



# British Association for Irish Studies NEWS

January 2004

Dear Members

Following the retirement of Jerry Nolan as BAIS newsletter editor, the BAIS National Council have decided to move to a new bulletin format that will supplement the information provided on our website: [www.bais.org.uk](http://www.bais.org.uk) and be accessible to all members. This is the first of our new bulletins. If you have any material that you would like to be included in future editions please contact me. The next deadline for copy (in electronic form if possible) is **1 April 2004**.

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Member, BAIS National Council

## CHAIR'S REPORT for 2003

Report of the Chair to the Annual General Meeting of the British Association for Irish Studies, 3.30 p.m. Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> January 2004, Low Countries Room, Institute of Historical Research, Senate House, University of London. This Report reviews general aspects of B.A.I.S. activities from December 2002 until December 2003 and for reasons which will become clear shortly, it may also be regarded as incorporating the Secretary's Report.

These past 12 months have been a period of transition in which we have seen changes in the office holders and levels of activity. Sean Hutton stepped down after many years as Chair, but thankfully we will still have the benefit of his experience and wisdom as a Council member. We took the opportunity to pay tribute in various ways to his long years of service. Jerry Nolan stepped down as Editor of the Newsletter, which under his guidance had developed into a lively and much appreciated publication. We have also expressed our gratitude for his work. As yet he has not been replaced. Eibhlin Evans has retired as Education Convenor, where her chief concern has been the Postgraduate Bursaries scheme. Once again the awards were presented by the Ambassador at a ceremony in the Irish Embassy. Under Eibhlin's guidance this scheme has become one of the most successful and widely praised aspects of B.A.I.S. activities. We would like to thank for all her work and also to express our gratitude to the Awards Committee which allocates the bursaries. Eibhlin has been succeeded as Vice Chair by Siobhan Holland, who has managed to combine motherhood with the care of our website and the organisation of a successful joint conference with the English Subject Centre of Royal Holloway College, University of London, on 7 November.

The post of Secretary has been vacant since I became Chair and the duties of agenda compilation and minute taking have been shared out amongst Council members, including Scott Brewster, Matthew Campbell, Richard Kirkland and Shaun Richards. I would like to thank them for their cooperation and patience. Thankfully, Claire Connolly has returned from her sabbatical at Boston College and agreed to rejoin the Council and take up the post of Secretary. Sandy Trott has continued to provide administrative support, which is much appreciated. Our funds have been carefully stewarded by Treasurer Aidan Arrowsmith who presents splendidly clear and comprehensive reports. However, it is clear we will have to generate additional resources in the very near future.

On the publications front, *Irish Studies Review* continues to thrive, each issue containing lively articles and reviews from a wide variety of disciplinary backgrounds. Thanks are due to the ongoing energy and commitment of the editors and publishers. A number of people have been approached to take up the post of Newsletter Editor, but unfortunately did not feel able to take this on. This is a matter for some concern since it was a vital means of maintaining communication with the membership. Christy Evans has continued with his admirably energetic work for the Irish language, producing *Nuachtlitir na Gaelige* and organising a variety of events designed particularly to support Irish language teachers in Britain.

I would like to thank everyone who has been involved in the work of the Association over the past year, especially Council members and Officers currently serving and recently retired, because they have put much energy, thought and time into supporting Irish Studies. But in particular I would like to mention the continuing support and goodwill of the Irish Ambassador and the cultural attaché. Turning to the future, one event already under preparation is a joint conference with the American and Canadian Irish Studies Associations at the University of Liverpool 12 -16<sup>th</sup> July 2004. In the coming year fund raising and the future form of the Newsletter must be priorities.

During the past year we have operated under the realisation that the context for Irish Studies in Britain is changing. At every level the educational system is placing increasing burdens upon teachers, pupils, students and researchers. In some institutions the opportunities for taking Irish Studies courses have diminished, whilst in others they have survived thanks solely to the energy and ingenuity of those involved. We have discussed these issues at Council and they were aired at the 7 November conference. We intend as an organisation to continue as the key support network for all with an interest in Irish Studies in Britain.

