

**‘Past romance and living interest’:
A.B. Rowan and *The Kerry Magazine* (1854-56)**

• **MARC CABALL**

Published between 1854 and 1856, the *Kerry Magazine* documents a remarkably creative and vibrant moment in Irish cultural history when a small provincial town in south-west Munster was linked through overlapping circuits of expertise and scholarship to dynamic metropolitan knowledge derived from a variety of literary, historical and scientific domains.

In 1854 a Church of Ireland clergyman and antiquarian, Arthur Blennerhasset Rowan (1800-1861) established and edited a short-lived antiquarian magazine in Tralee titled the *Kerry Magazine*. Published on a monthly basis over three years, from January 1854 to December 1856, the periodical's primary focus was on antiquarian matters, local history, *belles lettres* and natural history. Like numerous other journals and newspapers in nineteenth-century Ireland, the *Kerry Magazine* quickly vanished from popular consciousness and was effectively consigned to historical obscurity.¹ More recently, it has attracted some rather scant attention from literary bibliographers. Tom Clyde in his study of Irish literary magazines depicted it as ‘never more than competent’.² In an earlier equally brief reference to the *Kerry Magazine*, Barbara Hayley, somewhat enigmatically, ranked it among what she called local magazines ‘of more than local interest’ such as the *Ulster Journal of Archaeology*, the *Northern Magazine* and the *Armagh Monthly Messenger*.³ Aside from its intrinsic interest as the only antiquarian and literary magazine established outside Dublin, Belfast and Cork in the period 1850-1869, it is arguable that the *Kerry Magazine* affords a unique glimpse of the impact of national networks of knowledge and expertise on a geographically-isolated town in south-western Ireland in the mid-Victorian period. With a population of just over 9,000 (9,445) in 1851, which had fallen marginally from over 11,000 (11,363) in 1841 due to subsequent famine and emigration, Tralee, which was not integrated within the national railway network until 1859, may seem, at first glance, to have been, in intellectual terms, a provincial backwater isolated from contemporary academic debates and trends.⁴ In fact, a close reading of the

¹ Occasional passing references were made to the magazine subsequently, largely in regard to Kerry's history. See, for example, Frederick John Eagar, *A genealogical history of the Eagar family* (Dublin, 1861) p. 56; Mary Agnes Hickson, ‘Kileton in Glenfas’, *Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland*, Fifth Series, 8:4 (1898) pp 306-313 at p. 307; C.P. Crane, *Kerry* (2nd ed., London, 1914) p. xi.

² Tom Clyde, *Irish literary magazines: an outline history and descriptive bibliography* (Dublin, 2003) p. 28.

³ Barbara Hayley, ‘A reading and thinking nation: periodicals as the voice of nineteenth-century Ireland’ in Barbara Hayley and Enda McKay (eds), *Three hundred years of Irish periodicals* (Gigginstown, Co. Westmeath, 1987), pp 29-47:42.

⁴ W.E. Vaughan and A.J. Fitzpatrick (eds), *Irish historical statistics* (Dublin, 1978) p. 34; *Slater's national commercial directory of Ireland* (Manchester and London, 1846) p. 320; *Slater's royal national commercial directory of Ireland* (Manchester and London, 1856) p. 360; R.V. Comerford, ‘Ireland 1850-70: post-famine and mid-Victorian’ in W.E. Vaughan (ed.), *A new history of Ireland V: Ireland under the union, 1 (1801-70)* (Oxford, 1989) pp 372-95:375. Kieran Foley has demonstrated that the population of county Kerry decreased by 18.9% between 1841 and 1851 due to such factors as starvation, disease, falling marriage and birth rates and increasing numbers of emigrants. Kieran Foley, ‘Kerry during the Great Famine, 1845-52’ (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, National University of Ireland, UCD, 1997) p. 320.

Kerry Magazine suggests that Tralee and its professionals were to gain access to a dynamic nexus of knowledge and scholarship and in this sense, notwithstanding their distance from metropolitan centres, participated in wider intellectual and scholarly interchange in mid-Victorian Ireland. Moreover, a public print culture was firmly established contemporaneously in the town.⁵ In the 1850s newspapers in Ireland were largely bought on a subscription basis both by individual customers and newsrooms.⁶ A visitor to Tralee in 1852 observed that the local temperance benefit society's members had access to a small library which subscribed to five newspapers while in 1856 three newspapers were published in the town.⁷

