. For example, a chapter on “Means, Methods and Materials for Teaching” includes a section on the curriculum for St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth followed immediately by the oft-quoted extract from William Carleton’s *Stories of Irish Life* regarding the fictional schoolmaster Matt Kavanagh. On first reading, this is confusing, as it is difficult to see the connection between the extract relating to St. Patrick’s College, Maynooth and the curriculum offered by Matt Kavanagh in his Hedge School. The description of the curriculum

offered in St. Patrick's College in 1812 is taken from Westerfield's *Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*. This extract includes the salary paid to the staff of Maynooth—an annual salary of £227.10 shillings for the President General; £85 for the Dean; £85 for the Professor of Logic but £106 for the Professor of Moral Theology. It is interesting to read that in 1812 there was no regular Professor of Sacred Scriptures in Maynooth but that “a portion of the New Testament is committed to memory every week.”

A chapter on “Newspapers on Irish Education” includes useful extracts from early issues of the *Dublin Journal* and the *Belfast Newsletter*. The *Dublin Journal* in the 1730s regularly advertised dinners held in various taverns and eating houses of Dublin to honour different schoolmasters. For example, in February 1734 “between 30 and 40 gentlemen of quality and fortune who had been educated by the Rev. Dr. Thomas Sheridan invited the Dr. to an elegant dinner at the Plume and Feathers in Castle Street as a grateful acknowledgement of the great care he had taken with their education.” In this chapter, the author pays tribute to the work of John C. Greene for his computer record of the *Belfast Newsletter* from 1737 to 1800.

This book is a welcome addition to published sources on pre-nineteenth-century Irish education. It contains many long extracts from documents no longer easily accessible. The commentary on various aspects of education shows considerable research. Many extracts are amusing and provide a novel interpretation of education in the period.

By Irish standards this is an expensive book, costing almost \$90. It is unlikely to be bought to any significant extent by individual scholars or students. However, it should certainly be on the shelves of all well-stocked libraries, especially in universities and colleges of education. This volume is nicely produced. It is hard-bound with a green cover (appropriate for a publication on Irish education). It contains a reasonably comprehensive chronology of events from 1537 to 1798. Its list of sources is more than adequate and will be found helpful by scholars of the period. It is a pity, however, that in some sections of the book proof reading was not as meticulously carried out as one would expect for a book of this price. For example, on pages 90 and 91, lower case is used instead of upper case for some proper names and at the beginning of sentences. Also, commas are used occasionally instead of full stops. These, however, are all small criticisms and do not take away from the overall readability of the text.

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