

## ANNUAL REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 1990-91

My work during the year has included: (1) the administration of the Association and the running of the office: involving, among other matters, communications with the membership and the general public, arrangements for Officers' and Executive meetings and meetings of the Fundraising Review Group, and for the distribution of the ILS and other publications; (2) advising the Officers and the Executive Committee on various matters, and liaising, where necessary, with the Association's advisory subcommittees; (3) liaison with a wide range of organisations, from government agencies to community groups, and representation of BAIS at various functions; (4) the organisation and supervision of the third series of sixth form history revision conferences in Northern Ireland. In this work I have had the assistance of Mrs Polly Melotte, who has provided approximately one half-day's secretarial assistance per week.

The Association received the last tranche of AIB Bank sponsorship in February 1991, making the issue of sponsorship most pressing. In order to allow more time for fundraising, the Executive has initiated economies in the two major areas of expenditure: good office accommodation has been secured at a 50% saving on rent and a temporary arrangement has been made whereby the Executive Director will work on a part-time basis. Fortunately, the Association continues to have the active support of patrons and friends with contacts in the business world, who are prepared to play an active role in fundraising. A brochure carrying endorsements from leading figures in politics, business, scholarship and the arts is about to go to print and will be of great assistance in this area.

Services to members were affected during the year by the continued non-appearance of Irish Studies in Britain and the Association's own Newsletter. Discussions within the Executive and among the Officers have resulted in the decision to publish a new BAIS magazine, the Irish Studies Review, which will replace them - appearing in the spring. There had been problems for some time also concerning the distribution of the ILS. Following discussions with the publisher, we hope that distribution of the ILS will now take place punctually. Periodic bulletins have been published from the office during the year to keep members informed of developments within the Association and in the field of Irish Studies.

Among the events directly organised by BAIS have been the third series of history revision conferences for sixth formers in Northern Ireland (organised this year in conjunction with The Young Historian Scheme in Northern Ireland). The Irish Language Subcommittee has organised a number of day-schools for Irish-language teachers in adult education, and has published an occasional newsletter directed to those teachers. The Association is seeking LINGUA funding for a number of the activities initiated by the Irish Language Subcommittee. The Higher Education Subcommittee is collecting data for a brochure on Irish Studies provision at that level which will appear in the spring and David Cairns has been collecting and processing data for the third edition of the Survey of Irish Studies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The Convenor of the Adult

Education Subcommittee has continued to advise on the setting up of new Irish Studies courses at this level. The success of the Soar Valley model would suggest that the Adult Education Subcommittee should now review, and generalise from, the experience of a number of successful courses of a similar type now existing. Difficulties have been experienced in assembling a Schools Subcommittee and in identifying a proper role for the Association in relation to Irish Studies in schools. However, a group of Executive members with schools interests are examining the issue. BAIS also had difficulty in activating a Cultural Subcommittee. Happily, Steve Regan, a member based at Ruskin College, Oxford, has now volunteered his services to initiate activity in this area. Adequate financing of subcommittees is a vital issue if the Association is to avail of the expertise of the membership in developing policies and initiatives.

The Soar Valley Irish Dimensions in British Education Conference, with which the Association is linked through its financial assistance, was badly affected by the adverse weather conditions of early February. However, Nesson Danaher managed to provide a full programme of lectures and workshops.

BAIS's biennial Irish Studies Conference took place at St Mary's College, Strawberry Hill, Twickenham, in April. The theme was: "New Directions in Irish Studies". The conference was both enjoyable and successful, and drew financial support from both Johnson Matthey and the Irish government's Cultural Relations Committee.

The fourth series of BAIS Lectures have just concluded. They were organised by a group of members at Bath College of Higher Education, in conjunction with the Bristol Irish Festival. The theme was "Irish Writers". The lectures were very successful: drawing a good attendance, provoking lively discussion, and being virtually self-financing.

The continuing uptake for Irish Studies, and increase in their provision, is pleasing evidence of the demand which exists at third level and within adult education. This year has seen the development of new courses at adult education level in Birmingham and Nottingham, and of a Celtic Studies course at Manchester. At the level of higher education it is to be hoped that the appointment of Roy Foster to the Carroll Chair of Irish History at Oxford and the award of the Parnell Fellowship at Magdalen College, Cambridge, to J J Lee will serve to further raise the profile of Irish Studies in Britain.

In a period when the funding of the Association has become a matter of considerable urgency, it is pleasing to be able to report on a year in which a range of activities and services to members has been maintained. Action has been initiated in order to overcome those problems which have been identified in the functioning of the organisation or with regard to provision. Finally, a number of developments are in the pipeline, building on existing activities and achievements, to ensure that the Association will maintain its place as a co-ordinator in the Irish Studies field.

Seán Hutton