



TOMÁS BAIRÉAD PAPERS

GP2/138

Galway County Council Archives

PIONEER IN TOURISM

G.P.2/138 (1)

The Connacht Tribune Ltd. was among the pioneers in the development of tourism as a national industry and played a leading role in this field in the formative years of Irish tourism.

In 1924 with a view to promoting the tourist potential of Galway-Salthill, Connemara and Clare the company published an ambitious Tourist Supplement. Contributors included such noted literary leaders as W. B. Yeats, Jack Yeats, Lady Gregory, Dr. T. B. Costello, M.R.I.A., Tuam and others all of whose faith in the future of tourism has been amply justified.

In the early 1950's the company published The Western Tourist which also played an important part in the then rapidly developing tourist industry.

Long service has been a feature of company employment and among those still surviving who had lengthy service with the company are Mr. Pat O'Donnell, Ballinasloe, journalist, who was a member of the staff since 1922 until his retirement some years ago; Mr. Tom Barrett, Moycullen, journalist, who was a member of the staff in the 1920's and who later joined the Independent Newspapers; Mr. Thomas Mitchell and Mr. James McAnespie (retired) both of the printing staff and Mrs. Nell O'Reilly, Director and Manager.

The firm employs 65 (49 male, 61 per cent of whom are married and residing in Galway) and 16 female staff. This number does not include retired members of the staff, special contributors or district correspondents.

And **O LiATHAIN** explains in his introduction how he took up the writing of short stories in 1942 in order to supply reading matter for the three new magazines that had been started at the time, *An Glór*, *Comhar*, and *Inniu*; readable and interesting stories that would appeal to the ordinary reader. He has collected fifteen of them here and makes no claim for them as great literature. He wonders how they will appeal to today's reading public.

I wonder how they appealed to the reading public thirty years ago. Seosamh Mac Grianna, Tomás Bairéad, Maire and Máirtín O Cadhain were all publishing books in the forties and I am sure that Mr. O Liatháin would be the first to admit that he couldn't write as well as any of them. His stories are very much the work of an amateur, of a man who has ideas for short stories but lacks the gifts and probably the time to make an effective use of his ideas.

He was, as he says himself, a magazine writer, and it

Old and new

GLEANN AN LEASA

by *Ánraoí O Liatháin/Sáirséal agus Dill* £1.05

BREACADH

by *Dailthí O hOgáin/Mercier Press* 75p.

DOUGLAS SEALY

would appear that the magazines he wrote for were not very selective — some of the stories are no better than what you might see in a school magazine. He does not appear to have made any study of his craft.

The best stories are those where he has allowed his feeling for nature to guide him, as in "Eán na hÓtche" where a young boy is shown a robin's nest at night, or "Gaeilachas

Fomhair" where he describes a small community trying to save the corn by moonlight. In his more ambitious stories the characters are just cardboard and in his efforts to lend them significance he sometimes falls flat on his face.

Mr. O hOgáin is only 23 and is bravely offering the public 17 short stories. He hopes to write a novel in a couple of years time. It seems likely that he is a novelist and not a

GP2/138(2)
short story writer, for all the stories read like snatches from a work in progress. Each story comes to an end before he has said all that should have been said—the next chapter is missing, as it were. If his cast of countrymen, beggars, students, astronauts, school-children, roadmen, secret police and priests could be re-assembled in a novel, we would have a novel of unusual scope and interest.

Mr. O Liatháin, even in his best stories, has not succeeded in rejuvenating his themes; Mr. O hOgáin plunges deeper into his material and makes us feel that he is exploring his own mind and finding something new and unexpected. In his story "An Rud a Scriobhann an Púca" the final sentence is: "Perhaps the subject matter might be considered unworthy but his face had submerged gazing into the mirror of the page, and he wrote, and he wrote, and he wrote . . ." The author is his own Púca, and he shows a creative imagination which deserves encouragement.

