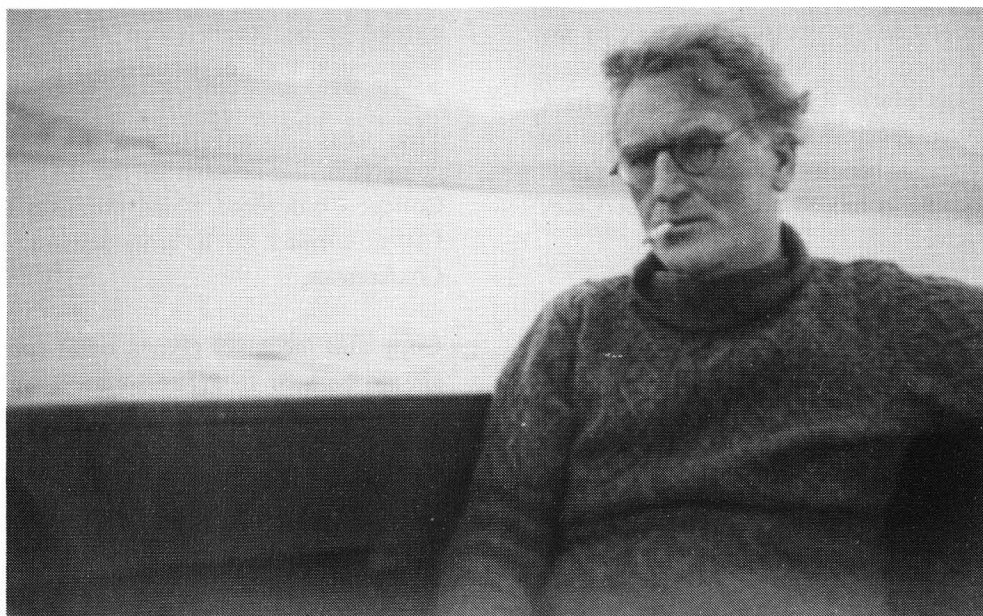


British Association for Irish Studies

Newsletter

ISSUE NO. 15 JULY 1998



ERNIE O'MALLEY – IRA INTELLECTUAL ?

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APPLICATION FORM FOR BAIS ONE DAY CONFERENCE

AT RUSKIN COLLEGE OXFORD

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Editorial

A change to the Newsletter is the replacement of a team of co-editors by one editor. This new state of affairs happened as a result of resignations due to pressure of work by my former co-editors – Madeleine Casey, Mary Doran and Marie Ryan – all of whom have contributed generously to recent issues of the Newsletter and hopefully will continue to report occasionally, as indeed does Madeleine Casey in this issue.

My chief concern as the Newsletter Editor is to aim at creating working partnerships with a range of BAIS correspondents throughout the land who are willing to report on Irish Studies events and activities of all kinds. Please contact me if you are prepared to become such a correspondent and/or send in your reports and/or items for the Noticeboard.

I am very grateful to all the contributors in this issue especially to Richard English, Reader in Politics at Queen's University Belfast, who agreed to be interviewed about his new biographical study of Ernie O'Malley.

The next Newsletter will feature a comprehensive account of the BAIS Ruskin College Conference which promises to be a fitting climax to a long season of '98 Conferences.

Copy and /or discs (Word 6/95) for No.16 should be sent to Jerry Nolan 8 Antrobus Road Chiswick London W4 5HY by 12 October 1998

Jerry Nolan (Editor)

BAIS RUSKIN COLLEGE APPLICATION FORM

Please return this booking slip to The Conference Convenor, Eleanor Burgess, Mulberries, Boreham, Chelmsford, Essex CM3 3DS. (Cheques/Postal Orders ONLY to BAIS).

COST (inclusive of lunch and refreshments) £30-00 ; BAIS Members £25-00; Students £20-00. Please note that there will be a discount of £5-00 allowed for registration before August 14th, 1998.

NAME.....

ADDRESS.....

.....Telephone.....

I wish to book.....places for the Conference. I enclose cheque/postal order in the sum of £.....
No. of Pupils Places.....BAIS member Yes/No (please indicate).....

Please note any special dietary requirements.....

Overnight accommodation can be arranged at extra cost by contacting Roger Sealy, Events Officer at Ruskin College. Telephone 01865 554331.

See page 11 for full details.

FOCUS INTERVIEW: RICHARD ENGLISH

Ernie O'Malley (1898-1957), a prominent IRA leader during the 1916-1923 Irish Revolution, left a classic autobiographical account of that violent period in *On Another Man's Wound* (1936); Further accounts were published posthumously as *The Singing Flame* (1978) and *Raid and Rallies* (1982). When he began to travel extensively in Europe and the Americas from 1925, O'Malley's interests moved far beyond the perspective of militant republicanism to encompass a wide range of writing projects, with his introduction to the catalogue of the Dublin exhibition of Jack B. Yeats pictures in 1945 as the most memorable highlight. In 1991 the historian Richard English co-edited with O'Malley's son Cormac *Prisoners: The Civil War Letters of Ernie O'Malley*. Now in the Preface to his biographical study *Ernie O'Malley: IRA Intellectual* (Clarendon Press, 1998), Richard English concludes that "O'Malley is...as personally compelling as he is historically and politically relevant. He is a world-historical witness of modern Irish history." Richard has very kindly agreed to discuss with Jerry Nolan the background to this strongly argued thesis.