The first half of the nineteenth century in Ireland witnessed the appearance and often rapid demise of a diverse range of journals devoted to religious, literary and historical issues from largely partisan political and sectarian perspectives. Barbara Hayley has highlighted two distinct phases of magazine growth and development at this period. She argued that during the first thirty years of the century, the main type of magazine which flourished was political or religious in focus. Such publications were generally propagandist and overtly contentious in their approach to religion and politics. Those magazines which attempted to be literary and apolitical proved short-lived. However, two oppositional denominational publications founded in the context of the Catholic Emancipation Act in 1829, the *Christian Examiner and Church of Ireland Gazette*, established in 1828, and the *Irish Catholic Magazine*, launched in 1829, display early signs of the appearance of a new literary consciousness. Hayley proposed that literary journals in their own right began to flourish in the 1830s thanks to several factors, including a relaxation in sectarian tensions following Catholic Emancipation and easier access to the press in remote areas and increased literacy underpinned by O'Connell's reading rooms. Such developments in turn informed a popular sense of national consciousness and an awareness of the world beyond Ireland and England.⁸ The most familiar and long-running literary journal to emerge in Ireland, the Conservative and Protestant *Dublin University Magazine*, published between 1833 and 1877, was initially distinguished by its inclusion of a wide range of Irish literary work. More popular publications such as the *Dublin Penny Journal* (1832-1836) and the short-lived *Irish Penny Journal* (1840-1841) were aimed at broader audiences and featured articles on diverse aspects of Irish history, antiquities, literature and culture.⁹ The *Nation*, established in 1842 by Thomas Davis, Charles Gavan Duffy and John Blake Dillon, while technically a weekly newspaper, in some respects resembled a magazine with its inclusion of material relating to Irish literature and culture. Immensely popular in its first incarnation between 1842 and 1845, it contributed to the formation of contemporary popular political awareness.¹⁰ However, both Barbara Hayley and Tom Clyde have argued that the immediate post-famine years witnessed relative de-

⁵ Niall Ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture in Ireland, 1750-1850* (Basingstoke, 1997) p. 21; C.J. Woods, *Travellers' accounts as source-material for Irish historians* (Dublin, 2009) p. 125.

⁶ L.M. Cullen, 'Establishing a communications system: news, post and transport' in Brian Farrell (ed.), *Communications and community in Ireland* (Dublin and Cork, 1984) pp 18-29:23; Marie-Louise Legg, 'The Kilkenny Circulating-Library Society and the growth of reading rooms in nineteenth-century Ireland' in Bernadette Cunningham and Máire Kennedy (eds), *The experience of reading: Irish historical perspectives* (Dublin, 1999) pp 109-123:112.

⁷ John Forbes, *Memorandums made in Ireland in the autumn of 1852*, 2 vols (London, 1853), i, p. 165; *Slater's royal national commercial directory of Ireland* (Manchester and London, 1856) p. 363.

⁸ Hayley, 'A reading and thinking nation', pp 29-33.

⁹ Barbara Hayley, 'Irish periodicals from the union to the *Nation*' in P.J. Drudy (ed.), *Anglo-Irish Studies*, 2 (1976) pp 83-108 at pp 99-103; Hayley, 'A reading and thinking nation', p. 38; Clyde, *Irish literary magazines*, pp 22-3.

¹⁰ Clyde, *Irish literary magazines*, p. 21.

cline and retrenchment in the production of magazines when compared with the initiatives and innovation of the period 1830-1849.¹¹

Accordingly, it was against a background of fragmentation and conservatism in the Irish magazine scene that Arthur Blennerhasset Rowan launched his county journal in 1854. Descended from a landed family settled in Kerry since the early eighteenth century, Rowan was educated at Trinity College Dublin, from where he graduated in 1821, and he was ordained to the ministry of the established church in 1825. He took up the position of curate in the village of Blennerville near Tralee, remaining there until around 1844. An evangelical, who underwent a profound religious awakening at the age of twenty, his career within the church, was somewhat undistinguished. At the relatively late age of 56 in 1856, he was elevated to the archdeaconry of Ardfert – the summit of his advancement within the Church of Ireland. Rowan's immersion in antiquarian research and correspondence, engagement in theological disputation and participation in municipal politics possibly contrived to divert his energies from his ecclesiastical career. Rowan, who was elected a life member of the Royal Irish Academy in 1832, published widely on the subjects of religious controversy and Kerry history. A resolute advocate of Protestant evangelisation in Ireland, he published tracts dealing with the Oxford movement and Anglo-Catholicism as well as sermons and a hostile account of resurgent Catholic piety in Tralee in the mid-1850s. His antiquarian interests covered topics as varied as archaeology, folklore, political history, genealogy and epigraphy. He read papers to the Royal Irish Academy on themes as diverse as ogham remains in Kerry and on the portraiture of Catherine Fitzgerald (d.1604), countess of Desmond. More popularly, Rowan published in 1853 a detailed account of the Killarney district aimed at the town's burgeoning tourist influx. Rowan authored a comprehensive history of Kerry which was never published and remains extant in manuscript.¹² By means of regular contributions to the *Kerry Evening Post* and in his role as editor of the *Kerry Magazine*, Rowan attempted to bring the history and antiquities of Kerry to the attention of a readership on a scale hitherto unprecedented.¹³

In line with contemporary practice, Rowan issued a prospectus, editorial statements of intent which were commonly circulated as leaflets, in advance of first publication outlining the programme and objectives of the proposed new magazine.¹⁴ The prospectus in its remarkable emphasis on county pride and sense of identity, articulated a message which remained constant over the course of three years of publication. In this regard, it is argued that Kerry should rank with some of the other counties in Ireland which had magazines to record 'the lives and labours of their eminent men – their interesting occurrences – their legendary stories – their various improvements and marks of social progress'.¹⁵ In the absence of an appropriate platform from which to publicise the county's diverse advantages and its inhabitants' achievements, whether of a 'martial, patriotic or literary' nature, the new magazine had been conceived to provide a stimulus to those engaged in studies relating to the county. Poets, historians, heroes, antiquaries, physiologists, geolo-

¹¹ Hayley, 'A reading and thinking nation', pp 41-2; Clyde, *Irish literary magazines*, pp 26-7.

