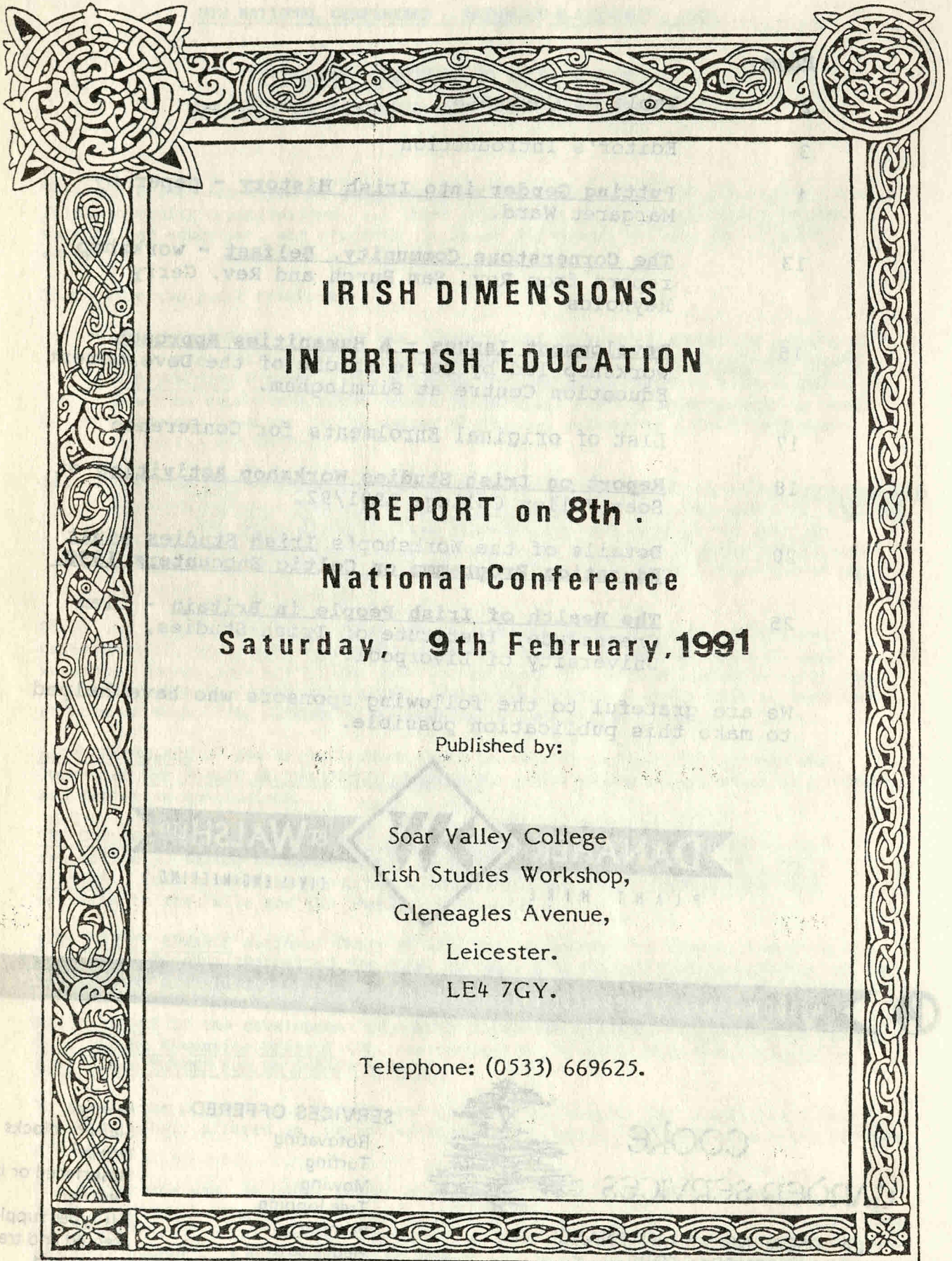


**IRISH DIMENSIONS
IN BRITISH EDUCATION**

**REPORT on 8th .
National Conference
Saturday, 9th February, 1991**

Soar Valley College
Irish Studies Workshop





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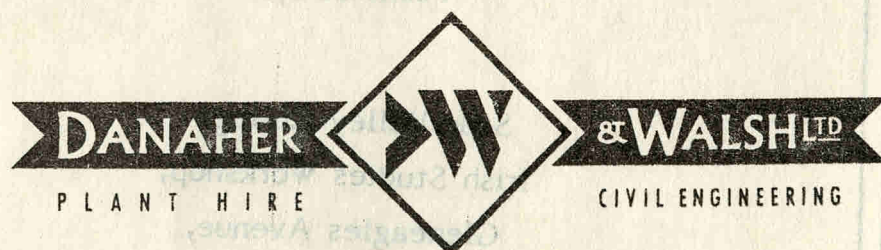
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IRISH DIMENSIONS IN BRITISH EDUCATION8TH NATIONAL CONFERENCE - SATURDAY 9 FEBRUARY, 1991"CULTURAL TRADITIONS IN IRISH HISTORY"THE NATIONAL CURRICULUM DEBATE AND THE GENDER FACTOR

This conference was aimed at teachers, parents, first and second generation Irish, Irish community organisations, all those interested in the relationship between culture and education, and students in upper secondary, tertiary and community education.

There were two guest speakers:

- i) JONATHAN BARDON - Head of the Academic and continuing Education Department of Belfast College of Business Studies who talked on "CULTURAL TRADITIONS AND TEACHING HISTORY: THE NORTHERN IRELAND EXPERIENCE". - with thoughts on how that experience might relate to National Curriculum proposals in Great Britain. Jonathan is the author of the now celebrated illustrated books on Dublin and Belfast.
- ii) MARGARET WARD - the author of the highly regarded volume entitled "Unmanageable Revolutionaries - Women and Irish Nationalism" spoke on the topic of "PUTTING GENDER INTO IRISH HISTORY". She assessed the achievements of feminist historians and discussed the question of whether Irish History sufficiently integrates feminist insights in order to give a balanced reflection of men and women's experiences.

There was to be a wide range of Workshops covering many aspects of development, unfortunately, while some speakers managed to travel from Belfast by air, some workshop leaders were hit by the very severe weather conditions prevailing at the time. Of 165 participant enrolments, approximately only 50 were able to beat the effects of snow. The workshops which actually ran on the day were:

LIAM GREENSLADE of the Irish Studies Inst. at the University of Liverpool who looked at THE HEALTH OF THE IRISH IN BRITAIN, exploring patterns, research evidence and tentative conclusions.

THE CORNER STONE COMMUNITY: REVS SAM BURCH & GERRY REYNOLDS (Methodist & R.C. respectively) talked collaboratively about WORKING TOGETHER FOR PEACE IN WEST BELFAST. This ecumenical group has a Community base on the "peace line" and operates in the Falls and the Shankill - as a team.

RUTH DUDLEY EDWARDS national Chair of BAIS and biographer of Pearse, ran a seminar on PATRICK PEARSE: EVALUATING HIS ROLE, to mark 1991 as the 75th anniversary of the 1916 Easter Rising.

MARJE BRIDLE of the development Education centre in Birmingham looked at the Joint Development Education Project (GB, Ireland and N. Ireland) and discussed CROSS-CURRICULAR THEMES FOR SECONDARY SCHOOLS.

To expand the programme in "emergency" conditions, Sean Hutton, Executive Director of BAIS, kindly offered an instant workshop on Literature in Irish for Irish Studies groups.

The Conference was, as usual generously supported by the British Association for Irish Studies, Leicester City Council, Soar Valley College and the civil engineering and plant hire firm of Danaher and Walsh; we wish to convey our appreciation for this valuable support. A special work of thanks is due to the 50 or so stalwarts who tackled "artic" conditions to make the Conference a success. A special Conference pack was sent to all those who had registered but were unable to attend.

Nessan J.E. Danaher, B.A., M.Ed. - Irish Studies Co-ordinator - Soar Valley College.

PUTTING GENDER INTO IRISH HISTORY

I'm concerned about the content of Irish history for many different reasons, partly as a researcher and writer and occasional teacher, but, above all, because I am an Irish woman and I want to know about my past and what 'the flow of time' (1) has meant for women. Although arguments continue to rage about the implications of 'revisionism' in the new histories that are being written about Ireland, these controversies are primarily concerned with the political thrust of this (fairly) new departure. But what of the human content of the narrative - the people within? Conventional historiography has given us kings, with the odd queen thrown in, and rebellious chiefs and politicians, with the peasantry popping in and out of the picture. In the last couple of decades the working class has managed to shoulder its way onto the scene and the history of the Irish working class is now rapidly unfolding, thanks to the diligence of a new generation of historians. But all this is strangely gender-free. Where are the women? What have they been up to for the past few hundred years? Does anyone know or care, and can we get source material that will enable us to discover their hidden history? And if we do, do we just 'add women and stir' and let the stew of Irish history thicken with this female addition?

In this paper I want to do several things. I want to look at the state of mainstream historical scholarship, to examine present-day historians' level of awareness of women's contribution to politics and society; to look at the implications of this for future historical research; and to examine feminist scholarship in this area and what it has to say on the notion of a 'gendered history'.