M. Busted, Chair, British Association for Irish Studies, January 2004

## BAIS ACTIVITIES

### BAIS, ACIS AND THE INSTITUTE OF IRISH STUDIES INTERNATIONAL IRISH STUDIES CONFERENCE, LIVERPOOL, JULY 2004

In July 2004 the British Association for Irish Studies will join with the American and Canadian Conferences for Irish Studies in a joint conference hosted by the Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool under its Director Professor Marianne Elliott. Papers on all dimensions of Irish Studies are solicited. This is an interdisciplinary and international conference, and, given the diversity of participants, no single theme has been selected. However, as well as papers rooted in academic disciplines, the occasion will provide a unique opportunity to examine differing conceptualisations and experiences of researching and teaching Irish Studies.

The Institute of Irish Studies at the University of Liverpool, founded in 1988, is the premier centre for Irish Studies in Britain. The city of Liverpool has long-standing links with Ireland. It has been chosen as the European Capital of Culture in 2008 and many of its institutions, such as the Maritime Museum and the Everyman Theatre, are developing programmes and activities, which will be available to conference goers in 2004. A broad range of accommodation options from university halls to nearby hotels and guesthouses will be available. The Conference will open with a reception on Monday July 12 and close with a banquet on Friday July 16. There will be opportunities for field trips in the city and surrounding region. For further information see: <http://www.acisweb.com>

## FORTHCOMING EVENTS

### UNIVERSITY OF LONDON INSTITUTE OF ENGLISH STUDIES SCHOOL OF ADVANCED STUDY and Goldsmiths' College, Centre for Irish Studies

#### Irish Studies Seminars Spring Term 2004

28 January: Yuri Yoshino (Goldsmiths' College, University of London): "Maria Edgeworth's Patriotism: The Absentee (1812) and Patronage (1814)"

11 February: Professor Terence Brown (Trinity College, Dublin): "Culture, History and Memory in the 1990s"

25 February: Dr. Gillian Wright (Nottingham Trent and Institute of English Studies): "Reading Early Modern Irish Women: Mary Molesworth Monck in Context"

10 March: Dr. Ronan McDonald (University of Reading): "Beckett and Irish Studies"

5 May & 19 May to be announced

Wednesdays at 6.00pm. Venue: Room 349, Institute of English Studies, School of Advanced Study, Senate House (3rd floor), Malet Street, London WC1E 7HU (No Smoking Building).

Organizers: Dr Clare Hutton (Institute of English Studies), Dr Siobhan Holland (St Mary's College) and Dr Ian McBride (KCL)

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### BAIS POSTGRADUATE BURSARIES SCHEME 2004

The annual BAIS scheme to support Postgraduate research in Britain on topics of Irish interest has been launched for 2004. BAIS will award bursaries of £500 - £1000 each to postgraduate students registered at universities in Great Britain conducting research on any aspect of Irish Studies. Students may use the bursary for travel expenses, payment of fees, subsistence or other expenses related to the completion of their research projects.

Applicants will be required to submit a completed Application Form together with completed forms from two referees who will be required to send these direct to the Chair of the Bursaries Committee.

Deadline for submission of Applications: **8 March 2004** The awards will be announced in May 2004. The decision of the BAIS Postgraduate Bursaries Committee will be final.

*How to Apply:* You can either download an application form from the BAIS website [www.bais.org.uk](http://www.bais.org.uk) or send for one by emailing Dr Richard Kirkland at [richard.kirkland@kcl.ac.uk](mailto:richard.kirkland@kcl.ac.uk). The awards will be announced in May 2004. Last year's successful applicants received their awards at a ceremony at the Irish Embassy.

