



Irish Studies Centre

Founded in October 1986, the Irish Studies Centre was the first of its kind in Britain. It is based in the Faculty of Social Sciences and Humanities at London Metropolitan University and its main purpose is the promotion of Irish Studies through research, teaching, documentation, dissemination and community liaison.

Our primary research focus is on migration and diaspora and, in particular, the Irish in Britain. We aim to increase the understanding and appreciation of the Irish contribution to all aspects of economic, cultural, political and social life in this country.

Key activities include the curation and development of the Archive of the Irish in Britain, liaising with Irish community organisations in Britain, international links with Irish academics, researchers and politicians and the running of a number of annual events, including: the Irish Writers in London Summer School, the Irish in Britain Seminar Series and the Irish Studies Centre Autumn Lecture.

The ISC celebrates its 30th anniversary in 2016 and is planning a number of special events to coincide with this.

Research

When the Centre was established in the mid-1980s there was very little published work about the Irish in Britain. It has been one of our key goals to transform this situation and in so doing contribute to the documentation and analysis of Irish migration and the wider field of research on the Irish diaspora. Research initiatives over the years include:

- Irish in Britain Research Forum / Seminar Series (1986-present)
- *Occasional Papers Series* (1990-97) – a series of research papers on the Irish in Britain published by the Irish Studies Centre
- *Northern Ireland: What Next?* (1995) - a major conference at which key players in the emerging Peace Process participated, including John Hume (SDLP); Mo Mowlam (Labour Party); Mitchel McLoughlin (Sinn Féin); David Ervine (Progressive Unionist Party).
- *Discrimination and the Irish Community in Britain* (1997) - a landmark report for

the Commission for Racial Equality

- *The Irish Diaspora: Writing, Researching, Comparing* (2000) - an international conference (in association with the British Association for Irish Studies) with leading scholars in the field including Luke Gibbons, Avtar Brah and David Lloyd.
- *The Second Generation Irish: A Hidden Population in Multi-Ethnic Britain* (2000-02) – extensive ESRC-funded research project into British people born of Irish parentage.
- *"Suspect communities"? Counterterrorism Policy, the Press, and the Impact on Irish and Muslim Communities in Britain* (2008-10) - ESRC-funded research project (in association with the Institute for the Study of European Transformations)
- *Cyprus and Ireland: Interactions and Parallel Journeys* (2014) - a cross-community research seminar (in collaboration with the Cyprus Centre)

Community Liaison

We are keen to ensure that our research, events and teaching programmes reach as wide a possible constituency. Liaising closely with Irish community organisations in Britain is an important part of this mission. The Centre has close ties with *Irish in Britain* (the umbrella organization for Irish community groups in Britain). Some of the groups we have worked with over the years include: Action Group for Irish Youth, Brent Irish Advisory Service, Council of Irish County Associations, Haringey Irish Cultural and Community Centre, Innisfree Housing Association, Irish Literary Society, Leeds Irish Centre, Leicester Irish Society, Lewisham Irish Centre, London Irish Centre, Irish Cultural Centre (London).

Media and Consultation

The Irish Studies Centre is in regular contact with the press and broadcast media about current events concerning Irish Studies and the Irish community in Britain and further afield. Programmes and publications in which the Centre has been involved include:

- *The Irish Empire* (RTE/BBC TV 2000) – major 5-part series on the history of Irish migration across the globe.
- *The Favourite* (BBC Radio 4, 2004) – documentary about Irish traditional music in London in the 1960s and the Islington pub which hosted it.
- *The Parting Glass* (BBC Radio 4, 2011) – documentary presented by Fintan O'Toole about the history of Irish Migration to Britain
- *From Inside: The Guildford Four* (BBC Radio 4, 2014) – based on the prison letters of Paul Hill, wrongfully convicted of the Guildford pub bombings in 1974.

Archive of the Irish in Britain

Founded in 1984, this is a unique academic and community resource and the largest of its kind in Britain. It consists of collections of documents, audio and video recordings, books, photographs, posters and ephemera cataloguing the history of the Irish in Britain from earliest times to the present day with a special focus on the late twentieth century.

Key projects have included:

- *When Did You Come Over?* (2000-03) - a multi-media touring exhibition about the history of the Irish in Britain
- *Irish Elders Now* (2003-05) - an oral history project about elderly Irish people in London which concluded with the production, DVD distribution and public screenings of a film documentary entitled *I Only Came Over for a Couple of Years....*
- *St. Patrick's Day in London* (2003) – an exhibition based around the St. Patrick's Day Programmes collection dating back to 1922.
- *Cardboard Suitcases* (2003-2011) – a long-term project to audit, acquire/commission, preserve and catalogue the archives of the London Irish Centre.
- *Home from Home* (2010-12) a research project on Irish County Associations in London which greatly expanded the number of county collections represented in the Archive and concluded with an exhibition of artifacts and mementoes.

The Archive is regularly consulted by researchers, students, academics and journalists from Britain, Ireland and the rest of the world. By preserving, expanding and disseminating the Archive, the Irish Studies Centre aims to secure and safeguard the historical records of the Irish in Britain and to enhance understanding of the Irish community for British, Irish and other peoples alike. We are keen to encourage participation in the development of the Archive through volunteering, donation of materials, interviews, exhibitions, talks and collaborative projects.

One of the key objectives for the Archive over the coming years is to secure funding to catalogue and digitize our special collections which include the Paul Hill Prison Letters, the St. Patrick's Day Programme Collection and the Winifred M. Patton Collection.

For further information or to visit the Archive, please email:

irishinbritainarchive@londonmet.ac.uk

Irish Studies Centre Autumn Lecture

Each autumn we host an annual evening lecture at which leading politicians, journalists and scholars speak about history, literature and current affairs in Ireland and the Irish diaspora. The Autumn Lecture provides a showcase for the work of the Centre and a forum for debate about Irish affairs past, present and future. Guest speakers at our lectures over the years have included: President Mary McAleese, Fergal Keane, Bernadette McAliskey, Terry Eagleton, Helena Kennedy QC, Fintan O'Toole and Declan Kiberd.

Irish Writers in London Summer School

First established in 1996, the summer school runs for two nights a week for five weeks and provides an informal but informative setting for students wishing to read and meet authors and discuss their work. Each week a set text is discussed in class on Tuesday evening and the following Thursday, the author reads and/or speaks about it to students. Guest writers have included Edna O'Brien, Blake Morrison, Emma Donoghue, Matthew Sweeney, Julia O'Faolain, Shane Connaughton, Anne Devlin, John Healy, Catherine O'Flynn, Maurice Leitch, Lucy Caldwell and Bernard O'Donoghue.

In 2005, we hosted *Where the Squat Pen Rests...* an evening of readings by some of Ireland's most celebrated writers including Anne Enright, Joseph O'Connor and Martina Evans.

Irish in Britain Seminar Series

This annual series offers an opportunity for students, academics and the general public to debate and disseminate the latest research on the Irish in Britain, migration and the diaspora. Leading researchers are invited to talk about their work and debate it in extended discussion with the audience. Guest speakers have included Bronwen Walter, Sean Campbell, Mary Hickman, Lance Pettitt and Ellen McWilliams.

If you would like to learn more about the work of the Irish Studies Centre, contact its Director, Dr. Tony Murray at t.murray@londonmet.ac.uk

Or go to: www.londonmet.ac.uk/irishstudiescentre