

RORY SWEETMAN, *Defending Trinity College Dublin, Easter 1916: Anzacs and the Rising*, Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2019, 172 pp., €19.95, ISBN 9781846827846.

When 20 years ago I first uncovered the story of the Anzacs caught up in the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin, little did I realise the full extent and significance of their role in defending Trinity College, Dublin (TCD). Having read Rory Sweetman's *Defending Trinity College*, I now know that the initial documentation of my research in the *Journal of the Australian War Memorial* in 2003 only scratched the surface of this little-known but important aspect of the history of the Rising.

As an Irish-born New Zealander and a graduate of Trinity College, Dublin, Sweetman has more than a passing interest in the story of the Anzacs' defence of the college. In addition, he has extensive qualifications as an historian of the period. The Australian soldier about whom I wrote in 2003 was but one of six Anzacs who helped defend TCD, the other five being New Zealanders. They were accompanied by six South Africans and two Canadians.

*Defending Trinity College* is not just a narrative account of what those dominion troops did during Easter week 1916. Sweetman argues that they provided a vital shield to protect Trinity from capture and that, had the college fallen, nothing less than heavy and prolonged artillery fire would have dislodged the occupiers, possibly leading to the college's destruction. Given the case which Sweetman has mounted in support of his thesis, it may come as a surprise that it has not previously been discussed and debated in the extensive literature on the Rising. The explanation may be twofold. First, as a symbol of unionism and Protestant ascendancy, TCD's 'defence' was not an appropriate subject for inclusion in the nationalist narrative of the nascent Irish state. Even today, the book's title might raise an eyebrow or two in some circles. Second, in recent decades, following the emergence of revisionist historians with no such qualms, it seems to have been assumed that the defence of TCD was not significant because of the prevailing belief that the rebels never mounted a serious assault on the campus.

Sweetman refutes that assumption by demonstrating from archival sources that TCD was indeed a planned target of the rebels, who mounted an assault on the college at midnight on Easter Monday but were driven off. Their defeat was due in part to reduced numbers available for the assault because of the confusion over Eoin MacNeill's countermanding order. But it was also due to the disciplined and sustained fire of the Anzacs, some of whom were veterans of Gallipoli. Once secured, TCD became a concentration centre for British troop reinforcements and a site for an artillery battery that bombarded rebel strongholds. Australians and New Zealanders of Irish descent sympathetic to the 1916 rebels might therefore be discomfited upon learning of the Anzacs' part in blunting their attack. But Sweetman provides some consolation with the second part of his thesis, which suggests that had the Anzacs failed to keep the rebels out, it might have ended badly for the college.

He argues that rebel occupation of TCD would have provided a place of refuge for rebels withdrawing from other strongholds as each was overrun, thus threatening

General Lowe's strategy of tightening the cordon around the city. Away from residential areas near the GPO, whose vulnerability convinced Patrick Pearse of the need to surrender, the rebels might have fought on, forcing the British to use extreme measures to defeat them.

We will never know if Lowe would have destroyed the college to save it, so to speak, using the lexicon of the Vietnam War. But in a chapter headed 'Whatiffery', Sweetman contends it cannot be ruled out given that artillery had been used against the GPO to minimise the casualties the British would otherwise have sustained in a frontal assault. As well as the six chapters setting out his argument, Sweetman provides short biographical details of the participants and a series of appendices comprising a selection of letters written home by several New Zealanders caught up in the Rising, as well as letters and reports by other witnesses to the events. Illustrations in the centre of the book include maps of Dublin as well as images of pertinent people and places. A detailed bibliography rounds out this interesting and thought-provoking study of the place of TCD in the Easter Rising.

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ERIKA HANNA, *Snapshot Stories: Visuality, Photography, and the Social History of Ireland, 1922–2000*, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020, 288 pp., £60.00, ISBN 9780198823032.

Every reader of *Snapshot Stories* will have been both the photographer and the photographed at some point—probably more times than they would care to remember. As Erika Hanna's research testifies, the habit of recording our lives through images existed long before Instagram. But how many of us have reflected on the purpose and meaning of our own photographs, or the impact of the images that flood our consciousness each day through the media? By drawing our attention to changing photographic practices in Ireland in the twentieth century, Hanna's work might just inspire us to think more deeply about how and why we compose, capture, edit, use and consume those 'snapshots'.

*Snapshot Stories* is beautiful, engaging and thought provoking. As well as being a joy to read, the book makes a significant and valuable contribution to the literature. Visual sources, including personal and family photo albums, studio portraits, photojournalism and activism, are examined, while technological, social, political, and economic changes unfold across the chapters, revealing their relationship with photography and photographic practices over time. This is fundamentally a work of social history: lives and experiences are reconstructed with captivating effect throughout, thanks to the author's meticulous research. Hanna's highly instructive account of the challenges and opportunities the medium affords, however, ensures the work is acutely relevant to the wider discipline.