Ireland Since the Famine (2) has been the standard text, at least until Foster's recent work. (3) Lyons was a leading light in the first wave of historians anxious to reveal a more complex scenario than the orthodox nationalist tradition of past decades. Was this resolve combined with an awareness that women might have had a history that, so far, had been all but forgotten? Was Lyons also intent on unearthing women's contribution? He does mention two organisations of women. He castigates the Ladies' Land League for their 'irresponsible' behaviour and Anna Parnell for her 'reprehensible' conduct. This is very strong language for the supposedly impartial historian, but he doesn't bother to elaborate on his judgements. Cumann na mBan gets a footnote. Lyons tells us that, due to its having followed the lead of Erskine Childers during the Treaty debates, it was dubbed 'the women and Childers party'. Not only is this an insultingly brief reference for a significant organisation, but the insult is compounded by the sexist nature of the reference. The women of Cumann na mBan are not given credit for possessing autonomous political views but instead have Childers credited as their leader. With regards to historical accuracy, I should say that nowhere in the Treaty debates is there any evidence to support this jibe. The six female members of the Second Dail demonstrated an impressive ability to articulate their views, and one that certainly had no need of any male voice whispering prompts from the side. How are other women's organisations dealt with - the suffrage movement, for example? The answer is that they really are not considered as part of 'Ireland since the Famine'. The only reference to Irish feminism that occurs in the whole of this 300 odd-page text is the following, referring to Countess Markievicz, 'Interested above all in women's rights - it was the suffrage question that first caught her interest'. We know therefore that Lyons was aware of the existence of the Irish suffrage movement, but the inference is clearly that this has no significance for the historian - at least, not for that particular historian. As Mary Cullinan has said:

(Lyons) has made a judgement, whether consciously or unconsciously, that women's rights and feminist movements are not a

significant part of Irish history in the sense that he judges nationalism, the cultural renaissance and the labour movement to be. It is also clear that he does not think his responsibility as a historian of this period of Irish history requires him to present feminism or feminist political action to the reader as part of that history. (4)

This myopia leads to a distortion when the lives of those whose political careers straddled various different causes are assessed. As Cullen has put it, 'A woman like Markievicz may be seen as part of Irish history when she is participating in nationalist or labour political or military activity. She and other women are *not* seen as part of Irish history when they campaign in support of women's claims for civil and political rights.'

Not only are they not seen as part of Irish history, nor are the causes themselves regarded as a valid aspect of the past, or one that is worth recording and preserving. This male-oriented consciousness, which permeates the whole of the discipline, is, as one feminist historian has described it, a kind of 'collective amnesia', and one which makes women 'vulnerable to the impositions of dubious stereotypes'. (5) Without knowing what the flow of time has meant to women, to their collective past, false judgements that have repercussions for the present continue to be made.

How does Roy Foster compare with his predecessor? Has there been a great change in scholarship in the 17 years that has elapsed between his survey and that of Lyons? If we use references to the Ladies' Land League as an indicator, then Foster would appear to take more seriously the political contribution of women. He declares:

perhaps one of the most important and least recognized, achievements of the Land League is that it provided a political baptism for a generation of radical Irishwomen who spoke on platforms, organized tactics, were denounced by the clergy and got arrested. Many of them would later be involved in the suffragette movement and Sinn Fein.

Foster is certainly more sympathetic than Lyons to Anna Parnell and the Ladies' Land League, but he has the advantage of having read Anna Parnell's manuscript history of the period. However, despite this, his assessment too is inadequate and distorted by a sexist bias. The real legacy of the Ladies Land League is that Irish women became aware that they needed to have their own organisation. Any other conclusion lets men off the hook for their conduct during that time.

Foster says that Parnell doubted his sister's political acumen and suppressed the organisation, yet Anna's own evidence presents a very different picture. Anna Parnell was not a parliamentarian, but a radical nationalist with an acute awareness of where her brother's tactics were leading. Once the men were out of jail and controlling the movement again, the women were determined to dissolve their organisation, conscious of their vastly different aims and their use of very different methods to achieve those aims. But, just as no contemporary, not even a man as sympathetic as Michael Davitt, could really understand the significance of the short history of the Ladies' Land League, and its revolutionary potential, so no present day (male) historian seems able to analyse the events of that time from the point of view of the women participants. Anna Parnell, as her manuscript demonstrates, was acutely aware of women's political powerlessness:

whatever the relative values of men and women may be, it is certain that the former cannot be done without, when it is a question of

altering the status of a country. If the men of that country have made up their minds that it shall not be done, the women cannot bring it about. (6)

Anna Parnell's efforts to get her manuscript published - she gave it to Helena Moloney, then editor of *Bean na hEireann*, to edit for her and the manuscript disappeared after a police raid - adds another dimension to our knowledge of women's disappearance from history. Every other participant in the Land War seems to have written a memoir and to have had no difficulty in getting published. It took Anna Parnell 100 years to get into print. Thankfully, her manuscript is now available for all to read. Reading her account now gives enormous insights into the extent to which Irish history has been male history and it is illuminating on the question of the types of political alliances that political women might have taken - following neither the path of fenianism nor parliamentarianism. Dana Hearne, the editor of *Tale of a Great Sham*, uses in her introduction a quotation from French feminist Helene Cixous, 'The new history is coming; it's not a dream, though it does extend beyond men's imaginations.' (7) So far, the sorry history of the LLL has proved her point.

But to return to Roy Foster and the extent of his inclusion of women into *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*. The statement that some former members of the Ladies' Land League would later become suffragettes is the only reference to the suffragette movement to be found in his text. He omits even a reference to the fact that in 1918 women won the vote. Have we reached the post-feminist age when so obvious a reference can be assumed? I doubt it. For some reason, the formation of the Irishwomen's Suffrage Federation in 1911 is listed in his chronology of important events, but that, apart from a reference to the Irishwomen's Franchise League in the biographical reference to Hanna Sheehy-Skeffington, is all the attention that the feminist movement receives. Inghinidhe na hEireann, the nationalist-feminist organisation founded by Maud Gonne in 1900, is given a significant mention, but Cumann na mBan is simply referred to as 'extreme' on one occasion and 'radical' in another, while the context is unexplained. Is political antipathy to their views an explanation for this lack of interest?

So far, one is forced to conclude that Foster, as Lyons before him, has discarded the suffrage movement as not significant enough to warrant more attention. What other indices can be used to evaluate the changes, if any, in historical awareness? A head count is a useful basic starting point. For the modern period, 15 references to individual women appear in Lyons' index and 13 in Foster's. Foster has used more substantial biographical references as footnotes, but against this, women rarely appear in the body of his text. Lyons' bibliography lists 8 substantial works about women of the period. Basically, they are the extent of scholarship at the time he was writing. He obviously considered (and rightly so) texts like the Van Voris and Marrecco biographies of Constance Markievicz to be important works. Bibliographies, particularly in texts which are broad-ranging surveys, destined to be read by the general public and students alike, are important markers on the current state of scholarship. And of course, they are designed to give guidance to areas of further study. They are also the historian's assessment of his/her profession. Many prove to be controversial, due to the idiosyncracies of the compiler. Roy Foster is no exception. What is his assessment of the feminist research which has broken new ground since the publication of *Ireland Since the Famine*? Dana Hearne's edition of the *Tale* is commended, but precious little else. No biographies are considered worthy of note, the pathbreaking *Women in Irish Society* (8) is ignored. Should I be flattered to be dismissed thus 'The important topic of the Irish feminist movement in this period is nowhere treated adequately; see, in default of anything else, M. Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*. (9)

I want, briefly, to consider one other male historian. (As an aside, I don't want to imply that women historians have automatically demonstrated an awareness of these issues, but they are not the ones who have written these influential all-purpose surveys) My purpose is not simply to indulge in invective but to emphasize the dangerous tendencies of contemporary scholarship - its sex-blindness and its arrogance - and to spell out some of the implications of this for the future. Joe Lee's recent work *Ireland 1912-1985: Politics and Society* (10) was one I greeted with anticipation as the author had been a contributor to *Women and Irish Society*, with an article entitled 'Women and the Church Since The Famine' and he had also shown an awareness of women in *The Modernization of Irish Society*, his book in the Gill and MacMillan series. The sub-title of his most recent book also gave reason for hope - 'Politics and Society' implied that this would not be an institutional account and nor would it take a narrowly political focus - the one exception when it might possibly be conceded that women, for various structural reasons, are not particularly visible.

It was therefore with considerable disappointment that I discovered that there are in the book, which covers 73 years of Irish history, a mere five substantive references to women: principally, the extension of the franchise; the Constitution protests of 1937; ratios of female to male emigration, while mention is made of the Peace Movement and the Abortion Referendum. Very few women are referred to by name (9 for the period equivalent to Lyons and Foster) and those that are, tend to be defined in exclusively masculine terms: Kathleen Clarke is "Mrs Tom Clarke" even though the reference is to her independent role as a Senator; he complains that Mary Hayden's professorship of Irish History was unjustified and should have been given to Edmund Curtis; Eileen Lemass is Haughey's sister-in-law; and Maud Gonne is only referred to via the men in her life "(Sean) MacBride, son of Major John MacBride, executed in 1916, and of Maud Gonne, of Yeats fame". Lee could hardly have been more hostile to the notion of women's autonomy. His bibliography reveals that he has read nothing on women that could have been incorporated into his text, lightening its excessively male focus. It is a very wide ranging survey which includes many references to obscure journals and articles from European sources, untranslated into English. But, for women, only Eithne Viney's 1968 work on *Women in Rural Ireland* is listed. In a gesture of quite staggering arrogance, Lee lists his article from the MacCurtain/O'Corrain work, but fails either to give the book a separate bibliographical reference or to list any other contributions from it. The only conclusion to be drawn is that he feels only his article has merit.

