

JAMES CARNEY'S CONNECTIONS WITH UPPSALA UNIVERSITY

IT is a great honour and pleasure for me to have been asked by the editors of the James Carney Memorial Volume of *Celtica* to write a brief account of Professor Carney's connections with Uppsala.

When, as a doctoral student, I first met James Carney in Dublin in 1948, he was already employed by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies which he had been attached to since its establishment by Éamon de Valera in 1940. In 1950, James Carney, then assistant professor at the Institute, was invited as visiting professor to Uppsala University by Professor S. B. Liljegren, to lecture on Irish Studies. In that year, Liljegren, within the framework of the English Department (i.e. the English and American Institutes) established an Irish Institute with a special library section of its own and a scholarly series, *Uppsala Irish Studies* (defunct now for many years). The visiting professorship, the first holder of which was Professor Carney, 1950–52 (whose immediate successor was Kevin Danaher of the Irish Folklore Commission, Dublin, 1952–53, followed by Professor Michael Duignan, Galway, 1953–55) in the course of time developed into a Foreign Lectureship in Celtic Languages. A Celtic Section (with B. Bramsbäck as Head) was set up by the English Department around 1970, and as of July 1989, the post, having for years been a part-time position, was made a full-time Foreign Lectureship in Celtic Languages, the present holder of which is Mícheál Ó Flaithearta, a graduate of the National University of Ireland, Galway.¹ (Uppsala University is the only one in Scandinavia to teach all four living Celtic languages: Irish, Welsh, Scottish-Gaelic, and Breton.)

Already on his arrival in Sweden, Professor Carney had produced several learned works, among them a three-volume edition of *Regimen na Sláinte*, a medieval medical text (extant in both Latin and Irish). He had also started editing and translating early Irish poetry into English, and was a mature scholar with an original and fertile mind.

In November 1950, to an audience of at least fifty people, James Carney delivered his first lecture on Irish literature and history, and a little later he started conducting courses in Old and Modern Irish. On 11 December, 1950, he acted as Second Proponent on the occasion of my *disputatio* on *The Interpretation of the Cuchulain Legend in the Works of W. B. Yeats* (Uppsala Irish Studies I, doctoral dissertation, Uppsala 1950). Professor J. J. Hogan (who, together with Professor S. H. Ó Duilearga and Professor S. B. Liljegren had been responsible for initiating the Uppsala venture) acted as Faculty Opponent.

Professor Carney, who was accompanied in Uppsala by his wife Maura and his son Paul, now a well-known Dublin judge, remained until 1 July, 1952, then returned again for shorter periods to visit his wife Maura, who acted as Foreign Lecturer in Celtic Philology during the academic sessions 1955–57. Maura had an MA in Celtic Studies and introduced the study of Welsh into the curriculum.

In 1959, James Carney was elected a member of *Kungl. Humanistiska Vetenskaps-Samfundet* in Uppsala. In 1975 he was created Doctor of Philosophy *honoris causa*, by Uppsala University, an occasion also of grief because of his wife's

¹ When the late Professor Bramsbäck wrote this note the holder of the lectureship was Dr Ailbhe Ó Corráin, a graduate of the Queen's University, Belfast.

sudden, untimely death on 1 May that year. On behalf of all the honorary doctors he gave the speech of thanks in the banqueting-hall of Uppsala Renaissance Castle. He reminisced on his Uppsala years and thanked Uppsala University and his colleagues and friends. He stressed the significance of the comparative method and the importance of Classical Greek and Latin literatures as well as other European and non-European cultures, for the study of Irish/Celtic literature. Influenced by Swedish scholars, especially, as Carney himself stated, Professor Björn Collinder, the eminent translator of *Kalevala* into Swedish, Carney during his Uppsala period set out on a new course in his scholarly career. Also Professors Dag Strömback and Åke Campbell meant much to both James and Maura Carney, to mention only a few of the names. Furthermore, he found it imperative to make his scholarly results available to a broader public, in other words, he learnt to popularize the results of his research. Professor Carney was in many ways a pioneer, who broke much new ground, and as such occasionally met with resistance and jealousy, but his combined modesty, courage and enthusiasm made him continue on his chosen path.

Apart from lecturing on Irish history and literature and teaching Irish, he also gave lectures outside the university. I remember, for example, a lecture he gave to the Swedish-Irish Society in Stockholm, on 'Speranza', Oscar Wilde's mother, Lady Wilde, and her relations with Scandinavia, especially Sweden, as she set them down in *Driftwood from Scandinavia* (1884). To an astonished audience Carney revealed the story of the persistent rumour that had been spread in Dublin on the birth of Oscar (b. 16 October, 1854) that he may have been the natural son of Oskar I (or perhaps Oskar II, long before he became King of Sweden in 1872). However, no evidence testifying to the truth of this rumour has been found. It might be added that Wilde's father, like Carney himself, was awarded an honorary Doctoral Degree by Uppsala University in 1858, and also received the Order of the North Star in 1862 from King Carl Johan XIV.

I cannot finish this without stating that not only was James Carney as inspiring lecturer, scholar and teacher, but he was also a good and loyal friend, and must be admired for the manner in which he was able to carry on research in spite of many years of serious illness. Although being no longer with us, he still seems to be 'indestructible', as his son Paul wrote to me after his father's death.

†BIRGIT BRAMSBÄCK