

IRISH STUDIES IN BRITAIN

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(see page 8)

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IRISH STUDIES IN BRITAIN

No.9 Spring-Summer 1986 ISSN 0260-8154

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EDITORIAL

THE CURIOUS CASE OF I.C.C.E.L. AND THE G.L.C.

This magazine is often accused, probably justifiably, of being London-centric. But then again, nearly one-third of Britain's Irish-born population lives in London and who can deny that the exciting developments in Irish Studies which have taken place in the capital over the past few years far outstrip anything else anywhere in the country?

However the story we are about to unfold not only concerns Irish people in London but should be of interest to all those concerned with the development of Irish Studies in Britain, the means of implementing these developments and the relationship between Irish community organisations and both local and central government in Britain.

One of the first acts of Ken Livingstone's Labour-controlled Greater London Council was to establish an ethnic minorities unit responsible directly to the leader of the council and designed to combat racism and improve opportunity for London's diverse ethnic communities. The establishment of an Irish Section in this unit in 1983 was very much an afterthought – born of pressure from Irish community organisations and for political reasons. It is fair to say that its establishment was not unanimously welcomed by other ethnic groups nor by their workers in the EMU who were suspicious at this apparent late conversion of the Irish community to the concept of anti-racism. In such a climate the Irish Section of the EMU was allowed to develop its programme relatively unhindered by both politicians and senior officers alike.

It must be said that right from the outset, some members of the Irish community expressed their reservations about getting entangled in the patronage system of the British local state and competing with each other for crumbs from the County Hall table. Others adopted the exact opposite position, asserting that as London's largest ethnic community, the Irish had a right to their share of any resources that were going.

With the imminent demise of the GLC this is an opportune time to take stock and to try and learn some lessons from the GLC experience, especially as there is every likelihood that the GLC Ethnic Minorities Unit and presumably the Irish Section will be resurrected in some truncated form in the not-too-distant future.

First of all credit has to be given to those GLC officers who through their dedication and efforts brought to birth projects of immense long term value for the Irish community in London (particularly in the field of community arts, housing and the women's committee). (Here this magazine has to declare an interest and state that it is in the throes, at the time of going to press, of trying to exact from the GLC financial assistance to enable the magazine to develop and, incidentally, has been ably assisted in this by GLC officers.)

However the recent experience of the London Irish Commission for Culture and Education has cast a shadow over the EMU Irish Section and its willingness and commitment to assist *all* Irish community organisations in London. Born as a result of the explosion of interest in Irish Studies in London, ICCLE was the direct descendant of Irish Cultural Activities London (itself founded in 1979) and was established in early 1984 to promote an awareness of Ireland's rich cultural heritage throughout London's

BACK ISSUES

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EDITORIAL

education system and to counter the negative stereotypes surrounding Ireland and Irish culture.

With its limited budget and two workers ICCEL over the next 18 months put together a creditable programme of educational and cultural activity which included Siol Phádraig – the London Irish Arts Festival – in March 1985. ICCEL was also by far the most broadly-based GLC-funded Irish project – with representatives from 27 constituent Irish cultural organisations affiliated to the Commission.

However what then happened to the Commission is unique in the history of the GLC Ethnic Minorities Committee since it was set up in 1981 and does not reflect well either on that authority and in particular its Irish Section on the EMU, nor on the organised Irish community in London which proceeded to tear itself apart on this issue with recrimination and counter-recrimination merely serving to buttress the old stereotype of the warring Irish. Lessons have to be learnt from this whole sorry saga if we are to make progress in the future. Shortly before its regular 6 month reappraisal of funding, ICCEL was informed that its money was to be summarily stopped at the end of that month (November 1985). The reasons given were that GLC officers were not happy with the quality of the Commission's work – this despite the fact that no representations to this effect had been made previously by GLC officers who were supposedly monitoring the project nor had they visited the project to investigate its work.

Coincidentally, and interestingly enough, the recommendation that ICCEL not be funded came days before the council's Arts and Recreation Committee was to consider the Commission's grant application to run the 1986 Siol Phádraig. In the event, as it appeared that ICCEL was not going to be funded this grant was immediately transferred to a 'London Irish Arts Festival' group which had coincidentally appeared at the same time, which was not officially constituted and whose accountability was in doubt.

Furthermore a decision to cease ICCEL's grant in November rendered it ineligible to apply for post-GLC funding as it would have not been in existence at the end of the 1985-86 financial year (the criteria for eligibility). We have no other alternative but to come to the reluctant conclusion that a deliberate attempt was made to sabotage the Irish Commission; that this was engineered by officers in the GLC Ethnic Minorities Committee and that they were aided, sadly, by members of other Irish organisations in London dependent on GLC grants, who despite knowing absolutely nothing about the work of the Commission nor why it was being cut (and privately admitting this), sought right to the end to do down the project, ostensibly on the grounds of its lack of accountability despite the fact that their own organisations were hardly paragons of virtue in this respect!

We are not highlighting these divisions in order to wash the dirty linen of the Irish community in public; we do believe that this case has important significance for Irish people in Britain and we do believe that it has not been aired sufficiently allegedly because of the dangers of publicising divisions. However the implications of this case are such that it cannot and should not be brushed under the carpet. If we are to become a mature community we have to learn from our mistakes and embarrassments – and, god knows, this one capped the lot!

In the event, after nearly four months prevarication, with meeting after meeting, in what seemed to be a deliberate attempt to delay a decision until the GLC was abolished, ICCEL's grant was reinstated and its festival money

approved. This only happened, however, after the Principal Race Relations Officer visited ICCEL, monitored its work and overturned the earlier negative recommendation provided by the EMU Irish Section. The disparity in the two reports was so great that it (quite rightly) raised the suspicions of the Conservative opposition on the GLC. However on also visiting the Commission the Conservatives recognised the injustice that had been done and agreed that the grant should be paid. We were then left with one of the supreme ironies of the whole affair with the Conservative opposition, hardly known for their supportive attitude to Irish community groups, backing the payment of grant to ICCEL while members of the strident 'right-on' Irish organisations, always sensitive at other times to the rights of the Irish community in London, were doing their utmost, to the very end, to scupper the Commission, to make two Irish workers redundant (who, incidentally, had not been paid for four months) and to deny to Irish and non-Irish people living in London the right to participate in, enjoy and gain benefit from, the introduction of Irish themes into the capital's educational and cultural life. Happily the potential of ICCEL is such that it will transcend this squalid and sterile sectarian squabbling. Unhappily it has to be remembered that it was our own, not British politicians, who wanted to sabotage these exciting developments. If only one-tenth of the negative energy that went into attempting to curtail this innovative Irish project had been channelled into positive energy to assist other Irish groups so many of them might not be facing collapse when the financial life-support system of the GLC is switched off.