¹² University College Cork (UCC), Special Collections, Boole Library, MSS U328, U329; *Mealy's sale of rare books, manuscripts, maps, ephemera, etc. December 7th & 8th, 2004* (Castlecomer, 2004) p. 104.

¹³ *The Gentleman's Magazine and Historical Review*, 211 (November, 1861), pp 565-6; James B. Leslie, *Ardfert & Aghadoe clergy and parishes* (Dublin, 1940) pp 38-9; Marc Caball, 'Rowan, Arthur Blennerhasset (1800-61)' in James McGuire and James Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish biography*, 9 vols (Cambridge, 2009) viii, pp 634-6.

¹⁴ Marie-Louise Legg, *Newspapers and nationalism: the Irish provincial press 1850-1892* (Dublin, 1999) p. 42.

¹⁵ *Prospectus*, 1.

gists, astronomers and artists will now be enabled to publish material where previously such authors had no relevant forum. Indeed, the benefits of the magazine were not envisaged in purely intellectual terms. It was suggested that economic benefits would accrue from its implicit beneficial impact on tourism. Observing the growth in English tourism to Kerry, Rowan argues that 'descriptions of our old castles – watering places – county seats – with legendary history – will create in the English mind, an irresistible interest which will lead them – in place of limiting their visits as heretofore to the show 'Lakes of Killarney' – to extend their tour throughout the whole county'.¹⁶ Manuscripts were solicited for publication and subscriptions to the magazine were invited at the cost of six shillings annually and payable half-yearly in advance.¹⁷

However, an editorial in the first edition of the magazine published on 1 January 1854 suggests that the prospectus's ambitions had met with only limited success. At the outset, it appears that the magazine had attracted little local support in terms of content provision:

...if we fail to excite that national interest within the county for the preservation of its literature, we feel satisfied of having performed our part in laying the matter before them. We cannot believe but there are gentlemen, and ladies, too, who will cheerfully come forward and write for this Journal.¹⁸

On public grounds, it was imperative that the magazine be supported. Rowan argued that in 'an age of cheap publication' there was no reason why the county should lack its own periodical. His task in this regard was disinterested in motivation: 'There is a blank in our social arrangements so long as we are without a Magazine'. Potential correspondents were notified that submissions were sought under the following thematic headings: original papers, tales, translations, original poetry, posthumous papers, original travelling sketches, original scientific essays and selections from new works. Significantly, it was stressed that political and religious discussion was firmly excluded from the remit of the new magazine: '...it is our most anxious desire to please all parties, by steering clear of these topics'. In summary, it was intended to provide a monthly magazine of public benefit 'on such cheap terms as to be within the reach of all'. Contributors were now expressly invited to come forward to assist in undertaking a lasting service for the county.¹⁹

In fact in terms of content, the dominant focus of the periodical throughout its lifespan was to be antiquarian interspersed with sentimental and largely insipid poems and prose essays. Indeed, the first edition established a template which was more or less to endure over the next three years of publication. The magazine opened with an article on the antiquities of Tralee, in particular the town's historic association with the noble house of Desmond. Crucially, it was in material relating to local history and antiquities that the magazine's real strengths lay. Rowan's articles on Kerry history were frequently informed

¹⁶ *Prospectus*, 2.

¹⁷ *Prospectus*, 2. The magazine was printed and sold by Ferdinand Charles Panormo, 25 Lower Castle Street, Tralee. Panormo's successful nomination for membership of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society in 1854 by Rowan's associate Richard Hitchcock indicates that the printer shared the editor's antiquarian interests. He may also be the 'Mr Panormo' who attended the inaugural meeting of the Dublin Natural History Society on 19 March, 1838. Royal Irish Academy, MS 12 P 2 (Minutes of Dublin Natural History Society), 1; *Proceedings and Transactions of the Kilkenny and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society*, 3 (1854-55) p. 173.

¹⁸ *Kerry Magazine*, 1:1 (January, 1854) p. 7.

¹⁹ *Kerry Magazine*, 1:1 (January, 1854) pp 7-8.

and enhanced by the fruits of primary research he had undertaken in Dublin's libraries and in the British Museum. The first edition also contained literary material, in this instance both anonymous original poetry and verse by Alfred Lord Tennyson, a travelogue by Rowan himself, and such generic Victorian prose as 'The Young Doctor's Tale', 'Greenwich Hospital (by an Old Scholar)' and 'The death-bed of Addison'.²⁰ This editorial template was further consolidated in the next and second number of the magazine published in February 1854. This edition opens with an essay by Rowan on the antiquities of Tralee informed by original research and by oral testimony. The remainder of the content consists of items such as original poetry, selections from English poets, an account of the burial of William the Conqueror and an essay titled 'A winter scene in the Gap of Dunloe' signed by 'F'. A letter published in this edition from a female subscriber styling herself 'Neanthe', although ironic and jocose in tone, hints at the marketing and publishing tensions inherent in the combination of learned and light subject matter:

...But there are two things you must not do. You must not make your work too learned for us ladies, who, though fond of reading, would not for the world have the slightest tinge of blue in our stockings, and you must not give us too much rusty fusty antiquities. I don't know exactly what rusty fusty means, but we all agree that it expresses something shockingly old and disagreeable, and we beg not to have too much of that sort of thing.²¹

The challenge of addressing the requirements of two diverse and locally-limited readerships, one antiquarian and the other interested in *belles lettres*, within the covers of one magazine ultimately proved beyond Rowan's editorial resources.

