

Secretary's Report, April 1987—November 1988

In the period since the last Annual general Meeting the work of the Association has continued to develop in scope and complexity.

Membership

As the Treasurer will indicate in his report, Membership has steadied at approximately 200 individual and Corporate members. This is the third year of the Association's active existence and it would be reasonable to expect that this figure represents the size of our clientèle in the immediate term. Further expansions of Membership will be dependent upon the Association's success in promoting Irish Studies more widely in the U.K. education system, and that in turn will be dependent on additional external funding to support further ventures in, for example, syllabus development.

A consequence is that the Association continues to steer delicately between the necessity to match the scope of its activities to the size and nature of its Membership (still predominantly in higher education) and the perceived need to promote Irish Studies through prestige activities such as the Lecture Series.

A fair conclusion might be that the long-term expansion of Irish Studies — and hence Membership — is now dependent, more than ever, on the success of the fund-raising campaign already initiated and to which the Chairwoman and Vice-Chairman have referred.

Administration

As Members will know, The Association was granted Charitable Status in December 1987. The practical consequence of this is that the Inland Revenue will accept subscription to the Association as a deductible expense, while the guarantee that charitable status affords that the Association is non-political has been extremely useful in convincing potential supporters (financial and otherwise) of our *bona-fides*. The continuing heavy demands upon the time of the Chairwoman and Chairman, together with the need to provide a London-based point of contact for the fund-raising operation already referred to led the Executive Committee to decide in the Summer of 1987 that the appointment of a full-time Executive Secretary was a necessity. A substantial Grant from the D.E.S. was therefore sought with two components: appointment of a full-time administrator (the Executive Secretary) based in London in office space which the Rowntree Trust had graciously agreed to provide, free of charge, in Poland Street, W1; retention of a professional fund-raising adviser to shape the policy of approaches to potential donors and to assist in the making of contacts and approaches.

On confirmation that the DES was minded to make a one-off grant to the Association for these specific purposes, and that the Department of Education, Northern Ireland would also make a grant, the Officers

(principally the Chairwoman and Vice-Chairman) drew up a job description for the post of Executive Secretary, mindful of the undertakings in this regard that had been given to the D.E.S. Interviews for the appointment, from a large field of extremely impressive candidates, took place in Spring, 1988, with the invaluable assistance of consultancy advice, donated free of charge, by the Personnel Section of the Chief Executive's Office, Birmingham City Council. After rigorous interviews, chaired by an external consultant adviser, the appointment was offered to Séan Hutton, who took up his post some six weeks later.

It is a pleasure for me to record that Séan's appointment has justified all our hopes. He continues to provide a readily accessible point of contact for all our Members and activities and his administrative input has assisted in permitting the elected Officers to give more time to planning long-term developments rather than the minutiae which while essential are also very demanding of time.

We should also note, however, that if the successful operation of the Association at a high level of activity is to continue the salary for the Executive Secretary must continue, and for this external funds — yet again — are essential.

Survey

The Second Survey of Irish Studies in Great Britain and Northern Ireland was issued in 1988. The number of entries has risen from approximately 190 in the First Survey to 390 in the Second. Nonetheless, as two pained letters subsequently indicated, this Survey did not include at least two clusters of active scholars and teachers in Northern Ireland. Accordingly the third Survey, preparations for which are under way, should contain even more evidence of the extent of Irish Studies Activities in Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It will be in two parts. One will contain information on individuals, the second information on Irish Studies Courses in Higher Education which can, hopefully, be taken from the Survey currently being conducted by Dr George Boyce to extend and update Marianne Elliott's 1986 Survey. This can then be used by students to identify degree programmes and components when making their undergraduate and post-graduate choices.

David Cairns
Hon Secretary