

# IRISH STUDIES IN BRITAIN

**AUTUMN-WINTER 1985**

**No 8**

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# IRISH STUDIES IN BRITAIN

No. 8 Autumn-Winter 1985 ISSN 0260-8154

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## EDITORIAL

The news that there is to be a conference on Irish Studies sponsored by Anglo-Irish Encounter is, after three years waiting, long overdue. As long ago as issue 3 of "Irish Studies in Britain" (Spring/Summer 1982) we were welcoming proposals to develop in this as well as other directions.

The stated aim of the conference is to encourage the initiatives which have recently been taken to establish degree courses in Irish Studies at higher level education establishments in this country. The organisers of the Conference believe that the establishment of such courses in Irish Studies would be useful in enhancing mutual understanding and greater knowledge of Ireland in British universities and polytechnics.

All very worthy, but why start so far up the educational ladder? Academics being (by and large) reasonable, cultured middle-class people are already in regular contact with each other and while we have always argued the desirability, not to say the necessity, of developing higher level Irish Studies courses for those who at the moment come up against a brick wall when they wish to progress beyond lower level courses, we still believe that it is work at the coal-face (schools, colleges, adult education centres) that is still crying in the wilderness for financial support and educational validation. If this was going hand-in-hand with higher level initiatives there would be some balance but as far as we can see both the British and Irish governments seem more interested in encouraging prestige events and developments than in nurturing the less fashionable but ultimately more fertile grassroots. So we give a guarded welcome to the conference but strongly urge a more balanced approach.

## ADVERTISING

"Irish Studies in Britain" has a readership of nearly 3,000. Subscribers include university, college and municipal libraries in Britain, Ireland, the USA and Europe. This is a ready market for your service or product as our readers are avidly interested in all aspects of Irish Studies.

Our rates are extremely attractive: £75 sterling full page A4; £40 half-page; £25 quarter-page; £15 eighth-page. Classified advertisements are also available at 20p a word. Please contact the publishers for further details.

## PRICE INCREASE

We regret to have to increase the price of a copy of "Irish Studies in Britain" to 65p as from this issue. The former price (50p) remained constant since issue 1 in 1981 but increasing costs have made its retention untenable. We would like to stress that "Irish Studies in Britain" is **totally** dependent on its income from both sales and advertising—we receive absolutely no grant aid from any authority or organisation. In the light of this and in order to ensure the continued financial viability of "Irish Studies in Britain" we have had to increase its price to 65p per copy. We hope readers will continue to purchase the **only** magazine in this country providing a forum for discussion on all aspects of Irish Studies in Britain.



**BACK ISSUES**

Issues 1-4 inclusive are now **completely** sold out. There are about 25 copies of issue 5 remaining and issues 6 and 7 are still available. Issue 5 featured the Irish in Bradford 1830-1920; and interview with Steve Brennan, the GLC's Irish Liaison Officer; the Irish Video Project and "Mad Micks and Englishmen"—anti-Irish racism in Britain. Issue 6 contains a full report on the 1984 Leicester Irish Studies conference as well as articles on teaching Irish to children; the future of the Celtic languages; the Changing Face of the Irish in Britain; Irish Studies in Coventry and teaching Celtic archaeology in Leicester. Issue 7 included "Teaching Irish History—Experiences and Problems"; First B.A. in Irish Studies?; The underachievement of the Irish in the British job market; Michael Davitt's unique memorial; Education and the Irish "Community" in Britain and "Hamlet agus an prionsa in easnamh?"

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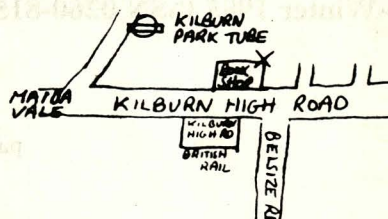
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# NEWS

## Irish Language and Culture Guide

The Centre for Information on Language Teaching and Research (CILT) is developing a series of language and culture guides designed for teachers, students, librarians, business people and anyone interested in teaching and learning a particular language. The Irish guide, to be published shortly, will provide detailed information on the provision and use of language teaching and learning resources and will contain sections on teaching, learning and resource materials; libraries and special collections; radio broadcasts; specialist booksellers and subscription agents, film distributors, opportunities for learning the language and examinations. The guide costs £2.70 a copy (including postage) and further details are available from CILT Regent's College, Inner Circle, Regent's Park, London NW1 4NS (tel. 01 486 8221/2/3/4).

## The O'Brien Story

Phillimore Publishers have recently published the first comprehensive history for over a century of the O'Brien family in Ireland. The author, Ivar O'Brien concentrates on the period between 1500 and 1865 and throws much new light on the role played by the O'Briens. In addition, there are chapters on the earlier history and Brian Boru, and on many of the former O'Brien castles of ancient Thomond, including those still in use—Bunratty, Dromoland and Ennistymon. For further information contact Phillimore at Shopwyke Hall, Chichester, Sussex PO20 6BQ.

## New Irish Directory

"Ireland: A Directory 1985" includes up-to-date statistical data on Ireland's population, production, trade, earnings, energy, education and lots more. There are also sections on Northern Ireland and the EEC.

Published by the Institute of Public Administration in Ireland, the directory provides information on over 2000 of Ireland's institutions and organisations, including state-sponsored bodies, government departments, major companies, trade associations and research organisations. The directory is researched and compiled annually and is available from Euro-Monitor Publications, 87-88 Turnmill Street, London EC1 (tel 01 251 8024). Price £37 sterling.

## Galway Company seeks work in Britain

An Grianán is an Irish editing, typesetting and publishing company set up by the Athenry (Co. Galway) Development Trust to create new jobs for unemployed people in that area. They are looking to attract work from Britain and can be contacted at their British office at Lees View, Ashford, Ashford Road, Badlesmere, Faversham, Kent.

## Oxford Irish Studies Conference

Anglo-Irish Encounter, as readers of early issues of 'ISIB' will remember, was set up by the British and Irish governments in July 1983 to promote by way of conferences and seminars greater understanding and better relations between their peoples.

Anglo-Irish Encounter are sponsoring a conference (invitation only) on Irish Studies at St. Peter's College, Oxford in mid-September. The conference will be addressed by Gemma Hussey and Keith Joseph, Ministers for Education in Ireland and Britain respectively.

The theme of the conference will be the establishment of Irish Studies in British higher education establishments. At the conference a British Association for Irish Studies will be formally established to encourage and co-ordinate the development of Irish Studies in this country. Nearly 100 academics, both from Britain and from Ireland, all of whom are involved or interested in the

teaching of Irish Studies in Britain, will be participating at the conference. A questionnaire is being sent to all institutions of higher education in Britain to establish precisely the resources that are available and a draft directory with a geographical index will be available at the conference and this will be subsequently published.

Centrally involved in this project is Dr Mary Fitzgerald of Crewe and Alsager College of Higher Education whose article on attempts to establish an Institute of Irish Studies in Staffordshire offering a BA degree course in Irish Studies appeared in issue 7 of "Irish Studies in Britain".

Dr Anthony Kenny, Master of Balliol College, Oxford, who is chairman of the committee organising the conference is also involved in planning a postgraduate degree (M.Phil.) course in Irish Studies which would last 2 years and commence in October 1986. This would involve all colleges at Oxford University and would be inter-disciplinary.

## New Irish in Britain Video

"I've always made the mistake of declaring I'm Irish because friends take the mick out of you afterwards. Before they knew I was Irish, they treated me as one of them."

The quote is from "Second Generation Experiences", a videotape recently produced by the Irish Video Project. The tape presents the views of young second generation Irish people about aspects of growing up Irish in London. Based primarily on interviews with young people from two Catholic secondary schools, the tape expresses their thoughts and feelings on a range of issues—the Church, Irish culture, contact with Ireland, anti-Irish racism.

The tape, 20 minutes long, is not a comprehensive statement on the second generation, but is intended for use as a "trigger" to stimulate and encourage discussion on the issues affecting their growing up in this country. It is available for hire (£12) or for sale (£30) from The Albany Video Project, The Albany, Douglas Way, London SE8 (tel. 01 692 6322).

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## Leicester Autumn Irish Studies Course

Elsewhere in this issue we highlight Irish Studies courses in Greater London, starting this autumn but readers in the East Midlands may be interested in the third annual Irish Studies course to be held at Soar Valley College, Leicester for 10 weeks from Wednesday 2 October (7.30-9.30). The theme of this year's course is "A Sense of Ireland" and topics will include "The Irish in Britain—An Alternative View" by Bernard Canavan; Professor James O'Connell on "Cultural Linkages between Britain and Ireland"; Fr. Bobby Gilmore on "The work of the Irish Chaplaincy Scheme in Britain plus sessions on the Celtic Way of Life; The Autobiographies of Patrick Kavanagh and Sean O'Casey and the poetry of Seamus Heaney. "Irish Studies in Britain—What have we achieved?" is the penultimate session in this course and examines the development of Irish Studies in this country over the past ten years. There will also be films on Joyce's "Ulysses"; Irish emigration to Canada and the controversial Channel 4 film "The Cause of Ireland".

The whole course is rounded off with an evening of traditional music, dance and song. All in all this sounds incredibly good value for an enrolment fee of just £12 for the ten sessions. Nessian Danaher on 0533 669625 or 0533 875368 can provide further details.

## London Irish Arts Festival and Book Fair

Siol Phádraig, the Irish Arts Festival held last Spring in London was a great success; in particular the Irish Book Festival held at the Royal Festival Hall on March 15 was adjudged to have been the most successful event of all with over thirty Irish publishers exhibiting, thousands of Londoners attending and over £40,000 worth of Irish books sold. Plans are afoot to repeat the Arts Festival next year and to have a longer Book Fair spread over 2 or 3 days. For information on the 1985 Siol Phádraig contact Irish Commission for Culture and Education 76-82 Salisbury Road, London NW6 (tel 01 624 3158) and on the Book Fair, Gemma O'Connor, 9 Beaumont Road, Headington, Oxford OX3 8JN (tel 0865 750649).

## Federation of Irish Societies Newsletter

The Federation of Irish Societies has started publishing a quarterly newsletter. Called 'The Link' it is available, free of charge, from P.O. Box 44, Letchworth, Herts., SG6 4HP. For further information telephone 04626 74406.

## Films and Videos on Ireland

The Other Cinema Film and Video Library has added two new releases to its list of ten Irish films and videos available for sale or hire. "Irish News—British Stories" looks at the presentation of Irish news in the British media while "Strip-searching—security or subjugation?" argues that there is no genuine security need for strip searching in Armagh jail and that the deliberate effect of this procedure is to degrade and demoralise the women concerned.

For further information on these and other films/videos relating to Ireland telephone the Other Cinema on 01 734 8508/9 or write to 79 Wardour St., London W1. For a free complete film list including over 350 titles on film and video send an 18p stamp to the above address.

## Irish Studies in Milton Keynes

Readers of issue 7 of "Irish Studies in Britain" will remember the WEA Irish Studies Course at Milton Keynes organised by Dick Hunter. Dick has now sent us the newsletter produced by students on that course which concentrated on the issue of "Understanding Northern Ireland". The newsletter aims to record and review some of the talk, discussions, plays and films that made up the course, and in this way in Dick's words "help to stimulate interest in the relationship between Britain and Ireland". Students from the course visited Belfast recently for

a study tour and an article in the newsletter describes their preparations. There are also articles by students on their response to the course itself; the PTA; women's lives in Northern Ireland; strip-searching as well as reviews of "The Rape and Plunder of the Shankill"; Charabanc Theatre Company's productions of "Oul Delf and False Teeth" and "Lay up your Ends", two plays on the Belfast working-class tradition; and Mike Leigh's BBC play "Four Days in July" about the lives of two working-class couples, one Protestant and one Catholic who have a lot in common but even more to divide them. The newsletter is excellent value at 30p only (including postage) and is an example to us all of how to record impressions and opinions of adult students attending Irish Studies courses.

Dick Hunter is now planning to start a course this autumn on the Irish in Milton Keynes, focusing on the history of people's lives and the contribution made by Irish people to life in the city. For further details on the course and on the newsletter contact Dick at Spencer Street, New Bradwell, Milton Keynes. Dick is also looking for letters and memorabilia passed down the generations which could provide valuable insights into the lives of past and present generations of Irish people. All material sent will be acknowledged, looked after and later returned.

## Merseyside Irish Studies Enterprise

There has been some controversy recently over whether or not the substantial Irish contributions to the development of Liverpool has been sufficiently appreciated and recorded, especially by the Irish in Liverpool themselves. That's why it is heartening to see the establishment of MISE—Merseyside Irish Studies Enterprise, a group made up of people from all areas of education, voluntary groups, parents and interested individuals. MISE intends to hold an education conference in November 1985 and further information can be obtained from Joan Inglis, 29 Blantyre Road, Liverpool L15 3HS, Merseyside.