A sample of the magazine's contents drawn from numbers published in 1855 and 1856 respectively gives some indication of the essential thematic continuity which characterises the publication. However, the range of content which had been originally envisaged was, apparently, not forthcoming. In a separately-printed statement published on 31 December 1855 and intended to be bound with volume two of the magazine, Rowan, significantly, offers a more limited view of the range of thematic coverage. An aspirational commitment to feature material on science had figured in both the prospectus and first number of the magazine in 1854. Now, Rowan speaks simply of a 'medium for communications connected with the antiquities and literature of this interesting county'. He strikes a positive note with regard to the magazine's circulation claiming a steady increase in its readership. Moreover, he declares that several of the new subscribers are in no way linked to Kerry other than by their interest in its history and antiquities. Obviously encouraged by such a positive response, he records that the magazine had been enlarged in size that year by the addition of a 'quarter sheet to each number'.²²

In terms of content, a cursory survey of the January number for 1855 highlights a high degree of continuity between it and the numbers published in 1854. This edition opens with the customary article on the antiquities of Kerry, the present item constituting number 11 in the series. In this instance, Rowan reproduces an account of a military expedition to Dingle in 1580 from a manuscript preserved in the State Paper Office. Other items included the first in a series of articles entitled 'Birds of Kerry' authored under the initial

²⁰ *Kerry Magazine*, 1:1 (January, 1854).

²¹ *Kerry Magazine*, 1:2 (February, 1854) p. 27.

²² Unpaginated sheet, Castle Street, Tralee, 31 December, 1855.

'F' and a piece titled 'on certain passages in the poems of Ossian' signed by 'H'. Rowan contributed further material in the form of a piece entitled the 'Legend of Castlegregory' and poems signed by 'R' respectively. It is argued in this essay that both the individuals represented by the initials 'F' and 'H' who contributed material on an ongoing basis to the *Kerry Magazine*, R.D. Fitzgerald and Richard Hitchcock, constitute along with Rowan himself and a Dublin-based contributor James Ferguson, key actors in linking Tralee to national knowledge networks.²³ The January number for 1856 replicates the template established at the outset of publication. The twenty-first instalment in the antiquities of Kerry series appears in the form of the reproduction of a 'report of Lord Herbert, and others, on the state of Kerry, A.D. 1673'. This item was based on archive material conserved in the Bermingham Tower of Dublin Castle. The thirteenth instalment in the 'Birds of Kerry' series appears from the pen of R.D. Fitzgerald. There is a heavy concentration on local history with items on topics such as the Kerry Volunteers of 1782; the funeral of Lady Arabella Denny; royal presents to the Denny family of Tralee.²⁴

The usual programme of local history and literary material was occasionally interspersed with items unrelated to Kerry. Such material may not always have found a ready welcome from the editor. In a sheet printed separately and intended for binding with the first volume of the magazine, the editor notes that the magazine has been in receipt of material which in his words 'might as well be sent to any other periodical in any part of the empire'. However, he urges contributors to bear in mind that the 'articles most suited to our pages are those which have some bearing, remote or direct on the 'Kingdom of Kerry' – its antiquities, – scenery, – past history, – or yet undeveloped capabilities'.²⁵ Nonetheless, the occasional news item unrelated to Kerry made an appearance. For example, a topographical sketch of the Crimea appeared in September 1855 and an account of the Great Eastern steam ship then under construction in Millwall in the October 1856 edition. In the latter case, a full description of the new vessel's design and capacity was offered on the basis that such details would be 'perused with interest, especially by those who have friends and relatives settled in Australia and India, countries which this Leviathan vessel is designed to bring so much 'nearer home to us'.²⁶

Aside from the intrinsic significance of Rowan's pioneering researches, critically informed by primary sources, on the history and culture of Kerry's historic elites, it is arguable that this short-lived and subsequently obscured periodical offers a unique insight into networks of knowledge in provincial Ireland in the mid-Victorian period. Furthermore, it is also arguable that such knowledge and its dissemination served a broader political and cultural function in the conscious delineation of a sense of place and local identity in the *Kerry Magazine*. R.F. Foster has argued that the growth of local history societies and the development of Irish antiquarianism from the 1840s onwards possibly evidences an assertion of regional differences and identities in the context of an increasing focus on the concept of nation. Such local consciousness is evident in the foundation of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society by John Prim and the Anglican clergyman James Graves in 1849. With characteristic insight and intellectual élan, Foster argues that expressions of regional intellectual creativity such as the establishment of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society or the foundation of the Cork Historical and Archae-

²³ *Kerry Magazine*, 2:13 (January, 1855). For Hitchcock's identity as 'H' see J.C., 'Richard Hitchcock, the Kerry antiquary', *Kerry Archaeological Magazine*, 3 (1914-16) pp 75-8 at p.78.

