

Tomás S. Ó Máille
1904–1990

With the death of T. S. Ó Máille in August, 1990, Irish onomastics lost one of its longest-serving and most industrious scholars. Born in Staffordshire in 1904, Tomás Ó Máille received his early education in Manchester. Moving to Ireland, he graduated from University College, Galway, in 1933 with a degree in Arts. A period of teaching in a Limerick secondary school followed, before his appointment three years later as an Assistant in the Department of Irish at U.C.G. In 1947 he was appointed to the Chair of Modern Irish in that university, a position he held until his retirement in 1974.

His early research concentrated on language and folklore, in particular on Irish proverbs and riddles. In 1947 he was awarded a doctorate for his collection of Connacht proverbs, published under the title *Sean-fhocla Chonnacht* in two volumes (1948 and 1953). He also published a number of articles on proverbs, and progressed to a study of Irish words and their origins. His collection of words and expressions from the Ros Muc area of Conamara, *Liosta Focal as Ros Muc* (1974), is one of the most important collections of its kind that we have. The year of his retirement also saw the publication of another book, *Breacadh*, which was a study of an elaborate metrical embellishment used by the professional poets of the Early Modern Irish period. His interest in metrics had been signalled earlier in a number of articles and short notes which he published during the 1940s and 1950s in various learned journals.

One of his earliest publications was a study of place-names in Galway city, 'Áitainmneacha i gCathair na Gaillimhe', in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, 22 (1946), 43–49, and onomastic research was to become his main scholarly interest. From then until his death a steady stream of articles emanated from his pen. He made extensive collections of place-names, investigated their origins, and examined the distribution and etymology of elements in them. A member of the Irish Place-names Commission, he was also a very strong supporter of place-name societies in Ireland and Britain. He regularly attended their conferences, often with his wife Aileen, and contributed his work to their journals. A bibliography of his

writings down to 1979 appeared in the volume of essays published in his honour, *Topothesia*, edited by Breandán Mac Aodha (see *Nomina*, 6, 113–15); this volume also reflects the wide linguistic and geographical range of his interests. His last publication, 'Irish place-names in *-as*, *-es*, *-is*, *-os*, *-us*', *Ainm*, 4 (1989–90), 125–43, appeared posthumously. His presence will be missed.

Ruairí Ó hUiginn
Coláiste Phádraig
Má Nuad