## Linen Hall Review Reviewed

Belfast's Linen Hall Review continues to maintain the high standards set in its earlier issues. Published by the Linen Hall Library, this quarterly journal covers developments in all aspects of the arts, literature, history and heritage of Northern Ireland all for the reasonable price of £3 for a year's subscription. The two most recent issues featured articles on the controversy over a quarrying at Navan Fort, Co Armagh and a retrospective look at the Field Day writers and intellectuals, Brian Friel, Stephen Rea, Seamus Heaney and Seamus Deane.

In its editorial on Navan Fort, the Review argues that "a society which is willing to loot and pillage its ancient monuments is equally capable of disregarding its literature", and "Northern chauvinists may, at the time of Wood Quay, have compacently assumed that only in the Republic could the authorities proceed so far despite evidence. They are now faced with a Northern manifestation of the same phenomenon . . . We are apparently to discuss "acceptable levels" of quarrying at Navan. One might well ask would Greeks willingly engage in debate on permissible levels of mining at the Acropolis, or Englishmen contemplate limited mineral extraction at Stonehenge?"

Strong stuff aimed to shame those intent on despoiling arguably Ireland's most significant ancient monument. Yet as the Linen Hall Review admits: "those who have the greatest interest, usually economic, in the destruction of ancient monuments, are, to say the least, hardly ardent readers."

The Linen Hall Reviews is available from the Linen Hall Library, 17 Donegall Square North, Belfast 1..

★★★★★



# IRISH DIMENSIONS IN BRITISH EDUCATION

## Report on Second National Annual

## Conference on Irish Studies

Nessan Danaher

"At last we've come out of the woodwork!" This was the comment of a teacher who attended the first such Conference in 1984. The teacher was first generation Irish, and middle-aged; the comment indicated a sense of cultural liberation and a feeling of release in the open celebration of her hitherto underplayed Irishness. This comment, indeed, indicated an area of interest which was to form the agenda for the Second National Annual Conference on Irish Dimensions in British Education held at Soar Valley College (Leicester) on 16th February 1985.

This Conference, which was aimed at parents, teachers, first and second generation Irish people, and all Irish community organisations, set out to explore current cultural issues and to examine social and psychological aspects of ethnic identity with regard to the first and second generation Irish in Britain. The event, jointly organised by the College's Irish Studies Workshop and the Irish in Britain Representation Group, was aimed at a national audience. Particularly supportive pre-Conference coverage was disseminated by *The Irish Post* and this undoubtedly helped to generate active interest. Enrolments eventually reached the 200 figure and represented a reasonable geographical spread; they arrived from universities, H.E. institutes, colleges of art and secondary schools, as well as from the whole range of Irish community organisations, cultural associations and youth organisations. Particularly interesting was the high level of representation amongst elements of the second generation. In terms of institutional recognition, the presence of Mr. Mark McLaughlin, one of H.M. Inspectors at the Department of Education and Science, augurs well for developments in the future.

The morning session was taken by the first two guest speakers: Dr. Ita O'Donovan and Dr. Philip Ullah. Dr. O'Donovan (Psychology Dept., University of Birmingham) discussed the concept of ethnic identity and the patterns of adjustment that immigrants may adopt in the "host" society, particularly with reference to the first and second generation Irish in Britain. Her research was based on the contrasting attitudes and cultural patterns of two sample groups—one drawn from the Irish in Birmingham and the other from the Dublin community. Amongst a number of fascinating insights, Dr. O'Donovan stated that her research into stereotypes showed that the Birmingham group had maintained an ideal view of Irish society, and that they had closely identified with this image. The research further suggested that the Birmingham Irish used history and ethnic associations with their concomitant cultural activities to inculcate in their offspring a strong Irish identity, a strategy not adopted by the Dublin Irish. How successful this strategy was, said Dr. O'Donovan, may be judged from a study of children's stereotypes, where an independent sample of 13 year-old second generation Irish children from Birmingham displayed a positive view of Irish people, together with a high self-identification with Irish people. In contrast, an independent sample of Dublin Irish children saw themselves as similar to both Irish people and English people.

The second guest speaker, Dr. Philip Ullah, (Psychology Dept., University of Sheffield) developed a discussion on the theme of psychological aspects of identity amongst the second generation Irish. He looked into the questions of minority group status vis-à-vis the dominant culture, stereotyping and its negative effects, and the areas of individual and collective identity. (A

spirited analysis of the importance of "the crack" in identity terms met a most enthusiastic response from the audience).

Dr. Ullah stated in conclusion that the question of identity for the second generation is one which forms a substantial part of their psychological development. Almost all members of this group tend to subjectively experience themselves as members of a low-status minority group. For some, the embarrassment is such that they refuse to have anything to do with the Irish. For others, this is a spur to developing pride in their Irish origins. For all of them there is the need to comply with the competing demands of two, overlapping cultures.

The afternoon sessions were taken by Mary Hickman and Brid Keenan. Mary Hickman, who is currently pursuing doctoral research at the University of London, offered an in-depth sociological analysis of the issues of identity and racism in education in relation to the Irish experience in Britain. She found that in school texts, a specific model of explanation is used to present Britain's relationship with Ireland. This enables a particular interpretation to be given to Britain's current relationship with Northern Ireland; it also reflects Britain's interests and precludes access to alternative accounts. She noted that curricular models of explanation relating to Irish Studies exhibited ethnocentrism and control. Using the concept of hegemony in terms of cultural domination and subordination. Hickman rejected the argument that curriculum content in relation to Irish Studies is a product of classless academic disciplines. She stressed that multiculturalism is therefore insufficient in that it does not define the causes of racism in relation to Ireland's treatment by Britain. In terms of the much-approved idea of "balance" in school text-books, Hickman concluded that it does not guarantee even partial objectivity; she uses the term "the balancing trick" to describe this effect. She also found ethnocentrism in school materials relating to Ireland to be a "pervasive malaise". Her detailed analysis of textbook approaches showed that Ireland exists only in relation to British concerns, and then only in terms of violence and lawlessness, and hence, irrationality. Complementary images of Irish inferiority and British superiority are thus reinforced.

These themes were further explored by Brid Keenan (Tottenham College of Technology) who went on to consider the areas of cultural production and reproduction in terms of the debate between a straightforward multicultural approach as opposed to the more radical anti-racist stance. Ms Keenan went on to indicate the relevance of these issues to the Irish not only here but in Ireland; she critically examined current theories about comparative cultures in Ireland and the current literary and dramatic output occasioned by the Northern Irish situation.

This report cannot, of course, do justice to the full contributions of the main speakers; as became established practice last year, a detailed summary of one the main speakers' contributions will be published in a full *Conference Report*, which will be available from the College from October, free of charge. This *Report* will also contain a summary of the points raised in discussion groups, a Bibliography, a list of useful addresses, and a selection of documents showing how various institutions are beginning to recognise the Irish dimension in British education. Of particular interest are documents from the Greater London Council and from the Catholic Church's recent report on multi-



cultural education. The minutes of the discussion group on Irish Language Teaching are also of great interest.

During the Conference discussion workshops were offered on a variety of topics: the Irish and ethnic identity issues, primary and secondary curriculum factors, anti-Irish racism, formal recognition of the Irish dimension, music/song/dance in the curriculum and the role of the Irish language. An extensive book display was organized by the College from its Irish Studies resources: a variety of interesting bookstalls offered their wares (Addison Press, Fentone Irish sheet music, Aisling Design (Coisceim books), Canavan's antiquarian and secondhand books and the ubiquitous Four Provinces Bookshop). During the luncheon recess, participants were able to view the latest offering from the Irish Video Project: *Second Generation Experience*, a 25-minute illuminating examination of attitudes to and within the second generation Irish in Britain. The Conference Programme itself contained a selection of discussion documents, including an interesting analysis of the integration-assimilation debate. These papers will be included in the full *Report* (which will be sent to all participants in the Autumn, together with invitations to the 1986 Conference).

Perhaps most useful for future development was the setting up of an embryonic framework for national development. About 80 individuals representing a thorough cross-section of the Conference attendance agreed to keep in contact between annual Conferences. Once operative, and, more importantly, once resourced, this could develop into a standing conference for Irish dimensions in British education (Junior and Secondary level) which could usefully dovetail with the proposed national association for Irish Studies at the third level due to be set up at the Anglo-Irish Encounter Conference at Oxford in September.

In conclusion, as Conference Co-Ordinator, I would like to thank all those individuals and organisations who helped to make the 1985 Conference a success. We hope to see you all at the 1986 Conference, which will focus on cultural linkages between Britain and Ireland and the place of language, music, song and dance in the curriculum.

(Nessan Danaher is Head of History and Irish Studies Co-Ordinator at Soar Valley College, Leicester. He is also IBRG Education Officer)

## IBRG EDUCATION COLUMN

Last Autumn (1984) the *Leicester Branch* in association with Soar Valley College ran a very successful course which attracted 55 enrolments, and on one evening registered 65. Guest speakers included Donal MacAmhlaigh, Liz Curtis, Tom Paulin and Fr. Roger Clarke (whose talk on Michael Collins was the crowd-puller alluded to). Leicester launched its first 10 week Irish Language class in January. This attracted 44 enrolments, one-third of whom were under 18 years. The scheme adopted was that used in the Buntus Cainte method; the teacher was Mary Cordes (née Lynch) from Kilgarven, Co. Kerry. Mary had spent time in the Dunquin Gaelteacht and is the holder of a fáiinne. Informal language classes continued after Easter. The Summer Term saw the inauguration of a very popular céili dancing class, which will continue into August and September. (College tel. no. 669625).

The 1985 Irish Studies Course will feature Bernard Canavan, Prof. James O'Connell, Catherine Byron, Eamonn Hughes and Ivan Gibbons. Soar Valley College staff will as usual feature: Nessan Danaher and Maggie Garvan. (See details elsewhere in this issue). Language classes will resume January 1986.

*Bolton IBRG* has also been active in the educational field. David Wright (tel. no. 0204-40121) contacted the local WEA and a joint language class was organised last session; this will be reflected from September. The Branch is discussing with Paul Salvesson of the Bolton Local History Group the production of a paper dealing with the contribution of the Irish to social and political life in Bolton over the last century and a half.

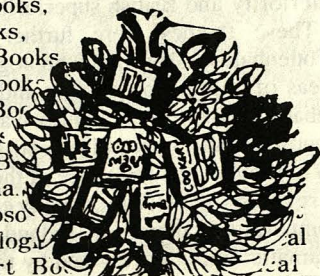
*Leeds branch* has organised its first Irish Studies course and intends to mount another after the Summer break. Details from Enda McCarthy (tel: 0532-684040).

Finally, the IBRG Education Officer is pleased to report that to date he has been invited to address well-attended Teacher-in-Service days on the Irish dimension in Birmingham, Wolverhampton, Islington, Camden and Leicester. These have involved active LEA co-operation; copies of in-service materials are available from Mr. Nessan Danaher, Soar Valley College.

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# SCHOOLING THE IRISH IN BRITAIN

Kevin J. Brehony

The reports of Royal Commissions on education in the nineteenth century tell us much about schooling but they also contain information about social conditions, some of which is valuable in trying to recover the experience of the Irish in Britain. One such report, which contains material relevant to that endeavour, is that of the Royal Commission on the Working of the Elementary Education Acts which was published in 1888. Among its many pages is the evidence to the Commission of Miss Constance Fox, a mistress at St. Patrick's infant school in Sudell Street in the heart of Manchester. Miss Fox spoke of her own school, the children of which she described as being 'almost entirely Irish', as well as to St. Chad's, another Catholic school in Manchester. Although not long, her evidence and the questions asked of her, open a window on to the lives of the Irish urban poor in England in the 1880's.

The examination of Miss Fox was begun by Cardinal Manning. At that time he was the leading Catholic prelate in England, a fierce opponent of state schools. He had been appointed to the Commission as a reward for urging Catholics to vote for the Tories in the election of 1885. Miss Fox had been chosen, said the Cardinal, to 'state certain special difficulties which attach to poor Roman Catholic schools'. She performed this task well by stressing the problems encountered by the school in obtaining fees from many of the children's parents. The fees charged were relatively low. Normally they were 2d per week but if the managers of the school knew that this was too much for some parents they were allowed to pay only 1d. Many children, whose parents were described by the managers or the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, as 'very poor but decent', were admitted without charge. Those parents who would neither pay the fees nor apply to the Poor Law guardians to pay for them and whose children frequently did not attend school, were of much concern to Miss Fox.

The scale of the problem gives an indication of the poverty of the Irish community in Manchester during the 1880's. About one third of the children who attended all the departments of St. Patrick's school paid no fees at all. Of these, five per cent had their fees paid for by the guardians and the rest were admitted without payment. At St. Chad's school, just over half the children were admitted without fees but there, the guardians paid the fees of just under a quarter of them. Significantly, in the case of those admitted free to St. Patrick's their parents had not applied to the guardians. Miss Fox explained that this was because the parents found it 'degrading and pauperising'.

