

## Book review

### Ireland's Civil Engineering Heritage

Ronald Cox and Philip Donald. Collins Press, Cork, Ireland, 2013,  
ISBN 13: 978-1-8488-9170-8, £17.99/€19.99, 288 pp.

This title appears 15 years after *Civil Engineering Heritage: Ireland* and the authors, represented in both publications by Ron Cox, are to be congratulated on this. It is a refreshed and expanded re-presentation of the subject. The authors state that the works have been selected for their technical interest, innovation, association with leading engineers or contractors, rarity or visual attraction – all of which are fully borne out by the result.

The works themselves are brought vividly to the reader, particularly when set against the Irish scenery, through the extensive use of colour photographs. This visual element is no mean task in itself and only the Egyptian arch carrying the Belfast–Dublin railway near Newry, County Down, seems deficient in this respect because of strong shadow, but this is the reality – in comparison to the image on the pound coin! The book presents the engineering history of Ireland, covering both the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, with an introduction and two main sections. The introduction sets out the contribution made by the civil engineer and outlines the different backgrounds and periods of civil administration through which engineering works were built, a background continued in the chapters in the book. The first of the two main sections is taken up with descriptive chapters outlining the subject matter: roads and bridges, canals and inland navigations, railways and viaducts, water and drainage and, finally, maritime structures. In these chapters the achievements of the engineer are related with contributions by famous names such as

Alexander Nimmo, John Rennie, Sir John Macneill, Benjamin Baker and William Bald. Background factors are outlined, often drawing on wider perspectives, as for example in the Water and drainage chapter with Dublin's public health issues compared with those of London in the Victorian period.

The second section is the gazetteer, representing the major part of the book and detailing the many surviving historical civil engineering works over six geographical areas. These are the provinces of Leinster, Munster, Connaught and Ulster in addition to sections covering Dublin city and district and Belfast city and district. Following the selection criteria there is a wide range of remarkable structures, with examples ranging from the earliest known tide mill in the world at Nendrum, the Thompson Dock at Belfast, built for the *Olympic* and *Titanic* liners, and a viaduct on the Greenisland Loop line, which, when completed in 1933, could claim to be the largest reinforced concrete railway viaduct in both Britain and Ireland. The 156 entries, some of which include details of more than one site, provide the national grid reference and location along with the historical engineering works (HEW) number. The latter references are taken from the record compiled by members of the panel for historical engineering works from the Heritage Society of Engineers Ireland and the Institution of Civil Engineers, and are the result of many years' research. With such a wealth of material, a general index to help find types of structure, railway companies and so on. more easily would have been useful. However, this will not prevent the reader finding it an indispensable guide to understanding the engineering history of Ireland.

Stephen K. Jones