



## BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR IRISH STUDIES

NEWS

2007

Dear Member

The BAIS Council are pleased to announce the redesign of our website and its new location at:

[www.bais.ac.uk](http://www.bais.ac.uk)

News of BAIS activities will be posted there and on our email news list < [bais@jiscmail.ac.uk](mailto:bais@jiscmail.ac.uk) > as well as reported annually in BAIS News. If you currently receive BAIS News in hard copy and would prefer to receive it via our email news list please contact Linda Christiansen [l.m.christiansen@liverpool.ac.uk](mailto:l.m.christiansen@liverpool.ac.uk). We will continue to contact members about BAIS administrative matters by letter when necessary.

Dr Catherine Nash, Department of Geography, Queen Mary, University of London, Mile End Road, London, E1 4NS,  
email: [c.nash@qmul.ac.uk](mailto:c.nash@qmul.ac.uk). Member, BAIS National Council

### BAIS ACTIVITIES

#### Chair's Report to the 2006 Annual General Meeting of the British Association for Irish Studies, 9 December 2006

Since our last AGM we have continued active support of Irish studies in Britain. Under the direction of Scott Brewster the Bursaries scheme again attracted a strong field. Scott has been succeeded as Convenor by Prof. Maria Luddy. I would like to thank him and the panel who assist with the awards process for all their work. The Postgraduate Essay Competition under Matt Campbell is now an established part of BAIS activities, and this year attracted some very high quality contenders. Thanks are due to Matt for his work and to the Editors of *Irish Studies Review* and Cambridge University Press for their support. In both cases the awards were made by the Irish Ambassador at a ceremony at the Embassy in May, and we would like to thank the Ambassador and his staff and successive Irish governments for the ways in which they support Irish Studies in Britain.

With Neil Sammells and Paul Hyland as editors, *Irish Studies Review* continues to demonstrate the lively richness of Irish studies – the increase in pages in 2007 is an indication of its health. *Bais News* in the capable hands of Editor Catherine Nash carries information on Association events and forthcoming activities. Christy Evans continued to organise language events in Britain and Europe and in September became a European Union Language Ambassador.

As in recent years, we worked with a number of institutions supporting Irish Studies. With the help of Ian McBride we supported the series of seminars organised by the Institute of English Studies at London University. On 24 June we linked up with the geography Department and the School of English and Drama at Queen Mary, University of London, to hold a one day conference on *Science Ireland*. Thanks are due to Catherine Nash and Prof. Clair Wills for organising a really stimulating event at the splendid Lock Keeper's Graduate Centre. Linda Christiansen at the Institute of Irish studies at Liverpool University continues to oversee membership matters with her characteristic efficiency. Claire Connolly our Secretary has looked after the day to day running of BAIS with notable skill.

There have been departures and arrivals. Siobhan Holland Burke has come off the Council, and we would like to thank her for the tasks she has undertaken for BAIS, most notably as Vice Chair, conference organiser and website manager. Aidan Arrowsmith has stepped down as Treasurer but will remain on the Council. We are really grateful for his careful stewardship of our funds in recent years. Two long serving members of Council have departed. Sean Hutton is a former executive Officer and Chair of BAIS. We have benefited enormously from his wisdom, managerial skills and vast range of

contacts. Eleanor Burgess is the longest serving current member of council, and has been notably creative in her contributions.

Looking to the future, we have three new council members – Emilie Pine, who takes over as Treasurer, Yvonne Whelan and Catriona Kennedy, and we would like to thank them for their willingness to become involved. Manchester University Press has agreed to publish a selection of the papers from our 2005 conference on *Irish Protestant Identities*. In September 2007 we plan a weekend conference on *New Irelands* to be held at Liverpool University in association with the Institute of Irish Studies and the Department of Politics.

I would like to thank all our members for their support of Irish studies in Britain. On a personal note, this is the last Report I will present as Chair. I hope my successor Shaun Richards will enjoy the privilege and stimulus as much as I have.

