Abstract
Rathlin Island (1575), Mullaghmast (1577/8), Smerwick Harbour (1580), Portadown (1641), Islandmagee (1641), Drogheda (1649), Wexford (1649, 1798), Scullabogue (1798), Mitchelstown (1887), Bachelor’s Walk (1914) – these are just a few of the Irish place names which, over the centuries, have been associated with the word ‘massacre’. But what exactly is a massacre, and were the events that occurred at these sites in these years actually massacres? Why did they happen: were they spontaneous or planned with a particular end in view? How do massacres relate to war and to genocide? And why have they ended: that is apparently stopped? Also, why are these massacres remembered, whereas similar bloody events have been forgotten? Starting in the late sixteenth century, this lecture will examine a selection of events labeled as ‘massacres’ for the light that they throw on the changing nature of violence in Ireland.

Elizabeth Malcolm has a BA (Hons) degree from the University of NSW, where she studied Irish history under Professor Patrick O’Farrell, an MA (Hons) degree from Sydney University and a PhD from Trinity College, Dublin. She is a FRHistS and a FASSA. She worked in the Institutes of Irish Studies at Queen’s University, Belfast, and the University of Liverpool for nearly 20 years, before taking up the Gerry Higgins Chair of Irish Studies at the University of Melbourne, from which she has recently retired. Her research interests are in Irish and Irish-Australian social, cultural and medical history, and she has published on topics such as gender and violence, crime and policing, mental health and migration, drink and temperance. Her major books include: ‘Ireland Sober, Ireland Free’ (1986); Swift’s Hospital, 1746–1989 (1989); Medicine, Disease and the State in Ireland, 1650-1940 (1999), edited with Professor Greta Jones; The Irish Policeman, 1822-1922 (2006); and Ireland Down Under (2012), edited with Associate Professors Philip Bull and Frances Devlin-Glass. She is currently writing a history of gender and violence in Ireland, 1150–1900, and has recently begun work on an ARC-funded project dealing with race and the Irish in Australia up to 1930, both with Dr Dianne Hall. She is a co-editor of the Australasian Journal of Irish Studies and was the first president of the Irish Studies Association of Australia and New Zealand (2006–12).