ROLF BAUMGARTEN (1936–2012)

The death occurred on 9 August 2012 of Rolf Baumgarten, who had a long connection with the School of Celtic Studies, having been a Research Scholar, Research Assistant, Assistant Professor and Professor at the School. He was born on the 22 July 1936 in Duisburg in Germany, the son of a mining engineer named Kurt Baumgarten. He initially studied Theology and Classics with a view to becoming a Lutheran minister, but his interests turned to Comparative Philology and General Linguistics. This led on to a study of the Celtic languages in Bonn and Berlin, and subsequently in Munich where he attended the inspiring lectures of Professor Julius Pokorny. He was awarded a Scholarship at the School of Celtic Studies which he held from 1961–64, and worked in particular on *Lebor Gabála Érenn*. It was during this period that he became acquainted with the writer and academic Máirtín Ó Cadhain, whom he held in high esteem and with whom he shared a quirky off-beat sense of humour.

It had long been felt at the School of Celtic Studies that there was need for a full-time Bibliographer on the staff to record the ever-expanding output of academic publications relating to Irish language and literature, and to follow on from R. I. Best’s two volumes, *Bibliography of Irish Philology and of Printed Irish Literature* (H. M. Stationery Office, Dublin 1913), and *Bibliography of Irish Philology and Manuscript Literature: publications 1913–1941* (Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies 1942). Permission was obtained from the Department of Education to advertise for the post of Bibliographer, and Rolf was appointed in 1971, initially at the grade of Research Assistant. He threw himself energetically into the task and embarked on a more ambitious undertaking than Best’s volumes, introducing wider criteria for the inclusion of publications. In 1986 his 776-page *Bibliography of Irish Linguistics and Literature, 1942–1971* was published by the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies. He subsequently set to work on the development of an on-line Bibliography of post-1972 publications, which has been continued by his successors as Bibliographer, Roibeard Ó Maolalaigh (2001–04) and Alexandre Guilarte (2004–). For progress to date on this project, see www.celt.dias.ie/bibliography.

Ó Briain and Pádraig Ó Héalaí, Indreabhán 2002) 565–71). He also had a flair for preparing the unfinished work of deceased scholars for publication, a task requiring sensitivity as well as scholarly acumen. Perhaps the most valuable of his contributions of this type was his adaptation of Michael A. O’Brien’s notes for his 1957 Rhŷs Lecture on ‘Old Irish Personal names’, which was published in Celtica 10 (1973) 211–36.

Allied to his work as Bibliographer was his editorship of the Newsletter of the School of Celtic Studies: Scéala Scoil an Léinn Cheiltígh, which ran from 1987 to 1996. This annual journal was Rolf’s brainchild, and served to raise the profile of the School, and contained material of a light-hearted nature as well as scholarly articles of a more conventional variety. His own contributions to the Newsletter included a piece on the discovery of RIA ms 23 M 70 previously owned by Kuno Meyer (1987), a study of the School of Irish Learning (1989), and an account of the career of Cuthbert Mhág Craith (1992). His record of current Irish Studies theses (1987/88–95) was immensely useful, and it is a matter of regret that this service is no longer available. He was also an editor of Ériu from 1988 until 2008.

In addition to bibliography, his interests ranged widely. His 1987 Statutory Public Lecture, delivered in University College Dublin at Earlsfort Terrace on ‘The Galatians: Celts in Asia Minor’, was one of the best such lectures I have heard. Textual cruces were a speciality. He contributed some interesting ideas on the use of the four categories of kinship in the Old Irish law-texts in ‘The kindred metaphors in Bechbretha and Coibnes usci thairidne’ (Peritia 4 (1985) 307–27), and he delved into the meaning of the elusive phrase có nomad n-ó in an article entitled ‘Có nomad n-ó: an early Irish socio-legal timescale’ (Peritia 17 (2003) 338–56). Isidore held a particular fascination for him, and he wrote a number of articles reflecting his study of the Etymologiae, including ‘A Hiberno-Isidorian etymology’ (Peritia 2 (1983) 225–8) and ‘Creative medieval etymology and Irish hagiography (Lasair, Columba, Senán)’, Ériu 54 (2004) 49–78.

His interest in the life and works of earlier scholars led him to plan the writing of a history of Irish scholarship after retiring from the School of Celtic Studies. He would have been the ideal person to carry out this project. Sadly, however, he suffered an incapacitating stroke only a few years into his retirement, which put an end to any such enterprise. He is survived by his wife Maureen, as well as two sons and a daughter.