JN: You mention the key importance of O'Malley's childhood as a member of a large Catholic middle-class family at first in County Mayo and then in Dublin where Ernie was a medical student in 1916. Would you say something about how this childhood contained the seeds of O'Malley's later twin romanticisms – political republicanism and cosmopolitan culture?

RE: There was a family friendship with John MacBride whose execution in 1916 much provoked O'Malley to great rage against the post 1916 executions. In spite of being friends of MacBride, the O'Malley family were out of sympathy with the Irish republican tradition. O'Malley's earliest republican impulses became part of an adolescent revolt against his socially ambitious middle class parents. O'Malley's older brother Frank who joined the British army was another strong early influence. O'Malley had thought about following Frank into the British army before he became a medical student. The great appeal of a professional and efficient soldiery was to resurface when O'Malley joined the IRA. O'Malley's passion for cosmopolitan culture was very early fostered by his mother who did much to encourage reading and learning in the O'Malley family home.

JN: The nature of O'Malley's Anglophobia was made clear in his contempt for Redmond's Irish Party and his rapid adoption of an uncompromising and rigid IRA idealism. I was quite intrigued by your reference to Sir Patrick Mayhew's praise in 1992 for O'Malley's appreciation of Britain's cultural riches. Why was Sir Patrick so beguiled by what you term O'Malley's Anglocentrism?

RE: What actually happened in 1992 was that one of Sir Patrick's civil servants read the Civil War Letters of O'Malley which I had just edited and was struck by the unexpected fact that O'Malley had had a great love of English Literature. The civil servant who wrote the speech used O'Malley as a peg to convey a message from the British Government to Irish Republicans as the peace process was unfolding. The main message was there was no inevitable conflict between Irish and English cultural traditions, if an IRA hero like O'Malley so loved English Literature. This is what Sir Patrick Mayhew was trying to convey in that speech at Coleraine, probably not very convincingly!

JN: You outline the considerable impact made on O'Malley by his travels in places like France, Italy, Spain, New Mexico and New York during the late 1920s. Was there much more than an Irish magpie at play here? Is there any evidence that O'Malley tried to integrate these eclectic influences into an holistic personal view of the world?

RE: O'Malley was very interested in many local cultures. While he felt that you needed to cherish what was locally distinctive, he also believed that each local culture had to be evaluated by comparison with others. The solitary nature of these travels stimulated him to challenge himself. On the physical level, he forced himself to climb mountains while he was recovering from his serious revolutionary injuries. On the spiritual level, he visited many museums and churches in search of examples of local art which he could set beside examples of Irish culture back home.

JN: On his return to Ireland in 1935, O'Malley was very warmly greeted by his old friends in Fianna Fail who must have been overjoyed by the London publication of *On Another Man's Wound* in 1936. His refusal to become politically active among friends continues to puzzle me. Are you suggesting that O'Malley made a conscious decision at some stage to work always outside established political structures?

RE: Even when O'Malley was elected as a republican TD in 1923, he felt very uneasy at the prospect of a party political career in Ireland. The enthusiasm of Fianna Fail party officials in the late 1930s failed to persuade him to become a TD. There was something in O'Malley's temperament which made him feel that he should continue to occupy the high ground of romantic republicanism and to disdain the political compromises which were the inevitable price paid by a parliamentary politician. The fact is that O'Malley had very little interest in politics as such. His vast collection of books contained no books about politics. His literary legacy shows that he never attempted to be a political thinker. Again it was a question of seeing himself as a lone troubled figure on the Irish scene.

JN: You mention O'Malley's art collecting which seems to have been made possible by his wife's money. Just how discerning was his taste in buying pictures and other art objects? Were there any interesting developments in his thinking about art collecting over the years?

RE: His wife Helen not only had the money but a great passion for art collecting which O'Malley learned from her. Their years of collecting together formed one of the most positive aspects of their relationship during the happy years of great intimacy before the marriage tragically broke down. O'Malley developed a very sharp eye under Helen's influence and became capable of brilliant insights into the work of Jack Yeats. He owned and loved two of Yeats' masterpieces "Death for Only One" and "On a Train for Sligo".

JN: I remember reading in Padraic O'Farrell's little book about the offer in 1979 of the O'Malley Loan Collection to County Mayo. The collection was reported as consisting of paintings, sculptures, oriental and south Asian objects, North American Indian objects, photographs, stained glass, metals, textiles,

costumes, rugs. Why did Mayo turn down such an extraordinary offer? What actually happened to the collection which was meant to form the O'Malley Memorial Museum in the county of his birth?