What conclusions can we draw and lessons can we learn from his shabby affair?

First of all it is irresponsible of politicians to establish new structures without monitoring their work closely. Not doing so opens them up to the charge that such actions were motivated solely by superficial political opportunism.

Secondly there is a real danger of voluntary organisations becoming completely dependent, first of all financially and then ideologically, on the grant-funding authority. Instead of a wide variety of groups, of all and no political and ideological beliefs being nurtured by a responsible grant-funding authority, only the favoured few who sing the right song when the money is put in and even worse become mere marionettes dancing at the behest of the puppet-master, qualify. Others, either too independent or politically unacceptable to the powers that be, find themselves out in the cold, cut off without a penny. This is no more than clientilism.

What is even worse, this introspective coterie of favoured organisations only having contact with like-minded groups and intolerant of other opinions, begins to really believe that it is the Irish community – failing to recognise, cocooned in their artificial hothouse conditions, that outside is an Irish population of, in the case of London, nearly ¼ million strong with a wide panoply of political, religious and social attitudes. It is the worst form of arrogance and condescension to treat these fellow members of the Irish community, as happened far too often in this case, as 'right-wing reactionaries' simply because they are not where you would like them to be politically and because they are not going to lie down and allow you to trample over a project into which they have put years of effort.

This has been a sorry chapter in the recent history of the Irish in this country. Everybody, not only those in London, involved in promoting Irish educational and cultural developments and necessarily having to work with local authorities and maybe being grant-aided by them can learn lessons from this squalid episode which must never be allowed to happen again.

NEWS

Irish Course at Goldsmith's College, London

Currently in full swing is a three-term Irish Studies course at Goldsmith's College, South-East London. The course is in its second year and what sets it apart from the more traditional course is that the students themselves decide which topics they want discussed. The course is called 'Irish Aspects' and this year is covering Irish literature and theatre; Irish social history since 1800; modern Irish politics and the history of the Irish in Britain (including their influence on the trade union and labour movement). At the end of the course students discuss what's happened and plan next year's programme. The course meets on Monday evenings and further information is available from either the College on 01 692 8653 or from Diarmuid Breatnach on 01 690 5689.

★★★★★

Catalogues of Irish Books

The latest catalogues from two British-based Irish book dealers have just arrived and both contain a wide cross-section of titles of sufficient variety to satisfy all readers. They are available from D. Canavan, 44 Tylney Road, London E7 and Hibernia Books, 10 Birch Drive, Hatfield, Herts. Please send an s.a.e.

★★★★★

Irish Books in Liverpool

Continuing the theme of Irish books, News From Nowhere, Liverpool's radical bookshop, have sent us their Irish books catalogue. There are over 500 titles included in the catalogue, mostly on the theme of Irish history and politics, but also with sections on women in Ireland, biographies, folklore, fiction, literature and children's books. They are also about to introduce an Irish language section. The catalogue is available from News From Nowhere, 100 Whitechapel, Liverpool 1, tel. 051-708 7270.

★★★★★

MISE Report

Still on Liverpool, we are pleased to report that the inauguration of Merseyside Irish Studies Encounter got off to a fine start last November with a lively conference on the introduction of Irish Studies in Britain's education system. Topics included 'The Irish in Liverpool: forgotten inheritance or suppressed identity?'; 'The Argument for Irish Studies'; and 'Developing Irish Studies in London'. This resulted in lively and at times heated debate, particularly on the issue of teaching Irish history, as well as putting forward strategies for future action on Merseyside. A conference report is now available and if you would like to receive it and further information on MISE, send £1.00 to Joan Inglis, 29 Blantyre Road, Liverpool L15 3HS, Merseyside.

★★★★★

Department of Foreign Affairs publications available

Individuals and organisations promoting an awareness of Irish Studies in this country are often unaware themselves

that the Department of Foreign Affairs in Dublin produces a number of publications including 'Facts About Ireland' and a boxed set, 'Aspects of Ireland', for distribution abroad. The aim is obviously to provide easily accessible factual information on Ireland and further information is available from Mr J. Lynch, Head of Information and Culture, Department of Foreign Affairs, St Stephen's Green, Dublin 2.

To date copies of the Department's publications have been deposited with Irish Studies projects in Liverpool, Leicester, Camden and Hounslow. There is no cost for this service.

★★★★★

Report of Milton Keynes WEA Study Tour to NI

In June last year 6 students from a Milton Keynes WEA course on Northern Ireland visited the province in order to complement and expand on what they had learnt in the classroom. The group met for 6 weeks after the class had officially finished, planning and preparing for their visit. The group raised their own funds as no organisation would support them and the tour was based on contacts set up by the course tutor, Dick Hunter.

The group visited the Shankill and the Falls in Belfast and interviewed Paddy Devlin and Fr Des Wilson as well as going to a Free Presbyterian church service and visiting the Ulster Museum and the Linen Hall Library. In Derry two local teachers were their guides to the city and provided introductions to local community activists.

Unlike many people in this country, the students on the Milton Keynes course were sufficiently motivated to visit Northern Ireland to see for themselves how the reality of the situation there measures up to what they discussed in the classroom and read in the papers. Their subsequent report on their visit is a model of its kind and both tutor and students (and the WEA itself) must be congratulated on a truly innovative approach to adult education. The report is wide-ranging, containing interviews with Presbyterian ministers, an item on the work of the Ulster People's College and an eye-witness account of a supergrass trial at Crumlin Road courthouse amongst many other interesting items, including a review of the local press in Northern Ireland. This report should be required reading for any student intending to start an Irish Studies course in this country. It is available for £1.00 (including p&p) from Dick Hunter, 10 Spencer Street, New Bradwell, Milton Keynes. Please make cheques payable to 'WEA Milton Keynes Branch'.