Mervyn Busteed. Chair

## CONFERENCE REPORT

### Science Ireland

On June 24<sup>th</sup> 2006 the British Association for Irish Studies held a symposium at the Graduate Centre, Queen Mary, University of London, on the history of science and technology in Ireland. Organised by Catharine Nash of the Departments of Geography and Clair Wills of the School of English and Drama, the conference focused on the practice of science in Ireland and in Ireland as the subjection of scientific investigation. The theme of the varied historical geographies of science in Ireland emerged strongly through the day's presentations and discussions.

The first three papers looked at science in the Irish provinces. Tadgh O'Sullivan's carefully researched paper on Rev. William Richardson described his crusade to promote agricultural improvement and rejuvenate the Irish economy through the application of scientific methods. In opposition to the Scottish agriculturalists in the north of Ireland, as O'Sullivan shows, Richardson sought local answers to local difficulties. Jim Livesey discussed the question of why big science did not take hold in Ireland. Analysing Cork reactions to the 1843 meeting of the British Association for the Advancement of Science, Livesey showed how the centralised model of science promoted by this organisation conflicted with the alternative provincial models of knowledge and expertise that allowed space for diverse experiences of science and for local knowledge and practices. Not cultural resistance, but provincial resistance to metropolitan standardisation attempts and the high degree of centralisation in 19<sup>th</sup> century Irish science were, he proposed, instrumental in the developmental path of Irish science. In her paper on scientific itinerancy in mid-19<sup>th</sup>-century Ireland, Elizabeth Neswald analysed regional Irish travellers and visitors from Britain and Europe. Discussing the practical problems of itinerancy and interactions between scientific itinerants and local populations, she suggested that Ireland, due to its geographical situation, could provide a model for the study of scientific itinerancy in general.

In the afternoon session, Sorcha O'Brien took a novel approach to the Shannon hydro-electrification scheme, analysing it from the point of view of design history. Since in the early Irish Free State, technology and modernisation were popularly associated with Britain, as O'Brien showed, rhetoric and advertising images played a crucial role in connecting this project to Irish interests, the Celtic heritage, and the Irish future. Continuing the topic of water and technology, Michael Reinsborough discussed the technological project of creating a system for supplying Belfast with water in the 1920s. Concentrating on the Silent Valley Reservoir, he looked at the challenges faced by engineers in developing the necessary technology to create the reservoir and at the challenges faced by politicians selling it to the public. Julie Anderson's paper discussed blind pensions, inspections and pension administration after the Blind Person's Act. As Anderson shows, in the pre-Act period physicians often certified blindness in order to give the impoverished elderly access to funds. Since these pensions were paid by the British state, false certification caused no moral dilemmas, but the system of blind inspection became more rigorous after responsibility for pension payment shifted to the new Irish government. In the final paper, Greta Jones

gave an overview of the debate about science in Ireland from the 1860s to the mid-twentieth century, covering questions of religion, Catholic influence on the contents of education, sluggish industrial investment in higher education and technological education, limited resources of the Irish state for investment in large-scale scientific projects and the influence of the peripheral situation. Finally, as Jones pointed out, Irish science was dogged by the problems of particularism and archaicism, since science and technology were associated with Britain, whereas language and literature could be more easily integrated into the foundation rhetoric of Irish nationhood.

Uniting all papers, were the questions of how historical actors wrestled with integrating science and technology into Irish provincial, local and national identities, and how dynamics of provincial resistance and provincial self-assertion as well as the peripheral situation shaped the Irish experience of science and the development of science in Ireland.

Elizabeth Neswald

#### FORTHCOMING CONFERENCE

##### New Irelands : Call for Conference Papers

An interdisciplinary international conference 14-16 September 2007 under the combined auspices of the British Association for Irish Studies, the Institute of Irish Studies and the Department of Politics of the University of Liverpool

The theme of the conference is the impact of both contemporary and historic change on the island of Ireland.

Recent years have seen steadily accumulating socio-economic, political, cultural and technological developments which have challenged institutions, stereotypes and values in both parts of Ireland. But the island has also experienced significant innovation in the past, and, as well as notable disruptions, the Irish narrative is characterised by some intriguing continuities.

The organisers would like to encourage contributions from the varied disciplines contributing to Irish Studies, including Literature, Politics, Geography, History, Archaeology, Sociology, Film & Media Studies and the Visual Arts, and from people working in other fields of study who have an Irish dimension in their work.