Nevertheless, the assumption shared by Miss Fox and the Commissioners was that those who did not apply to the guardians for relief were 'demoralised'. Which meant that they were poor because they were morally inadequate; those who, in the words of one of the Commissioners consumed, 'their earnings upon their own indulgences'. For the makers of social policy it was important to distinguish between the deserving poor and the demoralised as it was thought that the demoralised would contaminate the deserving and the 'respectable'.

However, while the Commissioners were keen to establish that those who did not pay did so because they were demoralised and that more Irish were demoralised than were the English, Miss Fox persisted in arguing that poverty itself was the principal reason. She told the Commission how the children lacked clothing, how they frequently went without food and that because of their poor housing conditions they were often ill. Nevertheless, the Cardinal pressed her to admit that few of those parents who had been repeatedly fined for the non-attendance of their children were 'very poor'. The occupations of the fathers fined for

allowing their children to sell goods on the streets at night were also held to be ones which were above the level of the poor. These included: labourers, a stonemason, a betting man, a warehouse porter, a carter, a cab-driver, a joiner, a bricklayer and a mechanic. Virtually all these jobs were unskilled, casual and subject to seasonal fluctuation. In these circumstances it is unsurprising that more Irish parents than English defied the law of school attendance and preferred to set their children to work.

In this context, from the point of view of the Irish immigrant, schooling was of limited usefulness as the prospects of any upward social mobility through this type of school were almost nil. Neither does it seem that the school did much to alleviate the hunger of the children and thus encourage many of the number on the register who did not attend. Some food was provided but St. Patrick's had no system of cheap dinners; as other schools in areas of acute poverty had begun to operate. The position of the Church was that such measures undermined family responsibility and encouraged demoralisation. Spiritual rather than physical health was clearly the first priority of the school. Even so, Miss Fox complained that there was not sufficient time for moral lessons and this despite spending three quarters of an hour every day on religious instruction. If 'respectability' was out of the reach of most of the Irish as it depended on skilled work and more importantly, continuity of employment, then the task of the school was to produce the next best thing: the decent poor. This it attempted to do in conjunction with the nuns of the Presentation Convent. Some of the community were said by Miss Fox, to be poor but in 'very comfortable circumstances'. This she attributed to the nuns, who maintained an influence over the girls after they had left school. The strategy of moralising the poor by educating prospective mothers was a common one in the late nineteenth century, the success of which was attested to by Miss Fox. The reason why the children knew so much 'about God and their religion', she claimed, was because they had 'pious mothers' who had been instructed by the nuns.

Not much that is novel emerges from this fragment of evidence. We know about the poverty endured by the Irish community and about the section of the labour market which it tended to be restricted to. We also know of the racism which suggested that the number of 'dissipated parents' was higher among the Irish community than in the indigenous one. What it does do however, is to confirm the general picture of Irish life in the cities of Nineteenth Century Britain provided by Lynn Hollen Lees for example, in her book 'Exiles of Erin'. The evidence also prompts a number of questions about the role of the Catholic Church and particularly its schools in the formation of communities in England but not of it. Paradoxically, the intersection of class, nationality and gender divisions produced a community dependent only upon its own institutions for its own survival. The voluntary 'private' associations of Church, Convent, school and St. Vincent de Paul form an area sharply at odds with that of the guardians and the laws of school attendance—in other words, the State. The values promoted in the area of the private, particularly by the Church paralleled in an ironic way those of the dominant groups in British society but especially those held by the Tory-Anglican bloc. The tension between those values and other aspects of the Irish identity together with the political expression of that strain, is an area which cries out for serious research and investigation.

*(The author was formerly a lecturer in education and now tutors the Open University course on Ethnic Minorities).*



# IRISH STUDIES IN BRITAIN—SURVEY OF READERS

We are conducting a survey of "Irish Studies in Britain" readers to establish exactly who buys the magazine. We are asking all readers to complete the following details and return them to us. (Use ordinary paper if you do not wish to cut your copy of the magazine). Please return completed details to

**"IRISH STUDIES IN BRITAIN", 83 Frithville Gardens, London W12**  
as soon as possible and certainly no later than 31 December 1985.

All those taking part will receive a free copy of the next issue of 'ISIB'. (If you are already a subscriber, your subscription will be extended by one issue).

Please print your name and address clearly.

Name .....

Address .....

If you want to remain anonymous, please indicate your town .....

Age Group                      under 18 ☐                      18-30 ☐                      31-45 ☐  
(please tick)                      46-65 ☐                      over 65 ☐

Background                      a) Irish-born (26 Counties) ☐  
(please tick)                      b) Irish-born (6 Counties) ☐  
   c) British-born of Irish parents ☐  
   (either one or both)

If c) were you born in                      i) England ☐                      ii) Scotland ☐                      iii) Wales ☐

d) British (no Irish connections) ☐

e) other—please specify

If Irish-born how long have you been living in Britain? ..... years

Occupation .....

Where do you buy 'ISIB'? .....

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Any further comments? .....



# GRÁINNE MHAOL— Recording the experience of Irish women in Britain Mary Lennon, Maire McAdam and Joanne O'Brien

*Gráinne Mhaol is a group of three women, all from Dublin, who have lived in London for between eight and twelve years. We came together two years ago with the aim of publishing a book about Irish women's emigration, as almost nothing has been written about it.*

*As our research was London biased, we received a grant from the GLC Women's Committee in 1983 to help with our research. In 1984 this grant was renewed so that we could complete the work.*

*If anyone would like to contact us they can do so by writing to GRÁINNE MHAOL, c/o 26 Boscombe Road, London W12.*

Our research, we feel, is part of a general emergence of Irish people as a distinct group in a more vocal way, which has developed over the past five years. Many articles in *Irish Studies in Britain* have explored this issue already. One important aspect has been the lessons we have learnt from the black communities—their refusal to assimilate, an option which has been pushed on them for many years and the ways they have fought back against racism in Britain.

As Irish women we face additional problems in our day-to-day lives, compared to Irish men. Too often articles written about the Irish community assume women's lives are identical to those of men. Coping with sexism as well as racism adds stress. Irish women also confront the British state in those areas which are quite different to those experienced by men—schools, health services, social security, housing etc. Added to this there are difficulties when we try to organise, either as part of our community, or as women separately. Most Irish organisations in Britain are male dominated, and do not encourage the involvement of women in an equal way. The work that many women do in organisations, such as catering, administration, organising events and so on, does not get the public recognition it deserves. Because of this general tradition of invisibility, many women who have become involved in organising around women's interests see themselves, and are seen by traditional community organisations, as separate. This includes a wide variety of groups and activities, for example, the Irish Women's Centre, the Irish Women's Abortion Support Group, the Irish Women's Discussion and Campaign Group, the first Irish Women's Conference in Britain, and women's Irish language, history, dancing and music classes, and sporting activities.

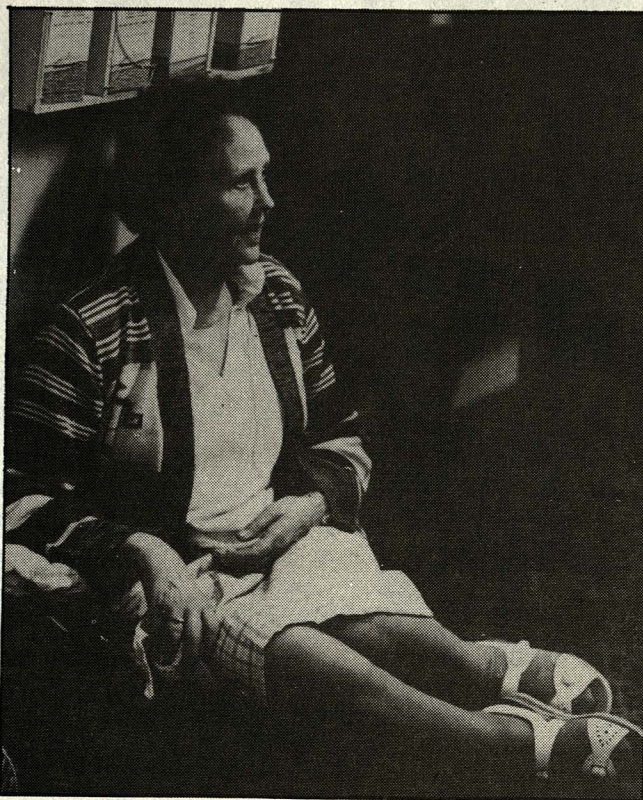
## Our Approach to the Research

Our research grew out of our feeling that we wanted to document aspects of Irish women's lives as immigrants. We decided to use interviews with women for two main reasons. Firstly, there is an overwhelming lack of written material about the Irish in Britain (in marked contrast with the Irish in America, for example). Secondly, oral history offered us the possibility of documenting women's experiences outside of an academic setting. Our own perspective as feminists gave us confidence in using this approach because it gives a voice to women themselves to talk, rather than to be talked about. It also challenges popular assumptions about what women are interested and involved in because it gives women a chance to explain their own activities and preoccupations without having them 'interpreted' by so-called experts.

History has been written by men, and because of this women have been obscured in 'brotherhood and the liberation of mankind'. Not only does this create a huge gap, but it distorts the real picture of Irish immigration. A simple example of this is that written references to Irish emigration right to this day talk about emigrants as though they were mainly men, whereas from the late 1930s to the 1970s more Irish women than men have left. Very few people know this simple fact. Because of this another reality gets obscured—that is the economic role Irish women have played in Britain, and in sending money home to Ireland. In the 1950s the Irish government admitted that remittances made up £12m of the country's gross national product. The contribution of Irish women to this figure must have been very significant.

## The Framework for Interviews

We aim to produce a book based on edited interviews and photographs. We would like it to reflect and explore a wide variety of experiences from leaving home to coming to live in England, as women themselves see it. In discussions, the three of us worked out a framework which covered the different women we would like to interview and the kinds of questions we wanted to ask. We also discussed the role that photography would play.



*"When I go back to Ireland on holidays, I look around me and think those hills belong to me, and that's my grass, and that's the way I feel. I can't say it—as long as I've lived in this country, I can't feel that way you know."*

Holyhead-Dun Laoghaire ferry

(Joanne O'Brien)



Documenting Irish women's experiences through photography will be an integral part of our work. Because of this, one of the group is a photographer. We agreed on areas we would like to cover. In addition to individual portraits, we will also represent women in situations such as work, family life, cultural and leisure activities, travelling from home, the Church and politics. We also intend to include pictures from women's own photo albums.

We based the interviews on a series of themes which we feel are central. These include:

1: themes which cover universal experiences which are generally ignored—childbirth, sexuality, bringing up children, sexism;

2: themes which question common assumptions or preconceptions about women—that immigrant women assimilate more easily than men into a foreign culture; that women in the family are often a reactionary political influence or force; that being a single woman, or a lesbian woman means that you are 'marginal';

3: themes which draw out the influence of Irish background or culture on women's lives—education, religion and family, political traditions, language and music.

Although the bulk of the interviews are with women born in Ireland, we are also interviewing second generation Irish women as we feel their experiences and viewpoint are essential to the overall picture. Many of the interviews also explore aspects of Irish women's involvement with other communities and cultures, for example through marriage, bringing up black Irish children, or through their work.

We've changed and modified our framework and questions as we have gone along because of issues that women have raised in the interviews and also because the way we work includes continuous background reading and research. For example, we have had to take into account the way different kinds of Irish identity, for instance Catholic/Protestant, rural/urban, Northern/Southern, working class/middle class, influences how we see ourselves and how we are seen when we come to England.

The interviews also explore the area of politics and political involvement. Because of the British view of Irish politics as parochial, emotional and nationalistic, women who want to become active in this country often find that political parties and groups assume that we either have nothing relevant to offer, or that our traditions are inferior to those of Britain. We have had, therefore, to think much more of ways of drawing out the political influences on women's lives and the ways that they are passed on. Stories told to women when they were children, the area they grew up in, activities that their relatives were involved in, as well as their own direct involvement, all influence political development.

The book which we hope to publish in 1986 will include portraits of women's lives, chapters which are based on specific themes, and descriptions of women's feelings about Ireland, arrival in Britain, bringing up children in Britain, work, and religion.



Roundwood Park, London Irish Festival—  
Two women with children have their hands full for the day out  
(Joanne O'Brien)



# IRISH STUDIES

IN

## A directory of local authority evening classes in LONDON Greater London starting September 1985

No. 6

1985/6

Free with 'Irish Studies in Britain' (Not to be sold separately)

### INTRODUCTION

This is the sixth edition of the 'Irish Studies in London' directory of adult education classes in this wide-ranging, interesting and topical subject. Such classes are an informative and enjoyable means of finding out about the rich and varied traditions of the neighbouring island about which we hear much but unfortunately seem to know little. These classes provide a forum in which the cultural gap between Irish and British people can be bridged as well as offering an opportunity to Irish people or young adults born in this country of Irish parents to renew or make acquaintance with their cultural heritage.