RE: Plans for the Mayo O'Malley Museum fell through because Helen had a dispute with the local council about the site. Luckily Helen was determined to honour Ernie's memory in Ireland, and eventually the O'Malley Art Collection which contains pictures by artists such as le Brocq, Maillol and Modigliani was acquired by the Dublin's Museum of Modern Art. There are also parts of the O'Malley Collection in the University of Limerick. The whole of the O'Malley Collection is best seen as a celebration of the moments of closest affinity between Ernie and Helen.

JN: Apart from acquiring his art collection, O'Malley reviewed and wrote about art. Would these writings, if collected, add up to a sustained and convincing view of art? Or would much of his writing about art, with the possible exception of his interpretation of Jack Yeats, now strike a reader as little more than fragmented routine journalism?

RE: When I started working on the O'Malley Papers, I had hoped to find many in-depth pieces about the arts. Now I have to admit that O'Malley's reflections are somewhat fragmented and were never really developed into sustained pieces of well argued writing. Changing fashions in critical commentary now make O'Malley's approach seem quite dated. In spite of this disappointment, I still find his writings (many of them still unpublished) about the arts of enormous interest as an important part of his emotional and intellectual development which is ultimately bound up with his very individually distinctive position in the Irish society of his times.

JN: Surely the most obvious forum for somebody like O'Malley with his strong interest in Irish art was not *The Bell* but *The Capuchin Annual* where in the 1940s cultural nationalists like Tom MacGreevy wrote with confidence and eloquence. In the context of *The Capuchin Annual*, O'Malley would have seemed much less of a solitary and isolated voice. Why did O'Malley avoid *The Capuchin Annual* when

even the editor Father Senan was a well-known republican sympathiser?

RE: It comes back to my earlier point about O'Malley feeling solitary and wanting to be solitary. He knew Tom MacGreevy well and liked him greatly; yet he deliberately chose to live in Mayo where he was necessarily remote from the arts which he loved. He used to complain to MacGreevy about living so far away from exhibitions, yet he continued to live apart. He was associated with the Irish Academy of Letters and the Bibliographical Society of Ireland, yet he remained the "lone eagle", as one of his friends in New Mexico once described him.

JN: In spite of your intended portrait of Ernie O'Malley as an Intellectual in the Edward Said mode, what I take away from your study is a very strong impression of a Romantic republican with an eccentric interest in the arts of the world. O'Malley spent the last ten years of his life utterly dedicated not to writing about the arts but about the fine details of Republican local military history (1916-1923) as he worked on his grand project of interviewing hundreds of surviving veterans and of filling up notebook after notebook with quotations from the period newspapers about IRA military campaigns. Given all that evidence, in addition to his Sunday Press articles and Radio Eireann broadcasts about the same project, how do you even begin to prove that O'Malley ever outgrew emotionally and intellectually a crippling obsession with his republican past as the heroic peak of life's achievement?

RE: You are right about what O'Malley considered to be the highpoint of his life. He never wanted to outgrow those early formative feelings of the young revolutionary. He continued to see life through the eyes of his youth. The important point to grasp is that O'Malley was a republican in the 1950s just as he was a republican in the 1920s. Only his personal circumstances had changed through time. In the 1950s all that he could do was express his republicanism through words, perhaps in the hope of inspiring deeds in others much younger than himself. I feel that O'Malley's deep opposition to British colonial rule in Ireland which he placed at the centre of his autobiographical writings entitles him to be

discussed in the perspective of Edward Said's "Intellectual" who subverts and replaces colonial repressive attitudes.

JN: You trail a most provocative comment about Irish Republicanism being both sustained and subverted by O'Malley's autobiographies. I find it very difficult to subscribe to your subversion theory. Perhaps the sad truth is that, however wide O'Malley's interests were, he failed to fulfil his full promise as a published writer when he died just under sixty because he had hardly begun to explore his personal feelings for a cosmopolitan culture, to set alongside those beautifully crafted poetic accounts of his IRA idealism in military action?

RE: Certainly O'Malley did the reading and the research and kept hundreds of notebooks which testify to the range of his ideas and interests. He could have, perhaps should have, written about writers like Hart Crane who became great friends. There is no doubt in my mind that he deliberately chose not to do so because what he really wanted to write about was his experiences as a leading IRA officer. What we can read and treasure today are the autobiographical writings. I would argue strongly that what sharply characterises those writings is the undercurrent of genuine subversion in the telling. O'Malley's republicanism did not spring from a response to IRA propaganda. Within his revolutionary impulse, he uncovers layers of sceptical response towards the influence of parents, towards the weight of a stagnant society, towards daily soul destroying restrictions. Such a level of reflection and doubt accompanied by a vision of cultural freedom is missing from the memoirs of other IRA activists of the period such as Tom Barry and Dan Breen. That beautifully expressed subversive voice in O'Malley can still challenge young Irish republicans who are first attracted by the romantic accounts of heroic deeds. For some of my students at Queen's O'Malley is a great cult figure.

