

## Executive Director's Report to the Annual General Meeting of the British Association for Irish Studies

As the Chair and Vice-Chair will report to you, a major development since the last AGM has been the gift of £50,000 a year over three years by Allied Irish Bank to BAIS to support the posts of Executive Director of BAIS and AIB Director of the Joint Education Programme. With this gift Allied Irish Bank became the Founding Corporate Patron of BAIS. A sum of £8,500 has also been made available to BAIS by the American Ireland Fund to assist with the running costs of the organisation.

With the adoption of a BAIS logo, the preparation of a new mission statement, and the commissioning of a professionally designed brochure, the evolution of BAIS's corporate identity has reached a further stage of development. Funding by a premier financial institution has raised the profile of BAIS considerably. A number of our patrons are now actively involved in assisting BAIS in its fundraising campaign. Past experience indicates that approaches now underway will take time to reach a conclusion, but the factors mentioned above mean that the Association is in a better position to pursue its objectives with regard to fundraising than it was a year ago.

The Association should draw encouragement from the welcome given to the development of Irish Studies in the UFC's Report of the Working Party on Celtic Studies. The recognition in the report that "Celtic languages and cultural traditions...constitute a vital part of our heritage, not only in Cornwall, Ireland, the Isle of Man, Scotland and Wales, but also in England which has an age-old and substantial admixture of people of Celtic extraction", is a welcome one. BAIS members will be especially pleased at the recommendation of the report that the "unique Chair of Irish at Aberystwyth" be preserved.

The two A/S levels, developed under the Joint Education Programme, "History, Literature and the Irish Identity, 1890-1926" and "The Irish in Great Britain, 1815-1914" (which together constitute an "A" level in Modern Irish History), have now been adopted by the Joint Matriculation Board and are ready for take-up in schools. The Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool University has held a number of in-service training courses under the Joint Education Programme, and in-service training under the Joint Education Programme at a number of centres throughout Great Britain will obviously be a priority in the coming year. The appointment of Dr Roger Swift as AIB Director of the Joint Education Programme both raises the profile of the Programme itself and provides it with full-time central co-ordination.

A new initiative successfully undertaken by BAIS in March of this year was the series of three Sixth Form Conferences which took place in Northern Ireland on Special Paper 6 of the "A" level History Syllabus: "Ireland c 1912 - c 1923". The conferences, which were organised in co-operation with the Northern Ireland Department of education, were attended by some 300 students and

their teachers. The lecturers were BAIS members Professor David Harkness and Drs George Boyce and Michael Laffan, as well as Dr Tom Fraser of Ulster University. The format of the conferences proved popular with both teachers and students, who have expressed the hope that this initiative will continue.

Due to the initiative of Siobhán Uí Néill, recipient of an Irish Post award this year, a series of Irish language examinations has been developed by BAIS in co-operation with the Institute of Linguists and the first candidates took these examinations in March. In May the Association was able to announce the institution of BAIS/Gael-Linn scholarships to send adult learners of Irish in Great Britain to language courses in the Irish Gaeltacht. Three Irish-language students from Britain spent a fortnight on the much praised Oideas Gael course in co. Donegal in July, as a result. BAIS has benefited greatly from the activity of this subcommittee in terms of publicity and the generation of goodwill towards BAIS.

The Association continues to be associated with the annual National Conference on Irish Dimensions in Education, organised by the Irish Studies Workshop co-ordinated at Soar Valley College, Leicester, by Nessel Danaher. BAIS financially supports this conference and there was a substantial BAIS input to the very successful 6th National Conference in February of this year. It was through the good offices of Nessel Danaher, also, that BAIS was associated with an essay competition for undergraduates announced by Bord Fáilte Éireann in May.

The BAIS Autumn Lecture Series took place at Liverpool, where it was hosted by the Institute of Irish Studies, during November 1988. The theme was "Images of Ireland" and the programme was as follows: Henry Kelly on "The Media and Ireland", Eileán Ní Chuilleanáin on "Poetry and Women in Contemporary Ireland", Bill Morrison on "The Playwright and Ireland", Anne Crookshank on "The Artist and Ireland", and George Watson on "Growing up in Northern Ireland". George Watson again worked quietly behind the scenes with the staff of the Institute in devising and co-ordinating the series. The Association is grateful to the Institute of Irish Studies at Liverpool University for hosting the lectures on its behalf.

BAIS has continued to develop relations with equivalent bodies in other countries. George Watson, who was then teaching in the United States, represented BAIS at the Annual Conference of ACIS (American Committee for Irish Studies). In May the Vice-Chair and the Executive Director attended the symposium "L'Irlande et la Révolution Française" in Paris, on behalf of the Association and discussed possible areas of co-operation with members of the Committee of SOFEIR (Société Française d'Études Irlandaises).

Paid-up membership of BAIS now stands at approximately 255.

Since the last AGM the Officers have met on five occasions (27 January, 28 April, 16 May, 9 June, 8 July) and the Executive on two (1 February, 8 July).

The reports of Convenors of Subcommittees which will be put before you separately, will indicate a further range of BAIS activities.

Despite the tightness of its budget, the Association has continued to initiate activity in a number of areas during the year and has maintained the range of services to members in terms of distribution of publications. The employment of a full-time official gives BAIS an improved opportunity to maintain contact with those individuals seeking to develop Irish Studies at various levels and, thus, to fulfill its co-ordinating role within the Irish Studies movement.

On the occasion of the biennial conference of the Association, at which this AGM takes place, it is appropriate to thank the BAIS Conference Secretary, Jonathan Moore, and the Local Conference Secretary, Harvey Cox, for all their efforts in organising this conference. The thanks of the Association are also due to Linda Christiansen, secretary of the Institute of Irish Studies for her hard work behind the scenes throughout the period running up to the conference, which has contributed in no small measure to the success of the occasion.

Seán Hutton  
7 September 1989