Potential students need no formal qualifications to join these classes. Although most are geared towards the academic year (September to June) many start at times in the year other than September and not all are necessarily year-long courses. All however, whether they be six weeks or six months long, require their students to attend usually a two-hour session, once a week.

Each local authority has its own fee structure, usually quite reasonable. The largest authority, the ILEA, charges £24 for a two-hour class meeting once a week for the academic year (30 weeks). Fees vary from authority to authority and generally people living outside the authority providing the class have to pay 50% extra if they want to enrol. Enquire by phone if you are in any doubt. There are reduced rates for pensioners, claimants and students under 18 (although these are primarily **adult** classes they are often the only opportunity young people born of Irish parents have of learning about an important part of their cultural heritage). There are also a number of classes where parents and children can learn together.

Most adult education centres have enrolment sessions prior to the opening of the class where you can join and pay your fee. Once again, ring the centre for details of enrolment.

This directory is divided according to subject matter although an interesting and welcome development is the growth of workshops where you can sample a variety of classes in the same evening.

The headings are:

- (1) General Irish Studies including history; current affairs; the Irish in Britain; etc.
- (2) Literature and Drama
- (3) Language
- (4) Dancing
- (5) Traditional Music

The information contained was correct at time of publication (August 1985) but may have subsequently changed. Please check with the relevant authority as this directory does not accept responsibility for any error. We would like to thank all tutors and organisers who helped in putting this information together. Finally, please make an effort to support these classes. Many people have worked hard lobbying for Irish Studies courses but their efforts will be undermined if insufficient numbers force a class to close or not start at all.

### 1: GENERAL IRISH STUDIES COURSES (history; current affairs; Irish in Britain, etc.)

INNER LONDON EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Fees for ILEA classes: £24 a year (three terms)  
(£10 a term, £4 summer term).

HAMMERSMITH AND NORTH KENSINGTON ADULT  
EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)

Addison Centre, Addison Gardens W14 (603 6102/9669)

IRISH WOMEN IN BRITISH SOCIETY

Wednesdays 7-9 for 8 weeks starting 23 October—fee £8

Irish people are the largest ethnic minority group in London, yet little has been recorded of their experience. Over half are women and their history is almost invisible. Women's experiences of arriving, working here, bringing up children etc., and the pressure they face as immigrants are different, in many ways, to those of Irish men. This course will cover the history of women's immigration, employment, comparison with other women immigrants, anti-Irish racism, second generation identity, etc. It will be of particular interest to women of Irish origin.

TUTOR: MARY LENNON

Last Chance Centre, 87 Masbro Road W14 (748 3020 × 3760)

CONTROVERSIES IN MODERN IRISH SOCIETY

Mondays 7-9 for 12 weeks starting 23 September—fee £10.

This course aims to open up a debate on a wide-ranging number of contemporary Irish issues not often covered in more orthodox Irish Studies courses. Issues discussed will include republicanism and loyalism; neutrality; the church; contraception and abortion; drug abuse and urban crime and the party system in the south.

TUTOR: JONATHAN MOORE

ISLINGTON ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)

It is intended to run an Irish history course in the autumn term. Details are not yet finalised but ring the Irish in Islington Project (281 3225) if you are interested.

WORKING MEN'S COLLEGE (for men and women)

Crowndale Road NW1 (387 2037)

THE IRISH IN BRITAIN

Wednesdays 6.30-8.30 for 6 weeks starting 6 November—fee £6 + £2.50 college membership for year (retired, unemployed and school students pay ¼ of course fee).

The Irish have been settling in Britain in large numbers since the end of the 18th century. This class will look at the 'push' factors that affected Irish emigration: population growth, the land system; the Famine; farm consolidation and the decline of agriculture wages. It will also look at the 'pull' factors which influenced settlement in Britain—who came, what they did and how patterns of immigration have changed during these two centuries. The class will also look at the changing image of the Irish in Britain as well as their effect on Irish and British politics.

TUTOR: BERNARD CANAVAN

(A Workers Educational Association course)



## **NORTHERN IRELAND—A DIVIDED SOCIETY**

Fridays 7-9 for 12 weeks starting 4 October—fee £9 + £2.50 college fee (for reductions see above).

This one-term course looks at all aspects of the crisis and at the issues behind the headlines. As well as providing an historical and political background, we will examine the structure of Northern Ireland society in terms of class, religion, education, economics, literature and leisure. Particular emphasis will be given to the characteristics of the often neglected loyalist community.

**TUTOR: ALAN PARKINSON**

(A Workers Educational Association course)

## **IRISH STUDIES**

Wednesdays 6.30-8.30 for 12 weeks starting 15 January—fee £9 + £2.50 college fee (for reductions see above).

Twelve classes on Irish history since the Act of Union 1801. Among the topics examined are changes in Irish agriculture, relations between landlord and tenant, the effect of British industrialisation on the Irish economy and the plight of the migrant labourer. The course will also cover the main developments in Irish politics: Catholic Emancipation, Repeal, the Famine, the Parnellite Party and Independence.

**TUTOR: BERNARD CANAVAN**

(A Workers Educational Association course)

## **OTHER AUTHORITIES AND ORGANISATIONS**

**University of London, Goldsmith's College, School of Adult and Community Centres**

38 Lewisham Way, New Cross SE14 (691 2659; Peter Moloney or 692 8653; Dale Thoroughgood).

## **IRISH ASPECTS**

Mondays 7-9 for 3 terms starting 23 September—fee £24.

A three term course covering a wide range of topics including the social history of the 18th century Ireland, Irish mythology, drama and modern literature, the Irish in Britain. The course is divided into six blocks looking at each issue for five weeks.

**VARIOUS SPEAKERS**

## **LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT**

Aylestone Centre, Aylestone Avenue NW6 (4510088/4598199)

## **IRISH STUDIES: IRISH HISTORY AND CULTURE**

Thursdays 7-9 for 3 terms starting 19 September—fee £15

**TUTOR: MICHAEL O CALLANAIN**

## **STRATFORD IRISH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION**

Colegrave School, Heniker Road E15 (534 8426; Rob McLoughlin)

## **IRISH HISTORY AND CULTURE**

Mondays 7-9.30 (all year round with guest speakers) (WEA class)

## **HARINGEY IRISH IN BRITAIN**

## **REPRESENTATION GROUP**

will be offering an Irish Studies course in Haringey this autumn. Details to be finalised. Ring 281 3225.

# **2: LITERATURE AND DRAMA**

## **INNER LONDON EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

Fees for ILEA classes: £24 a year (three terms)  
(£10 a term; £4 summer term)

## **HAMMERSMITH AND NORTH KENSINGTON**

## **ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)**

Mary Boon branch, Earsby Street W14 (opposite Olympia) (603 7271 after 6 pm)

## **MODERN IRISH LITERATURE**

Tuesdays 7-9 for 12 weeks starting 24 September

An examination of recent 19th and 20th century Irish achievements in English literature. As well as discussing the giants in the field (Wilde, Joyce, Shaw, O'Casey, Yeats and Beckett etc) the course will examine the parallels between recent Irish literature and that of the Third World.

**TUTOR: FRANK MELLON**

Last Chance Centre, 87 Masbro Road W14 (748 3020 × 3760)

## **LONDONER DRAMA GROUP**

Wednesdays 8.30-10pm for 3 terms starting 25 September

This group largely consists of young (16-25) second-generation Irish people. New members are welcome.

## **PUTNEY-WANDSWORTH ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)**

Hotham School, Charlwood Road SW15 (789 8255)

## **JOYCE'S 'ULYSSES' THROUGH HOMER, AQUINAS, DANTE and IBSEN**

Wednesdays 10.15-12.15 (mornings) for 24 meetings starting 25 September.

This is the second year of a three year course but new students are welcome to join. It involves a study of Joyce's 'Ulysses' in conjunction with some major works of literature that went into its making, e.g. Dante's Divine Comedy.

**TUTOR: Mrs M. BARAITSER**

(A University of London Extra-Mural Course)

## **HENRY COMPTON YOUTH CENTRE (ILEA)**

Ashby Mill School, Prague Place, Bedford Terrace SW2  
(737 1772 after 7 pm)

## **IRISH DRAMA**

Wednesdays 6-9 starting 4 September.

This is part of the Irish Cultural evening held every Wednesday at the school.

**TUTOR: ROSEMARY KENNEDY**

(See also Irish language section for learning Irish through drama, poetry and song).

## **OTHER AUTHORITIES AND ORGANISATIONS**

## **CITY UNIVERSITY, CENTRE FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION, EXTRA-MURAL STUDIES**

Northampton Square, London EC1 (252 4399 × 3268/9)

## **JAMES JOYCE: 'DUBLINERS', 'PORTRAIT' and 'ULYSSES'**

Tuesdays 6.30-8.30 for 10 weeks starting 8 October—fee £14.60.

Joyce is important not only as a product of the Irish literary renaissance but also as a key figure in the course of modern fiction.

**TUTOR: CELINE LEONARD**

# **3: IRISH LANGUAGE COURSES**

## **INNER LONDON EDUCATION AUTHORITY**

Fees for ILEA classes: £24 a year (three terms)  
(£10 a term; £4 summer term)

## **CAMDEN ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)**

Irish Centre, 52 Camden Square NW1 (485 0051)

Stage 1—beginners

Fridays 6.30-8 starting 27 September—£1 per year

Stage 2—for those with some knowledge

Friday 8-9.30 starting 27 September—fee £1 for year

**TUTOR: SIOBHAN O'NEILL**

plus for children aged 7 to 14 only

Stage 1—beginners

Saturdays 10-11 starting 14 September—no fee

Stage 2—intermediate

Saturdays 11-12 starting 14 September—no fee

**TUTOR: SIOBHAN O'NEILL**

## **CENTRAL ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)**

Hugh Myddelton Centre, Sans Walk EC1 (388 7106)

Stage 1 and 1+

Wednesdays 6.15-8.15 starting 25 September

**TUTOR: SIOBHAN O'NEILL**

Stage 2/3

Tuesdays 6.15-8.15 starting 24 September

**TUTOR: SIOBHAN O'NEILL**

(for information on course and content ring Siobhan O'Neill on 254 7087)

## **CHELSEA—WESTMINSTER ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)**

Westminster City School, Palace Street SW1 (584 0855 or 589 2569)

Beginners and intermediate

Tuesdays 6-8 starting 24 September

**TUTOR: SEAMUS KENNEALLY**

## **CLAPHAM—BATTERSEA ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)**

Latchmere School, Latchmere Road SW11 (223 5876)

Beginners and near-beginners

Thursdays 7-9 starting 26 September

**TUTOR: SIOBHAN O'NEILL**



## HAMMERSMITH AND NORTH KENSINGTON ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)

Mary Boon School, Earsby St W14 (opposite Olympia)

(603 7271 after 6 pm)

Stage 1—beginners

Thursdays 6.30-8.30 from 26 September

TUTOR: CHRISTY QUINN

Stage 2—intermediate

Tuesdays 6.30-8.30 from 24 September

TUTOR: CHRISTY QUINN

Last Chance Centre, 87 Masbro Road W14 (748 3020 x 3760)

Beginners family workshop

Wednesdays 6.30-8.30 from 25 September

TUTOR: COLETTE PRENDERGAST

## WORKING MEN'S COLLEGE (for men and women)

Crowndale Road NW1 (387 2037)

Fees £24 a year + £2.50 college fee (retired, unemployed and school students pay ¼ of the course fee).

Stage 1—beginners

This course will introduce students to both the written and spoken language. The main aim is to give people a chance to take the first steps in the culture of the "hidden" Ireland.

Fridays 7-9 starting 4 October

TUTOR: EILEEN DOHERTY/PATRICK COYLE

## 'O' Level Irish (Northern Ireland Examinations Board)

A one-year course for those with some proficiency in the language. Students are expected to read widely and do homework. They will be examined in oral and written Irish. Examinations will take place in the Working Men's College.

Mondays 7-9 starting 30 September

TUTOR: EILEEN DOHERTY/PATRICK COYLE

## HACKNEY ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)

Woodberry Down Branch, Woodberry Grove N4 (805 5555)

Stage 2—intermediate

Keep up your Irish through drama, poetry and song

Mondays 7-9 starting 23 September—fee £1 per year

TUTOR: SIOBHAN O'NEILL

## ISLINGTON ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)

George Orwell School, Holland Walk, London N19 (272 4772)

Stage 1—beginners

Thursdays 7-9 starting 26 September

TUTOR: PATRICIA COFFEY

## HENRY COMPTON YOUTH CENTRE (ILEA)

Ashby Mill School, Prague Place, Bedford Terrace SW12

(767 1772 after 7 pm)

Workshop—all stages. Part of Irish Cultural evening

Wednesdays 6-9 starting 4 September

TUTOR: SEAMUS KENNEALLY

## OTHER AUTHORITIES AND ORGANISATIONS

### UNIVERSITY OF LONDON, GOLDSMITH'S COLLEGE, SCHOOL OF ADULT AND COMMUNITY STUDIES

38 Lewisham Way, New Cross SE14 (691 2659; 692 8653)

Stage 1—beginners

Thursdays 7-9 starting 26 September

TUTOR: SEAMUS KENNEALLY

## CONRADH NA GAEILGE (THE GAELIC LEAGUE)

Irish Club, 82 Eaton Square, SW1

An Scoil Ghaelach

Beginners and intermediate adult classes

Saturdays 10.30 and 12 noon

Bunscoil London

Classes for children 7-11 years

Saturdays 10.30

Details 578 3010

## CUIDEACHTA

Irish Club, 82 Eaton Square SW1

Conversations and songs in Irish

Last Friday each month 8-10.30 pm. Open to all.

## LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Aylestone Centre, Aylestone Avenue NW6 (451 0088/459 8199)

Fees £15 per year (retired; unemployed; under 18: free)

Stage 1—beginners

Tuesdays 7-9 starting 17 September

TUTOR: EILEEN DOHERTY

## 'O' Level Irish

Tuesdays 7-9 starting 17 September

TUTOR: PATRICK COYLE

## 'A' Level Irish

Mondays and Thursdays 7-9 starting 16 September

## LONDON BOROUGH OF HARINGEY

(in association with Haringey Irish Association)

Details of Irish language classes in Haringey were not yet finalised before this directory went to press. Ring Bill Aulsberry on 889 6579 for further information.

## HARROW IRISH IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATION GROUP

Railway Tavern, Wealdstone Bridge, Harrow, Middlesex

Stage 1—beginners

Wednesdays 8-9

(For details of starting date, fees etc., ring 427 6741).

TUTOR: CORMAC McKEEVER

## LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

McEntee Centre, Billet Road E17 (527 4110; Bob Tennant)

Stage 1—beginners

Mondays 7.30-9.30 starting 9 September

TUTOR: PADRAIGIN NI COSAIGH

## STRATFORD IRISH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Colegrave School, Heniker Road E15 (534 8426; Rob McLoughlin)

Stage 1—beginners

Tuesdays 7-9.30—no fee

TUTOR: PADRAIG O CONCHUIR

## IRISH CULTURAL EVENING at Ashby Mill School, Prague Place, Bedford Terrace SW2

(737 1772 after 7 pm)

Every Wednesday evening 6-9 pm from 4 September

Irish Dancing—tutor: Nancy Bowler

Irish Drama—tutor: Rosemary Kennedy

Irish Music—tutor: Michael O'Connell

Irish Language (all stages)—tutor: Seamus Kenneally

Celtic Art and Design—tutor: Terry Bowler

ILEA fees (children under 18; retired and unemployed:

£1 any number of classes

## 4: IRISH DANCING CLASSES

### INNER LONDON EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Fees for ILEA classes: £24 a year (three terms)

(£10 a term; £4 summer term)

### CAMDEN ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)

Irish Centre, 52 Camden Square NW1 (485 0051)

CEILI DANCING—basic steps and figures of at least twenty dances.

Dancing is to live accordion music in a friendly and informed atmosphere

Thursdays 7.30-9.45 starting 26 September

TUTOR: EAMONN HERLIHY (272 5064)

### CHELSEA—WESTMINSTER ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)

Marlborough School, Sloane Avenue SW3 (584 0855/589 2569)

IRISH STEP DANCING—for those with some knowledge of the subject, i.e., non-beginners

Friday 7.30-9.30 starting 27 September

TUTOR: TERRY BOWLER

### HAMMERSMITH AND NORTH KENSINGTON ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)

Last Chance Centre, 87 Masbro Road W14 (748 3020 x 3760)

CEILI DANCING—part of regular Irish evening for adults and children.

Wednesdays 8-10 pm starting 25 September

TUTOR: JOAN BURKE

### HENRY THORNTON YOUTH CENTRE (ILEA)

Ashby Mill School, Prague Place, Bedford Terrace SW2

(737 1772 after 7 pm)

IRISH DANCING AND CEILI DANCING—adults and children

Thursdays 6.30-8.30 starting 5 September

TUTOR: TERRY BOWLER



**IRISH DANCING**—part of Irish Cultural evening  
Wednesdays 6-9 starting 4 September

TUTOR: NANCY BOWLER

**ADVANCED IRISH DANCING**—for 14-17 year olds (£1 course fee)  
Mondays 7-9 starting 2 September

TUTOR: TERRY BOWLER

Henry Thornton School, 45 Clapham Common South Side SW4  
(622 0135 after 6 pm)  
Saturdays 2.30-4.30 starting 7 September

TUTOR: TERRY BOWLER

**ISLINGTON ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)**  
Eden Grove branch, Ringeross School, Georges Road N7  
(607 4108)

**IRISH STEP DANCING**

Wednesdays 7-9 starting 25 September

TUTOR: MAIRE CLERKIN

#### OTHER AUTHORITIES AND ORGANISATIONS

##### LONDON BOROUGH OF HARINGEY

(in association with Haringey Irish Association)  
Tottenham Green Education Centre, Town Hall  
Approach Road N15

**IRISH STEP DANCING**

Mondays 7-9 starting mid-September

TUTOR: MAIRE CLERKIN

Stroud Green Junior School, Woodstock Road N4 (359 1024)

**IRISH STEP DANCING**

Thursdays 7-9 starting mid-September

TUTOR: MAIRE CLERKIN

##### STRATFORD IRISH COMMUNITY ASSOCIATION

Colegrave School, Heniker Road E15 (534 8426: Rob McLoughlin)

**IRISH STEP DANCING**

Mondays 7.30-9.30

##### HARROW IRISH IN BRITAIN REPRESENTATION GROUP

Railway Tavern, Wealdstone Bridge, Harrow, Middlesex

**IRISH CEILI DANCING**—adults

Wednesdays 9-10

TUTOR: DEIRDRE CARBERRY

(For details of starting date, fees etc., ring 427 6741)

## 5: IRISH TRADITIONAL MUSIC CLASSES

##### INNER LONDON EDUCATION AUTHORITY

Fees for ILEA classes: £24 a year (three terms)  
(£10 a term; £4 summer term)

##### HACKNEY ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)

Centreprise Community Centre, 136 Kingsland High Street E8  
(254 9632)

**IRISH TIN WHISTLE WORKSHOP**—for adults and children

Tuesdays 6.30-9 starting 24 September

TUTOR: MARY MOLLOY

##### HAMMERSMITH AND NORTH KENSINGTON ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)

Last Chance Centre, 87 Masbro Road W14 (748 3020 x 3760)

**IRISH TIN WHISTLE WORKSHOP**—for adults and children

Wednesdays 7-9 starting 25 September

TUTOR: MARY MOLLOY

##### ISLINGTON ADULT EDUCATION INSTITUTE (ILEA)

Caxton House, 129 St John's Way N19

**TRADITIONAL MUSIC**

Mondays 7.30-9.30 (further details 281 3225)

TUTOR: ELAINE JEFFRIES

##### WORKING MEN'S COLLEGE (for men and women)

Crowndale Road NW1 (387 2037)

**IRISH MUSIC**

This is a course of discussions and practical workshops for those interested in traditional Irish music. The aim will be to introduce students to a range of Irish music and, for those who bring instruments, to develop their interest and skills in playing. You are invited to bring fiddles, whistles, flutes, banjos, mandolins, pipes, accordions (not piano accordions). If you do not have an instrument, buy a whistle and bring it along to the first meeting.

Thursdays 7-9.30 for three terms starting 3 October. Fee £30 + £2.50 college fee (retired, unemployed and school students pay ¼ of course fee).

TUTOR: PAUL GALLAGHER

(The tutor can provide private tuition prior to the class (5.30-7: £40 for 10 half-hour lessons (no reductions))

##### HENRY THORNTON YOUTH CENTRE (ILEA)

Ashby Mill School, Prague Place, Bedford Terrace SW2  
**IRISH MUSIC**

Wednesdays 6-9 starting 4 September

TUTOR: MICHAEL O'CONNELL

#### OTHER AUTHORITIES AND ORGANISATIONS

##### LONDON BOROUGH OF BRENT

Kilburn Polytechnic, Harlesden Centre, Barratt's Green Road NW10  
(961 2962)

##### TRADITIONAL MUSIC WORKSHOP

Discussions and workshops for those interested in Irish folk music. Entrance is by interview on the first evening. Please bring your own instruments.

Tuesdays 6-10 pm for 3 terms starting 17 September

TUTOR: PAUL GALLAGHER

Aylestone Centre, Aylestone Avenue NW6 (451 0088/459 8199)

##### TRADITIONAL MUSIC WORKSHOP

A similar class to the one above

Thursdays 6-10 pm for 3 terms starting 19 September

TUTOR: BRENDAN MULKERE

##### EALING TRADITIONAL MUSIC SCHOOL

West Ealing Youth Centre, Churchfield Road, Mattock Lane W13

(579 5615: Denis Fitzgerald)

Saturday morning (9-12) tuition for children and parents.

Starting 21 September for 3 terms. Fee 50p per session.

##### LONDON BOROUGH OF HARINGEY

(in association with Haringey Irish Association)

Stroud Green Junior School, Woodstock Road N4

**IRISH MUSIC**

Wednesdays 7-9 starting mid-September

TUTOR: ELAINE JEFFRIES (272 0887)

#### AN OICHE GHAELACH

##### (IRISH EVENING)

Every Wednesday evening from 25 September  
at Last Chance Centre, Masbro Road W14  
(748 3020 x 3760 or 603 6102) For adults and children.

6.30- 8.30 Irish Language Workshop

7.00- 9.00 Irish Tin Whistle Workshop

8.00-10.00 Irish Ceili Dancing

8.30-10.00 Londerin Irish Drama Group

Organised by Hammersmith and North Kensington  
Adult Education Institute (ILEA)

#### LONDON IRISH WOMENS CENTRE

Cabin Y, 25 Horsell Road N5 (609 8916)

will be organising classes this year.

Details to be finalised.

The City Lit, Stukeley Street, WC2 is planning Irish  
Studies courses this autumn. Ring 242 9872 for details.



# HIGH TIDES AND TRAVELLING MEN

Michael Hannon

The apple trees were in full bloom, and somewhere in the shade of a sycamore a woodpigeon kept up his incessant call. It was a beautiful June morning in 1946. I was taking my first big step in life – I was going to England.

In my school days I had seen 'The Spalpiens' come and go and I wondered what England was like. Now I was to become a migratory worker; that's what it stated on my Travel Permit Card. 'Migratory Worker' was I suppose the English equivalent of 'Spalpien'. The original spalpiens were by now growing old. They had long since settled down and had sons and daughters who were to follow in their wake.

Rural Ireland had little or nothing to offer its sons and daughters in the postwar years. No great job opportunities were in the offing. Young men found seasonal work in turf-cutting schemes; options open to young girls were limited. Those who had not opted for the religious life or nursing went into service. Others emigrated, either to Britain or the United States.

Some young men joined the Army during the National Emergency. Others headed towards Kildare's Bog of Allen, where, as the wag put it... 'Some suffered for a time before going to England.' Luckily there was a lucrative labour market in Britain. Ireland had a new generation of young men and women to satisfy the needs of an undermanned country in the aftermath of war.

In less than ten years a million of Ireland's young men and women had settled in Britain. I was one of them. There are a million stories to be told, stories of success and failure, of heartbreak and hardship. Indeed it may be left to the second generation Irish to tell the story in full, after all THEY are a big part of it.

HERE, I open a tiny little window into an episode of my emigrant sojourn...

Even though the war had come to an end a year previous (1945), we Irish were still regarded as aliens. On arrival in Britain we had to furnish the police with a personal photograph and notify them of our place of residence. Furthermore, we were obliged to report every three months to the Aliens Department of the local police station.

There was also what was called 'A Control of Engagement Order' in operation. This prevented an individual from taking employment other than that for which he or she was granted an entry visa.

My own condition of entry at that particular period was for agricultural work only.

My employer was a well-to-do farmer, a man whom we seldom saw, and when we did it was only from a distance. It's doubtful if he knew half-a-dozen of his employees personally.

The Lincolnshire Fens were still dotted in those postwar years by 'Paddy Huts'. Many were still inhabited by Irishmen, both young and old. The older ones were 'The Hardliners', who had little or no time for the new arrivals. The elders kept their distance. They didn't like to talk too much about themselves or give any hint as to their county of origin.

Though they were awake at cock-crow on weekdays, Sunday didn't see them stir till opening time. We youngsters left them to their dreams as we got ready for mass. Spalding was the nearest town and this was five miles away. The tiny church was not able to accommodate all the Irish

on Sunday mornings. Many of us had to kneel on the pavement outside where we were given curious looks from passers-by.

Decimal coinage was in the future and wages were small by today's standards. The parish priest of Spalding's tiny church took exception to too many three penny bits being put into the collection box on Sundays. This he attributed to the Irish in the congregation. Many of us took exception to his remarks, myself included, but we held our peace. I have often thought since that winter must have been a lean period in Spalding's house of God when the Irish had all gone home.