This is more than a personal gripe. This kind of attitude must have repercussions for the future study of history. As I have said, bibliographies are statements of the 'state of the art', and are used by many as pointers to further research. The recent scholarship by women therefore remains invisible, known only to a small band of devotees, or those determined enough to go beyond the narrow confines of the academic world. But the texts I have criticised are being produced by academics, by professors who presumably set the tone for what occurs within their departments. What happens to their students? Do they spend three or four years studying 'history' only to graduate as uncomprehending of the reality of women's lives as they were when raw young freshers? What happens to anyone who wishes to undertake research into women's historical contribution? Is there anyone there to give encouragement, to offer pointers? Are there many women in roles of teacher, of supervisor of theses? Does it remain a battle for academic credibility, to prove feminist research is intellectually rigorous and valid? I hope that present-day graduates have an easier time than I had, when trying to convince the powers-that-be that they want to undertake research on women, but when I see what stage

mainstream history is at now, I don't feel overly optimistic. If women's studies are not integrated into the core curriculum of undergraduate study, then they are unlikely to figure prominently in research proposals. And, as the cycle continues and research findings trickle down to school level, so new texts will continue to have very little about women in them, and the next generation of school students will enter higher education with no awareness of women's role in historical events and no desire to continue and intensify their studies.

My feelings are endorsed by women historians within Ireland. Maria Luddy and Cliona Murphy, (11) in a hard-hitting survey of the present state of historical scholarship, describe history in Ireland as 'A narrative account of the doings of men, largely carried out by men, written by men and taught by men.' They go on to ask a number of pertinent questions:

How many of the male historians in Ireland...take a good look at themselves and their departments and their subject matter? What is the ratio of male to female undergraduates? And how does this ratio reverse itself as one proceeds up the academic ladder? Where do all the enthusiastic female undergraduates go? Does their disappearance have any link with the invisibility of women in history?

They declare their belief that it is 'problematic for the discipline of history' that women who do manage to become professional historians are the ones who write women's history, making that history, if not inferior in the eyes of men, than at least a very separate history which simply reverses the norm so that women research and write it and read it and teach it to other women, while men can continue to ignore what is happening. In many departments now, that would appear to be the current state of 'women's studies'. The battle to get women's studies onto the curriculum is being won, but it has become a separate area of study and those who undertake research remain within this female ghetto, completely marginalised and unable to penetrate the prevailing male orthodoxies.

In America and Britain, many highly regarded male scholars have written histories of women, particularly of women in suffrage and socialist movements. Their views and conclusions are often challenged by feminists, that I would not deny, but the fact is that they regard such research as significant and worthwhile. It is also further evidence of the rigidity of the division between the sexes in the field of Irish historical scholarship - can we imagine any of the present generation of prominent male scholars announcing that they were writing a history of Irish women? The academic world waits with great anticipation when it is announced that eminent scholars have embarked on such labours as the official biography of Michael Davitt or W.B. Yeats. Would the walls of academia collapse if one of these eminent persons was to announce that, to take one unlikely example, his latest project was a comparative study of the British and Irish suffrage movements?

Several Irish feminist historians have used the conceptual framework of Richard Evans's study *The Feminists*, (12) to analyse the radical content or otherwise of Irish feminism. In doing so, they have rightly pointed out his exclusion of Ireland, which is made all the more anomalous because of his inclusion of most European countries - encompassing Finland and Iceland for example - and his evaluation of the differing strengths of suffrage movements in Protestant and Catholic countries. (13) Examination of the Irish experience would have been most enlightening, although it might have caused problems for his basic thesis, but presumably he assumed the Irish experience to be the same as the rest of Britain's. Ignorance of the rich amount of Irish primary source material is probably also part of the reason. When Evans published his book in 1977, little on the subject had appeared in print.

It is another example of how marginal Irish women have been, in an historical sense, until very recently. And it again demonstrates how determinedly masculine the focus of Irish historians has been.

Cliona Murphy's excellent account of the Irish suffrage movement (14) is only the second book to appear on the subject, and the first to analyse the impact of feminism on Irish society in the early twentieth century. Her work sheds great light on such subjects as the role of religion, the mobilising of public opinion, and the influence of the press; topics of general interest to all historians. But will that book be read and its title added to undergraduate reading lists? In her conclusion, Murphy says her study serves 'as an indicator of what as yet has to be done' and she makes a number of suggestions for further study: biographies of those women who played a role in the suffrage movement; thematic studies on, for example, the numbers of female doctors and female writers who became involved in the movement; analysis of the Munster Women's Franchise League and other non-militant groups which, so far, have had very little attention. As she says, 'much more work will have to be undertaken before a more balanced picture of Irish history will emerge in the history books.'

Feminist historians are obviously in need of support - both intellectually and emotionally. An Irish Association for Research in Women's History, its members coming from north and south, has been formed in the past few years. Its annual conference in 1990 attracted a wide variety of women, both young graduates and those women who have lived through, and helped to make, history in the period between the 20's and the 40's. The pursuit of history then becomes not an abstraction, but a search for a past in which we all share and in which we all have a vested interest in understanding.

In 1987 an Irish Feminist History Forum was established, both as a group where those interested in women's history could pool their thoughts and findings and also to provide an impetus for the publication of new material. Their objective is, they say, to enable as broad a range of readers as possible to see 'not only do Irish women have a history, but that it is a history which is vibrant and worth recording.' (15)

The first publication to emerge as a result of this initiative is *Women Surviving: Studies in Irish Women's History in the 19th and 20th centuries*. As the editors explain, all the articles have women:

firmly planted within their own historical period. They are not living in a separate dimension as one might have supposed from...reading the traditional textbooks in Irish history...Their lives are firmly connected to, and dictated by, the political, social, demographic and economic happenings of the time. They are a part of history, not on the fringes of it.

The studies, which range from examining the role of nuns in society, women in workhouses, women as prostitutes, and as domestic servants, through to analysis of women in the suffrage movement and women's contribution to post-Independence politics, are valuable additions to our understanding of Irish society and important contributions to the underdeveloped field of Irish social history. They are also some of the first attempts at integrating women into the mainstream of Irish history, rather than simply fitting women 'into the empty spaces', which, so far, has been a necessary stage through which feminist history has been travelling.

Another pointer in demonstrating the sorry state of scholarship here, is the fact that in some countries scholars are complaining that histories of women have too often

concentrated upon suffrage and other women's rights campaigns, to the detriment of social histories of the family, changes in domestic labour, the influence of class and sex on female oppression, etc. Practitioners in Ireland have a very long way to go before we could even begin to be critical in that sense, but *Women Surviving* is a brave attempt to move away from the more obvious areas of research, in order to develop a more complex picture of the totality of women's experiences.

For a moment, let us return to the question as to why the Irish suffrage movement has suffered from such neglect by historians. Hanna Sheehy Skeffington, a leading suffragist, calculated that, in proportional terms, it was as large as its British counterpart. It was certainly not concentrated in Dublin, because many towns and country districts also had suffrage groups and societies within them. Neither is there any difficulty with source material as the *Irish Citizen* ran between 1912-1920 and the Irish movement often featured in the pages of British suffrage journals. It was also composed of educated women who wrote copiously. I think the explanation lies in the fact that to research the organisational history of women's struggles for their rights requires a total shift of perspective to a woman-centred consciousness, and this has needed a degree of self-confidence and intellectual combativeness that has, until recently, been difficult to imagine. But the process has begun, and as more rich source material is unearthed, there should be more students eager to build upon the small foundations that have so far been constructed. The few studies of Irish suffragism that exist now throw so much light on topics like the hold of religion; the degree of political contact with the international community; the influence of the press upon public opinion; the effect of the Home Rule crisis upon unionist-nationalist relations - that I fail to see how any historian could be indifferent to understanding more about that particular aspect of our past.

In Ireland, what has been criticised by feminist historians is not the clinging to women's rights preoccupations, but rather what they consider to be an excessive concentration upon nationalist history. Cliona Murphy attributes this to the fact that the new independent Irish state lauded those women who helped in the national struggle, creating folk heroines 'comparable only to ancient Gaelic Queens', while the suffragists were viewed as unnationalistic, if not traitors, for putting women's issues before those of the nation. (16) The latter is undoubtedly true, but it doesn't explain the fact that the nationalistic heroines were also by and large equally ignored by the historians, and it has only been in the past decade that any real assessment of their contribution has begun. I would contend that nationalist and feminist women have fared equally badly when it comes to serious attention by historians, and that it is as important that the one movement gets recognition as the other. But I would accept that it has in a sense been easier to begin with the nationalist cause because its landmarks have already been defined and so the task becomes one of finding the evidence to describe the important role we all suspected, but could not document, that women had played during the various stages of the struggle against British rule in Ireland.

In writing this type of history, the goalposts do not change. It is not male-defined, because much of it is detailing women's autonomous contribution, but women continue to be the outgroup, fitting into categories and value-systems which consider 'man' as the measure of significance. Gerda Lerner has described this as 'contribution history': the movement in question stands in the foreground of the inquiry; women made a contribution to it and that contribution is then evaluated. This Lerner sees as 'transitional women's history', one step on from the first level of 'compensatory history' which looks for notable women, the women who achieved, rather than describing the historical experience of the mass of women. (17) The writing of biographies falls into this stage, but not entirely so, as modern

biographies attempt to situate the individual within the context of the period, and to give greater prominence to those who shared the lives of the better-known.