Irish Studies at Bath Spa University College – A Personal View

It was pure good luck that I happened to notice the flyer for the Irish Studies MA on a noticeboard in Bath. I had just retired from what felt like a lifetime of teaching and was more than ready to go back to being a student. And it would be interesting to see to what extent the Irish history I had been taught in Dublin 50 years ago tallied with historical thinking today.

I was interviewed with another mature student, who had just finished a course on labour history at Ruskin College. My own lack of historical knowledge appeared not to matter. Irish Studies at what was then Bath College of Higher Education (and is now Bath Spa University College) caters for most ages, nationalities and interests, and our group included new history graduates, a German education student spending a year out in England, middle-aged career professionals looking to their Irish roots or others simply widening their interests, like me. Most of us did the course over two years, part-time – some of the young ones managed it in a year, but it was tough.

There are four modules in the course, two of which, "Politics, Literature and Society 1848-1916" and "Literature and Society in Modern Ireland 1916-", are compulsory. It was the choice of optional modules that attracted me as much as anything, with a wide range of different academic disciplines to be tasted – geography, literature, media studies, women's history. In fact, of course, as one only does two of them, and there are clashes, the choice is relatively limited – I got "Becoming Citizens: Irish Women in the Nineteenth and early Twentieth Centuries" but not my literature choice, which was initially a disappointment, although its replacement, "Colonial Ireland: Cromwell to Wolf Tone", soon removed my regrets. (Literature modules are back on the course now, and future students will be offered choices from Swift in the Age of Satire, through Irish Gothic to Irish Writing 1890-1930.)

The structure of the course does, in fact, make it possible to follow literary interests, or, indeed, any interest one may have which is relevant to Ireland – a dissertation has been done on football in Ireland, and others on art and folk music are on the way. There are ten 3-hour sessions to each

module, each of them consisting of a lecture by the tutor, followed by discussion, study of documents and/or a pupils presentation. Possible topics for presentations are provided, but the most interesting ones in our group tended to be on subjects chosen by the presenter.

The course of lectures, with assessed presentations and essays, leads to the Diploma. For the MA we added a dissertation of around 25,000 words. We faced the task with some trepidation. A general meeting with tutors convinced us, despite their supreme tact, that the topics we were considering were possibly too wide/too narrow/too difficult to research in the time available/ too over-worked already/too underdocumented, but we did all end up with a topic and a tutor with the topics ranging from Burke and the slave trade, prostitution in Ireland in the nineteenth century, the novels of Annie M.P. Smithson and Rosamund Jacob (mine) to Gerry Fitt. At least one of us will be going on to do further study.

Irish Studies at Bath Spa University College are not, however, just the Diploma and MA courses. There are, for instance, undergraduate I.S. modules which are increasingly popular. One of the aspects I particularly appreciated was the tutors' total commitment not just to their courses and their publishing but to a general furthering of interest in all things Irish. They organise an annual series of public lectures on Irish themes – my two years included "The Irish in Britain" and "Irish Women: Images and Achievement". Bath Spa is also the home of the famous *Irish Studies Review*.

Then there is the annual study trip to Ireland for undergraduates and postgraduates. My trip to Dublin included the usual sight-seeing for those who didn't already know the city, a chance for those about to start dissertations to learn the workings of the National Library and Archives and to chase up contacts, an excursion to Avonmore, the house of the Parnell family, and to Glendalough – and an immersion course in the delights of Temple Bar. All in all, it was a very good two years!

Danae O'Regan

A report on the first conference of the Women on Ireland Network at St Mary's University College, Strawberry Hill, 26th and 27th June 1998.

At the Irish Embassy, gold-leaved in the evening sun, we were drawn to sit by the Ambassador's tongue. A warm welcome for the Women on Ireland Network's delegates ensued, punctuated by greetings from Mo Mowlam, in Belfast on more pressing business. We sat listening and laughing as Martina Evans engaged us with her poems and an extract from her latest novel. Mary Dorcey's readings were touching and thought provoking on the mother and daughter relationship from birth to old age, and the thrill of new lovers. Wine-warmed, we networked then, matching faces to familiar names: connecting in the convivial atmosphere which permeated this conference.

In the Gothic surroundings of St Mary's University College, the day of the conference began with a welcome to St Mary's by its Vice-Principle, Mary Eaton. The Network's Chair, Kathy Cremin (University of York), thanked all those who had made the event possible. Mary Doran from the British Library then introduced Christine Kinealy (University of Central Lancashire) who gave the first plenary entitled 'Victoria: the Famine Queen'. Christine's wittily acerbic paper demolished Victoria as effectively as did the people who removed her statues from Irish towns following the establishment of the Free State. The realisation of how patronising and paltry her offerings of relief were to Ireland's famine victims had long been lore and was made manifest as these stone effigies disappeared from town squares if not from people's memories.

The twenty-four papers presented in three parallel sessions were as varied as they were linked by the common theme of Irish women. Topics included: the poetry of Maeve McGuckian; representations of female desire in three recent plays; the contemporary Irish women's movement; women involved in the housing policies of the newly established Free State; gender politics in cinema; women seasonal migratory agricultural workers in Scotland at the turn of this century; Maeve de Markievicz's obscure life in the shadow of her famous mother. A refrain of the day was how well papers were chosen for each session, eliciting links that made

for stimulating discussions.