Those were the days of bread rationing and clothing coupons, of powdered milk and powdered eggs. Days when German prisoners of war worked side-by-side with the neutral Irish... and Land Army girls picked tulips in the windswept Fens.

In 1948 I received permission from the Ministry of Labour to change to public works. This was to be the first of many contracts with 'George Wimpey'. The job entailed building a sea wall which would stretch from Holbeach Marsh to Kings Lynn. By doing so, many thousands of acres of marshland would be reclaimed from the sea. The majority of the workforce was Irish, which included foremen, gangers, digger-drivers, banksmen and labourers.

The great enemy was the tides. They had the habit of stealing silently up gaping creeks and taking you unawares. When this happened there was nothing one could do but retreat to the safety of the cab. Though digger-drivers were issued with 'a tide time table booklet', the nature of the work (strange as it may seem) was often the cause of not consulting it.

Night shift work was hazardous. The shift started at 7 p.m. and ended at 7 a.m. the following morning. It was an eerie feeling to be abroad at an unearthly hour. In the cold light of day the tower of 'The Boston Stump' (St Bardolph's Church) could be seen as it rose above the Boston skyline. The wind from the Wash was bitter, especially during the spring months. It could penetrate even the most durable donkey jacket, leaving one to feel as though one was in shirt-sleeves.

Men from every Irish county were here. Only close friends addressed each other by their first names. Usually it was – 'How's it going, Donegal?' or 'How's she cuttin', Galway?' or 'Good ony ya, Tyrone.' It must have sounded like some secret code to the locals.

Some of the Lincolnshire folk didn't particularly like the Irish. This dislike was not because of people being employed on farms and other local projects. It had its roots, I believe, in the War of Independence or 'The Black and Tan War', whichever you like to call it. It's reputed that the Lincolnshire Regiment suffered the heaviest casualties of any British regiment at that time. It was not uncommon to see 'NO IRISH SERVED HERE' signs displayed in public houses even in the years immediately after the war. I can remember seeing such a sign hanging on an inner door of a pub situated close to 'The Boston Stump' back in 1948. The Race Relations Act was still some way off.

Working on the edge of the Wash was a hazardous task. Men were often at the mercy of the elements. In summer the scorching sun drained the energy from men's bones. In winter the scorching wind was just as unkind. There was no



shelter to be found in the marsh. It was a barren place bereft of trees and shrubs. Only the wild geese and the grouse revelled in the harshness of this bleak place. On summer nights the waters of the Wash gently lapped against the newly-built bank which the Irish were steadily stretching towards Kings Lynn.

The winter and spring tides desperately tried to tear apart what had already been accomplished. There were times too when the succeeded in breaching the bank, toppling the giant earth-moving machines into creeks as if they were Dinky toys. On approaching the marsh at high tide, eyes strained to count the jibs reared against the skyline.

One morning 'Darkie' Sweeney from Donegal jumped from the transport van uttering a cry of woe. Throwing his hands in the air, he looked towards where the dragline should have been.

'Aye, she's gone, she's gone,' he cried. 'It must have been a brave wee wave that took her.'

He didn't fear for his mates on night shift. He knew they would be in the cabin long since, but the 33 R.B. mechanical digger was lying on its side in the grave it had already dug for itself.

There was no such thing as heroic captains going down with their ships here. This was another job of journey work as it was for most of us. In time we would move on, leaving thousands of acres of reclaimed land to already rich Fensland farmers. We wouldn't become affluent because of our labours, but we would carry away memories of good companionship and great conversation.

Yes; they came from Ireland's four green fields to work in this desolate place. Only God knows where any of them are today.

Looking back to 1948, I will always think of it as the year of 'High Tides and Travelling Men'.

(Michael Hannon has written many short stories and articles, and now lives in Nottingham.)

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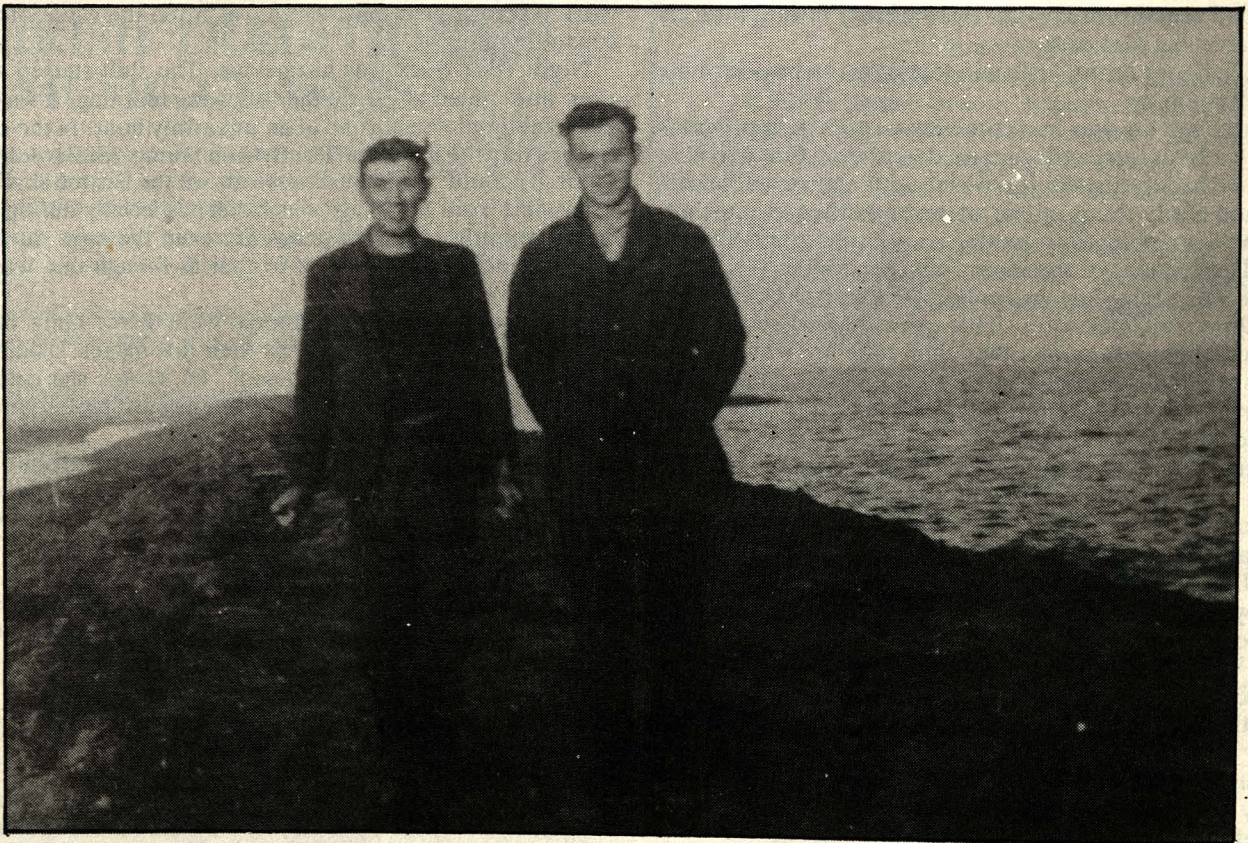
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**Charlie Sweeney (left) from Donegal and the author on the edge of the Wash, 1948.**



# LIVERPOOL AND THE IRISH FAMINE 1845–1985

Micheál Ó Riabhaigh

Let me say from the outset that I do not believe in any big conspiracy theory of racism. I do believe however that this city and this county is racist through and through. It never has been nor could be a "consensus" based society. And the foundation of its conflicts is racial distrust and hatred.

There are two forms of Merseyside racism: colour racism and sectarian racism. Both are now part and parcel of the bricks and mortar of the county. Colour racism has recently become a favoured subject of professional social analysts. Sectarian racism is forgotten about. A recent and otherwise useful study of Liverpool political history (P. J. Waller—*Democracy & Sectarianism: a history of Liverpool 1869–1939*) concluded that sectarianism died in 1939. I was born in 1942 and have lived with an increasing awareness of sectarian racism. It is not as easy to spot because it is not related to colour. It is real nonetheless and has distorted and crushed the life chances of many thousands of Merseyside people.

Sectarianism racism took root in Liverpool with the very beginnings of the industrial revolution. The fundamental relationship of capitalism between owners of the means of production (commerce, ship yards, industry) and the rest (wage/salaried workers) forced the way we can now get a living if unsupported by State benefit. 19th century Liverpool was a big labour exchange. Different groups of immigrants competed for jobs. They had no roots here apart from the chance of a wage. From Wales, Lancashire, Cheshire, Scotland and Ireland, some groups were more distinctive than others. The Irish were especially marked. Some by an extreme level of social deprivation, some by language, and most by the effects of anti-Irish, anti-Catholic prejudice. The facts that Irish Nationalism had begun to have political clout on mainland Britain, and that Catholic church management was so efficient, kept Irish immigrants as a distinct, if despised, group within Merseyside's working class. Because those mid-19th century years were fundamental in shaping capitalist Britain, it would be remarkable indeed if so distinctive an element of working class life were to have disappeared. Capitalism encourages the competitive spirit: it would, surely, have fostered the rivalry of racial and sectarian groups . . . and it did.

I believe the traces can be clearly seen today as one important feature of Merseyside life. That is especially true of Knowsley.

One way of seeing the connection between the past and present of Merseyside sectarianism is to look at where the more socially deprived sections of the immigrant Irish working class were moved. As the Catholic Church was crucial in keeping the people's identity, and as that church has been well-organised, the people's march to "Knowhere" can be traced fairly easily. Where the people went, church and school (and more recently social club) followed—sometimes even preceded. Church marriage laws and a separate system of primary, secondary and higher education did the rest. With the people, moved the prejudices against them; and along too went bad conditions (social and economic). By reaction, the people kept up defensive verbal aggression and a passive resistance to the institutions that carried out the social policy. The church has gradually lost its populist leadership; only a tiny minority of Merseyside socialists think Irish nationalism is an important issue. To that extent the aggression and resistance have lost their immediate national social base. They endure nevertheless in the style of language and life of a majority of the people. They are rational because the immediate prejudices to which they were the answer have been made permanent in the social and economic conditions of our lives.

Over the years I have noted many examples of Merseyside's sectarian racism. I was born in Norris Green. In the 1930's the University's School of Social Science produced a pamphlet about housing on that estate. It advised the corporation to regulate tenancies so as to have three non-catholic to every catholic family. It was seen as undesirable that catholics be allowed to outnumber the rest—as was inevitable by catholic social policy: against the contraceptive practices of the day. Many years later, in the 1970's a priest wanted me to go there as a "community worker". He wanted to see a change in the influence of the local church: "It's still being run like an Irish village", he said disparagingly.

In August 1963 Professor Mays published the results of "research" on the then comparatively "New Town" of Kirkby. His article was optimistic. The basis of his optimism was the stabilising effect of the social relations between priests and a high proportion of the New Town's people. The fact that Kirkby was then notorious for the media image of the tough criminal area was the reason for the Professor's insistence that we aren't all bad! Since 1963 however, Kirkby has been grafted onto other estates to become Knowsley. If the sectarian racism has any fruit, it is alive and growing here. I do not share the Professor's optimism; for I do not see how the lives of the people can be changed until the basic injustice has been overturned. But I do agree with the professor that a major part of the social "problem" and its resolution is to do with the social fact that here we have the enduring results of a confrontation between immigrants that have not yet found a home and the social institutions which carry the fear and prejudice of the British State.

Nearer home to social work, the prejudice is reflected in two articles in a professional journal. One compared Scottish and Welsh sports fans: the former were soccer supporters, the latter of Rugby Union. Besides the obvious "status" difference between the two games, the author described the Scottish supporters in terms which would have rightly met with demands for their retraction had the supporters been black. A second article related that, of course, many of the drunks in court had Irish names. Such heavily racist humour can prejudice our assessment of a client. A colleague wrote off, in advance, one of my clients from a particular tenement complex in South Liverpool. "I see you got Mac X from . . .!" he said. "No good that place"! "Full of your bomb throwers!" For many British people our Irish link, even by family name, spells trouble, social and domestic, and personal irresponsibility. The schools of social work studies may trendily dismiss Keith Joseph's notorious "cycle of deprivation" speech. Exception, however, is made in practice of the family of Brian Anthony Murphy. What worries me, even as I write, is that some of you will find this funny—naturally!