²⁴ *Kerry Magazine*, 3:25 (January, 1856).

²⁵ Unpaginated sheet bound with volume one of the *Kerry Magazine* (1854).

²⁶ *Kerry Magazine*, 3:34 (October, 1856) pp 156-8.

ological Society in 1891 are indicative of what he terms 'the kind of local confidence and dynamism which distinguishes Irish provincial life at certain junctures and periods'.²⁷ While the *Kerry Magazine* is clearly the product of the type of intellectual synergy proposed by Foster, its genesis is also emblematic of broader political and cultural tensions.

Damien Murray in his study of romanticism, nationalism and Irish antiquarian societies in the period from 1840 to 1880 has stressed how the growth in Irish antiquarian activity was complemented by significant political and social change in Ireland. A number of legislative initiatives challenged the historic hegemony of the Protestant elites and the established church. The 1832 Reform Act weakened the link between landownership and political power while the Irish Church Temporalities Act of 1833 suppressed ten bishoprics and the Tithes Acts of 1834 and 1838 commuted the payment of tithes. Most significantly, the Irish Municipal Reform Act of 1840 constituted a major new departure in local administration and removed Protestant control of corporations and associated patronage which had previously been monopolised by sectarian urban elites.²⁸ Under the terms of this bill, existing corporations were abolished and municipal councils became fully elective with a £10 male household franchise.²⁹ Such developments were surely anathema to Rowan. A committed evangelical Protestant, he was sworn a free burgess of the borough of Tralee in 1824 and served as the last provost of the town before the replacement of the provost, burgesses and corporation by a new town council in 1840.³⁰ The embattled nature of the Protestant presence in Kerry is exemplified by figures from the 1861 census, the year of Rowan's death, when 96.7% of the county's population was returned as Roman Catholic in denominational affiliation.³¹ Moreover, the impact of the famine on Kerry's resident landowners and gentry is difficult to determine in cultural terms. However, the implications for the Protestant elite of what Kieran Foley in his definitive study of the great famine in Kerry summarised as its 'shattering impact on the county's population' were hardly limited to utilitarian questions of economic and demographic consideration.³²

Within the context of the attenuation of the Kerry Protestant interest, Rowan's launch of the *Kerry Magazine* was designed to articulate the integrity and legitimacy of the experience, values and achievements of the county's ascendant classes. Central to his project was the presentation of a progressive local identity premised on a common material inheritance and shared histories. In eschewing questions of political and religious controversy, Rowan, attempted to project a common identity on an inclusive basis. Such inclusivity was, inevitably perhaps, vitiated by sectarianism and conflicting senses of nationality. Although the *Kerry Magazine* is remarkably free of overt sectarianism, it is inherently culturally Protestant and represents the viewpoint of a specific milieu.³³ Ironically, however, it is arguable that Rowan's concept of a county identity was appropriated more or less intact in due course by an emergent nationalist middle class. In as much as political developments in Kerry formed part of and were determined by a wider national paradigm, it is evident also that the county's intellectual elite accessed broader networks

²⁷ R.F. Foster, 'History, locality and identity: a lecture to mark the centenary of the society', *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, 97 (1992) pp 1-10 at p. 5.

²⁸ Damien Murray, *Romanticism, nationalism and Irish antiquarian societies, 1840-80* (Maynooth, 2000) p. 7.

²⁹ Virginia Crossman, *Local government in nineteenth century Ireland* (Belfast, 1994) pp 78-9.

³⁰ Caball, 'Rowan, Arthur Blennerhasset (1800-61)'.

³¹ Vaughan and Fitzpatrick, *Irish historical statistics*, p. 52.

³² Foley, 'Kerry during the Great Famine', p. 320.

³³ Rowan's devotion to antiquarian pursuits transcended sectarian divisions and he interacted freely with Roman Catholic scholars. See, for example, John O'Donovan's letter to him dated 3 October 1855 [RIA MS 4/A/50 (i)].

of knowledge and expertise. The remainder of this paper will review how Rowan, via three specific contributors, drew on such networks for the purposes of the *Kerry Magazine*.

These individuals, an archaeologist, historian and naturalist, illustrate how overlapping circles of knowledge served to link a provincial town with metropolitan scholarship. The historian and archivist, James F. Ferguson, first contributed to the *Kerry Magazine* in July 1855. Ferguson, who was born in South Carolina in 1806, is best remembered for his work in indexing the exchequer records of Ireland and for his research on the records of the courts of exchequer and common pleas. He served as clerk and secretary from 1850 for a commission collating Irish courts records until its abolition two years later.³⁴ Ferguson's opening contribution to the *Kerry Magazine* was in the format of a letter to the editor in which he offered material of local interest from the medieval records of the Irish Court of Exchequer. The editor is assured of further material should it be deemed appropriate. Rowan appended a note of thanks in which he thanked Ferguson for his paper:

...a token that when, in his researches, an article of local interest even to our remote 'Kingdom of Kerry' comes in the way, he is not unmindful of our local periodical – this is the kind of patronage and assistance which we most value, and for which our thanks are proportionately due.³⁵

In the subsequent August, September, October and November numbers for 1855, formal articles by Ferguson entitled 'Notes of early records of the court of Exchequer' appeared in the magazine.³⁶ However, Ferguson died at his lodgings in Rathmines in late November 1855 and his final contribution to the magazine was followed by a brief obituary. Ferguson's death was to be the first of two which would seriously undermine Rowan's commitment to the magazine project. It also reveals the fragility of such informal knowledge networks.

