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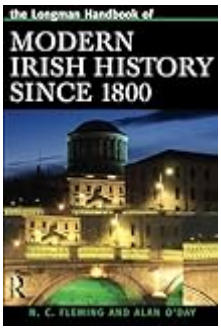

N. C. Fleming, Alan O'Day. *Longman Handbook of Modern Irish History since 1800.* New York: Longman, 2005. 824 pp. $40.40 (paper), ISBN 978-0-582-08102-4.

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Just the Facts: A Fundamental Guide to Modern Ireland

This work joins Longmanâs previous efforts to compile and consolidate decades worth of national data and information into single reference volumes. As with the *Longman Handbook of Modern British History, 1714-2001* (2001) compiled by Chris Cook and John Stevenson, there is much to commend in this Irish entry. N. C. Fleming and Alan OâDay have produced a valuable and convenient reference for researchers and students of Irish history.

The *Longman Handbook of Modern Irish History* is divided into six sections focusing on political history, social and religious history, economic history, foreign relations, biographies, and a glossary. Though published in 2005 and promising to cover events and information since 1800, the *Handbook* only slightly surpasses the millennium with the most recent data ending in 2002. This minimal coverage of Ireland's most recent history is likely due to the restrictions of publishing and difficulty of obtaining and compiling recent data; it does not detract from the overall usefulness of the work.

The political section is the longest part of the text. Transitions within Irish politics and governmental structure since the Act of Union took effect in 1801 demand the inclusion of information pertaining to Britain as well as Northern Ireland, the Free State, and the Republic. An index of parliamentary candidates from 1801 for seats in respective parliaments makes up the bulk of this section. Students will appreciate the glossary of political parties, list of principal government ministers, and chronology of key political developments in Ireland as well as pertinent events in Britain. Curiously, Fleming and O'Day include occasions that might be considered distinctly religious or social, such as the founding of Catholic orders, in the chronology without explanation. Those looking for less commonplace information may have greater interest in the subsection on election data; the editors provide data on the size of the electorate and voter turnout for Westminster and DÃ¡il contests, and a table of the breakdown of party composition in the DÃ¡il from 1918 to 2002.

Readers concerned with the changes in Irish society in the last two centuries will appreciate the economic, so-

cial, and religious sections of the *Handbook*. Fleming and O'Day have drawn from Central Statistics Office (CSO) and Northern Ireland Statistics and Research Agency (NIAAS) data to provide cost of living and wage indices as well as trade figures. Unfortunately, the editors offer only trade statistics from the 1930s onward, and useful detailed breakdowns based on commodity and countries of origin and destination are largely limited to 1984 to 2001. Researchers working outside of this timeframe will have to look elsewhere, but the *Handbook* is especially useful for students interested in charting the expansion of the Irish economy in recent decades.

The social and religious components of the work draw heavily on W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrickâs *Irish Historical Statistics: Population, 1821-1971* (1978) to incorporate data on crime; religious affiliation; population growth and decline; and enrollment in primary, secondary, and higher education institutions. While the volume edited by Vaughan and Fitzpatrick is a standard resource for Irish scholars, the now thirty-year-old study deserves an updated edition. Fleming and OâDay have done their readers a service by incorporating CSO and NIASS data, thereby extending the range of the data on births, marriages, and deaths.

The social and religious history section also includes twenty-four pages dedicated specifically to women. The editors have compiled lists of women elected to seats in the DÃ¡il, Senate, Parliament of Northern Ireland, and the Assembly. In the context of the text's overall organization, the lists might have been more conveniently located in the political section of the *Handbook,* but this is a minor quibble. Students may be particularly interested in the chronology of significant events in education, religion, law, and politics pertaining to women; though it is unclear why Fleming and O'Day have chosen to start the chronology in 1765, a year that is outside the parameters of the text.

The editorsâ addition of a substantial list of Irish periodicals included in the social and religious section may be valuable to researchers. In effect, Fleming and OâDay provide an abbreviated periodical directory complete with not only the names and locations of the periodicals but also their publication dates and succinct descriptions of the content and political leanings of many publications. The roster is not exhaustive; it is surprising, for example, to find that the list includes the *Capuchin Annual* but not other significant religious periodicals, such as the valuable *Irish Ecclesiastical Record* and the Jesuit publication *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*. Nonetheless, these omissions do not detract from the value of the *Handbook*Îs catalog of more than four hundred newspapers and journals.

There are some minor errors in the text. For instance, the founder of the Presentation Sisters, Nano Nagle, is identified as Namo Negle (p. 4). The biography and glossary sections are useful and extensive in scope, covering key political and cultural figures and events. The information Fleming and O'Day give for each entry is necessarily brief; however, numerous glossary entries suffer from too much brevity where even a single additional sentence would have greatly aided novice students of Irish history. In addition, students, or those unfamiliar with economic statistics, might have benefited from greater explication of the data, particularly the price and wages indices that Fleming and OâDay include in the economic history section.

On the whole, the *Handbook* is a useful and valuable investment for scholars and advanced students of Irish history. The tables of facts and figures alone that are included in the sections on society, religion, and economic history are among the most useful parts of the text and will save readers some of the time they might have spent scouring volumes from the CSO or the NIAAS.