It is an observable statistical fact that welfare clients in particular areas of Merseyside do reflect a high proportion of working-class people with an "Irish" family link. There is a connection in parts of Merseyside between crime and "Irish" descent. In social work in such areas, we are bound to come across a high proportion of people with defensive truculent attitudes, the product of the immigrant Irish working-class tradition. In meeting such clients I maintain that their stance and attitudes are *still* justified. The sectarian racism of the mid-19th century has become institutionalised and made "objective" in the very fabric and structure of Merseyside social and economic life. Quite a different response is called for when anger and aggression are justified than when they are not. In counselling/casework, in group training and neighbourhood contacts, it has to be an essential part of social work practice to



reveal the rational basis of the anger and frustration of the "communities" from which our clients come. For only then can the other "law and order" matters be seen in a real context: male aggression, selfish individualism, a ruthless imitation of capitalist exploitation, are common to all working-class situations in Britain. They need to be tackled; they can be controlled. How to do it will not be seen in the social policy blueprints of the British liberal democratic State. It will only be done when the people are given back their particular and special dignity. It will only come about when the root original injustice against the immigrant is cut out. This last point takes us out of social work terms of reference. It is worth raising the question as to how social work would continue to work effectively in such a change of scene. My aim in this brief article was however to uncover the too long forgotten spectre of sectarian racism. If it provokes you to reflect and reply—I've achieved what I set out to do. The "consensus" model of society however never has and never could work on Merseyside. Perhaps what I have written may give one significant reason why I am convinced that is so.

## TOUJOURS LA FAUSSE POLITESSE Pádraig Ó Conchúir

Various reasons can be ascribed to the disappearance of Irish. Once Irish speakers had become the minority and monoglot Irish speakers a rarity the position was set for Common Politeness to become one of the staunchest allies of the intrusive colonial language. This mechanism is very familiar. Any group of, say, three people, speaking Irish will as likely as not be joined by a fourth who speaks English. Elementary courtesy ordains that in deference to the newcomer the conversation will switch to English. As the proportion of Irish speakers gradually dwindled the effect of the "politeness factor" steadily snowballed. None of us like to be deliberately rude to people who are not hostile towards us. More and more Irish becomes a medium for consenting adults behind closed doors. At any Irish Conference the process will be exemplified. It can be taken for granted that there will be a general goodwill or at worst indifference towards the language. Nevertheless, as the majority attending will not be able to speak Irish with any degree of fluency the medium of the proceedings will inevitably be English.

Regardless of any relative success in the teaching of Irish the Politeness factor will continue to militate against the use of Irish even if there is a marked increase in the number of serious learners. Language being intrinsically a social phenomenon it is impractical to try to achieve fluency in a language by speaking to oneself. The difficulty of using Irish as a medium of social intercourse in itself produces yet a further adverse element: the Laziness Factor. There being so few opportunities for sustained conversation or discussion in Irish one consequence is that when such an opportunity does arise it is so novel that the speakers who rarely comment on anything more weighty than the weather in Irish are likely to find it such an effort to persevere in this unaccustomed use of Irish that tiredness conduces towards a reversion to English.

As a means of coming to grips with this apparently intractable difficulty it seems that a new code of good manners should be agreed. This could be to the effect that:

- It is polite to speak Irish;
- For those with little or no Irish it is no real hardship to hear it spoken for a few minutes;
- It is impolite to introduce English into an Irish-speaking group;
- A few phrases could be learned to discourage a group one has joined from switching to English "Lean libh i nGaeilge".

Because of the intrinsically social nature of language every effort should be made to provide venues, outside the classroom, where Irish is the accepted medium. Pending such ambitious ventures as English Gaelteachtaí or weekend Irish courses it should be possible to make a modest start, perhaps a visit to someone's house on one regular night of the week. With the acquiescence of the sympathetic manager of an Irish Club or pub there could be an accepted convention that on a particular night of the week a certain area is Irish speaking.

Another impediment to the use of Irish is the disinclination to use whatever small measure of Irish that has been learned for fear of making a mistake. Here the adage: "Is fear Gaeilge Bhriste ná Béarla Cliste" should be paramount, so that however faulty it might be the learner should be encouraged to say something. Pedantry has been another decidedly inhibitory factor so there could well be a convention not to correct anyone else's Irish unless such correction has been specifically requested.

With those able to speak Irish fluently being a decided minority there is danger of a harmful situation developing in which many people regard Irish as "Their Language". On the contrary it is necessary to insist that Irish is not the property of any group. If it is to survive and with it our own identity as a distinctive people it requires support by all of us. Ideally, that should be our active support expressed by speaking Irish; if not it needs at least our moral support by encouraging others to speak what is OUR not THEIR Language. Níl neart go cur le chéile!

(Pádraig Ó Conchúir is a member of Conradh na Gaeilge and is an Irish language teacher in East London).



(From 'Fortnight', N. Ireland's independent review: £7 subscription for 10 issues).



# DIVIDED NATION: UNDIVIDED HOUSE

## Labour and Tory government policy on Northern Ireland

Michael Patrick O'Brien

In October 1979 Humphrey Atkins, the Tory Secretary of State for Northern Ireland of the time, announced to an undivided Commons that 'responsibility for law and order in the Province remains the government's overriding priority'. This statement came only days after glimpses were shown of the minister making jovial exchanges with Rev Ian Paisley on the national news broadcasts. The content of this statement, of course, tells us nothing that is new.

This article, which summarises a research report I carried out last year, attempts to illustrate what would appear to be considered as the most important and immediate issues concerning Northern Ireland for the elected representatives of Britain in the House of Commons. The report was based on a content analysis of Hansard Parliamentary Debates for the period encompassing both Labour's reign of 1974-'79, and the Tories' first term in office, 1979-'83. The analysis included debates, in the form of questions, answers and ministerial statements and the appropriation accounts, illustrating the relative distribution of resources as a result of the policies implemented. The evidence suggested the priority attached to law and order, by both parties, occurs at the expense of other important issues concerning the economy, social/welfare and constitutional issues.

Sixty years after the Irish Free State government confirmed the border as laid down in the 1920 Act, the conflict continues, largely in the form of paramilitary activities or random sectarian and reprisal killings. The state, the central institution of capitalist society, is seen to view the problems in a contradictory way. On the one hand, the problems are not viewed as an anti-imperialist struggle (or defence/retaliation in the case of Loyalist activity), but instead it is seen as sporadic collection of civil disturbances, violent criminal acts defying the laws of the land. On the other hand, certain police and army powers, the court system, prisons and interrogation centres and many other areas pertaining to law and order are peculiar only to Northern Ireland and do not operate in mainland Britain. Inhumane treatment and humiliating gun-point checks are protected behind the tyranny of the 'restoration of normality' ethic.

As Morgan and Purdie point out, in 'Divided Nation, Divided Class', violence is only one strand of the conflict. The North's 'repressive power apparatuses' have changed very little despite the different systems of government that have prevailed. The pre-1972 Stormont parliament that existed for a half-century with its Unionist majority rarely opposed anything originating from Westminster, although this relationship changed following the suspension of Stormont and the transfer of law and order powers to Westminster in 1972. Subsequent initiatives such as the 1973 Assembly with proportional representation, the settling up of the Executive, and the Constitutional Convention of 1975, fell through as they were being planned. When the Tories came to power in 1979, utterances of 'rolling devolution' were made with a gradual extension of powers for a Northern Irish Assembly. It is too early to fully discuss the

outcome of such proposals, though the likelihood remains that demands of the dominant majority will be more sympathetically received is to be expected.

Below is a sample of the figures recorded in the study of Hansard. In order to gain a greater degree of objectivity and minimise selectionism and bias, every discussion in the House about Northern Ireland was scrutinised for its subject-matter and recorded in the coding categories constructed. The categories are based on four major policy issues which I would argue are both theoretically and empirically important. Obviously, the formation of recording units and underlying assumptions will, to a certain extent, determine the findings. The figures shown below are totals, although they were broken down into subdivisions.

	Discussions of Northern Ireland in the House of Commons			
	Total no. of Questions, Written and Oral Answers		Official Ministerial Statements Issued	
	Lab (74-79)	Tory (79-83)	Lab (74-79)	Tory (79-83)
Law and Order	1,253	1,009	23	9
Social/Welfare	721	806	1	1
Economic	385	641	3	2
Constitutional	268	341	5	5

Overall, prisoners and the prison system were afforded more attention than any other 'law and order' issue, particularly in Thatcher's first term of 1979-83, when the hunger strikes gave us a stark illustration of the extent of bi-lateralism in Westminster. The two other major areas of discussion were paramilitary activities and use/size of the police, although these areas largely dominated Labour's term of office. One could argue these figures are a mere reflection of incidents that may have occurred in Ulster in that period, and it would be fair to say certain paramilitary groups were more active in the mid to late 1970s than in the 1980s. Evidently, MPs pay more attention to subjects like the police, the army, 'terrorists' and prisons than the Prevention of Terrorism Act, the refusal of 'Special Category' status and other controversial pieces of legislation.

Both parties appeared to be concerned about similar social/welfare issues such as education, housing development, rent and rates and health services, although throughout the research it appeared Labour displayed a pervasive concern for housing, probably in the light of the 1975 Porter Report which outlined serious problems in Ulster's housing sector. Agriculture consistently occupied the top priority in talks concerning the Northern Irish economy, whereas unemployment became an increasingly significant subject, with only 15 discussions from 1974-79, rising to 132 under Thatcher's government, with the advent of monetarist policies, the recession biting deeper and areas like Derry City where nearly one in three males were out of work at the start of the 1980s. However, constitutional issues were the most infrequent subject areas for dialogue, although there was a greater shift in emphasis in the nature of constitutional issues than of any other category. Between 1974-79 the formation of the Executive gave the basis for much discussion, as did the impact of the European Community. Tories, on the other hand, answered 70



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questions about British presence and policy in Ulster, and 65 questions concerning talks with the Republic.

In analysing ministerial statements one can recognise obvious similarities they bear with discussions in the House of Commons. Law and order is again the dominant consideration of ministers, for example, there were 23 statements largely about sectarian violence in Labour's term of office, while Tory ministers spoke mainly of prison activity, 'dirty' protests, hunger strikes and escapes. A few short extracts are given below:

'I have made it clear the basis of government policy, namely that we are seeking a genuine and sustained cessation of violence.' (Merlyn Rees, February 11 1975.)

'Without a solution of the formidable security problems, the necessary condition will not exist for constitutional advance and reconciliation.' (Harold Wilson, PM, January 12 1976.)

'The right response is to work calmly, but firmly, under the law and under the guidance of the security forces for the defeat of terrorism.' (Jim Prior, November 16 1981.)

The statements were often requested by a prominent leader of the opposition and, on the whole, were detailed accounts of a violent incident that occurred a day or two before, this would normally be concluded with a brief reiteration of government policy. This implies a situation where a random violent act warrants a random statement. Such statements never appeared to prepare or lay 'foundations' for anything, but were expressions of shock and disgust. This is sufficiently illustrated by the confused, clumsy statement of Michael Alison (Tory Minister of State for the NI Office) in April 1980:

'It is not fair to say that we do not make statements except on odd occasions when individual lives are lost. We made a statement today because of the exceptional character of the potential threat. We make statements frequently when individual lives are lost.'

The fact that statements always follow an incident, alone, is a pure illustration of the 'reactionary' stance adopted by successive British governments. From each party came discussions of prison escapes or bombings, but what about stimulation of the economy? What about verbal statements for housing allocation, assurances of redevelopment of run-down social amenities? Clearly, these omissions and the lack of informative dialogue reflect the lack of action, but most of all, a lack of true initiative and a failure to 'take the bull by the horns'.

The implications of the government's priorities in Northern Ireland are clear enough for the Irish people. Stagnation of the economy and social services force emigration, in particular, of unmarried people with slightly greater chances of mobility. For the Irish in Britain this often negate possibilities for just a short-term stay on the mainland. Furthermore, it is evident the state's emphasis on law and order in Ulster can lead, as it has done in the past, to a criminalisation of certain sections of the Irish population in England. More than a handful have been subject to house checks, surveillance or questioning in the name of the PTA. These factors, aided by media amplification, contribute to and perpetuate one of the more subtle forms of racism encountered in Britain today, placing restrictions on the social mobility of the Irish on the mainland and reinforcing their concentration of Irish communities in Britain's towns and cities.

In 1975 the British (Labour) government adopted a new position of 'Ulsterisation, Criminalisation and Normalisation'. It was a policy aimed at cleaning up the surface blemishes on Ulster's face and to return to 'normal' as soon as possible through tougher security measures and an intention to gradually return some form of power. Yet overall it

would seem as if the state approaches the problem from a punitive angle, with disregard for the unemployed, those living in housing conditions unseen in mainland Britain, and a divided community that is governed politically and militarily from Westminster.

It could be questioned as to whether such an assertion can be inferred from an analysis of Hansard, and to the extent day to day discussions in the House of Commons are a measure of government policy. At the outset of the original research project, the intention was not a once-and-for-all investigation of policy, but more a look into the amount of time MPs spent on different issues, i.e. the number of questions, answers, statements and debates given over to these issues. From this, inferences were made as to the outlines of policies, for it would appear inevitable that politicians will spend more time debating issues which they feel are of importance. It must be conceded that in measuring the frequency of occurrence, it is a difficult task to prove how effective an index this is in studying the importance of an item. The evidence, however, overwhelmingly illustrates law and order is viewed, by both parties, as the most immediate and important priority in Northern Ireland. Underlying my interpretations is the conclusion that the state has not responded to the social, economic and political needs of the North and its people, and that greater success would be achieved, at least in the short term, by greater attention being paid to those needs.

