

If rich, buy the two-volume set. If poor, look through it when you next visit an academic library, and if that's your plan you'll be able to skim the general introduction in advance: it's online at academia.edu.

ANDREW DALBY

Elizabeth Fitzpatrick and James Kelly, eds.: *Food and Drink in Ireland*: Royal Irish Academy, 2016: 430pp., paperback, €25.00.

This giant volume, at very reasonable price, first appeared in 2015 as part of the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Section C* (Volume 115). It is a collection of essays by people qualified in word and deed on the consumption of meat and drink from the Mesolithic to the modern era. It should be proclaimed from the rooftops that each contribution is comprehensible and has been largely stripped of the discourse of academe, without sacrificing the footnotes. It is a model of its type. Every essay seems to produce something worth chewing on. I hesitate to mention one without unintentionally denigrating another, but I made beelines for Cherie N. Peters on the diet of early medieval Irish peasants, Susan Lyons on the archaeological evidence pertaining to fruit, vegetables and foreign foodstuffs in medieval Ireland, Fiona Beglane on game in the medieval Irish diet, Madeline Shenahan's piece about Irish manuscript recipe books as source for culinary material culture, Regina Sexton on the food culture of pre-Famine Ireland, Máirtín MacConIomaire on *haute cuisine* restaurants in nineteenth- and twentieth-century Dublin and Rhona Richman Kenneally's grand discussion of the improvement of the domestic kitchen in the Irish countryside during the 'long' 1950s, from which came the brilliant answer of one housewife to an enquiry about the best kitchen improvement in that period: 'running water' (in 1961, only one rural household in eight had running water). Usually, the heart sinks with books such as these: this is the exception.

Matthew Richardson: *The Hunger War, Food, Rations & Rationing 1914–1918*: Pen & Sword Military 2015: 290pp., hardback, £25.00.

Matthew Richardson's name will be unfamiliar to those interested in the history of food, but he is one of the brightest lights in the present generation of museum-based social historians. His books concentrate on the personal experiences of the troops and ordinary people involved in warfare, a subject for which his years as a keeper of the Liddle Collection at Leeds University provided him with an invaluable body of knowledge. One of the characteristics of his work is his eagerness to let his long-deceased informants speak directly to the reader in their own words, these first-hand quotations then being analysed and set into their historical, social and geographical contexts. As a result, his immaculate, original scholarship reads with all the pace and freshness of a good novel, constantly surprising us with its informed insights into the ordinary lives of the past.