★★★★★

1986 Irish Directory

What is Arramara Teo? Who is the Chinese Ambassador to Dublin? How much did the Irish Exchequer borrow last year? How many Presbyterians are there in Ireland?

These and many other questions are answered in 'Ireland: A Directory 1986', researched and compiled by the Institute of Public Administration in Dublin. The book gathers information from hundreds of sources and provides an instant, up-to-date and accurate source of reference on all aspects of Ireland's public, professional and business life. Over 2,000 organisations are covered, from government departments, educational institutions and companies to trade unions and co-operatives. It also includes important statistical information on Ireland, north and south. The Directory costs £39 and is available from Euromonitor Publications Ltd., 87-88 Turnmill Street, London EC1 (tel. 251 8024).

★★★★★

New Information on Ireland resource guide

The GLC-supported Information on Ireland has recently published 'A Resource Guide to the North of Ireland'. Compiled with an unashamedly Republican bias, the guide aims to bring to the attention of British readers the vast plethora of recently published books, periodicals, newspapers and pamphlets, as well as films, videos and exhibitions pertaining to the situation in N. Ireland. The guide is available for 70p (including postage) from Information on Ireland, Box 189, 32 Ivor Place, London NW1 6DA.

The same organisation has also published 'An Interlude with Seagulls: Memories of a Long Kesh Internee' by Bobby Devlin, brother of former SDLP politician Paddy Devlin. It costs £1.75 (including postage).

★★★★★

Latest Linen Hall Review

The Devlin family also features in the latest issue of 'Linen Hall Review', the quarterly journal of the Linen Hall Library. Paddy Devlin reassesses the 1960 controversy fuelled by 'Over the Bridge', the Sam Thompson play which exposed sectarianism in Belfast's shipyards and raw nerves in Belfast's political and cultural elite, who tried unsuccessfully to censor and stifle the play.

With comprehensive news on books, including an interesting article on Irish children's fiction, this issue maintains the high standard set by earlier issues. A year's subscription costs £3.00 from the Linen Hall Library, 17 Donegall Square North, Belfast 1, and it's well worth it if you want to keep in touch with cultural developments in the North.

★★★★★

Oxford Conference on Irish Studies

Readers of issue 8 of 'Irish Studies in Britain' will remember that we gave a guarded welcome to last autumn's Irish Studies conference in Oxford but stressed that it should involve and utilise the experience of existing participants in the field of Irish Studies in this country as well as seeing ways of introducing Irish Studies into our universities and polytechnics. In fact at the conference it was forcibly stressed that any attempt to do the latter without involving schools and colleges would be similar to planting a tender seedling in extremely infertile soil. All sectors of education, from primary school to university level, it was stressed, need to be involved together and to co-operate for each other's benefit. Irish Studies in British universities for prestige reasons is one thing, but if it is to survive and thrive as a component in the British education system, each sector needs to work together.

The report of the conference is available from Anglo-Irish Encounter, 10 St James Square, London SW1.

★★★★★

British Association for Irish Studies

Continuing on the same theme, the above point seems to have hit home with the establishment at the conference of the British Association for Irish Studies. In addition to organising an annual conference, the Association has set up three sub-committees to look at ways in which Irish Studies can be introduced into (a) the schools system (b) the post-school system (mainly adult and community education) and (c) university and polytechnic level.

Membership of BAIS costs £12 waged and £7.50 students and unwaged, and further information on this and the annual conference can be obtained from Dr Shaun Richards, Acting Treasurer, BAIS, c/o Humanities Department, North Staffordshire Polytechnic, Beaconside, Stafford ST18 0AD; tel. 0785 52331 x 318. International membership costs £25.

★★★★★

American Committee for Irish Studies

Of course in the United States this sort of thing has been in operation for years. The American Committee for Irish Studies was established in 1962 and has over 800 members in the USA, Canada, Ireland, the UK and other countries. Each spring ACIS holds its annual national conference, usually attended by 150-2,000 scholars. This is supplemented by regional conferences in the autumn throughout the US. Membership costs \$18 and runs from September to August. Each member receives the thrice-yearly ACIS newsletter plus a subscription to 'Irish Literary Supplement' and the 'Guide to Irish Studies', a catalogue of Irish Studies courses in the United States. If you're interested contact Jim Donnelly, History Department, University of Wisconsin, Madison, Wisconsin 53706, USA. They will also send you an interesting booklet entitled 'A History of the American Committee for Irish Studies'.

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Leicester Irish Dimensions in British Education Report

Nessan Danaher of Soar Valley College, Leicester, has sent us a copy of the report of the Second National Conference on the theme of 'Irish Dimensions in British Education'. This has really established itself as *the* conference for all those involved in Irish Studies at primary, secondary and further education level, although everybody is welcome. The report this year has been published by Leicestershire Education Committee's Centre for Multicultural Education and is available for the price of two 12p stamps (to cover postage) from Nessan at Soar Valley College, Gleneagles Avenue, Leicester LE4 7GY or from the Centre for Multicultural Education, Rushey Mead Centre, Harrison Road, Leicester LE4 6RB.

The report contains summaries of three of the four papers given at last year's conference – 'The Invisible Irish: Racism, Education and the Irish in Britain' by Mary Hickman; 'Psychological Aspects of Identity amongst the Second Generation Irish' by Dr Phillip Ullah; and 'Concepts of Ethnic Identity and the Pattern of Adjustment in relation to the Irish in Britain' by Dr Ita O'Donovan. The report also contains further articles and resource lists.

★★★★★

Irish in Britain bibliography

The GLC-funded Irish in Britain History Group has just published the first bibliography of the history of the Irish in Britain. Containing over 700 references, it will be of interest and value to students and teachers working in the fields of sociology, demography, historical geography, urban growth, economics and politics as well as to all those interested in Irish Studies in a general sense. The addition of a subject and chronological index means that references in the bibliography can be easily and efficiently consulted. Subjects covered include the Irish and the Labour Movement, Chartism, Images of the Irish, Irish Nationalism, Regional Studies, Irish Women and Emigration, the Catholic Church and Orangeism in Britain.

The bibliography costs £2.80 and is available from the IBHG at 76 Salusbury Road, London NW6 6NY.