(This article is based on research carried out as part of a sociology degree at the Polytechnic of North London.)

## BOOKS

### RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS



Recently arrived Irish-interest books on the "Irish Studies in Britain" desk include:

**An Irish Eye (Brandon Books £4.95 paperback) by Anthony Cronin.** A compendium of topical pieces first written for the author's "Viewpoint" column in the *Irish Times*. Cronin ranges far and wide in this book from the origins of republicanism to the significance of modern feminism; from Robert Emmet to Lord Mountbatten. The general theme, however, is the meaning of being Irish.

**Rich and Rare (Ward River Press £6.95 paperback) by Sean McMahon.** An excellent anthology of Irish lyric and narrative poetry, pieces or oratory, epigrams, proverbs and party songs including Boolavogue, Roddy McCorley, Slievenamon, She Moved Through the Fair, A Nation Once Again, The Sash and the Orange Lily-O as well as Pearse's oration at the graveside of O'Donovan Rossa, Emmet's Speech from the Dock plus the text of the 1916 Proclamation and the 1912 Solemn League and Covenant.

**The World of the Irish Wonder Tale—an introduction to the study of fairy tales (University of Toronto Press £9.50 paperback) by Elliott B. Gose Jr.** It is only over the past hundred years that Irish folk stories have been written down. The author briefly tells eleven of these and analyses them from a number of approaches including psychological and anthropological. He also presents the tales as literature illuminating their beautifully articulated plots, archetypal characters and profound themes and compares their characteristics with other Celtic, Egyptian and North American Indian myths.



**Pure Murder: Drug Abuse in Ireland (£2.95 paperback); If You Can Talk, You Can Write (£2.00 paperback); and the Irish Feminist Review (£3.95 paperback)** are three recent publications from the **Womens Community Press, Dublin**.

The first is written by those with immediate experience of drug abuse in Ireland; users, ex-users, families and friends and those working to help them. The second book is the result of the efforts of a women's writing group in Kilbarrack, North Dublin to record their views of everyday life through their short stories, poems and articles.

The **Irish Feminist Review** covers issues and events relevant to and written by women from all over Ireland. Articles include items on post-referendum Ireland, prisons, the peace movement and women and work.

**No Mate for the Magpie by Frances Molloy (Virago £3.50 paperback)**. Written in Derry dialect this is the story of Ann McGlone, a Catholic growing up in Northern Ireland in the fifties and sixties, from being a factory machinist in Derry to entering a convent to becoming a bacon slicer in Belfast, to Dublin until deciding to leave Ireland for somewhere where "life resembled life". This has been described as a first novel in the finest tragicomic tradition belonging in the company of Flann O'Brien and Stevie Smith.

**Wilson Place by Brendan O'Byrne (Ward River Press £5.50 paperback)**. In his first novel, the author, now in his mid-seventies, paints a wonderfully vivid and minutely detailed

picture of Dublin in the early 1920s, the Dublin in which the author himself grew up. The poverty of working-class families, the political turbulence of the time and the colourful religious and social events are all seen through the eyes of a young boy.

**Paddy's Lament: Ireland 1846-1847—Prelude to Hatred (Ward River Press £4.95 paperback)** by Thomas Gallagher. Making extensive use of contemporary records and eye-witness reports, the author has recreated the experiences of a group of Irish who sought refuge in emigration but brought with them a deep animosity and hostility towards Britain which persists in Irish America to the present day.

**Night Shift (Brandon Books £3.95 paperback)** by Dermot Bolger. This is the first novel by one of Ireland's leading younger poets. It explores the consciousness of a young man coming to terms with the realities of modern, urban Ireland.

**The Young Stamp Collectors (Portmoon Press £12.50 hardback)** by Rosamund Praeger. This is based on a recently discovered manuscript by the Ulster sculptress who lived from 1867 to 1954. It was written and illustrated early this century and although it is a children's book its value is that it is an extremely evocative period piece highlighting the mores and conventions of Edwardian middle-class Ulster.

**Irish Political Documents 1916-1949** edited by Arthur Mitchell and Pádraigh Ó Snodaigh (Irish Academic Press). 146 documents covering the period from the Easter Rising to the formal declaration of the Irish Republic in 1949.

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## TEACHING MATERIALS

### Teaching Community Relations

*Teaching Community Relations* is a source book published by the Community Information Service, 2 Annadale Avenue, Belfast 7. It is intended primarily for teachers in Northern Ireland but should prove immensely useful to teachers in Britain thinking of introducing any aspect of Irish history, politics or current affairs into their curriculum. It reviews existing literature, examines projects previously undertaken, discusses the teaching of Irish History and looks at issues such as community relations, community service, peace and international understanding. The final chapter lists practical resources, contacts and facilities available. It is available for £3 (plus 50p p & p) from the address above.

★★★★★

### Brighton Notes

*Ireland: Whose Problem* is a set of teaching notes supplied to us by Brian Parsons of the Battersea and Wandsworth Irish Committee who tells us that they have been produced by one of his colleagues teaching in Brighton. Through the use of Victorian and contemporary cartoons and quotes plus questionnaires they provide useful material on aspects of Anglo-Irish History. A second part dealing with the present situation in Northern Ireland is expected shortly. Contact Simon on Brighton (0273) 691095 for further details.

★★★★★

### ILEA Multi-Ethnic Education Review

The Winter/Spring 1985 issue (Vol 4 No. 1) of Multi-Ethnic Education Review contains an eight-page pull-out supplement on resources for teaching Irish studies and compiled by Emma Thornton. It also contains the article "Mad Micks and Englishmen" by Brian Parsons, as well as articles on black under-fives, views on education by young Turkish women and one on education and traveller children.

Copies of the Review can be obtained at a cost of £1 each from ILEA Learning Resources Branch, Order Processing Department, 4th Floor, Centre for Learning Resources, 275 Kennington Lane, London SE11 5QZ.

★★★★★

### Irish History Tapes in Liverpool

Dr. John McGurk, Head of History at Liverpool Institute of Higher Education tells us that he has produced four talks on historical perspectives on Ireland's past for use in General Studies in sixth forms and that these are available in the form of two cassettes from Sound Education, 53 Garston Old Road, Liverpool L19 9AD.

Dr. McGurk also teaches an Irish option on the Anglo-Elizabethan period from which students on the BA General Degree course produce long essays on themes, incidents and personalities concerned in the Elizabethan and Jacobean conquest and colonisation of Ireland. A second option "The Celtic World" is also taught but despite both options proving popular and attractive to students Dr. McGurk believes these to be the only Irish Studies courses on offer in Liverpool. Obviously a case for the newly-formed Merseyside Irish Studies Enterprise (MISE!) (See article elsewhere in this issue.)

## Irish Commission for Culture and Education, London

*The ICCEL was one of the four commissions set up as a result of the GLC Irish Conference in 1983. We asked them to provide an outline of their philosophy and objectives.*

### Objectives

- (a) to research, identify and articulate the special needs of the Irish in London in the areas of culture and education.
- (b) to develop an anti-racist programme that will reflect the history and heritage of the Irish.
- (c) to sponsor an annual festival of Irish culture in London as well as participate in other multi-cultural events in the capital.

The Irish community in London make up an estimated one sixth of the population (an accurate figure is not available because the 1981 census does not indicate those of Irish descent), and although it is the longest established ethnic group in the city, no specific provision exists for the expression of the rich cultural heritage of Ireland in an official capacity. What exists, is a diversity of volunteer community based initiatives scattered all over London. The funding of ICCEL, an amalgamation of these groups, will consolidate work already being done and present it on a London-wide scale. ICCEL now employs two full-time workers – a Co-ordinator and Research Officer, funded by the GLC – to pursue the two related areas of culture and education.

In Britain as a whole the Irish, Britain's largest ethnic minority, have never enjoyed the dignity and status of equality. This is the result of the racist treatment of the Irish past and present (for example the established Irish 'joke'). By challenging racist images and stereotypes, ICCEL will be exposing the prejudices against the Irish – prejudices which are perpetuated by the educational system and in the media.

Each fail to represent the centuries' long contribution of the Irish to European history and culture.

The Irish Commission for Culture and Education was set up in February 1984 by twenty-seven Irish organisations to serve the whole of the GLC area. Two of these organisations, Comhaltas Ceoltoiri na h'Eireann (Irish Music Association) and the Gaelic Athletic Association, have been in existence for many years. Individual organisations in the past have organised concerts throughout London featuring Irish music, songs and dance; and have participated in local multi-cultural events.

ICCEL is the only organisation of its kind in London. It is recognised by the Irish Community because its constituent members are delegates from that community, representing a broad cross-section of Irish cultural activities. Furthermore, the GLC's 'policy Report on the Irish Community' supports all the educational and cultural proposals of the Commission.

It is common knowledge that any person content in the knowledge of his/her identity, history and heritage is capable of making a far greater contribution – reflecting the emotional and artistic as well as the rational/scientific – to the benefit of the whole society.

The Irish in Britain have been denied this knowledge through the established information agencies such as schools, colleges and the media. Through its educational and cultural programmes the Commission aims to provide this knowledge.



These will be anti-racist programmes committed to attacking degrading stereotypes, and designed to present a positive image of the Irish identity with special reference to its ancient language and culture.

Curriculum development will be an important part of ICCEL's involvement at school level, where there is a clear lack of text book and resource material for teachers wishing to introduce relevant and meaningful perspectives on Ireland.

With regard to Higher Education, the Commission has taken on the task of developing and providing a course on Irish Studies.

These programmes will not only seek to cover the gap in the knowledge of Irish people, but also the British, and other ethnic minorities who are becoming increasingly aware of Ireland and the Irish.

At present, Irish youth are confronted by two contradictory forces: the family and the Irish community who emphasise the Irish tradition; and the schools which completely ignore the issues regarding this separateness, often presenting the positive contributions under the all-encompassing term of 'British'.

The few references made to the Irish often focus upon the potato famine, and the chaotic nature of the Irish feudal system during the eighteenth century.

Coupled with this dearth of information on Ireland and the Irish heritage in schools, is the strong impact in the wider society, of the tragic events in Northern Ireland. This impact is felt by all – Irish and non-Irish.

Furthermore, the media coverage of these events and the persistent refusal of successive British Governments to see this tragedy in the context of the whole of Ireland and to make a real political initiative, involving the Irish Government, sustains Irish peoples conviction that a colonialist/racist policy still exists at the highest level of British Government towards Ireland. This racist attitude and practice percolates right through the establishment and affects the way ordinary British people – and other ethnic minorities view the Irish.

More importantly, all of the aforementioned put together have an adverse effect on the lives of Irish people in Britain by reinforcing the racist stereotype of the Irish as incompetent/incapable of dealing with their own affairs.

The Commission's cultural programme will give much needed expression to the richness and diversity of traditional and contemporary cultural activities.

Within the traditional programme will be included: music; song; dance; Irish language; literature – Irish and Anglo-Irish; Gaelic games – hurling, football, camogie, handball (note – Gaelic games are the oldest in Europe); Irish cooking.

Contemporary forms include: folk ballet; Irish film and video projects with particular reference to the Irish experience in London; fine arts; photography; literature and drama.

The Commission intends to develop and promote classes in all of the above, and to sponsor a positive sense of Irishness through the media of festivals, multi-cultural events and general community activities.

Each year the Commission will help organise and present a Festival of Irish Culture in London. A modest programme is planned for Spring '86.

Activities of this nature will have a threefold effect.

Firstly, the Irish will again have a consciousness of their own identity; secondly, the young will learn to appreciate the positive aspects of being Irish; thirdly, it will raise the awareness of Londoners as a whole as to the reality of the Irish identity.

ICCEL, through its cultural programmes, will not only enrich the cultural life of Londoners but, more import-

antly, will provide the younger generation in the Irish community with a positive self-identity.

At present, the most popular images of the Irish are determined by the often derogatory representations in the media. In escaping from these stereotypes, the young at the same time alienate themselves from their families and the community. Neither are they totally accepted by the wider community, whose attitudes are shaped by these very stereotypes that the young are escaping.

Such programmes will also benefit the older members of the community by giving them an active place in the city's cultural life – not a displaced group dependent on nostalgic reference to past life in Ireland.

ICCEL's programmes, obviously, are not solely for the benefit of the Irish community, but will also extend and develop the wider community's knowledge and understanding of the Irish and so enhance the cosmopolitan character of London.

Most importantly, they will challenge the ignorance at the root of all prejudice and discrimination.

ICCEL will make developing links with London's other ethnic minorities a priority of its work, with a view to mutual understanding and respect.

ICCEL can be contacted at Brent Irish Centre, 76–82 Salusbury Road, London NW6 (Tel. 01 624 3158).

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