Ailbhe Smyth gave the second plenary although not the one she had planned. She spoke to the assembled delegates of the importance of this Network at this important time for Ireland. Describing the massive changes that have taken place in Irish society in recent times, she also spoke of the myriad injustices against women, whether working in academic institutions or in prostitution, which were daily occurrences. Her plea was for women scholars to redefine what academia is about, for their studies to be expansive, provocative, disobedient and open: crossing borders physical, mental, emotional. Ailbhe Smyth's plenary was as inspirational to those of us actively researching as to those of us currently resting on our honours.

The most moving part of the day was when Gareth Peirce, solicitor to Roisin McAliskey, came to give the final plenary in the late afternoon. A quietly spoken woman, her face etched with the grimness of the sights she must see, Gareth Peirce took us from the academic to the visceral as she described her client's long, gruelling, inhuman, unjust incarceration in this country's penal system. With uncompromising directness, Gareth expressed how what happened to Roisin continues unabated to women and men without the massive ground level and high-ranking support received by her client. In a concluding sentence, which surely echoes back to the Famine Queen, Gareth said that this appalling personal experience for Roisin McAliskey was an utter disgrace to this country.

Following the final parallel session of papers, this extraordinary day came to a close in the local pub. As six o'clock Saturday rain fell, an enthusiasm of women, full of their personal and collective triumphs, occupied what had been the pub's quiet space and celebrated.

Madeleine Casey

FOINSE AND THE BOUNDARY COMMISSION

On 5th April there appeared a provocative view in the Irish language weekly newspaper, *Foinse*. It claimed that the government of the Irish Free State, as it was then, cynically betrayed the Catholic nationalists of the Six Counties in 1925. For this it was said to have received a write-off of some millions of sterling which was due to Britain under the provisions of the Treaty of 1921. This view has often been brought up elsewhere over the years.

The perpetrators of the alleged misdeed in 1925 were named and shamed in the *Foinse* article. All of them were founding fathers of the new Irish state. All had earned their spurs, pre-1916, in the Irish Volunteers. Later they were members of Sinn Féin during its decisive general election victory in favour of republicanism in 1918. Two were Ulstermen. The list includes William T. Cosgrave, Ernest Blythe, Desmond Fitzgerald, Patrick McGilligan and Kevin O'Higgins.

It is still worthwhile attempting to establish what actually happened in the context of the Boundary Commission and Clause 12 of the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 6th December, 1921.

Michael Collins, Arthur Griffith and Eamonn Duggan would never have signed the Treaty without having those two safeguards in place for the Catholic Nationalists of the North. Their conviction was that the Commission and the Clause would eventually give Fermanagh, Tyrone, South Armagh and South Derry to the jurisdiction of new Irish Free State, as all those areas had strongly Nationalist majorities. As it turned out, the two safeguards failed to deliver what Collins and his team had envisaged. What happened in fact was that the Nationalists of those counties were subjected to gerrymandering, the loss of proportional representation in local and parliamentary elections and the discrimination which was to lead to the bloodshed seen in Northern Ireland over many years.

The Boundary Commission, when it met in 1925, had three members. Professor Eoin McNeill represented Dublin; J.R. Fisher stood for Belfast; the Chairman was Supreme Court Judge Feetham from South Africa who represented the Commonwealth. Michael Collins and Arthur Griffith were long dead by then. The Commission

met in London. There was an immediate bombshell for the Irish when Judge Feetham refused to interpret Clause 12 as the Irish delegation at the time of the 1921 Treaty had interpreted it. Great pressure, it is claimed, was put on Feetham not to yield, probably from extreme Conservatives like Lord Birkenhead. No Six-County territory would be ceded to Dublin's government. Orangemen threatened to "play hell" if an inch of "Ulster soil" was surrendered. Out-voted, Professor McNeill resigned in disgust. The Treaty was, in effect, broken. Its signatories had been double-crossed. Many Irish people, and indeed many English people, were indignant. It was a betrayal equal to Limerick in 1691, Catholic Emancipation in 1801, and the Curragh Mutiny in 1914. Stanley Baldwin, Conservative British Prime Minister tried unsuccessfully to obtain satisfactory compensation for Ireland. Thus was a great injustice institutionalised.

Short of going to war with the world's most powerful Empire, there were few options left for Cosgrave and his Cabinet. The new Irish government decided to use its power to build up the new Irish state: an unarmed police, an army, the Irish language in the civil service, the Shannon hydro-electric scheme, the three beet-sugar factories, the Hogan project in farming ("one more cow, one more sow, one more acre under the plough"), positive membership of the Commonwealth, an active role in the League of Nations. Soon Kevin O'Higgins was helping to shape the Statute of Westminster and to reform the Commonwealth: all of which invaluable work paved the way for the abolition of the Oath in 1933, the constitution in 1937, the maintenance of neutrality in World War II and the establishment of the Republic of Ireland in 1949.