The second contributor who merits closer scrutiny is altogether more elusive than either Ferguson or Rowan's protégé, Richard Hitchcock. In the January 1855 number of the magazine, the first of a series of monthly articles entitled 'Birds of Kerry' was published under the signature 'F'. In total, 'F' wrote twenty one such articles with his last contribution appearing in the final December 1856 number of the magazine. These articles are both highly informative and concisely written. Internal references provide evidence as to the probable identity of 'F'. There are regular allusions in these articles to Kerry material in William Thompson's *Natural History of Ireland*, published in four volumes between 1849 and 1856. Thompson (1805-1852), an active member of the Belfast Natural History Society, was noted for his detailed and extensive research on the appearance and behaviour of birds, both common and rare, in Ireland and Scotland. Held in high regard by Charles Darwin, Thompson has been described as the foremost Irish zoologist of his time. His *Natural History* was the first detailed book on Irish birds and was planned as part of a complete natural history of Ireland.³⁷ In this work, it is clear that Thompson

³⁴ G.B. Smith, rev. Aileen M. Ireland, 'Ferguson, James Frederic (1806-1855)' in H.C.G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (eds), *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, 60 vols (Oxford, 2004) xix, pp 357-8.

³⁵ *Kerry Magazine*, 2:19 (July, 1855) pp 127-8.

³⁶ On 19 October 1855, Ferguson sent Rowan a copy of an O'Connor Kerry lineage. In turn, Rowan supplied Ferguson with details he possessed of the same family's genealogy. UCC, Boole Library MS U328v2, pedigree of O'Connor Kerry on a sheet of paper and a letter from Ferguson to Rowan dated 30 October 1855 bound between pp 88 and 89 of the manuscript.

utilised information and knowledge derived from correspondence with a network of fellow naturalists throughout Ireland to enhance his accounts of various species, their habitats and their numbers.³⁸ In relation to Kerry, Thompson received data in the main from two named individuals: Richard Chute of Blennerville described by Thompson as a 'gentleman who has contributed much to our knowledge of the birds of that part of Ireland' and from Robert D. Fitzgerald of Tralee.³⁹ In the 1856 edition of *Slater's Royal National Commercial Directory of Ireland*, David Robert Fitzgerald of Strand Street is listed under the heading 'Gentry & Clergy' in the entry for Tralee.⁴⁰ In line with Rowan's practice of signing articles with the initial letter of a contributor's surname, it seems safe to assume that 'F' represents Robert Fitzgerald.

Fitzgerald's interest in natural history appears to have built considerably on the expertise and researches of Richard Chute.⁴¹ Regular references to previous sightings of various species by Chute supplement Fitzgerald's own observations.⁴² Interestingly, Fitzgerald was acutely aware of the risk of exposing the birds he described in the *Kerry Magazine* to the predatory attentions of both local and visiting hunters. In the October 1855 number, he describes the Magharee islands on the northern side of the Dingle peninsula and he recounts how 'in a short visit at one time we counted no less than twenty-two different species of birds'. He laments in particular the theft of eggs by local fishermen:

...we regret that no restrictions are laid upon the gathering of eggs, which scarcely admits of a single brood of the larger kinds being reared upon the islands. Every morning that it is possible to land, the fishermen engaged in setting lobster-pots visit them, and carry away the eggs that have been laid during the night.⁴³

Fitzgerald suggests that if the proprietor of the one inhabited-island were to instruct his tenants to protect the birds that such an approach might save species from local extinction and which, otherwise, 'at some future time, when natural history is more generally studied, will be considered a loss'.⁴⁴ A similar sense of loss informed his description of Bewick's swan. He describes how annually a number of these birds visited Tralee bay in the winter while larger flocks were to be found on the lakes of Killarney. He laments the recent shooting of such a swan over Blennerville and the lapse of the popular belief that the 'souls of pious virgins animate such forms, that ill-luck attends whoever molests them'. In fact, Fitzgerald observes, laconically, the swans had disappeared with the superstition.⁴⁵

³⁷ Geoffrey V. Morson, 'Thompson, William (1805-1852)' in Matthew and Harrison (eds), *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, liv, pp 476-7.

³⁸ Clive Hutchinson, 'Bird study in Ireland' in John Wilson Foster and Helena C.G. Chesney (eds), *Nature in Ireland: a scientific and cultural history* (Dublin, 1997) pp 262-82 at pp 264, 266.

³⁹ William Thompson, *The natural history of Ireland*, 4 vols (London, 1849, 1850, 1851, 1856), ii, p. 331; iii, p. 200.