Papers are invited on the following themes:

- Language, Literature and Identities
- Construction & renewal of identities around gender, sexuality or religion
- Commodifying Irish Pasts: Heritage, Landscape and Memory
- The Irish Language, retreats & revivals
- Transformation of the Irish Economies in the Nineteenth & Twentieth Centuries
- Northern Ireland Society 'After the Troubles'
- Imaging Historic and Contemporary Ireland in Film, Music & Performance
- Diasporic Versions of Identity

Each speaker will have 20 minutes for a presentation and will be expected to take questions. Participants are encouraged to put together panel sessions (three papers of 20 minutes each). Abstracts of not more than 300 words should be sent as either hard copy or email attachment by 31 March 2007 to:

Mervyn Busted, Geography Discipline, School of Environment & Development, Mansfield Cooper Building, University of Manchester, Manchester M13 9PL, U.K. Email: [mervynbusted@hotmail.com](mailto:mervynbusted@hotmail.com); tel: 0161 928 8861

## BAIS Council Contact Details

Chair: Professor Shaun Richards  
Faculty of Arts, Media & Design,  
Staffordshire University,  
Stoke-on-Trent ST4 2XW  
c.s.richards@staffs.ac.uk

Secretary: Dr Claire Connolly  
School of English, Communication and  
Philosophy,  
Humanities Building, Cardiff University,  
Cardiff CF10 3EU  
connolly@cardiff.ac.uk

Treasurer: Dr Emilie Pine  
Department of English and Related Literature,  
University of York,  
Heslington, York, YO10 5DD  
ep513@york.ac.uk

Website and JiscMail Manager: Dr Aidan  
Arrowsmith  
Department of English,  
Manchester Metropolitan University,  
Rosamund Street West, Manchester M15 6LL  
a.arrowsmith@mmu.ac.uk

External Liaison Officer: Dr Scott Brewster  
School of English, Sociology, Politics and  
Contemporary History,  
The University of Salford, Crescent House,  
Salford, Greater Manchester, M5 4WT  
W.S.Brewster@salford.ac.uk

Postgraduate Essay Prize Committee Chair: Dr  
Matthew Campbell  
School of English Literature, Language and  
Linguistics,  
The University of Sheffield,  
Sir William Empson House, Shearwood Road,  
Sheffield S10 2TD  
m.campbell@sheffield.ac.uk

Postgraduate Bursary Awards Committee  
Chair: Professor Maria Luddy  
Department of History, University of Warwick,  
Coventry CV4 7AL  
m.luddy@warwick.ac.uk

Irish Language Co-Ordinator: Christy Evans  
Shenfield High School,  
Alexander Lane, Shenfield, Essex CM15 8RY

Irish Studies Seminar Convenor: Dr Ian  
McBride  
Department of History,  
King's College London,  
Strand, London WC2R 2LS  
ian.mcbride@kcl.ac.uk

Vice Chair & Editor, BAIS News: Dr Catherine  
Nash  
Department of Geography,  
Queen Mary, University of London,  
Mile End Road, London E1 4NS  
c.nash@qmul.ac.uk

Editor, Irish Studies Review: Professor Neil  
Sammells  
Bath Spa University College,  
Newton Park, Bath BA2 9BN  
n.sammells@bathspa.ac.uk

Publicity Co-ordinator: Dr Yvonne Whelan  
School of Geographical Sciences, University of  
Bristol,  
University Road, Bristol BS8 1SS  
yvonne.whelan@bristol.ac.uk

Dr Mervyn Busted  
Department of Geography, University of  
Manchester,  
Oxford Road, Manchester M13 9PL  
mervyn.busted@manchester.ac.uk

Dr Catriona Kennedy  
Centre for Eighteenth Century Studies, The King's  
Manor,  
University of York, Exhibition Square, York YO1  
7EP.  
calk100@york.ac.uk

Dr Richard Kirkland  
Department of English Language & Literature,  
King's College London, Strand, London WC2R  
2LS  
richard.kirkland@kcl.ac.uk