I don't want to dwell at length on the significance of these various stages, merely to use them as pointers to the current state of Irish historical research. What exists at the moment is 'gender free' but, in effect, the experiences of men (and not usually working class men) are dominant. It has therefore been male history, and a class-based history at that, which has determined what the important historical periods have been. What we have at present, in relation to a gendered history that takes women as well as men into account (and that only to a very limited degree), is 'contribution history' - 'women and Irish nationalism', 'women and the trade union movement'. We have a long way to go before an awareness of gender as an historical theme can be integrated into the text books.

What would be different if this were to happen? There must surely be a radical change in the writing of all history, because the feminist approach challenges the categories and the conventional periodisation of historians. The whole concept of periodisation - the important eras in history which have set the agenda for future generations - is called into question by advocates of a gendered history. Joan Kelly has argued that women did not have a Renaissance, because they were completely excluded, their status did not improve. (18) Neither did the various Reform Acts benefit women; in fact, once the word 'men' was legally defined as to exclude women, it could be said that women's struggle for equality suffered a severe defeat.

Proponents of modernisation theories assume an unproblematic advance for women, but, in the Irish context, what is 'tradition' and what is 'modernisation'? Were women better off before or after the advent of colonial rule; did changes in the land tenure system mean that women became more isolated within the individual family. Is there a gulf between revisionist history and feminist history - the one legitimates colonial rule by portraying images of backwardness, the other has different indices of evaluation. Historically significant periods for women might be very different from what is now itemised in our history books. At the least, as Luddy and Murphy have said, we need to ask questions as to why events like the Act of Union, Catholic Emancipation or the various Land Acts should be as important for both sexes. If there is a dichotomy of experiences between women and men, then this needs to be taken into account.

Luddy and Murphy offer a few suggestions for a list of significant dates for Irish women. This includes the establishment of religious communities in the early 19th century; the winning of educational rights for women in the middle of the 19th century; the impact upon women of the Contagious Diseases Acts of the 1860's; the development of the first suffrage groups and the opening up of local government to women. As they stress, the incomplete nature of their list is indicative of the limited amount of research that has been completed.

Joan Kelly has suggested that attitudes toward sexuality should be studied in each historical period because she considers that constraints upon women's sexuality imposed by society are a useful measure of women's true status. (19) Could this method be used by Irish historians, and would it be an effective tool for evaluating change? It could further our understanding of the position of women in Gaelic society, the impact of Christianity on Ireland, changes of family structures pre and post-Famine, not to mention the fairly dramatic changes in Irish life over the past couple of decades. This kind of synthesis stresses the interrelationships of women and men's lives, using inclusive historical perspectives in order to analyse their experiences. It is the hallmark of what is being posited as 'gendered history'.

Obviously, as Gerda Lerner has said, no single methodology or conceptual framework can fit the complexities of the historical experience of all women, but we do need to have new categories, to pose new questions, before the synthesis of a new universal history can be written. What is very clear is that there is no room for complacency in what we have achieved, and male historians will one day be forced to meet the challenge which is now being posed by feminist scholars.

FOOTNOTES

1. An evocative phrase used by Sheila Ryan Johansson, "'Herstory' As History: A New Field Or Another Fad?'. In Berenice A. Carroll (Ed.), *Liberating Women's History*, University of Illinois Press, 1976.
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MARGARET WARD

BRISTOL
FEBRUARY 1991

The Cornerstone Community is a small group of Protestant and Catholic Christians from the West Belfast area, who have come together to be a sign of hope in a divided community.

Currently, we have 18 members, 6 of whom live in the Community House, the rest live and work in the West Belfast area. We represent all social, economic, and religious backgrounds. We see our mission as one of living as a people being reconciled by God, and bringing hope to our people through whatever projects, programmes etc. seem appropriate. However, the symbol of our being together in the midst of almost total polarization is seen as our most important role.

Background problems of the area.

The area is one that has been badly affected by the Troubles; names such as Falls,, Shankill, Ballymurphy, Divis Flats, Springfield Road, have long been associated with the worst that Belfast has been through. The area is totally polarized along sectarian, religious, tribal lines. During the early 1970's an estimated 40% of households in the district were forced to move because of the 'Troubles'. This left a deep sectarian bitterness on both sides. The Communities are now divided by a 15 foot high wall, euphemistically called the 'Peace Line'. The Paramilitaries of both sides (I.R.A.; U.D.A.; I.N.L.A.: U.V.F., etc.) are both powerful and feared.

In addition, it is an area of high social deprivation. Unemployment is now well over 65% in the area as a whole, and up to 80% in really bad areas. Over 65% of children receive free school meals. There is a high level of one-parent families (in some schools over 50% of their pupils area from this type of home, although the average level is probably nearer 25%).

There is a severe ' bottom of the social pile ', mentality, with a deep lack of self respect/ self-value/ sense of dignity and worth, a lack of confidence in their own leadership qualities, and a general feeling of hopelessness, rejection and vulnerability. Many feel alienated from those in authority and from those more privileged and react in negative ways. We believe that the Cornerstone Community, amongst others, is called to try and address this situation in whatever ways we can.

THE WORK OF THE COMMUNITY.

1. PRAYER.

The Community is first and foremost a praying community. At its weekly meeting the community gives significant time to prayer and reflection. 'Live-in' members pray together twice daily, and we are all committed to pray regularly for each other and for the neighbourhoods around us.

2. ECUMENICAL PRAYER GROUPS.

Since December 1986 we have hosted a monthly meeting of praise and prayer for Peace in Springfield Road Methodist Church. People from various local churches, Catholic and Protestant, participate together in this. Our weekly Thursday evening Bible sharing is also attended by people of different Christian denominations, both Catholic and Protestant. Members of the Community frequently attend local prayer groups, often of a different denomination to their own, as a sign that " The walls of separation do not reach to heaven."

3. GROUP WORK.

At frequent intervals the Community mounts small conferences and study sessions to enable local people from both sides to share experiences and examine differences and so come to a better understanding of one another.

Members of the Community regularly attend 'religious and Peace' conferences, both as participants and as resource personnel.

4. HEALING AND HELPING

Members of the Community take a leading part in a local 'Churches Ministry of Healing' and in comforting the distressed, especially those distressed through the 'Troubles'.

5. CRISIS VISITING.

We visit people locally who have suffered through violence. Whenever possible, we do this in twos, a Catholic and Protestant together. This has proved to be a powerful healing symbol and witness.

6. BRIDGE BUILDING.

We have established links between local clergy and church workers from the Falls / Shankill area, enabling them to meet regularly, and we host a regular 'Youth Leaders Meeting' enabling them also to share experiences and plan joint ventures.

For a number of years now we have had overseas volunteers who have worked with local youth leaders in both the Catholic and Protestant clubs. They have established valuable links between the clubs and have also given an international flavour to their work.

7. PEACE EDUCATION.

Frequent opportunities arise to share our 'vision' with church; school and community groups and to encourage them to pray and work for peace.

8. A RESOURCE.

Members and Friends, who work full time in difficult circumstances in local churches, communities or enterprises, find in Cornerstone a resource through which they are refreshed and re-equipped for their various tasks.

9. HOSPITALITY.

Our House is an open house, offering hospitality to all who come, wherever they come from. Many people from many countries have stayed and been helped to a deeper understanding of the situation and a new appreciation of the resilience of the local people.

We try to remain open and flexible, responding to local needs and initiating new programmes as opportunities arise.

Development Issues

A Humanities Approach

a development education project involving Irish and British teachers*

Marje Bridle

Development Education Centre, Birmingham

(The DEC/Trocaire Project Team presented a Workshop on this project at Conference 1990.)

The curriculum development project is being run jointly by the Development Education Centre (DEC) in Birmingham and Trocaire, a world development agency in Ireland. DEC is an educational charity whose aim is to introduce a global dimension into the school curriculum. The project has brought together secondary teachers from Ireland and Britain.

The project workers, myself and Stephen McCarthy, a teacher seconded to Trocaire, have run a series of joint workshops which have generated a great range of ideas. They have also given us first hand insights into the relationship between our two islands.

Looking at our own international relationship has already helped us to think about links we have with other countries and how we teach about these countries. The proximity of our two islands has made it possible for teachers to visit and work for a weekend in each country. We have been able to get a flavour of life in both places and to explore face to face, myths and stereotypes about each other.

Specifically the project's aims are:

- to provide opportunities for British and Irish teachers to work together, share ideas and develop teaching materials;
- to develop the skills necessary for teachers to design and implement programmes of in-service work in their own and others' schools;
- to identify innovative curriculum work already being carried

out in development education and to make this more available to other teachers;

- to design and publish new development education materials;
- to encourage and support the extension of a social justice perspective in Humanities.

Over the last year we have had six residential weekend workshops for teachers. These have been held in Birmingham and Dublin. A number of focal points have emerged out of this workshop process, including a series of cross curricular themes which we have begun to explore. These include developing cities, land in conflict, images, emigration, colonialism, literature and development education. Below are some of the ideas which the project will develop.

Staff Development Curriculum Teams

We have deliberately involved as far as possible, several teachers from each participating school. Many teachers who expressed an interest in the project are trying to build staff teams in their schools to develop cross curricular work. Some of the Birmingham participants, for instance, had set up exciting experiments in their schools on the theme of South Africa. Desmond Tutu's visit to Birmingham in 1989 provided the focus for this work and inspired DEC's photopack "Tutu - Preparation for Debate" which was and still is being widely used. A number of schools suspended the timetable for a particular year group to do this cross curricular themework, one sus-

ended it for the whole school for a week. Our project aims to support staff teams wanting to do this kind of work.