★★★★★

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★★★★★

New Books from Irish Feminist Publishers

Arlen House, The Women's Press, Ireland's leading feminist publishers, have recently reissued 'Holy Ireland' by Norah Hoult. Out of print for fifty years it is set in middle-class Dublin at the turn of the century and tells the story of a young Irish Catholic woman who suffers the estrangement of her family when she falls in love with and marries an English Protestant. It has been described as 'an exposé of the small-mindedness, prejudices and bigotry often implicit in Irish Catholicism'. Arlen House are also issuing the paperback version of 'Irish Women: Image and Achievement'. First published in 1985 to mark the tenth anniversary of Arlen House, it is 'a celebration of women in Irish culture from prehistoric to modern times'. Chapters include Women in Myths and Early Depictions; Women in Ulster; The Female Song in Irish Tradition and Changing Times for Women's Rights. In Britain Arlen House can be contacted through Ion Mills, 18 Coleswood Road Harpenden, Herts AL5 1EQ, who also represents other Irish publishers in this country.

★★★★★

Irish Language Journal

'Teangeolas' is the twice-yearly publication of the Linguistics Institute of Ireland/Insitúid Teangeolaíochta Éireann. It aims to disseminate information on the work of ITE and to publish articles on different aspects of applied linguistics and on the learning and teaching of living languages. It is available free from ITE, 31 Fitzwilliam Place, Dublin 2.

★★★★★

THE LINEN HALL REVIEW

"A Northern View of the World of Irish Books"

Now entering its third year, *The Linen Hall Review* is already recognised as a vital current awareness publication for those interested in Irish studies.

As from Spring 1986 *The Linen Hall Review* will incorporate *Irish Booklore*, which from 1971 onwards was the leading Irish antiquarian journal.

The Spring '86 issue includes features on Irish science fiction, Thomas Kinsella and Belfast's Quota Press, plus twenty or more book reviews.

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MILTON KEYNES 24 HOURS AFTER THE ANGLO-IRISH AGREEMENT

Alan Parkinson

The phone rang and rescued me from the internecine squabbles of the latest telly 'soap'. It was a request to offer workshops on the nature of loyalism and about the problems related to the 'teaching' of the Northern Irish problem on the British mainland, in that 'newest' of English cities, Milton Keynes. By coincidence Dick Hunter, whose forthcoming Saturday school on the Northern conflict had grown out of an earlier adult education course and a subsequent tour of Belfast and Derry, had attended the same academic institutions in Belfast, though our vintage was *slightly* different!

My London-based Irish Studies class were not in the least impressed by my 'plugging' of the Saturday school. One student intimated that I was 'mad' going up to Milton Keynes on an expenses-only basis, whilst Stephen's advice was to keep a 'look-out' for Special Branch infiltrators. Despite the ominous warning from the organiser — 'They're mostly left of centre' — I paid little attention to their warnings, at least until the day itself . . . Then the position was somewhat different. The day before Fitzgerald and Thatcher had 'got together' at Hillsborough and the 'Irish' question once more dominated the Fleet Street headlines. Perhaps the squabbling kids with the Belfast accents on the Liverpool train were 'plants'? And why did the Liverpool football supporter disembark at Milton Keynes? My intention to delve into the intricacies of the Accord and to catch up on the interpretation of the Fleet Street 'heavies', was foiled, thanks to the surprising briefness of the journey and the noise in my carriage. I hoped that the 'school' didn't have the time to digest the headlines either.

I was met by Alan, a jovial native of Scunthorpe, but a self-admitting roamer who had amazingly found his roots in Milton Keynes. The city itself lives up to its prototypical image of a late twentieth century urbanisation. A central railway station situated a couple of miles from the city centre, a spiralling road network, mushrooming estates and a general feeling of acres of space.

The Saturday school is to be 'housed' in the middle of a leisure complex — Milton Keynes appears to be a city of 'complexes' — and the Social Studies hall is a hive of activity. The mobile bookshop featuring all the latest publications on the conflict — everything from the *Falls Memories* of Gerry Adams to Sarah Nelson's analysis of Loyalism, *Ulster's Uncertain Defenders* — looks inviting but merely produces three purchases. The crèche next door has more takers and it's the Study Tour display which attracts most interest. The video recorder's on the blink and the coffee urn's not quite ready. Still, the show's *nearly* on the road.

Although Milton Keynes does not possess an 'obvious' Irish community, Irish Studies classes had already proved their popularity. Most of the group are either Irish or have Irish connexions. Jack is a retired TU official who had been a Falls Road Labour Councillor in the Thirties; other students included an ex-squaddie turned student, who had painful memories of duty in Derry in the early Seventies, a pair of Scottish Catholics with 'rum' memories of Glasgow's Twelfth and two West Belfast men, one from the Sandy Row and the other from the Falls, strangers whose antennae managed to keep them apart...

This West Belfast pair kept a low profile in the crowded workshop on the nature of Loyalism. This is not an easy concept to decipher at the best of times and time was never really on our side throughout the day. However, a lively discussion session on Orangeism followed the explanatory talk, and similar interest was shown in the other workshop sessions (History of the RUC, Irish Socialism and Nationalism, and Strip-searching).

'Lunch' was a quick beer and a chat — again on the Accord — in the leisure centre. The slides of the Study Tour were already in motion when I crept back for the afternoon session. Many of the slides were interesting but, as with other 'outsiders', tended to dwell *too* much on the city's desolation. When they couldn't distinguish one bonfire 'aftermath' in the Whiterock from another in Woodvale, they turned to the 'expert' for guidance ('Isn't one slum just like another?' I asked myself).

Due to the teachers' industrial action, my afternoon workshop, 'Teaching Northern Ireland', attracted only a handful of customers. Using Michael Noctor's paper as a guide, we shared our experiences in teaching Northern Irish issues at primary, secondary and adult education levels. We agreed that, regardless of level, a study in 'reasonable' depth (half a term at least) is desirable and that specific group activities, such as role-playing (perhaps based on the trials and tribulations of the various parties involved in either council house allocation in the late Sixties, or during the H-Block crisis in 1981), or collating and discussing press handling of Ulster issues, e.g. the H-Block crisis, the Brighton Bombings, or the Anglo-Irish Accord, can be utilised to sustain interest in the topic.

