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## FOREWORD

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Terry BARRY

I am delighted to write the Foreword for this volume of the papers which were originally given at the Ruralia III conference held in the National University of Ireland at Maynooth, County Kildare, Ireland from 3rd-9th September 1999. All together around 60 delegates attended the conference from 15 countries. The theme of the conference was "Dispersed and Nucleated Medieval Rural Settlement/Structure de l'habitat rural médiéval, groupement et dispersion". There were also two very successful field trips, one to Roscommon and the other to Wexford, where the delegates were able to see two very different types of medieval rural settlement landscapes. In this connection I would like to sincerely thank both Dr Kieran O'Connor and Billy Colfer for leading these field trips. I would also like to take this opportunity to thank everyone who made this conference such a success, and especially the sponsors: the Department of Modern History, National University of Ireland, Maynooth; *Dúchas*, the National Heritage Service; The Faculty of Arts (Humanities), Trinity College Dublin; The Medieval Settlement Research Group, and Roscommon County Council. Finally, I would like to especially thank Rosanne Meenan, the Conference organiser, Ms Cathy Lennon, Executive Officer of the Department of Medieval History, and my research student, Roland Budd, for all his work in looking after the Audio-Visual equipment.

I think this third conference marks the true "coming of age" of this organisation which unites so many scholars from so many parts of Europe in pursuing a common objective: that of better understanding and explaining the complexities of European medieval rural settlement. It is also very opportune that the delegates were able to view some of the sites in County Roscommon which are under active consideration for further study as part of Dr Kieran O'Connor's research project on Gaelic-Irish medieval rural settlement for the Discovery Programme Ltd. Indeed, it will be both interesting and informative to follow the progress of this important project at subsequent Ruralia conferences. In this regard I know that we are all now looking forward to Ruralia IV in Germany in 2001.