Cross Curricular Work

The project is involving teachers of English, RE, History, Geography, Humanities, Science and gives us an ideal opportunity for looking at how we can tackle cross curricular themes in secondary schools.

The project's steering group, which includes two members of the Integrated Humanities Association (IHA) executive committee, discussed what was meant by the term Humanities. As a result the project has adopted what is broadly the definition of Humanities used by the IHA:

'Humanities refers to a core area of study which has to do with people; whether as individuals, groups, communities, societies or a species sharing common characteristics; and with our relationship with our environment in its spatial, historical, economic, political, social, religious and moral aspects.

A Humanities approach makes use of themes, rather than traditional subject disciplines, although drawing on the concepts, methods and perspectives of any subject discipline which might usefully support a more complete understanding of the issues affecting contemporary human society.'

The approach seeks to develop skills in handling information about people and to facilitate a process of learning which emphasises the active involvement of the student

* This article first appeared in *Humanities Resources, Journal of the Humanities Association*, Autumn 1990. Vol. 4, No. 1 (P. 9-10)

in research and analysis.'

The teachers we have worked with want to make use of this approach to tackle development issues. Some teachers from Britain have recently done cross curricular projects on the themes of Water, Health, Justice. The school which worked on Water has looked at how this theme can be used to cover National Curriculum attainment targets in different subjects. In the Irish context, teachers are more interested in developing a Humanities approach within their own subject areas. Changes in the curriculum in Ireland now give teachers more creative flexibility.

Fieldwork

We have made use of a fieldwork approach in the project workshops. We want to promote this as an approach which enables both teachers and students to relate development issues to first hand local experience.

In Birmingham, groups went to find out about a business tourism development in the city centre and regeneration schemes in two inner

city areas. In Dublin, groups went to a docklands redevelopment area, traveller sites and an inner city project. In each case teachers spoke to people living in these communities and to officials responsible for their redevelopment. We also used various information documents about the development projects.

We came back and presented the issues as classroom activities or as a teaching process. We also made use of some teaching materials about Sao Paulo, a city in Brazil. These had come out of a teachers' study visit to Brazil which some members of this project had been part of. The study visit had made use of a similar type of fieldwork process, involving teachers experiencing at first hand aspects of development in Brazil. We hope to use one of our themes to illustrate this fieldwork approach in the materials the project publishes.

We are running two further workshops in Belfast and Birmingham this Autumn. A number of teachers from Northern Ireland have recently become involved in the project. These workshops will allow us to expand this group.

In the coming year we will be working on teaching materials for a number of cross curricular themes and addressing questions such as

How can we make best use of different subject methodologies in cross curricular work?

How can we support other teachers in doing cross curricular work in the context of the change happening in our education systems?

What models can be developed for introducing cross curricular work into the secondary school

How can we use the local international relationship of this project in teaching about these countries and to help us understand our relationship with other countries?

We are offering workshops on this project at the IHA conference this year and next. We will welcome feedback from IHA members on the work we have done so far and on our ideas for the teaching materials which the project will develop.

POSTSCRIPT to this article can be found inside back cover.

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REPORT ON "IRISH STUDIES WORKSHOP" ACTIVITIES 1990/91

In the Autumn of 1990 we ran our 8th annual Irish Studies Adult Education Programme - "Celtic Encounters". This is an inter-disciplinary course, with varied inputs (guest speakers, films, videos and drama groups) and proves consistently to be a popular option, attracting 40 enrolments and an average weekly attendance of around 25 persons. The course duration is 15 weeks (please refer to programme, reproduced in full on pages 20 - 24).

The workshop has, over the year, made a number of contributions to external activities:

- locally we contributed an Irish input to the access course run at Highfields Youth and Community Centre, called "Imperialism and the Colonial Past". This leads to the Certificate in Urban Studies and attracts post-18 students, mainly drawn from the Afro-Caribbean and Asian community in part of the inner city.
- again the local level, the Co-ordinator was invited to address the Vaughan Archaeological and Historical Society on the topic of the Irish Community in Leicester in the 19th Century. This was a well-attended event, and some helpful local contacts were made.
- much work has been done on the ongoing PROJECT on the history of the Irish in Leicester, with the Co-ordinator carrying out numerous interviews, with local elderly people, as well as engaging in sustained and systematic research at the Leicester Public Record Office. A database now exists of all Irish-born persons in Leicester (and their children) from 1841-1871, based on census analysis.
- In September, 1990 the co-ordinator represented the College and the Workshop at the third (and probably final) CEDPATH Conference held over 4 days at Lady Margaret Hall in Oxford. (Combined Education Departments Project for the Advancement of the Teaching of History). This tri-partite event, jointly funded by the Education Departments of London, Dublin and Belfast, has been an important barometer of curriculum development and positive inter-relationships. The participants attend at the invitation of H.M. Inspectorate.
- as well as Irish Studies, the college has also run a successful and popular SET & CELLI DANCING CLASS, over the last year. Our tutor is Lancashire-born Beverley Whelan, who, together with Mike Feeley has produced some excellent musical entertainment in the traditional mould. There was an extremely well attended CELLI at the end of the Summer Term, with music by the Western Lilt junior Comhaltas Band from North London. We also had a most entertaining evening from Schitheredee (Tim Lyons and Fintan Valelly) involving traditional music, song and dance.
- good relations have continued to develop with the Newark Technical College Irish Studies groups. We joined them on their Summer Study visit to London to see the exhibition of Jack B. Yeats Paintings at the Whitechapel Gallery, and to experience the Young Vic production of "The Plough and the Stars" by Sean O'Casey.
- in terms of BAIS (British Association for Irish Studies) the workshop is an active participant in most areas, the Co-ordinator currently serving as a Convenor of the Adult Education Sub-Committee. This group is currently processing the replies to its Questionnaire - designed to produce a database of information on the Irish Studies Adult Education scene nationally. This will be published in 1992, subject to finance being available.
- one item of long-term significance in Leicester is the advanced stage reached in planning for an Open College Network on the lines of those already established in other parts of the country (e.g. in Manchester). This Workshop has made a formal input to the planning group at County Hall and the situation looks promising for the accreditation of Irish Studies locally. We plan a variety of Irish Studies modules, subject to satisfactory conditions.

- our Irish Language Classes for both Beginners and Advanced continue to thrive, ably organised and delivered by Maureen Broderick. The language classes are supported financially by the College; our tutor has attended various in-service courses (e.g. at Manchester).

Finally, we wish to thank Soar Valley College for its continued support and Leicester City Council (Recreation and Arts Department) for its annual grant support - essential for the administration and cultural programmes Workshop.

We also wish to acknowledge the administrative advice and support from Mrs Wendy Burke of the College Resource Department.

BAIS (British Association for Irish Studies) is to be particularly thanked for its support for the annual conference; we also wish to thank our long-term commercial sponsor, Danaher and Walsh Ltd., civil engineering Plant Hire of Leicester, who annually help to fund our Conference Report.

IRISH DEMOCRAT 1939 - 1980

(Incorporating Irish Freedom)

244-246, Gray's Inn Road, London, WC1X 8JR

During the war and post-war years the Irish Democrat was the dominant source of Irish news published in Britain. The Connolly Association at that time ran the Immigrants Advice Bureau to help claim lodging allowances for the thousands of Irish workers who came to help rebuild a shattered Britain.

For over fifty years the Connolly Association has issued a monthly newspaper specialising in Irish political analysis, news and reviews. Published in Britain since 1939 the archive now offers the historian an ideal source of information on the campaigns of the Irish community in Britain. Details of their demands, campaigns, allies, achievements and failures are analysed with comments on the period and conditions of the time. During this half-century there has never been a period when the Irish Democrat failed to give a lead on the issues of the day that affected the Irish people. While not condoning political violence the Irish Democrat campaigned for the release of the two previous generations of Irish prisoners in England, as it continues to campaign for the third generation now (years 40, 56, & 70). Never banned in Britain the paper was however banned for six years in Northern Ireland under the Special Powers Act.

It is not commonly known that the first civil rights demonstrations were in fact held in Britain in the early sixties, starting with a CA march from Liverpool to the House of Commons in London to demand civil liberty for the people of Northern Ireland. The Irish Book Centre forerunner of the Four Provinces Bookshop was established in 1966 to supply the increasing demand for Irish literature in Britain. The CA campaigned for a Bill of Rights for Northern Ireland which was debated in both Houses of the Westminster Parliament in 1971.

The Irish Democrat now represents a substantive history of the campaigns of the Irish community in Britain and its effects on the Government of the day and the British Labour movement. What were their demands, who were their allies, what were their achievements, their failures. It is all there in the back issues of the Irish Democrat.

No history of the Irish community in Britain can be complete without reference to this archive of source material.