⁴⁰ *Slater's royal national commercial directory of Ireland* (Manchester and London, 1856) p. 361.

⁴¹ *Slater's National commercial directory of Ireland* (Manchester and London, 1846): 'Blennerville House, the seat of Richard Chute, Esq., is a handsome and pleasant residence - the only one of any note in the parish' (p. 320). In the *Kerry Magazine*, [2:17 (May, 1855) p. 86], Chute is described as an 'excellent ornithologist' and was resident at Tullygarran. See also *Seventh annual report of the Dublin Natural History Society* (Dublin, 1845) p. 33; Valerie Bary, *Houses of Kerry* (Whitegate, Co. Clare, 1994) p. 75; Russell McMorran and Maurice O'Keeffe, *A pictorial history of Tralee* (Tralee, 2005) p. 54.

⁴² *Kerry Magazine*, 3:25 (January, 1856) p. 5.

⁴³ *Kerry Magazine*, 2:22 (October, 1855) p. 196.

⁴⁴ *Kerry Magazine*, 2:22 (October, 1855) p. 196.

⁴⁵ *Kerry Magazine*, 3:26 (February, 1856) pp 28-9.

Fitzgerald's contributions also provide tantalising glimpses of networks of natural history both within and beyond Kerry. In fact, William Thompson's references to correspondence in the 1830s with T.F. Neligan of Tralee suggests that an interest in natural history was reasonably long-established in the area.⁴⁶ Richard Chute, described by Fitzgerald as having 'done so much for the study of ornithology in the south of Ireland' had a large study collection of preserved birds which Fitzgerald drew on in his writings.⁴⁷ Chute, by now resident at Tullygarron to the east of Tralee, is said to have had a 'collection of our native birds... unrivalled in Kerry, and probably, as a private collection, in the kingdom'.⁴⁸ Again, within Kerry, Fitzgerald speaks of receiving information from Ross Townsend, who was chief officer of the coastguards stationed near Castlemaine. It appears that Townsend supplied him with details of an unusually rare species of duck shot in Castlemaine harbour and whose preserved remains Townsend had originally sent to William Andrews, secretary of the Dublin Natural History Society, for the purposes of identification. Fitzgerald acknowledges the help of both Richard Chute and Andrews in reproducing the relevant comments on the Castlemaine bird in a paper apparently read previously to the Dublin Natural History Society. In this paper, Andrews describes Townsend as 'well experienced' and having 'long been familiar with the varieties of water-fowl visiting that coast'.⁴⁹ Andrews, a well-known naturalist whose work was recognised by his election as a member of the Royal Irish Academy and the botanical societies of Edinburgh and London, made a significant contribution to the study of the fauna of south-west Ireland.⁵⁰ His most notable discovery was the Kerry slug, *Geomalacus maculosus*. Evidently, a shared passion for natural history united a series of individuals, both experts and amateurs, within Kerry and beyond to Belfast and Dublin in the transmission and dissemination of knowledge.

The third contributor to the *Kerry Magazine* is unusual both in terms of his modest social origins and lack of formal academic training. Richard Hitchcock was born near Blennerville in 1824 to impoverished Protestant parents who apparently had been obliged by financial circumstances to retire from county Cork to a small farm at the foot of the mountains overlooking Tralee bay. Apart from a few years at the local Erasmus Smith school, he was self-educated. However, his interest in archaeology and geology was encouraged by the local Church of Ireland curate, Arthur Rowan, who gave him access to his extensive library. Having taken lessons in drawing from an engineer working on the construction of the Tralee ship canal, Hitchcock quickly developed a talent for accurate architectural drawing. He was appointed a temporary clerk on famine relief schemes and his consequent residence in Dingle (1846-48) and the access this provided him to the antiquities of west Kerry was to prove a seminal influence in his formation as an antiquarian. Writing later of his time in west Kerry, Hitchcock described how he had found in the remote barony of Corca Dhuibhne 'monuments of almost every age and class, and in a remarkably fine state of preservation... The Ogham inscriptions of which the barony of Corkaguiny contains so many, possessed peculiar attractions for me'.⁵¹ Having come to

⁴⁶ Thompson, *The natural history of Ireland*, i, pp 261, 306, 349-50.

⁴⁷ *Kerry Magazine*, 3:25 (January, 1856) p. 5.

⁴⁸ *Kerry Magazine*, 3:25 (January, 1856) p. 10. For contemporary collections of stuffed birds in Munster see John Francis Maguire, *The industrial movement in Ireland, as illustrated by the National Exhibition of 1852* (Cork, 1853) p. 348.

⁴⁹ *Kerry Magazine*, 3:26 (February, 1856) p. 30.

⁵⁰ James Britten, rev. D.E. Allen, 'Andrews, William (1802-1880)' in Matthew and Harrison (eds), *Oxford dictionary of national biography*, ii, p. 136; Terry Carruthers, *Kerry: a natural history* (Cork, 1998) pp 147-9.