**IRELAND: SPACE TEXT TIME**  
**an interdisciplinary conference**

Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages  
University of Ulster, Magee Campus, Derry

**Keynote Speakers**

T.M. Devine  
Terry Eagleton  
John McGahern  
Bronwen Walter

**26-28 March 2004**

The first plenary conference of the Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages sets out to examine the ways in which concepts of space and time have shaped our understanding of the issues of place and identity in Ireland and elsewhere. The conference will address the themes of language, literature and identities; history, memory and commemoration; imaging Ireland in film, music and performance; heritage, travel and tourism; diasporic versions of identity; landscape, representation and belonging

**Ireland: space text time** seeks to provide a forum for writers and researchers in many disciplines, including geography, language and literary studies, history, politics, museum and heritage studies, film studies, music and ethnography. The choice of keynote speakers reflects the wide-ranging nature of the conference's engagement with key aspects of identity formation and expression, an engagement which is central to the Academy's field of enquiry.

**NEW VOICES 2004**

Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages, University of Ulster  
Magee Campus, Derry

**6-8 February 2004**

The Academy for Irish Cultural Heritages at the University of Ulster is pleased to announce that it will host the sixth annual New Voices in Irish Criticism Conference on the University's Magee Campus in Derry on 6-8 February 2004. New Voices has established itself as the premier forum for emerging scholars in Irish Studies. Papers are invited from research students in all fields of Irish Studies including anthropology, cultural theory, folklore, gender studies, geography, history, languages, literature, music, philosophy, popular culture, sociology and theology. Defining 'Irish Studies' broadly, the conference welcomes contributions on all aspects of the study of Ireland, as well as on non-Irish topics by scholars working from Ireland, north or south. New Voices aims to provide an opportunity for research students in Ireland to discuss and debate their work, and also welcomes the participation of doctoral students and other writers and researchers from Britain, continental Europe, North America, Australia and Asia. The conference is free.



Full conference details can be found at: [www.arts.ulster.ac.uk/academy](http://www.arts.ulster.ac.uk/academy)

**14<sup>th</sup> CONFERENCE OF IRISH HISTORIANS IN BRITAIN** *Conflict and Resolution in Irish History*

University of Keele, 16-18 April 2004

For information phone: 01782 583200, email: [hib05@keele.ac.uk](mailto:hib05@keele.ac.uk) or see [www.keele.ac.uk/depts/hi/news/events.htm](http://www.keele.ac.uk/depts/hi/news/events.htm).

Registration deadline: **12 March 2004**

**CALL FOR PAPERS**

**Special issue: Irish space(s): zones and margins**

The interdisciplinary French journal *Etudes irlandaises* invites submissions for a special issue, 'Irish Space(s) : zones and margins', to be published at the end of 2004. Guest editors: Claude Fierobe and Sylvie Mikowski, University of Reims.

Possible topics, very broadly defined, include (but are not limited to): The Pale and beyond; civilisation versus the wilderness, the space conquest; in-between space(s), no-man's-lands, marginal space(s) (e.g. satellite towns, the centre and the periphery, etc); facts and representations; gaps and borders, border-crossings, border-lines, transgressions; passages and passengers (e.g. travellers, holding centres, etc); space(s): reality and fantasy; cultural space(s): perception/reception of the space of the Other.; places and symbols.

Submitted essays should be sent in four hard copies and one electronic copy (Mac compatible) by **April 30th 2004** to: Sylvie Mikowski, 2, square des Bouleaux, 75019 Paris, France, [sylvie.mikowski@noos.fr](mailto:sylvie.mikowski@noos.fr)

Contributors should use the style-sheet of the journal to be found at <http://etudes-irlandaises.septentrion.com>

For more information please contact: [Pascale.amiot@wanadoo.fr](mailto:Pascale.amiot@wanadoo.fr)



## CONFERENCE REPORTS

### Representing Ireland: Past Present and Future Conference Report

Dr Alison O'Malley-Younger

Over the weekend of the 24<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> October, 2003 the University of Sunderland in collaboration with Tyneside Irish Festival, hosted an international Irish Studies conference around the theme of *Representing Ireland: Past Present and Future*.

The purpose of the conference/cultural event was to encourage new critical voices to combine with established academics in the field of Irish Studies in an environment that was both edifying and entertaining. The entertainment, provided by Tyneside Irish Festival included a conference ceilidh, with members of the *Comhaltas Ceoltoiri Eireann* and solo performances by Rita McSherry. Also included were an Exhibition of Traditional Celtic/Pictish Art by Kathleen NicMhuirich, poetry readings by Bernard O'Donoghue and Medbh McGuckian, and a closing commemorative mass for Father Herbert McCabe, an eminent theologian and friend and inspiration to many present.