Some of the contributors over the years are listed here

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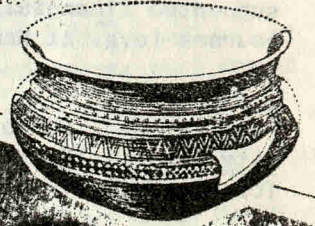
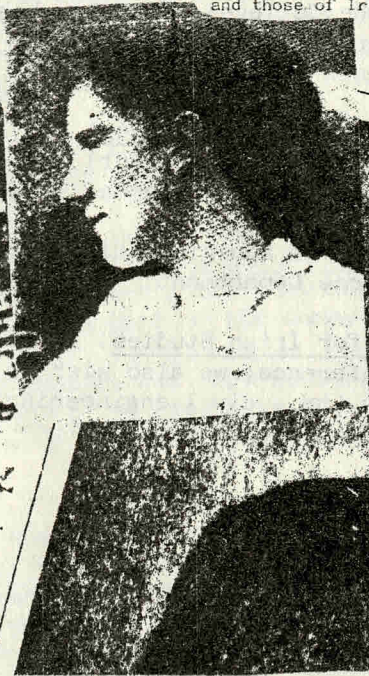
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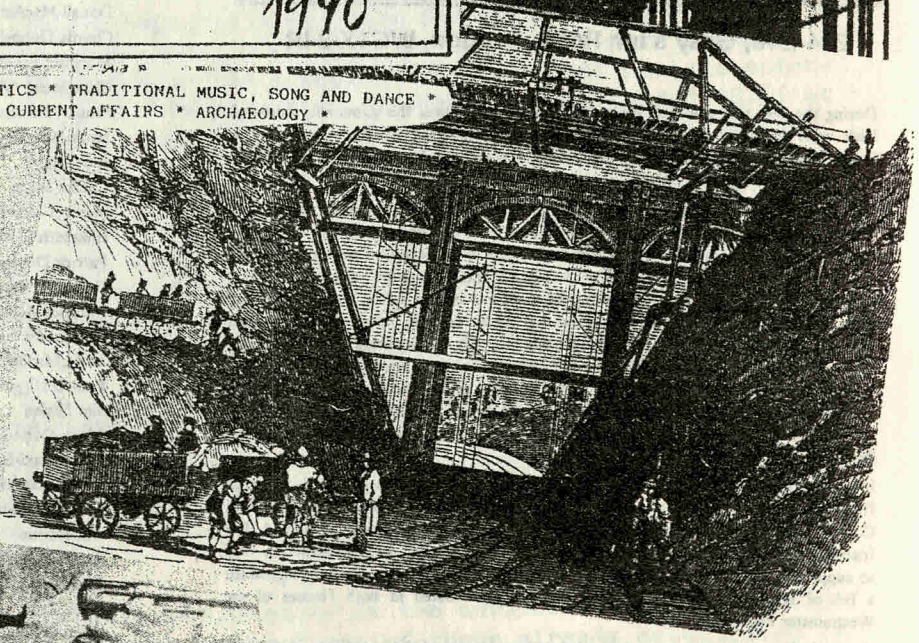
Grant Aided by Leicester  City Council

This year's programme tries to link certain key strands of Irish History, Anglo-Irish relations and the experience of the Irish abroad. It should be of interest to the general public, as well as Irish people and those of Irish descent.



CELTIC Encounters 1990

HISTORY * LITERATURE * POLITICS * TRADITIONAL MUSIC, SONG AND DANCE *
EMIGRATION * RELIGION * CURRENT AFFAIRS * ARCHAEOLOGY *



Irish Studies Workshop

Co-Ordinator: *Nessan J. Donaher, B.A., M.Ed.,*
Soar Valley College,
Gleneagles Avenue,
Leicester, LE4 7GY Tel (0533)669625/666377

CELTIC ENCOUNTERS (1990) - ASPECTS OF THE IRISH EXPERIENCE

(Irish Cultural Activities - Informal Talks & Discussion Evenings)

ACTIVITIES PROGRAMME- 15 WEEKS

5 SEPTEMBER

THEATRE GROUP - HEARTS & HUMOUR THEATRE CO PRESENT:

(note 8 pm start) **"I'M YER MAN"** by Maurice Dee (in Drama Theatre)
A recent review by Eddie Gormley commented:

IT'S as well to nail your colours to the mast at the start. Maurice Dee is second generation Irish, and has based his one man show, *I'm Yer Man*, on his experiences working with an Irish road gang.

I'm also second generation Irish, and have also worked with an Irish road gang - undoubtedly a great opportunity to complain about lack of accuracy, or to feel aggrieved about the Irish being yet again the butt of the joke.

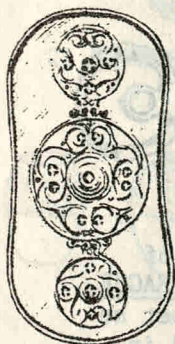
Dee's show, however, left no cause for complaint. The humour is well observed and delivered not out of malice, but out of affection for the whims of a nation.

I'm Yer Man pivots around two labourers, Con and Danny, who present conflicting views of life.

Con 'came over' years ago, and his character is in line with the O'Casey mock heroic tradition. Danny was born here, and has the bullet-like delivery of an alternative comic.

The result is a helter skelter ride taking in brewing tea, luminous statues of the Blessed Virgin, fear of priests, drinking, parental attitudes, lack of communication and sex.

Maurice Dee received a terrific ovation from an audience largely made up of family and invited guests. The real test will come when he tours the Irish Centres and pubs, and the Irish people are confronted by their mirror image, warts and all.



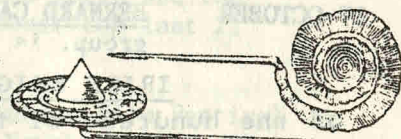
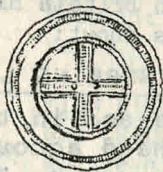
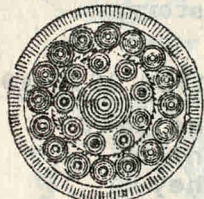
Bronze Shield with Enamel Ornament

12 SEPTEMBER

"THE WORK OF ANGELS" - MASTERPIECES OF CELTIC METALWORK - 6-9th

Centuries AD. Illustrated with slides from the recent Exhibition at the British Museum of marvellous jewellery and treasures from the Celtic regions of Scotland and Ireland. As Gerald of Wales was to write in the 12th Century:

'If you take the trouble to look very closely, and penetrate with your eyes to the secrets of the artistry, you will notice such intricacies, so delicate and subtle, so close together and well-knitted, so involved and bound together, and so fresh still in the colourings that you will not hesitate to declare that all these things must have been the result of the work, not of men, but of angels.'



IRELAND

GOLD DISKS, IRELAND

Maggie GARVEN, Head of History & Archaeology at the College, will lead this session.

19 SEPTEMBER

Tim SCHADLA-HALL of the Leicestershire Museums Service, is our guest:

"THE CELTS AND IRELAND: ARCHAEOLOGY, MYTHOLOGY, NATIONALISM AND CODOLOGY"

Tim will look at the origins of the term 'Celt' and the associated archaeology in the British Isles and Europe; he will go on to critically examine the links between Celtic mythology and Irish nationalism, and to compare monuments in Britain and Ireland.

26 SEPTEMBER

"THE IRISH IN ENGLAND" is a 2 part VIDEO presentation by **THE IRISH VIDEO PROJECT** (Ken Lynam & Don Magee). A discussion will follow.

Irish people constitute the oldest and largest immigrant population in England today, yet our lives and concerns are generally ignored or misunderstood and misrepresented.

On the one hand we are not considered all that different from English people, part of a rural/urban migration pattern, easily assimilated into the 'English way of life'. On the other hand we have been subjected to a series of negative stereotypes: through the anti-Irish jokes we are cast as stupid and ignorant, and all too frequently in newspaper columns and cartoons we are represented as mindless and psychopathic.

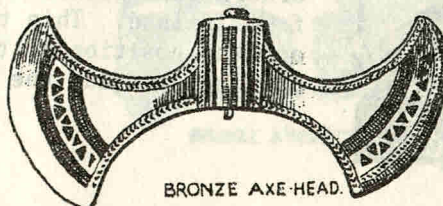
In recent years there has been a growing movement within the Irish community which is beginning to challenge anti-Irish racism and to demand greater recognition for the Irish as an immigrant population. As part of that movement, the Irish Video Project has produced these two video tapes, recently shown on Channel 4, which we hope will contribute to the debate and discussion now taking place within the Irish community, and also encourage greater understanding of the Irish immigrant experience within schools and colleges.



Bronze Harness Ornament



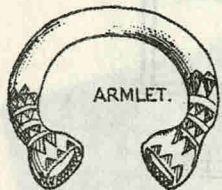
POTTERY (WELWYN, HERTS)



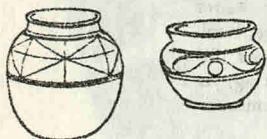
BRONZE AXE-HEAD

3 OCTOBER

"LYNX" THEATRE & POETRY GROUP present "REBELS & FRIENDS". The production, in the Drama Theatre, is set against a background of 500 SLIDES from museums in both England and Ireland, and traditional music. It is a play about CONSTANCE MARKIEVICZ, one of the leaders of the Easter Rising in Dublin, and her pacifist sister, EVA GORE-BOOTH, who worked for women's rights in England. A reviewer in the Irish media recently wrote:

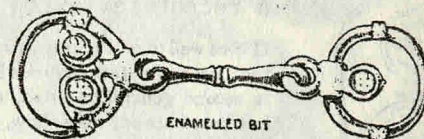


ARMLET.



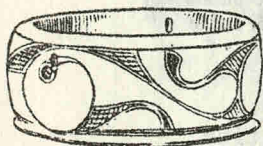
THE breadth and depth of research apparent in *Rebels And Friends*, which opened at the Triskel Theatre, Cork, last night, underpins this quite remarkable Lynx Theatre London production based on the lives of sisters Constance Markievicz and Eva Gore Booth.