The evaluation session which followed the final workshop proved to be a frank one. Some students — particularly the English-born and the first/second generation southern Irish — admitted that they had been confused by the complexities of the historical and political background and by the proliferation in 'Ulster' terminology and suggested that an introductory, 'diluted' session on the background to the current Troubles would have been more helpful. Others expressed a disappointment that they had been unable to take in *all* the workshops. Despite these criticisms, the Milton Keynes WEA and Dick Hunter in particular must be congratulated on their keenness in pioneering such a course and also in producing an excellent Study Trip booklet. The early difficulties were sorted out and a number of relevant videos — *Four Days in July*, *On the Word of the Supergrass* and *Creggan* — were shown at the end of the proceedings.

Regretfully I had to leave and made my farewells. Alan's Saab needed a push out of the leisure centre's carpark, but in no time I was on a south-bound express. The train was virtually empty and I had a chance to digest *those* headlines. Better late than never...

(Alan Parkinson is an English teacher with the ILEA and teaches adult education classes on Northern Ireland.)

IRISH STUDIES IN BRITAIN —RESULTS OF READERS SURVEY

In the last issue of 'Irish Studies in Britain' we asked readers to complete and return a simple questionnaire in order to provide us with some basic statistical information on who buys the magazine. Even with the attraction of a free copy of the current issue as bait, the response was not exactly overwhelming! 32 replies were received, which means out of sales of 800 of the last issue 4% returned the questionnaire. Still, as opinion poll surveys make predictions on samples consisting of a smaller percentage here goes — readers are advised that the following statistics are for interest only although some trends are obviously apparent even on a 4% sample.

14 of the sample were aged between 18 and 30 and of these 8 were born in this country of Irish parents. 10 were aged 31-45 and of these 4 were second-generation. 5 correspondents were in the 46-65 age range (4 of them born in Ireland). 2 readers were over 65, both born in Ireland. Of the Irish-born respondents 10 were from the South and 2 from the North. Of the British-born readers, all came from England. There were 2 non-Irish respondents. One reader described himself as 'Liverpool-Irish' and another said his ancestors were 'famine emigrants'! On average our Irish-born readers had lived in this country for 16 years.

As regards occupation all but 3 were what one would describe as 'professionals', i.e. teachers, lecturers, community and social workers, librarians, etc. 50% of readers bought their magazine by subscription and the remainder from community and radical bookshops which stock the magazine. An astonishing (and pleasing from our financial point of view!) feature was that 17 of the 32 regularly responded to advertisements in the magazine, all of them to the bookshop and publishers' ads.

6 of our respondents lived in London and 2 each from Leicester, Leeds, Manchester, Hull and Merseyside. 1 each lived in Scotland (Glasgow); Wales (Cardiff) and Canada (Ontario).

The majority of respondents enjoyed the exchange of information, the directory of classes and information on

educational developments in the magazine although what one reader liked about 'ISIB' was 'the fact that it exists at all'. The dislikes were more interesting — a London bias, no regular letters column, 2 issues a year too infrequent, too elitist, more book reviews, more Irish language articles and boring layout. It is only fair to point out that the solution to at least two of these is in our readers' hands — we cannot publish articles in Irish or letters in either language if we don't receive them! One reader found our Irish language articles 'incomprehensible', which is strange as we are painfully aware that we haven't yet published an article in the first national language.

The 'other comments' section provided some interesting observations, not least the Leeds reader who informed us he votes Fianna Fail. One reader said that the magazine was 'not as narrow as its name implies'. Another reader said she found 'ISIB' 'rather dry'. I would like more news/information about Irish cultural events rather than the lengthy articles about racism, i.e. a celebration of the joys of being Irish in Britain rather than recriminations about its sorrows.

Finally, the last word remains with a Nottingham reader: 'It (ISIB) sometimes seems to have a vaguely pro-feminist, pro-abortion, anti-church attitude especially for an Irish paper, that cannot have much widespread interest or appeal. I'm not intolerant, just disinterested. Words such as "racism", "cultural liberation", "ethnocentrism", "psychological identity" makes ISIB read like an Irish version of "New Society". At times it seems written more for university graduates than for people like me.'

Suitably chastened, the editors would like to thank all those who participated in the survey and hope they enjoy their free copy of this issue. To all readers we would ask you to send in your letters on any aspect of 'ISIB' that pleases or annoys you. Only with your support can we establish a regular readers' letters page. We will even publish letters in Irish in order to kill two criticisms of the magazine in one fell swoop!

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THE IRISH IN BRITAIN — some stereotypes challenged

Bernard Canavan

'My father and mother were Irish and I am Irish too'; so go the words of the old song, and so for many goes the definition of second-generation Irish identity. And one can see that such a straightforward concept has its attractions. For example, it greatly inflates the size of the Irish community, by suggesting that the census definition of 'Irish-born' seriously underestimates the extent of the community. And once one has overcome that hurdle, one can go on to speak of successive generations; for if the second generation are Irish, what about the third, and the fourth, and the whole uncounted, and uncountable, crowds of 'Irish by descent'?

In the light of such great numbers the Irish in Britain have been indeed neglected, and the argument for a share in any largesse handed out by local authorities or central government must be correspondingly enhanced. But this is not simply a pragmatic concept, for the notion of identity by origins has deep roots in Irish political life. A piece in the 'Irish Post' summed up this tendency recently when it spoke of Margaret Thatcher (née Sullivan) being more Irish than Garret FitzGerald, whose ancestors were clearly Norman, rather than Gaelic Irish. The point was obviously made half in jest, but it reflects certain attitudes about racial origins that are still held by many Irish.

Contrast this ever-extending racial inclusiveness with the narrowness of Irish cultural identity. Nearly all contemporary publications about the Irish in Britain emphasise the view of Irish life — Catholic, Gaelic and nationalist — first given currency by De Valera in the 1930s.

This view is not without foundation, but it is only a half-truth. It is particularly inaccurate as a generalisation of the Irish born in Britain, and of course it bears no relation at all to the 'Irish by descent'.

It's worth looking at these components in turn:

Take the definition of Irishness as that of being Catholic. The 1984 *GLC Report on the Irish Community* is only one of many publications with statements to the effect that 'Irish people have always identified with Catholicism'. No figures are given to substantiate this assertion; but if we look at the 1971 census returns (NI and the Republic combined) we find that in fact over 37% of the Irish population are non-Catholic, being Presbyterian or Church of Ireland. One Irish person in three does not fit the stereotype.