⁵¹ RIA MS 24 E 13, p. 1 ('Notes to accompany sketches of ogham inscriptions made for the Rev. Charles Graves, F.T.C.D., by Richard P. Hitchcock. The whole rewritten, and carefully revised with very considerable additions Dublin 1850').

the attention of the TCD mathematician and antiquarian, Charles Graves (1812-1899), the latter employed Hitchcock to locate and record ogham inscriptions on the Dingle peninsula and elsewhere in the south of Ireland. Securing positions as a library clerk in TCD and as an assistant to the Geological Society of Ireland, Hitchcock moved to Dublin and immersed himself in antiquarian research and activity. He was active in the affairs of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society and became a friend of its guiding force, James Graves (1815-1886). Hitchcock both contributed material to and worked on the production of the Society's *Transactions*.⁵²

The example of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society appears to have influenced both Rowan and Hitchcock. The May 1854 number of the *Kerry Magazine* contains a review of an article by Hitchcock on sixteenth-century Dingle first published in the *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society* in 1852 and subsequently published separately by John O'Daly, the publisher and antiquarian who had been instrumental in the foundation of the Celtic Society in 1845.⁵³ In this anonymous review, and almost certainly by Rowan, Hitchcock is hailed in characteristic fashion for his work on behalf of Kerry's heritage, the present work being an 'omen that Kerry is about to wake from its long sleep of literary torpor and indifference, and to call the attention of the world to these time-worn memorials of ancient days, and to those features of natural beauty, ever fresh and unchanging in attraction, in which our county abounds'.⁵⁴ It seems that Rowan considered Hitchcock a key ally in attempts to awaken interest in Kerry's past and archaeological heritage. While Hitchcock contributed a series of pieces to the magazine, largely on bibliographical material relating to the county's history, he published his substantial research on various archaeological topics relevant to Kerry and elsewhere in Ireland in the *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society*. Although Hitchcock seems genuinely to have supported Rowan's efforts in establishing a local magazine, it is likely a tension arose between his commitment to a professional career in antiquarian research and the leisured middle-class world of Rowan's endeavours. Articles in a journal of a prestigious learned society such as that of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society would have served to enhance the reputation of a young scholar such as Hitchcock more than the appearance of material in the generalist and regional *Kerry Magazine*. In a letter from Hitchcock to the September 1854 number of the magazine, he refers to archaeology as having 'taken a high place among the Sciences' and argues that the archaeology of Kerry should now be documented in the county magazine.⁵⁵ In fact, the nascent professionalisation of disciplines such as natural history and archaeology probably also undermined the attractiveness of general literary magazines for scholars such as Hitchcock who were motivated by professional career requirements. As it happened, Hitchcock's death from TB in December 1856 at the age of 32, along with the passing of James Ferguson in the previous year, were significant factors in Rowan's decision to cease publication at the end of 1856.

⁵² Marc Caball, 'Hitchcock, Richard (1824-56)' in McGuire and Quinn (eds), *Dictionary of Irish biography*, iv, pp 719-20; Richard Hitchcock, 'Athcarne way-side cross', *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society*, 1:2 (1850) pp 185-6; 'Gleanings from country church-yards', *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society*, 2:1 (1852) pp 127-33; 'Dingle in the sixteenth century. With an introduction and notes', *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society*, 2:1 (1852) pp 133-43; 'Notes on the round towers of the county of Kerry', *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society*, 2:2 (1853) pp 242-54; 'Notes made in the archaeological court of the Great Exhibition of 1853', *Transactions of the Kilkenny Archaeological Society*, 2:2 (1853) pp 280-95; 'The castles of Corkaguiny, county of Kerry. No I' and 'The castles of Corkaguiny, county of Kerry. No II', *Proceedings and Transactions of the Kilkenny and South-East of Ireland Archaeological Society*, 3 (1854-55) pp 345-56, 384-97.

⁵³ Murray, *Romanticism*, p. 46; Proinsias Ó Drisceoil, *Seán Ó Dálaigh: éigse agus iomarbhá* (Cork, 2007).

⁵⁴ *Kerry Magazine*, 1:5 (May, 1854) p. 80.

⁵⁵ *Kerry Magazine*, 1:9 (September, 1854) p. 141.

This essay has sought to demonstrate that the *Kerry Magazine* was the product of the convergence of particular regional, political and cultural influences and factors. Rowan's primary objective was the creation of a non-partisan sense of local identity which transcended political and religious allegiances to foster pride and appreciation of the county's heritage. Ironically, Rowan's notion of local consciousness was inherently politicised in so far as it was predicated on the primacy of an Anglophone and effectively Protestant elite culture. The indigenous culture of the county's Irish-speaking inhabitants found no place in Rowan's vision of a common past and shared future. Rowan intended the *Kerry Magazine* as an instrument to encourage local pride and as a first step in the creation of what he envisaged as the 'Kerry Antiquarian Society and Fine Arts Institution' with a role similar to that of the Royal Cork Institution or the Royal Dublin Society.⁵⁶ Rowan's ambitious vision was not realised. However, the *Kerry Magazine* remains as a testament to a remarkably creative and vibrant moment in Irish cultural history when a small provincial town in south-west Munster was linked through overlapping circles of expertise and scholarship to metropolitan knowledge across several domains.

⁵⁶ *Kerry Magazine*, 1:9 (September, 1854) p. 142.