

EXECUTIVE SECRETARY'S REPORT TO THE ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF THE
BRITISH ASSOCIATION FOR IRISH STUDIES

During the current year, BAIS has acquired four new patrons: Mr Seamus Heaney, Mr Robert Kee, Ms Detta Ó Catháin and Sir David Orr.

Membership is now increasing steadily. In June we had 192 paid-up members. We now have 244 members, some of whom are lapsed members who are rejoining.

However, our aim must be to win into membership even more of those with Irish Studies interests who are working in the fields of higher and adult and further education, as well as to broaden our membership among teachers in the compulsory sector.

We have been able to offer the BAIS membership a reasonable range of benefits this year, certainly as far as publications are concerned. Two issues each of the BAIS Newsletter, Irish Studies in Britain and the Irish Literary Supplement have been distributed to members. In addition, each member received a copy of the Second Survey of Irish Studies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland, edited by our Honorary Secretary, Dr David Cairns. As a bonus, members also received a promotion copy of the special edition of Books Ireland edited by BAIS Executive Committee members, Mr Jonathan Moore.

Our annual lecture series has moved on from London to Liverpool, where it is being held this year (throughout November) in conjunction with the Institute of Irish Studies. The series title is "Images of Ireland" and the lecturers are Mr Henry Kelly, Ms Eileán Ní Chuilleanáin, Mr Bill Morrison, Dr Anne Crookshank and Dr George Watson. It is to be hoped that members will consider the idea of rotating the lectures to different centres each year a satisfactory one.

Under the Joint Education Programme, being run jointly by BAIS and the Institute, in-service training has been provided for teachers. On 12 July a successful one-day conference took place at Liverpool on "Irish Studies 8-13: its place in the national curriculum", and on 26 November a further conference will take place on "The Irish Famine".

It has been decided that in 1989 BAIS will organise an Irish Studies Conference in conjunction with the Institute.

BAIS made financial contributions towards the costs of the following conferences during the year: the Soar Valley Irish Studies Workshop, the Conference of Irish Historians in Britain, and the IASAIL Conference.

Considerable progress is being made in the preparation of examinations under the Joint Education Programme. An A Level in Modern Irish History and two A/S levels, History, Literature and

the Irish Identity, 1890-1926 and The Irish in Britain, 1815-1914 have been accepted by the Joint Matriculation Board; and work is progressing on the preparation of a GCSE in Irish.

Work is also nearing completion on the preparatory materials for examinations in the Irish language being developed by BAIS and the Institute of Linguists. The first examinations will take place in March 1989.

The establishment of the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool has been one of the great successes of the year, that outcome owing so much to the energy and professionalism of its Director, Dr Patrick Buckland. The establishment of a combined honours degree course in Irish Studies at the Polytechnic of North London has been an equally welcome development. Good news has come from other quarters as well: from Nottingham University, where Mr Tom Paulin's optional Irish Studies course for undergraduates was fully subscribed almost overnight; and from Manchester, where the one-course in Irish Studies, organised by the Manchester Irish Education Group has been over-subscribed. However, there has also been news of another kind, as, for example, the dropping of a popular course in Irish History at Brunel University due to lack of funding.

BAIS campaigned strongly during the year on the question of the future of Irish at the University College of Wales, Aberystwyth, and the apparent threat to the unique Chair of Irish situated there. The outcome of that situation is not clear at the moment, as we await the report of the Celtic Studies Working Party of the UGC. However, it is pleasing to note the very satisfactory uptake for courses being offered by Professor Emrys Evans in his capacity as Visiting Professor at the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool.

Since my appointment as Executive Secretary in May there has been one meeting of the Executive Committee and one meeting of Officers and Convenors.

There has been one meeting, as well, of higher education representatives, which was attended by Professor Lewis Warren on behalf of the UGC. That meeting was held to review the strategy for the promotion of Irish Studies in higher education. Following that meeting questionnaires have been circulated to institutes of higher education, and the information which they elicit will be used to update the reports of 1986/7 on Irish Studies at that level, and as the basis for renewed approaches to the DES and the UGC.

Other members of the Executive Committee will report to you on the fundraising activities of BAIS, on the financial state of the Association, and on the activities of the Advisory Subcommittees. What has been achieved during the past year has been achieved on very slender resources and has demanded a high level of commitment on the part of individuals. My own

experience as Executive Secretary has impressed on me how much is dependent, here as in other areas in the realm of Irish Studies, on the commitment of individuals.

There are signs that that personal commitment and the highly professional approach which has been adopted by the organisation are beginning to bear fruit. It is to be hoped that one result of the standing being achieved by BAIS will be that adequate funds will become available to ensure the future of the organisation.

Seán Hutton
Executive Secretary
11/11/1988