And relating this point to the Irish in Britain, if we look at one of the few historical studies of emigrant destinations, that of David Fitzpatrick's 'Irish Emigration in the Later Nineteenth Century', the evidence is that non-Catholic Irish made up a disproportionate percentage of the permanent migrants who settled in Britain. The census term 'Irish' does not therefore necessarily mean Catholic; any more than research conducted in purely Catholic schools can form the basis of generalisations about the Irish in Britain. And it raises a number of interesting questions about the extent to which we can speak of anti-Catholic prejudice as being the same as anti-Irish.

The Gaelic language aspect of Irish identity is a more ambiguous aspect of identity, and certainly not one defined in a couple of paragraphs. But a couple of points are worth noting. The most important of these is the often-assumed link between language and race. It is for instance usually

implied that the colonisers of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries spoke English and that the natives spoke Gaelic, so that historically the language is an indication of racial origin. That may have been so for the first-generation settlers (more than one writer at least believes that many of the Scots who settled in Ulster spoke Gaelic); but after a time Gaelic became increasingly the language of planter and native alike, thereby blurring any ethnic distinction between the different groups.

Lecky devoted several pages of his 'Ireland in the 18th Century' to the question of an Irish race. He quotes the Catholic writers of the 1640 Remonstrance, who expressed the view that 'the people of Ireland are for the most part descended from British ancestors' (Vol. 1, p.399). And this was before the Cromwellian and later settlers arrived. Modern writers concur with this view. Estyn Evans in his 'Personality of Ireland' declared that 'if I were to sort out the genes of the Irish people I would hazard a guess that those coming from English settlers would exceed those deriving from "the Celts".' (p.44)

Lastly, it is worth examining what Irish nationalism meant during the height of Empire in the 19th century. Nearly all writing about the Irish in Britain speaks of the identification of the Irish historical struggle for independence with that of Third World anti-imperialism. But was it? It is a question that if we do not ask ourselves others will ask us; and the answer has to be, that it was not. Certainly, Home Rule was not anti-imperialist from O'Connell to Parnell, nor was the Sinn Féin movement; Home Rule stood for the economic right of Ireland to take full advantage of Irish produce within the Empire through greater encouragement for investment and production under a devolved government. It did not mean a rejection of Empire; rather it meant the development of Irish industry to the level where the Empire might be exploited more effectively.

Many Irish families were involved in the slave trade — a few like O'Connell, and the now, sadly, forgotten Richard Allen opposed it. Many were involved in the administration and expansion of the Empire, both Unionist and Nationalist. And of course the Irish missionaries, both Protestant and Catholic, were engaged in transforming native culture into Christianity, while peopling the less inhabited areas of the Empire.

So when we look at ourselves as a Catholic people, as an ethnic minority, as an anti-imperialist nation, many qualifications have to be made, some of which are so profound as to make the original notion meaningless. But the abandonment of such stereotypes need not necessarily be a negative thing. The patronising notion that Irish culture is a simple affair, or that all Irish people are the same, is as much to be resisted as the more obviously insulting images of Irishness. But in resisting the latter the current wisdom is that we must embrace the 1930s simplifications that both divided and stultified Irish life, and encouraged not a few Irish to leave. It would be an irony indeed if that was the identity we imposed on ourselves here.

(Bernard Canavan is an Irish Studies tutor in London and is a member of the Irish in Britain History Group.)

FROM LAND LEAGUE TO IRISH DEMOCRATIC LEAGUE: The Story of a Lancashire Irish Club

John Dunleavy

'Where the people went, church and school (and more recently social club) followed...'

—Micheal O Riabhaigh, *ISIB* (Autumn-Winter, 1985)

While studies of many churches and schools have been compiled, histories of individual clubs are rare indeed. Efforts made by Irish immigrants to organise and promote their social and political welfare by way of clubs have gone largely unrecorded. Hugh Lawler's *History of the Halifax Irish Club* (Halifax, 1984) is something of a rarity in this respect. It seems unlikely that studies of this nature could be attempted in many other places, given that so many clubs, and records, are no more.

The 1880s was a decade which saw the formation of a great number of clubs among the Irish in Britain. First came the Land League clubs, that at Poplar, London, established by Jim Connell (of Red Flag fame), allegedly being the first of these. Most of these clubs closed with the suppression of the Land League in 1881; but the wider franchise resulting from the 1884 Reform Act induced the Irish to form a successor organisation in the shape of the Irish National League of Great Britain. Although the INL played some part in the 1885 General Election, it was not until the General Election of 1886, when Irish Home Rule was the key issue, that the number of local branches multiplied dramatically. Probably the best single source for details of just when individual branches were formed is the *Weekly Freeman* (Dublin). The present writer, currently engaged on a study of the Irish movement in Haslingden, Lancashire, learned from a local journal that the club there was formed in June, 1886, and this has provided him with a starting point for this brief outline of the club's origins and development.

While the Haslingden Irish Club cannot claim to be the oldest club in the town, it is the second oldest: and, by a strange irony, occupies premises completed in 1870 for the local Conservatives. The first Irish club, a branch of the Land League in 1880, was one of many which came into existence during the 'land war', then raging in Ireland. Branches in England were given the task of informing people by way of public reading rooms and raising funds to aid evicted tenants.

The ready response of the Haslingden Irish to the events in Ireland is understandable on two scores: firstly, many of them had been victims of earlier clearances; and secondly, the founder of the Land League, Michael Davitt, had once resided in the town. The Davitt family, following eviction from their Mayo holding, lived at Haslingden for twenty years. The Davitt connection with the town ended in 1870 when Michael Davitt was sentenced to fifteen years penal servitude, only a few months after the rest of the family had emigrated to the United States.

The Irish Land League was formed in response to the onset of the recession in agriculture, and the attempts made by landowners to enforce evictions for non-payment of rent. Davitt urged the tenants to unite in the Land League, and resist the landlords. The incidents of this episode of Irish history have often been related: suffice to state here that the League mitigated some of the hardships suffered by the tenantry and that this was due not only to the degree

of organisation achieved under the leadership of Parnell and the organisations skills of Davitt, but the material and moral support mobilised by branches of the League which proliferated not only in Britain but throughout the English-speaking world. The Haslingden Irish community manifested its support by founding a Land League reading room, and sending donations to the evicted tenants' fund.