Perhaps all of us Irish, especially *Foinse*, should try to understand the misfortune of the Boundary Commission and the courageous pragmatism of Cosgrave's cabinet in the dark days of 1925.

Charles O'Beirne (on behalf of the Irish Language Group, Cambridge)

REPORT ON BAIS AWAY DAY

The purpose of the "away Day" was to enable National Council members to take a more measured view of the recent progress of BAIS and to share ideas on future developments, free from the constraints of Council business.

The review of recent developments suggested that the focus on delivery of a range of services to members has assisted the Association's escape from the shadow of a turbulent history and the initiation of a new, constructive phase of development. Funding had been placed on a stable basis and improved procedures for

financial monitoring and accounting were in place. Membership was stable at about 250-300, though recruitment just about balanced wastage. While the membership renewal procedure, and that for welcoming new members, had been improved, it was felt that the Association needed to continue to give attention to issues around recruitment and retention of members. The interdisciplinary and inclusive nature of the membership was thought to be gratifying, but the geographical concentration on London and the South East was noted with some concern.

BAIS Developments which promised well for the future included:

- (a) successful lecture series in London and Manchester;**
- (b) the association with IRISH STUDIES REVIEW in its new stage of development with Carfax publishers;**
- (c) the BAIS NEWSLETTER;**
- (d) partnerships in the organisation of events, e.g. with the University of Salford in 1997 and Ruskin College in 1998;**
- (e) the development of a BAIS website;**
- (f) BAIS funding support for the new "Women on Ireland" Network.**

There was no shortage of ideas for future projects. Suggestions included BAIS bursaries and awards in association with centres of Irish Studies; organisation of lectures series in association with local BAIS members and Irish Studies Centres; an "occasional paper" series in the BAIS NEWSLETTER.

However, it was recognised that such ideas could not be developed in isolation but needed to be part of a carefully thought out Development Plan covering the next few years. Such a plan would give the Association a sense of coherence and

direction and the promotional focus needed for funding. But any development also had serious human resource implications – i.e. who would do the work? In a situation where many members were under heavy and growing pressures from their full-time jobs, some opportunities were not being followed up.

The Council have shared their thoughts with you – constructive responses would be very welcome.

Mervyn Busteed and Sean Hutton

REPORT: IRISH TEXTS SOCIETY CELEBRATES CENTENARY

The Irish Texts Society (ITS) – *Cumann na Scribheann nGaedhilge* – was founded in London on 26 April 1898, originating from a sub-committee of the London-based Irish Literary Society (ILS). The activities of the ITS, the ILS and the London branch of the Gaelic League evidenced the vibrancy of Irish cultural life in London at that period; and it was fitting therefore that members of the ILS and the Gaelic League should have joined us at the Irish Club in London's Eaton Square on 25 April 1998 for a wine reception to celebrate the Society's centenary. The attendance included the grandson of R. Barry O'Brien, who presided at the inaugural meeting.

Speakers at the reception were the Irish Ambassador, Ted Barrington, ITS President Professor Pádraig Ó Riain, Professor Raymond Chapman (chair of the ILS) and Marianne Ling (Vice-Chair of the Irish Club). The founders of the Society were recalled: Tomás Ó Flannghaile, Professor F. York Powell, Alfred Nutt, Eleanor

Hull and Douglas Hyde among them. Professor Ó Riain also drew attention to the Society's achievement – Dineen's Irish-English Dictionary, a main series of 57 volumes of Irish texts and translations, and a Subsidiary Series, initiated in 1993, of supporting and associated materials.

A reprint of Volume 1 in the ITS main series, two romantic tales edited and translated by Douglas Hyde, with a new introduction by Dr. Marie Ní Mhaonaigh, was launched to mark the centenary. "Irish Texts Society: the first 100 Years" was launched at a reception in Dublin on 3 July as a further part of the centenary celebrations.

Sean Hutton, Honorary Secretary of ITS

Catalogue and details of membership available from: The Irish Texts Society, c/o The Royal Bank of Scotland plc, Drummonds Branch, 49 Charing Cross, London SW1A 2DX

REPORT: 1798 AND IRISH REPUBLICANISM-MEMORIES AND REALITIES

This was the title of the Cambridge Group for Irish Studies 1998 Symposium in the Fitzpatrick Hall at Queen's College on Saturday 21st March. The Cambridge Backs had carpets of yellow and white daffodils beneath the soft haze of pale green from the burgeoning trees for the seventy or so participants to enjoy.

The previous afternoon, as a prelude, about thirty of them gathered round a table in the Munro Room in the old part of the College for a seminar on "The Irish Rebellion of 1798: the International Contexts". Kevin Whelan set the pace and tone in his paper "The Glorious American, French and Irish Revolutions; the context of 1798". Starting with England in 1688, he showed how they were all inspired by the same ideals and why, after three successes, Ireland's failed. Maurice Bric of UCD spoke about the United Irishmen in America and the evolution of the first party system. After tea, Tom Bartlett gave a rivetting account of "Informers, Informants and Information: the Intelligence wars in the 1790s" which traced the reasons for 1798 failure in Ireland. That evening Brendan Bradshaw and Eamon Duffy hosted a candlelight dinner at

Magdalen College. Guests included the Irish Ambassador and his cultural attache, the Irish Minister of Education, and myself representing BAIS. At the coffee, port and whisky stage of the feast, Brendan Bradshaw made an impassioned plea for funding of Irish Studies at Cambridge.

