

## **Dublin through the ages. Edited by Art Cosgrove. Pp viii, 168. Dublin: College Press. 1988. IR£12.95.**

### **Maura Cronin**

This collection of eight studies examines the development of Dublin from the ninth century to the late 1980s, tracing the physical growth of the city, the fluctuations of its population, and the varying fortunes of its inhabitants.

The transition from proto-town to town is investigated by H. B. Clarke, who shows modern Dublin evolving from twin settlements — that of pre-patrician origin on the ford at Ath Cliath, and the separate monastic settlement at Dubhlinn. In the mid-ninth century a viking stronghold was established in the area, becoming a permanent settlement by the late 980s. Progressively strengthening its urban character, Dublin minted its own coinage in 997 and had built a permanent bridge over the Liffey by 1014, by which time it had become the key to the political domination of Ireland.

Dublin's continuing domination of Ireland was ensured, as shown by James Lydon, into the later middle ages by the granting of successive royal charters which gave Dublin a definite corporate existence, its governing assembly maintaining defences and regulating all aspects of city life in the face of perennial dangers of fire, disease, famine, Irish attack. The gulf between rich and poor in its tightly packed population was wide, but was bridged somewhat by individual charity and by a number of hospitals specifically geared to the needs of the sick and destitute.

Colm Lennon's study examines the hesitancy of religious change in the reformation period when, though loyalty to the crown stayed largely intact, the city's strong sense of civic pride

became closely interwoven with the old religion. Though die Tudor policy of boosting local oligarchies was largely reversed by the Stuarts, Dublin's élite managed to maintain and improve their fortunes by profitable cross-channel trade and through gentrification by marriage

David Dickson traces Dublin's prosperity from 1600 to 1800 to increased specialisation in the production of sugar, grain, textiles, and luxury goods. Strong credit capabilities, an efficient banking system, and a developed port facilitated in the 1770s, this prosperity was transitory. The city's in every twenty of the population of Ireland by 1685 and with a growing food dependence on the midlands and meant that by the late eighteenth century Dublin's influence thereafter was to be political.

Through the eighteenth century, too, the Dublin Murphy gives a fascinating account of the factional clashes Liberty Boys and catholic Ormond Boys. Partly sectarian, clashes eventually drew the mob into contact with radical revealing a poorly understood but dawning sense of mass political awareness.

Both Fergus D'Arcy and Mary Daly show the nineteenth for Dublin. The city was affected by the departure associated élite, and by the failed growth of a substantial middle class. At the same time, old public festivities in the face of resurgent catholic devotionism while contracted in the face of modernisation, foreign competition, rural areas. Employment created by the building and was generally unskilled and casual, and by the late of workers were underfed, badly housed, and susceptible actually deteriorated during the first world war and the suburban drift, first of the upper classes towards and later of the aspiring lower middle classes to Harold's the inner city into an area of tenements.

Not until after independence was any effective attempt of population change and working-class housing. demographic trends in Dublin after 1921, when the and greater sub-region

began to expand to reach over sizes decreased and housing patterns changed but the so that by 1971 the city centre population equalled only of inept planning, which can, perhaps, be remedied only planning and administrative body for the greater Dublin This is a fascinating book which, though the work of together by a strong line of continuity. Themes introduced on by others, thus presenting a well woven and enlightening would have preferred more comprehensive referencing not have detracted from the readability of the book. Overall, however, this book has achieved that elusive end — genuine scholarship combined with a good end.