There is a documentary sweep to Ms Jacqueline Mulhallen's work which lifts it above mere theatre and unfolds history in quite the most absorbing fashion. It deals with the labour and birth pangs of this terrible beauty, Ireland, with great feeling, but also with the dispassion of documented evidence.



ENAMELLED BIT

10 OCTOBER



The Workshop Co-ordinator, NESSAN DANAHER will look at the life of MICHAEL DAVITT (1846-1906), founder of the IRISH NATIONAL LAND LEAGUE. From Co Mayo, the family emigrated to Lancashire where Davitt lost an arm as a child worker in a cotton mill. He became a Fenian, and in 1870 was sentenced to 15 years penal servitude. After release, he worked with PARNELL, and DEVOY in the USA. He played a highly significant part in the LAND LEAGUE, became MP and a noted political commentator - visiting Leicester in 1906 whilst working for the labour candidate. This talk will use slides and primary source material (historical documents).

17 OCTOBER

BERNARD CANAVAN - a founder member of the Irish in Britain History group, is back once again, this time to talk to us about:

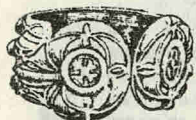
IRISH EMIGRANT AUTOBIOGRAPHIES; RECORDS OF WORKING LIVES 1870-1970

Of the hundreds of thousands of Irish who crossed the sea in the last hundred years, only a dozen or so have left a first hand account of their experience - and the majority of those were men. They range from tramping labourers like Patrick Magill and Michael MacGowan, hard men like Brendan Behan and Jim Phelan, and respectable toilers like Paddy the Cope, Donal MacAmlaigh and John O'Donoghue and include a disillusioned Orangeman in Bonnar Thompson, and a disillusioned Republican in Connor Reardon. In speaking for themselves these individuals provide a corrective to many of the accounts written by others - both Irish and British - of the Irish emigrant experience.

24 OCTOBER

No meeting - Leicester half term break.

31 OCTOBER

ENAMELLED BRONZE (CELTIC)
PERTHSHIRE

A FAMILY HISTORY WORKSHOP - Many people in Britain are interested in their family backgrounds, and many have Irish ancestors. Christine KINEALY of the ULSTER HISTORICAL FOUNDATION (which is in Belfast) is our guest speaker. She will indicate the main possibilities of research into family history for those with an Irish background. This is a fascinating topic, and a good starting point if you're interested in researching your own family's history.

7 NOVEMBER

RITA WALL, a journalist with 'The Catholic Herald', will discuss THE CONTRIBUTION OF THE FEMALE RELIGIOUS (NUNS AND SISTERS) TO THE ISSUES OF JUSTICE AND INDIVIDUAL DIGNITY. Many of the religious orders were founded in, and are still staffed in the main, by sisters from Ireland. This talk will cover aspects of Anglo-Irish relations and the position of the Irish community in British Society (eg the marginalised and the oppressed - politically, socially and economically).



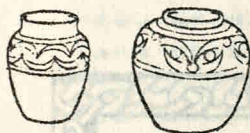
14 NOVEMBER

Nessan DANAHÉ, the Workshop Co-ordinator will talk about LEICESTER AND THE IRISH: LEICESTERSHIRE SOLDIERS AND IRELAND SINCE THE TIME OF QUEEN ELIZABETH I (about 1550-1922). Surprisingly, perhaps, we can trace a pattern reflecting the involvement of Leics elements in the British armies right through this 400 year period, covering the Elizabethan militias, the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688, the 1798 Rebellion, the Fenian invasion of Canada in the 1860s (!) and the War of Independence. (1918-21). It's not all a tale of violence and colonialism - there are the occasional more light-hearted episodes.



21 NOVEMBER

ROBERT NOONAN (or TRESSSELL) AND THE IRISH CONNECTION. Robert Tressell was the author of the famous socialist novel 'The Ragged Trousered Philanthropists' (televised some years ago on BBC2). His Irish background is less well known: we will examine what is known, and explore other Irish elements in his life. As well as his writing, he was a gifted craftsman painter and decorator (long before the DIY era began) and SLIDES will be shown of his houses in Dublin and Hastings, and of his work. Our guest for this evening will be JOHN WOODHURST, who is organising the new Irish Studies course at Newark FE College in Nottinghamshire.



28 NOVEMBER

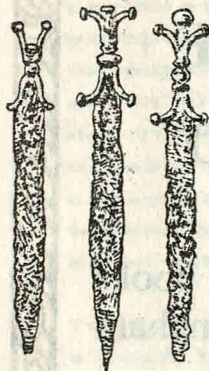
We are pleased to welcome JIM O'HARA who is Director of Irish Studies and Senior Lecturer in History at St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, in London. He is also Vice-Chair of the British Association for Irish Studies. The topic will be NORTHERN IRELAND: 21 YEARS ON: A RETROSPECTIVE. This look back at the 'Troubles' will analyse the changing dimensions of the conflict in N Ireland for both communities, and its impact on politics and society in both the North and the Republic, as well as changing British reactions over the last 21 years.



HARNES ORNAMENT

5 DECEMBER

FILM NIGHT: A recent smash-hit success at the Cannes Film Festival was 'HIDDEN AGENDA', KEN LOACH'S new film about Northern Ireland. We are highly privileged to be able to show this film, courtesy of BSB (British Satellite Broadcasting).



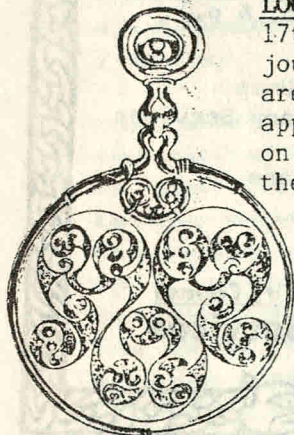
Now with a new film about Northern Ireland, *Hidden Agenda*, picked as the British entry at the Cannes Film Festival, Loach is once again tackling a subject which the Establishment would prefer left well alone. He remains suspicious of the Establishment — and perhaps what some might see as his paranoia is well-founded.

Loach is about to cross swords with the Establishment again, this time the Government, the Army, the secret services and police. Quite a formidable bunch to take on. *Hidden Agenda*, directed by Loach and to be released later this year, is written by Jim Allen and has Fred Holroyd, the former Army captain who 'blew the whistle'

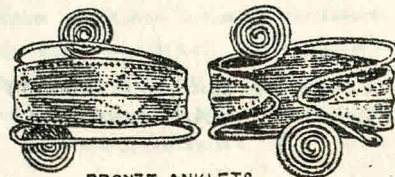
on alleged dirty tricks in the Ulster security services, as its adviser. The film investigates the British intelligence services, the treatment of civil liberties groups, Loyalist hit squads, torture of political prisoners and, of course, the Establishment back in London.

12 DECEMBER

CATHERINE BYRON, a Leicester-based freelance writer, and no stranger to this Workshop, will give us a talk entitled "TRUAGH MO THURAS GO LOCH DEARG" - "VAIN IS MY JOURNEY TO LOUGH DERG". The title, from a 17th Century Irish poem, refers to Catherine's physical and spiritual journey in the footsteps of SEAMUS HEANEY, whose Station Island poems are set in the famous pilgrimage centre of Lough Derg. This should appeal to us - especially in the sense of the feminine perspective on Catholicism, nationalism and Ulster. Catherine recently explored these same issues in a seminar at University College, Dublin.

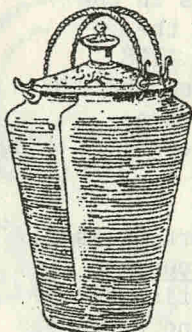


GOLD CLASP AND HOOP IRELAND.



BRONZE ANKLETS.

19 DECEMBER



"BEANNACHTAI NA NOLLAIG!" is the Irish for CHRISTMAS GREETINGS! To get into the festive mood, we shall show TWO VIDEOS:

- (1) A FEAST OF IRISH SET DANCES looks at the long tradition of community folk dancing in the ways it is still practised in different parts of Ireland today.
- (2) THE IRISH HOOLEY is just what it sounds like - a session of TRADITIONAL MUSIC, SONG AND DANCE - a great "crack"!

The following booklists are available in the series *A Sense of Ireland*.

1. Irish Politics
2. Irish History
3. Irish Women's Issues
4. Irish Lives
5. Irish Fiction
6. Irish Music
7. Irish Poetry
8. Irish Children's Books
9. Irish Miscellany
10. Books in Irish:
Leabhair as Gaeilge

Any of the books listed may be requested and obtained from your local library.

The lists represent just a few of the very many books available in Birmingham Libraries on Ireland and of Irish interest.

Cover design based on drawings by Courtney Davis from his *Celtic Art Source Book*.


A

**SENSE OF
IRELAND**

A selected list of books
available from Birmingham
Library Services.

The set of 10 lists costs
£1.50 (including p. & p.),
from:

The Commercial Unit
Birmingham Library Services
Central Library
Chamberlain Square
Birmingham
B3 3HQ

 **Birmingham City Council
Library Services**

The Health of Irish People in Britain

Liam Greenslade

Institute of Irish Studies

University of Liverpool

Racial inequalities and ethnic differences in physical and mental health have become the focus of increasing attention from researchers and professionals in recent years, but the experience of Irish people, who are the largest minority community in Britain, has remained all but invisible. Whereas evidence is emerging of distinctive patterns of disease, with differential incidence and prevalence rates in specific minority communities, few studies have explored the health status of Irish migrants and their descendants.