The effectiveness of the League was something which took the British Government and the landlords by surprise; Gladstone later likened it to a social revolution. The authorities suppressed the League in October 1881, and imprisoned Parnell, Davitt and other leaders. Legal prohibition was not sufficient to dampen Irish spirits; branches now simply went underground. Several of the Haslingden Irish leaders (like Davitt) had been Fenians, and were quite capable of operating in a clandestine way. Evidence that the organisation was kept intact is provided by its ability to continue with the annual St Patrick's Day commemoration, and quite openly, for much of 1882, prepare for a great rally to be addressed by Davitt. When he finally revisited the town in January 1883, the father of the Land League was greeted by a public procession through the main streets, and spoke to 1,400 people in the main public hall.

Initially, the need for a formal political organisation among Haslingden Irishmen, even after the 1884 Reform Act, did not seem all that important. Neither did they need the advice of the Parnell Manifesto as to how to vote in 1885, since the Liberal Candidate for Rossendale, Lord Hartington, was known to be antagonistic to Gladstone's Irish land policy, while his decision to break with the Liberal Party on the issue of Home Rule surprised few people. These events undoubtedly helped galvanise the local Irish or organise and maximise their vote for the pro-Home Rule Liberal candidate, and affiliate with the INL. Since that time, the Irish club in Haslingden has had a continuous existence.

Politically, the Haslingden club remained allied to the Liberal camp until 1918. After the setback of 1886 the local Irish had the satisfaction of seeing the Parliamentary representation of Rossendale regained by a Liberal-Home Ruler in 1892. In that historic by-election, Michael Davitt played a key role: henceforth, local MPs were always committed Home Rulers. Nomination papers submitted for the 1922 general election reveal a switch from Liberal to Labour. Rossendale's first Labour MP, elected in 1929, was proud of his affiliation with the club. This change of political allegiance was mirrored in municipal politics: a club member was elected as a Liberal to the first Haslingden Borough Council in 1891, on which he served for twenty years. The first Irishman elected in the Labour interest was successful in 1919.

A century ago the club provided members with a library and reading room, card games, and a bar dispensing beer and liquor. The restricted nature of accommodation meant that general meetings and social functions had to be held elsewhere. In 1911 the branch purchased the former Conservative club, and from that time members have been able to enjoy a wider range of social and recreational activities on their own premises. The removal to roomier premises brought an influx of new members, and women became

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eligible to join as social members. A more ambitious educational programme was started too, with lectures and discussions, while grants and awards for members' children helped stimulate scholastic endeavour.

Socially and politically the Haslingden League club has made a significant contribution towards promoting the welfare of the Irish in the district. In 1953, one of the club stalwarts, the late John Bourke, wrote a brief history of 'The Irish in Haslingden', which was serialised by the *Haslingden Observer*. As he pointed out, one of the difficulties in undertaking such projects arises from the absence of records concerning the formative stages of the clubs. Because the Land League had been suppressed, successor organisations were loath to compile or maintain minutes or other documents. Fortunately, due to the 'union of hearts' between the Irish and Liberals after 1886, the local press came to be more attentive to club matters, regarding the INL as a legitimate, constitutional political body.

Local studies, even when undertaken by well-meaning individuals, often suffer from an inability by the writer to take account of outside events and this defect is apparent in the writings of Lawlor and Bourke. In 1891, for example, the Haslingden branch supported Davitt in his call for Parnell's resignation in view of the O'Shea divorce proceedings. A subsequent minute, however, threatening anyone advocating 'Parnellite views' with expulsion indicates that the membership was not unanimous on the question. The readiness of the branch to endorse the Liberal Parliamentary candidate in 1918 appears to have been at variance with the wishes of the younger members (many of whom were still in the forces). The mood of the demobilised members is reflected in their readiness to ally themselves with the Labour Party, Irish names being much in evidence among local activists in the inter-war period.

In 1886 the official name of the club was the Michael Davitt Branch of the INL; subsequent changes in the name of the Irish organisation nationally, first to the United Irish League, and later still to the Irish Democratic League, have been followed by the Haslingden branch. Local attachment to the memory of the Land League's founder is reflected in the retention of Davitt's name. Despite changes in the official designation of the Irish League, visitors to Haslingden usually remark on the locals' insistence on referring to the club as 'the Land League'.

John Bourke asserted that Haslingden is the custodian of the memory of Davitt, and towards this end the club has been vigilant in playing its part. Shortly after Davitt's death, a memorial organ and plaque were installed at St Mary's RC Church, where the Davitt family once worshipped. Later, when the site of the former Davitt home was being redeveloped by Haslingden Council, a further memorial plaque was set up; while more recently the local council have named a new street in his honour.

There is no doubt that with the passage of time the Haslingden club has come to be regarded by its members and the community generally as essentially a social club. A decline in Irish immigration to the district since World War I is one reason for this; a weakening in the sense of national identity is another; and a growing absorption with other political issues inevitably has meant that Ireland has not retained the attention it once enjoyed. In spite of the changed character of the club, given that it has survived for a century, the epitaph pronounced by John Bourke in 1953 still has a certain validity:

'They organised themselves into an Irish political body, and taking inspiration from that great patriot Michael Davitt, pleaded and worked unceasingly for the freedom of their native land.'

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GAEILGE: TEANGA NA HÉIREANN?

by Seoirse Ó Broin

Ba cheart dúinn go léir a bheith bródúil as ár dteanga féin, teanga chomh hálainn is atá ar fáil san Eoraip. Cén fáth mar sin go mbíonn náire orainn i a labhairt. Nach deas úsáid a bhaint aistí, nuair a bhuaileann Éireannach eile leat, le habairtí mar:

Go mbeannaí Dia duit!

Conas tá tú??

Sláinte mhaith duit!

'Sé do bheatha!

Mar sin, sea, aithníonn ciaróg eile agus is beag Éireannach nár fhoghlaim an méad sin ar scoil. De gnáth cuireann abairt Ghaeilge gáire agus sásamh ar an duine a chloiseann í. Osclaíonn sé an croí agus neartaíonn an muintearas.

Chun do shuim a mhuscailt molaím duit dhá fhoclóir a fháil:

- (1) Gearrfhoclóir Gaeilge-Béarla ag an Roinn Oideachais;
- (2) English-Irish Dictionary le Tomás de Bhaldraithe.