With venues across Newcastle Upon Tyne and Sunderland, the conference began on Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October at Newcastle's Literary and Philosophical Society with keynote speeches from Dr Stephen Regan (Royal Holloway, University of London), and Dr John McDonagh, (Mary Immaculate College, University of Limerick). In the first of two papers he delivered, Stephen Regan discussed 'W.B Yeats: Irish Politics and Postcolonial Theory'. Clear, accessible, thought provoking and intellectually stimulating, the paper assessed the direction of Yeatsian criticism in the wake of postcolonial theories, and in the light of postcolonial readings such as those of Edward Said. This was followed by John McDonagh's paper and slide show entitled: 'The Great Pyramids of Carlingford Lough: John Hinde and the De Valerian Utopia': a lively combination of common-sense witticism and critical reflection on Irish political representation and stereotype.

Friday evening saw a poetry reading by Whitbread prizewinner Bernard O'Donoghue at St Peter's Campus, University of Sunderland, where he read from his collections *The Weakness* (1992); *Gunpowder* (1995), *Here Nor There* (1999); *Poaching Rights* (1999) and *Outliving* (2003). Well-paced and keenly executed, touching and funny, the readings exemplified the conference's theme as he combined elegies for his past in Ireland with lyrical depictions of the here-and-now.

Medbh McGuckian read from her collections *On Ballycastle Beach* (1988), *Marconi's Cottage* (1991), *Shelmaliar* (1998), *Drawing Ballerinas* (2001) and *The Face of the Earth* (2002). Concentrating on the themes of womanhood, death and nation McGuckian's readings were profound, perplexing, powerful, compelling and very well received.

Plenary speakers at the conference proper included Professor Terry Eagleton, (University of Manchester), Professor Shaun Richards (Staffs), and Dr Stephen Regan. Eagleton's provocative keynote paper entitled 'The Irish Sublime' was an eloquent synthesis of theoretical stringency, potent irony, wit and verve. His contributions also included a performance of 'The Ballad of Willy Yeats' at the conference ceilidh, and a moving commemorative speech for Father Herbert McCabe at the concluding mass. Shaun Richards gave a witty and entertaining plenary entitled 'From Inish Meain to Craggy Island: Traces of Irish Authenticity', on recent cultural representations and commercial exploitations of Ireland and Irishness, ranging from Irish theme bars to 'Father Ted'. Stephen Regan's second plenary entitled 'Northern Irish Poetry: Before and After the Ceasefire' offered compelling close readings of lyrics and elegies from Francis Ledwidge to Ciaran Carson, combining text and context to include contemporary versions of the 'Aisling' form in what was a fascinating examination of the 'Irish' national tradition in poetry. He was also able to introduce his most recent book: *Irish Writing: An Anthology of Irish Literature in English 1789-1939* (Oxford University Press, 2003), defined by Paul Muldoon as [an] anthology [that] 'vividly and valiantly presents a nation and national literature coming into being.'

One of the Saturday panels dealt with Romantic period Irish literature. Jane Moore introduced her important new scholarly edition, *The Satires of Thomas Moore* (Pickering and Chatto, 2003), a work which makes us reconsider the nature of both Moore's poetry and politics, whilst Claire Connolly and John Strachan both addressed Charles Robert Maturin's troubling and remarkable Gothic masterpiece, *Melmoth the Wanderer*.

The chronological and theoretical scope of the papers was impressive, ranging from Helen McLaughlin's 'Imagining Ireland: Representations of Ireland

in the Middle English Brut' to Alison O'Malley-Younger's 'Liminal States: Ethnic Performativities in the Possible Worlds of Brian Friel's drama', and Helen Blakeman's poststructuralist reading of Medbh McGuckian's Poetry.

