Abstract
As the younger son of an Irish landlord E.M. Richards went, like so many other Irish men, to the United States in search of fortune and a career. A qualified engineer, he envisaged many opportunities in a land where railways were being spread across the continent at a rapid rate. He found what he was seeking, as well as much that intrigued him and much that appalled him in this land of opportunity. In particular, his focus for employment took him to the vortex of the most formative developments in the nation’s history. Initially he settled and married in the slave owning state of Virginia, but then moved to the newly settled free state of Kansas, both to get away from a slave society and to locate himself on what he thought would be the likely eventual route of the Sante Fé railway. His hatred of slavery drove him to volunteer to fight in the ensuing civil war. In this paper an assessment and evaluation is made of how this educated son of the Irish gentry—and after 1860 himself a landlord—far removed from the culture and experience of the bulk of Irish emigrants, reacted to and interpreted the American experience through this climactic period.

Philip Bull joined the then Department of History at La Trobe University in January 1975, having previously held a position in the Department of Western Manuscripts at the Bodleian Library, Oxford, where he was responsible for collections of nineteenth and twentieth century British political papers. His principal research interest is in the political history of Ireland in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, particularly in the period from the 1860s to the 1920s. Within that field his work has focused especially on the relationship of the land tenure issue to the development of nationalism and more generally on how this affected the relationship between Ireland and Britain. Between 2006 and 2009 he was Director of the Innovative Universities European Union Centre, a project funded by the European Union through La Trobe University. He is also co-editor of the Australasian Journal of Irish Studies.