Next day a series of outstanding speakers explored the events, personalities and legacies of the ill-fated uprising: Tom Bartlett who portrayed and evaluated Wolf Tone; Tommy Graham who gave a very informative account of the United Irishmen organisation, north and south; Daire Keogh who analysed the Catholic Church's reaction to 1790s radicalism; Jim Smyth who detailed the Protestant reaction to 1790s radicalism. After tea, Kevin Whelan concluded the symposium by speaking about "'98 after '98: Memories and Realities". Evening entertainments were provided in Queen's Bar for those who stayed on to be brought back gently to the present-day world.

Eleanor Burgess

REPORT: WHO FEARS TO SPEAK OF '98 ?

The principal London event to mark the two hundredth anniversary of the United Irishmen's Rebellion of 1798 was a meeting in the Irish Club on 14th May at which the key speakers were Professor Thomas Bartlett, Professor of Modern Irish History at University College, Dublin and Dr. Kevin Whelan, the Dublin Director of Notre Dame University and Head of the Centre for Irish Studies. Both speakers were making a tour of a number of centres in Britain and Ireland sponsored by the official celebration committee and the opening speaker at the London meeting was Mr. Seamus Brennan T.D., Minister of State in the Taoiseach's Department, who was representing that committee.

The London meeting was organised by BAIS in conjunction with the Irish Literary Society and produced a greater attendance than any similar event in recent years. Indeed it was standing room only. Sean Hutton, chair of BAIS, who presided explained that for domestic reasons at the Club it all took place against the background of a tropical beach which gave rise to all kinds of symbolical, not to say post-modernist speculations about the proceedings.

The two main talks were designed to be complementary. Professor Bartlett dealt in broad and masterly detail with the rebels' military campaigns in the four main areas of conflict, the North-east, the South-east, the West and, most crucial and most disastrous of all, Dublin. He analysed the reasons for the lack of cohesion and for the tactical failures of the rebel leaders, especially in Wexford, where the relative strategic value of certain towns, particularly New Ross, had been fatally miscalculated.

Dr. Whelan was less concerned with the details of the rebellion itself than with the historiography which it had inspired and with the influence of its aftermath on the Ireland of the following two centuries. He charted the transformation of Irish republicanism

from the pluralism of the United Irishmen into the largely Catholic forms that we have inherited today. The Union, itself essentially produced by the rebellion, had given constructive hope to many of its advocates. However, the refusal of George III to follow it with Catholic Emancipation had shocked Pitt and others into resignation and paved the way for the campaigns of O'Connell. These further identified nationalism with Catholicism and by giving encouragement to the development of the recently created Orange Order finally destroyed any hope of resurrecting the interdenominational republicanism that had fired the United Irishmen.

Whelan discerned three new post-'98 strains in Irish historiography, life and politics : the Anglican, rejoicing in the Union which had confirmed its privileges, the Catholic, combating those privileges and the Presbyterian, still begrudging the Anglicans their dominance but also embracing a new and virulent anti-Catholicism.

The talks were followed by a lively question time and reception when many of the stimulating ideas that had been floated were pursued in greater detail particularly by the Wexford men and women who were as prominent on the platform as in the audience.

BOB BELL

NOTICE BOARD

Details of the British Association of Irish Studies one day conference in association with Ruskin College and History Ireland.

IRISH REVOLUTIONARIES AND BRITISH RADICALS

At Ruskin College, Walton Street, Oxford (near Bus and Rail Stations) on Saturday, September 12th 1998.

PROGRAMME

- 09.15 Registration
09.45 Welcome by **Jim Durcan**, Principal of Ruskin College
10.00 **Kevin Whelan** (Notre Dame / Dublin)
Three Revolutions and a Failure: 1798 Rebellion in context.
10.30 **Bob Purdie** (Ruskin College)
The Trial of Maurice Margarot: English, Scottish and Irish Radicals in 1792
11.00 Coffee
11.30 **Virginia Crossman** (Staffordshire University)
Theobald Wolfe Tone and the Commemoration of 1798.
12.00 **Gillian O'Brien**, (Institute of Irish Studies, Liverpool)
Samuel Nielson and the *Northern Star*
12.30 **Tommy Graham**, (Trinity College Dublin)
Dublin '98
13.00 Lunch
14.00 **Stephen Howe**, (Ruskin College)
Two Island Revolutions: Malta and Ireland 1798

