The eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were an era of continuity as well as change. Though properly portrayed as the era of ‘Protestant Ascendancy’ it embraces two phases – the eighteenth century when that ascendancy was at its peak; and the nineteenth century when the Protestant elite sustained a determined rearguard defence in the face of the emergence of modern Catholic nationalism. Employing a chronology that is not bound by traditional datelines, this volume moves beyond the familiar political narrative to engage with the economy, society, population, emigration, religion, language, state formation, culture, art and architecture, and the Irish abroad. It provides new and original interpretations of a critical phase in the emergence of a modern Ireland that, while focused firmly on the island and its traditions, moves beyond the nationalist narrative of the twentieth century to provide a history of late early modern Ireland for the twenty-first century.

JAMES KELLY is Professor of History at Dublin City University. He is a member of the Irish Manuscripts Commission, and President of the Irish Economic and Social History Society. His publications include That Damn’d Thing Called Honour: Duelling in Ireland, 1750-1860 (1995); Henry Flood: Patriots and Politics in Eighteenth-Century Ireland (1998); Poynings’ Law and the Making of Law in Ireland, 1660-1800 (2007); and, as editor (with Martyn Powell), Clubs and Societies in Eighteenth-Century Ireland (2010); (with Mary Ann Lyons), The Proclamations of Ireland, 1660-1820 (5 vols. 2014), and (with Elizabeth FitzPatrick) Food and Drink in Ireland (2016). His book Sport in Ireland, 1600-1840 (2014) won the special commendation prize offered by the National University of Ireland in 2016.
This authoritative, accessible and engaging four-volume history vividly presents the Irish story – or stories – from c.600 to the present, within its broader Atlantic, European, imperial and global contexts. While the volumes benefit from a strong political narrative framework, they are distinctive also in including essays that address the full range of social, economic, religious, linguistic, military, cultural, artistic and gender history, and in challenging traditional chronological boundaries in a manner that offers new perspectives and insights. Each volume examines Ireland’s development within a distinct period, and offers a complete and rounded picture of Irish life, while remaining sensitive to the unique Irish experience. Bringing together an international team of experts, this landmark history both reflects recent developments in the field and sets the agenda for future study.

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Thomas Bartlett, MRIA
General Editor, The Cambridge History of Ireland
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Abbreviations

AAI  Art and architecture of Ireland, A. Carpenter gen. ed., 5 vols.
     (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2014)
AAS  Archives of the Archdiocese of Sydney
Add. MS  Additional Manuscript
AICP  Archives du Collège des Irlandais, Paris
BL  British Library
Bodl.  Bodleian Library, Oxford
b.  born
c.  circa
CP  Cullen papers
dep.  deposit
d.  died
DDA  Dublin Diocesan Archives
DSE  Dublin Stock Exchange
edn  edition
GDP  gross domestic product
HO  Home Office
HMC  Historical Manuscripts Commission
HMSO  Her Majesty’s Stationery Office
IAA  Irish Architectural Archive
IIP  Independent Irish Party
IRB  Irish Republican Brotherhood
ITS  Irish Texts Society
MP  Member of Parliament
MS(S)  Manuscript(s)
NAI  National Archives of Ireland
NGI  National Gallery of Ireland
NLI  National Library of Ireland
Abbreviations

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<td>NKP</td>
<td>New Kirby papers</td>
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<td>National Portrait Gallery</td>
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<td>new series</td>
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<td>Pennsylvania Gazette</td>
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<td>PICRA</td>
<td>Pontifical Irish College, Rome, Archives</td>
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<tr>
<td>PRONI</td>
<td>Public Record Office of Northern Ireland</td>
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<td>RDS</td>
<td>Royal Dublin Society</td>
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<td>RIA</td>
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<tr>
<td>UVF</td>
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<td>WSC</td>
<td>Wide Street Commission</td>
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General Introduction

The aims of this four-volume History of Ireland are quite straightforward. First, we seek to offer students, and the general reader, a detailed survey, based on the latest research, of the history of the island from early medieval times to the present. As with other Cambridge histories, a chronological approach, in the main, has been adopted, and there is a strong narrative spine to the four volumes. However, the periods covered in each volume are not the traditional ones and we hope that this may have the effect of forcing a re-evaluation of the familiar periodisation of Irish history and of the understanding it has tended to inspire. A single twist of the historical kaleidoscope can suggest – even reveal – new patterns, beginnings and endings. As well, among the one hundred or so chapters spread over the four volumes, there are many that adopt a reflective tone as well as strike a discursive note. There are also a number that tackle topics that have hitherto not found their way into the existing survey literature. Second, we have sought at all times to locate the history of Ireland in its broader context, whether European, Atlantic or, latterly, global. Ireland may be an island, but the people of the island for centuries have been dispersed throughout the world, with significant concentrations in certain countries, with the result that the history of Ireland and the history of the Irish people have never been coterminous. Lastly, the editors of the individual volumes – Brendan Smith, Jane Ohlmeyer, James Kelly and myself – have enlisted contributors who have, as well as a capacity for innovative historical research, demonstrated a talent for writing lucid prose. For history to have a social purpose – or indeed any point – it must be accessible, and in these volumes we have endeavoured to ensure that this is the case: readers will judge with what success.

Thomas Bartlett, MRIA

General Editor, The Cambridge History of Ireland
MAP 1. Map of Ireland.