While all the papers were worthy of note, some of the conference highlights included Ruth Barton on the engagingly ridiculous 'Leprechaun' series of low-budget horror movies which star a green-painted midget armed with a Michael Myers style carving knife, Mary Lynne Broe's 'performative performance with self' on the poetry of Medbh McGuckian, Lance Pettit on cross-dressing comedy, and Jason David Hall and James Ward's close readings of Heaney and Swift respectively. Equally engaging were Dan Ross' examination of Seamus Deane's *Reading in the Dark*, and John McDonagh's discussion of desecralisation, myth and authenticity in the poetry of Brendan Kenelly. Thanks to Guinness and Tourism Ireland for supporting the occasion.

### Irish Studies in the Curriculum Conference Report

Dr Siobhán Holland  
St Mary's College/LTSN English Subject Centre

This autumn, BAIS, the LTSN English Subject Centre and the Institute of English Studies organised a symposium on 'Irish Studies in the Curriculum' (November 7<sup>th</sup> 2003) which explored the issues involved in the teaching and research of Irish Studies in Higher Education.

The event explored the issues involved for lecturers who have to balance their research in 'Irish Studies' with their teaching responsibilities and the practical structures offered by their institutions. Lecturers who contribute to Irish Studies' programmes are often lodged in English or History departments and teach to single-discipline undergraduates as well as to those interested in interdisciplinary approaches. Other colleagues are only in a position to offer 'Irish Studies' style modules on pathways or as lone modules within the confines of traditional disciplinary-based programmes.

Like our colleagues who teach on other 'area studies' programmes (e.g. American studies) we are increasingly likely to find that programmes, departments and even faculties are being adjusted around us in ways that complicate any attempt to promote or maintain area studies programmes or genuinely 'area studies'-inflected approaches. The plenary speaker, Paddy O'Sullivan from the Irish Diaspora Project at Bradford and his respondent, Roy Foster, helpfully explored the issues raised by sets of interdisciplinary, disciplinary and institutional affiliations.

At the symposium, delegates discussed the investment students often have in Irish studies courses in terms of their own searches for 'authentic' identities. We also discussed students' preconceptions about the possibility of using literature to gain a totalised, authentic knowledge of a coherent and self-identical society. Matthew Campbell from the University of Sheffield and Siobhán Holland from the English Subject Centre debated the issues involved in, and strategies for, teaching Irish texts to English students. Derval Tubridy and Lucia Boldrini from Goldsmiths discussed their approaches to teaching Joyce and Beckett, both in contexts where Irish issues or contexts are and are not prominent or determining factors. Their papers helpfully raised the problem of exceptionalism: that is the strategy of teaching Irish literature as if it is created in totally unique circumstances that render comparisons with other literatures irrelevant.

Increasingly, courses on Irish texts are attracting undergraduates and postgraduates who have few or no preconceptions about Ireland. Paddy Lyons from Glasgow discussed his experiences of designing and delivering Irish literature courses in Scotland as well as elsewhere in the European Union. The issues involved in organising programmes were discussed in detail when Conor Carville and Daragh Minogue from St. Mary's College helpfully shared their experiences of re-validating and effectively retrenching the role of an Irish Studies programme. They also outlined their FDTL 'Area Studies' project bid, which promises to introduce students to interdisciplinary debates on migration and make use of creative writing as a critical approach. Their ideas helped to suggest some of the ways in which innovations in English and Area Studies programmes can be productively and innovatively combined.

The event highlighted the importance of building and sustaining links between academics who research and teach in Irish Studies and of course drew attention to the vital role BAIS can play to support these links. Feedback on the event was incredibly positive.

**BAIS website and emailing list** The British Association for Irish Studies now has a website at <http://www.bais.org.uk>. It offers details about BAIS conferences as well as other events of interest to BAIS members. You can also use it to download forms for the annual bursary scheme and to find out about last year's winners. We also run an email notification service for members. If you are a BAIS member who is not yet signed up to the service, please let us know. We are thinking of developing the site and the mailing list further. All suggestions should be forwarded to Dr Siobhan Holland at [hollands@smuc.ac.uk](mailto:hollands@smuc.ac.uk)