To all intents and purposes, the health of Irish people in Britain remains officially invisible because the overwhelming majority of research reports differences between 'white' and other groups usually on the basis of a mixture of racial and national origin, using categories such as 'Asian', 'Indian' or 'West Indian'. The assumption that the 'white' ethnic group is homogeneous not only belies well-established evidence of significant and enduring social class inequalities in health, but also implies that communities of migrants with white skin have 'assimilated' such that their social and material conditions, culture and life-styles are no longer distinct.

It is a matter for debate as to why reports, over 10 years ago, of higher rates of attempted suicide and of admission to psychiatric hospital among Irish migrants to Britain have prompted little subsequent study of the circumstances underpinning such acute distress. More recently, it has been shown that Irish-born men in England and Wales have the highest death rate of any immigrant group, when standardised by social class, has not received the same attention or subsequent analysis as, for example, evidence of high death rates from coronary heart disease or diabetes amongst men from the Indian sub-continent or the Caribbean.

It is possible perhaps that the timing of this research played a role in the absence of any systematic follow-up. Migration from Ireland to Britain declined during the 1970's. It is once again on the rise however, particularly amongst the young. The present increase in the Irish migrant population makes the omission of systematic follow-up research into their health all the more glaring.

The health of Irish people in Britain was not always cloaked in the invisibility to which I have alluded. In the middle decades of the 19th Century, the Irish were regarded as a significant factor contributing to public health problems in many parts of the country. In that period, the health of the Irish was subject to a considerable surveillance and monitoring within the host society. Seen as a source of infestation and a hazard to health, the severity of their conditions, even when contrasted with those amongst the indigenous urban poor, were instrumental in the

introduction of public health and housing policies geared to the minimisation of risk to the wider populace. Ironically enough, it was the Irish, forming a large part of the domestic pool of casual labour, who found work building the drains, sewage systems, and other public works that arose as a consequence of the fear of epidemic.

Moving from past visibility to present invisibility, the study of Immigrant Mortality in England and Wales 1970-78 reports mortality rates for 'All Ireland'. The aggregate 'Irish' category is used to avoid inaccuracies stemming from the misclassification of country of birth on death registrations. In some cases, 'Ireland' alone was recorded as the country of birth, without specifying which part. The scale of the problem of misclassification is indicated by evidence from the OPCS Longitudinal Study, that 25% of people born in Northern Ireland were recorded at death as having been born in the Irish Republic or 'Ireland, part not stated'.

The aggregation of Irish migrants into a single category may, however, mask significant differences in their mortality. Between 1970 and 1972, the Standardised Mortality Ratios (SMR) for all causes were reported separately for migrants from the Irish Republic and Northern Ireland. Male and female migrants aged 20-69 from the Irish Republic had strikingly higher mortality (at 132 and 128 respectively) than male and female migrants from Northern Ireland (102 and 92 respectively). Mortality data reported for the aggregate 'Irish' category therefore merit cautious interpretation.

In England and Wales between 1970 and 1978, death rates among Irish-born men aged 15-64 were 22% higher than the average for all men of that age. Some of the excess is accounted for by the over-representation of Irish-born men in semi-skilled and unskilled manual occupations, amongst whom death rates are generally higher than average. Nevertheless, when the occupational class distribution of male Irish migrants is taken into account, there is still an excess mortality of 15%. Moreover, Irish men are the only immigrant group whose premature mortality is higher in England and Wales than in their country of origin.

The principal causes of male Irish migrants' deaths in England and Wales were accidents, suicides and violence (80% above average) with a particularly high risk of homicide, accidental poisoning and accidental falls; tuberculosis (145% above average); some cancers, notably the oral cavity and pharynx (83% above average) and the gall bladder and bile ducts (76% above average) (Marmot et al, 1984). Deaths from liver cirrhosis were 63% above average amongst Irish-born men, whilst risk of death was also high from peptic ulcer (42% above average), and high blood pressure (35% above average). In each of these cases, the death rate was higher than from the same causes in Ireland.

Although the health experience of Irish-born women living in England and Wales was better than in Ireland between 1970 and 1978, they also experienced a higher than average death-rate (16% excess mortality), the third highest female immigrant

mortality rate. Whilst women's social class is more difficult than men's to categorise, standardisation of married women's mortality rates for (husband's) occupational class did not reduce their overall death rate between 1970 and 1978. This suggests that factors other than conventional measures of social class position affected their health.

Like male Irish migrants, Irish-born women living in England and Wales had very high death rates from all forms of tuberculosis (115% above average); accidental poisoning (77% above average) and cirrhosis of the liver (59% above average). Death from other chest disease was also more likely, by 59% for cancer of the lung, bronchus and trachea; and by 37% for bronchitis, emphysema and asthma.

To date, no research has explored why the mortality of Irish-born adults living in England and Wales is so much higher than average. A preliminary analysis of self-reported data on smoking and drinking, from the GHS, confirmed popularly held views that Irish people are more likely to smoke and drink heavily, but no account was taken of social class, which is known also to be associated with varying rates of alcohol and tobacco use. Furthermore, recently published evidence suggests that the tendency to shorter than average life expectancy extends into the second generation Irish population in England and Wales.

At the Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool, we have attempted to address the causes of increased mortality in a preliminary way by analyzing data on health and lifestyle amongst first and second generation Irish migrants taken from the 1984 General Household Survey, an ongoing survey of approximately 25,000 people conducted annually by the OPCS. Full details of this analysis may be found in Pearson Madden and Greenslade (1990) and Greenslade, Pearson and Madden (1991).

From our preliminary analysis of one year's GHS data no clear answer to the question of whether Irish migrants' high mortality is due to poorer social and material conditions. Age structure seems to account for the higher rates of poor health and long-standing illness of migrants from the Republic of Ireland. There is apparently no residual which might be attributed to their generally lower socio-economic status.

As far as the non-psychiatric morbidity experiences of the Irish migrants compared with the non-Irish population are concerned, our analysis reveals conflicting evidence. When age is taken into account, the self-reported health status of the Republic Irish is better than one would expect from their high mortality and their socio-economic status. Northern Irish migrants, by contrast, after disaggregation by age, report worse health than one would expect from their higher socio-economic status. However, the numbers are so small when we disaggregate by age that we would not wish to place great stress on these findings.

Both of the first generation Irish groups have high reported rates of abstention from alcohol, yet their mortality from alcohol-related diseases is apparently high. Those who do drink are not significantly more likely than average to drink heavily,

but the second generation are. The Republic Irish population had a substantially greater proportion of smokers than the British population born of British parents, but second-generation Northern Irish migrants smoked as much. No clear pattern emerged here.

The differences in mortality between first-generation migrants from the Republic and the North are not reflected either in their own self-reported health status or in that of second-generation migrants.

We found it impossible to identify any strong "Irish" dimensions to the morbidity experience of the second generation Irish in Britain, apart from the possibility that Republic Irish first- and second-generation migrants tend not to consult doctors until an illness becomes limiting. The second generation's tendency to conform to the "norm" of the British population born of British parents was far stronger than any tendency to replicate the experiences of the preceding generation of migrants.

This report is concerned with research at a very preliminary stage of development. However, a much longer term project of investigation using both primary data collected within the Irish community and secondary data from official sources is about to get under way. Hopefully the result of this future study will provide the information necessary to understanding, and preventing, the causes of poor health amongst Irish people in Britain.

References

Greenslade L Pearson M Madden M (1991) The Socio-Economic and Demographic Conditions of Irish Migrants in Britain Occasional Papers in Irish Studies No 3, Liverpool: Institute of Irish Studies.

Pearson M Madden M Greenslade L (1990) Generations of an invisible minority: The health and well being of Irish people in Britain Occasional Papers in Irish Studies No 2, Liverpool: Institute of Irish Studies.

Stop Press - Project Update - January 1992

The teaching materials from this project are now well underway. At the end of this year we plan to bring out a handbook for secondary teachers at key stages three and four about crosscurricular work.

The main part of the handbook will focus on three themes - Community and Change, Conflict, and Colonialism - each of which contains teaching activities and student stimulus pages for photocopying. Each theme has both a British/Irish and a wider world dimension.

So for instance, Community and Change suggests a teaching process for looking at the theme and has a number of case studies about different communities and their development. For example, the first is about Bournville in Birmingham and looks at a philanthropist's vision, in this case Cadbury, for a community; another is about the Fatima Mansions community in Dublin, a group of people living in blocks of flats who have initiated changes in their own community; another is about a shantytown community in Brazil where a community worker, an 'outsider', finds himself deeply influenced by the people he meets and acts as a catalyst for change in the community. The teaching ideas encourage students to think about their own involvement with communities and development processes within them.

The Conflict theme suggests a learning process which can be applied to any conflict situation. Our stimulus material focuses on the 'peace lines' in Belfast and on Cambodia.

Finally, Colonialism offers a framework for tackling the theme which allows the perspective of the colonised and the coloniser to be catered for sensitively and creatively. Again material has an Irish/British and wider world dimension.

The handbook will also contain ideas for planning crosscurricular work in secondary schools which draw on the experiences of the teachers involved in the project.

Trialling of the material in schools is taking place this term in both Britain and Ireland. Watch out for the handbook at the end of the year.

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