



The Strangers Gaze: Travels in County Clare 1534 - 1950

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This anthology brings together over four centuries of superb accounts of County Clare by visitors from Ireland, Britain, the continent, Australia and America. These visitors include such notables as Arthur Young, William Thackeray and Thomas Carlyle. While their accounts enlighten and entertain, they also provide fascinating insights into the social, religious and cultural traditions of County Clare. By studying the procession of travellers through the county over the centuries, the histories of urban and rural communities are revealed in a fresh and interesting light. Visitors brought their own particular prejudices with them which influenced their view of the countryside and the people they encountered. Their descriptions often reveal as much about themselves as they do about the people they observed. This interaction between native and stranger results in a book of complexity and extraordinary human interest. Whether written in Irish, Latin, French or English, these travellers' accounts display an exceptional richness and diversity. In almost seventy descriptions of County Clare, the historical landscape is thoroughly explored. Historical landmarks such as the Cromwellian Conquest, the Great Famine and the Land War are described by individuals who either participated in or witnessed these great events. Soldiers of fortune, mapmakers, shipwrecked clergymen, itinerant judges, social reformers, newspaper reporters, all inhabit these pages. They present a view of Clare that is compelling and unique. Richly illustrated with contemporary pictures and contemporary line drawings, The Strangers Gaze evokes the atmosphere and character of the county's past.

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