PARALLEL SESSIONS

- | | | |
|---------------|---|--|
| 14.30 | Michael de Nie (Winsconsin-Madison University)
"The French Disease", the British press and 1798 | Gary Peatling (Oxford University)
Positivists and Irish History:
Radicals and the Heritage of the
1798 Rising. |
| 15.00 | Anthony Breen (University of East Anglia)
Carlow 1798 | Kevin Bean (Institute of Irish
Studies, Liverpool)
Revising the Rising? Contemporary
Republicanism and 1798 |
| 15.30 | Nessan Danahar (Soar Valley College)
Leicestershire and the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798 | Caroline Davies (Institute of Irish
Studies)
"Who fears to speak of '98?" The
loyalist perspective of 1798. |
| 16.00 | Tea | |
| 16.30 | Panel Discussion chaired by Bob Purdie
Why commemorate 1798? | |
| 17.30 onwards | to the neighbouring public house, Jude the Obscure for informal Irish music. | |

NOTICEBOARD

NEW FEDERATION OF IRISH SOCIETIES PUBLICATIONS

The Health of the Irish in Britain: the Report of a Community Conference (Price £5 + 75p p&p)

This is the report of a major conference organised by the Federation of Irish Societies and SHARE Project at the King's Fund in November 1996, which brought together Irish community organisations and purchasers and providers of health and social care services. Reports of workshops on mental health issues, alcohol and drug abuse, older people and health promotion

highlight best practice and contain a series of recommendations from the workshops directed to health care commissioners and Irish agencies. Contributors include the British Co-Chair of British-Irish Inter-Parliamentary Body, the Irish Ambassador, the Vice-Chair of the Commission of Racial Equality, and Seeromanie Harding of ONS.

Mary Tikki, Elderly Irish People in London: A Profile (Price £4 + 75p p&p)

This paper originated as a submission to the King's Fund Commission on the Health and Care of Older People in London. Compared to other minority ethnic groups a higher proportion of Irish people in London are aged 60 and over. The older Irish population have specific health problems and social and cultural needs which

are not recognised or adequately addressed by providers. The paper draws a profile of the older Irish population. Summaries of key issues and recommendations for a wide range of service needs among elderly Irish people, both in high and low density settlements, are provided.

Report of the London Irish Pensioners Conference: October 1997 (£3 + 75p p&p)

On 3 October 1997 300 Irish elders from twenty London boroughs attended a day conference, together with representatives from fifteen Irish organisations, to consider the needs, concerns and interests of the London elderly Irish

population. Workshops on housing, social security benefits, Irish elders clubs, support groups and networks, and returning to Ireland proved a popular and valuable way of allowing Irish elders themselves to define their needs.

These publications will prove valuable to individual and organisations involved in representing the needs of the Irish community in Britain, or in the commissioning or delivery of services to them. Copies of the reports are available for purchase to affiliates of FIS at a discount of £1.50 per copy and minus the cost of p&p.

To order by post, please make cheques payable to FEDERATION OF IRISH SOCIETIES and send your order to Community Care Development Co-Ordinator, FIS, The London Irish Centre, 52 Camden Square, London NW1 9XB Tel: 0171-916-2733 Fax: 017—916-2753

NOTICEBOARD

MEMO RE: BAIS MEMBERSHIP AND IRISH STUDIES REVIEW

Following the new arrangements between Bath Spa University and Carfax concerning the publication and distribution of Irish Studies Review there have been a few transitional “hiccoughs” which have led to some confusion concerning arrangements for the receipt of ISR in the minds of BAIS members.

A larger journal – format ISR will appear three times a year. ISR will continue to be available to BAIS members as a benefit of membership, all part of an attractive and competitive package of benefits.

If you have not received the current issue, or do not receive the issue to be distributed in August, please write to the membership administrator and we will pursue the matter.

MEMO RE: *PROPOSALS FOR BAIS BURSARIES*

Representatives from the BAIS National Council and from Irish Studies Centres in Britain met in the library of the Irish Embassy in London on Thursday, July 9th 1998. After a wide ranging discussion an unanimous decision was taken to launch a scheme of **BAIS BURSARIES**. In the first year there will be four bursaries, each worth £1000, which will be awarded to enhance research opportunities for post-graduate students in an area of Irish Studies. A steering committee was set up and full details of the proposed scheme will be published in the near future.

There was also some very worthwhile discussion at the embassy meeting on topics such as BAIS membership recruitment and the desirability of a national programme of BAIS sponsored lectures.

BAIS NATIONAL COUNCIL

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DATE FOR BAIS COUNCIL MEETING SATURDAY 22.08.98

BENEFITS OF ANNUAL MEMBERSHIP:

- 3 issues of Irish Studies Review and BAIS Newsletter posted to you
- Network of nearly 300 members with Irish Studies interests.

ADVICE TO APPLICANTS FOR MEMBERSHIP

All overseas applications should include a £2-00 supplement to cover postage costs. Overseas remittances should be sent in the form of a Sterling Money Order only. For further information about subscription rates please see application form on the next page. Membership runs for twelve months. Members will receive a reminder of renewal prior to membership lapsing.

IF NOT ALREADY A MEMBER FILL UP THE APPLICATION FORM NOW.

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