Cuir ceist san leabharlann poiblí i do cheantar faoi leabhair Gaeilge agus faigh amach an mbíonn ranganna Gaeilge á reachtáil sa chomharsanacht. B'fhiú litir a scríobh chuig an údarás áitiúil chun eolas a fháil.

Ansin coinnigh dialann nó leabhar lae i nGaeilge. Ní hamháin go mbeidh sé rúnda, ach spreagann sé thú ar lorg na bhfocal ceart, agus cothaíonn sé an tsamhlaíocht. Sar i bhfad beidh scéal le hinsint agat. Féach ar an scríobhnóir cáiliúil úd Dónall Mac Amhlaigh, atá ina chónaí i Sasana, agus scéalta á dteacht amach go rialta aige. Thosaigh sé le

'Dialann Deoraí' agus thuill sin clú idirnáisiúnta do. Aistríodh go teangacha eile é mar cháipéis staire soisialta.

Choinnigh mé féin dialann i rith an chogaidh, agus is suimiúil dul ar ais dtí 1940 agus léamh faoina haerruathair i Londain. Cuir i gcás ar an 6 Meán Fomhair:

'Sé haerruathair inniu ag na hammanaí seo - 5.30 a.m., 8.30, 12.55 p.m., 6.00, 8.55 is 11.30. Crannchur san oifig ar an chéad aerfhogha eile. Ag na pictiúir le hAindriú "an Pasáiste Thiarthuaidh". Dóiteán Mór sa chathair.'

Agus ar an leathanach roimhe sin:

'Dhá aerfhogha. Ag céilí beag. Dúirt mé cúpla amhrán. Abhaile i dtacsaí. Pléascáin ag titim. Im chodladh ar an chéad urlár.'

Bhí mé ag fanach i bPimlico ag an am, agus ba ghnách liom codladh ar an cheathrú urlár.

Iarraim rud eile ort. Nuachtán Gaeilge a cheannach go rialta. Tá 'Anois', a thagann amach gach Domhnach, le fáil ó 27 Cearnóg Mhuirfean, Baile Atha Cliath 2 ar £6 an ráithe agus 'Lá', páipéar laethúil ó An Muileann, Sráid Mhic Chonáid Midhe, Béalfeirste, BT13 2DE ar £15 an ráithe.

Guím ádh mór ort agus geallaim duit go mbainfidh tú aobhneas nua as an tsaol.

(Seoirse Ó Broin is a member of the Irish in Britain History Group and has taught Irish for the Gaelic League.)

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IRISH HISTORY IN BRITISH SCHOOLS — FOR OR AGAINST?

Emma Thornton

Q: At school then, what did you learn about Ireland?

A: The general attitude was that Ireland was somehow inferior to England, both religion, and historically. Ireland was some riotous rabble across the sea that didn't know how to behave, and there was poor Gladstone trying to sort them out, and the general attitude of our 'O' level teacher was that, wasn't Gladstone foolish to waste his time and energy in trying to sort the Irish out, when they were quite obviously never going to be sorted out. And something else that sticks out in my mind very vividly was when we did the 1916 Rising, and that the base of the Rising was the Post Office in Dublin, and she considered that hilarious that the Irish had a Post Office as their base, and she poured contempt on that. That really made me angry. And I had a different version of the Rising in 1916 from my grandparents too, and their version was that here were young men fighting and dying for what they believed in and it was just as important to them as any war, say that the English have fought, and yet in school it was just dismissed, as you know, that unruly lot over there misbehaving yet again.

At school we did things from an English point of view, and at home, things were from an Irish point of view... The English of idea of what the Irish are like, sort of typical stereotype of all Irish being ignorant, drunken navvies, was a threat to you when you're younger, and even though you knew it wasn't like that, nevertheless there was some little bit in your brain that made you think well, maybe they are, and you had to sort of try and not let the two come too close to each other, otherwise that sort of problem would rear its head, and you would have to choose between them. As I went into my teens, I just thought it was best to ignore the Irishness, not just to play it down, to pretend it wasn't there. Not to deny it, but to manage without it.

(Ann Collins, now a young teacher, remembering her schooldays. From the video The Irish in England, available from the Irish Video Project.)

★★★★★

'I was teaching in a Church of England Primary school in Kilburn and a young boy aged eight, who had an Irish name, when asked where his father was from, said he did not know and he looked uncomfortable about the question. He looked around at his friends and fidgeted in his chair. I let the matter go but later discovered that, in fact, his parents were Irish.

It took perhaps a matter of months for him to be quite happy to admit in class and acknowledge that his parents were from Ireland and, in fact, although the school was a Church of England school, it had many children who had relations or friends who were Irish. This change in reaction followed stories about Ireland and about my own life history. After a while the child, it seemed to me, rejoiced about being Irish, and I witnessed a change in his work and attitude to school and towards his classmates. He became

more out-going and his work output improved in quality and quantity.

The other children, some Caribbean, some Asian, also found reason to speak more openly, with confidence indeed, to speak more openly about their parents and a sort of cultural exchange took place.'

(From a paper by an Irish supply teacher to a conference on the Irish in London organised in 1984 by the GLC Ethnic Minorities Unit.)

★★★★★

In the last few years, little positive change has been made in the curriculum – surface or 'hidden' – that would ensure that people like Ann Collins or the eight year old boy don't feel their Irishness a subject of ignorance or ridicule.

Despite numerous anti-racist conferences and reports, there seems to be a 'blind spot' amongst educationalists when it comes to Ireland. There is an unwillingness in schools (and outside them) to:

- recognise the Irish in Britain as an ethnic minority, with many of the same problems, concerns and needs as other ethnic minorities;
- tackle anti-Irish stereotyping and racism;
- find out and teach about Irish history and culture;
- bring up the subject of the situation in Northern Ireland today.

When trying to find the cause of this unwillingness, I have met a variety of explanations and excuses. There are three that crop up most often:

1. Many feel that the Irish are no longer an ethnic minority, as they have assimilated into mainstream British culture; or that they are, but being white, their problems and needs aren't as great as those of other (black) ethnic minorities, who therefore deserve priority when it comes to educational provision.
2. Another strong feeling is that if you do teach about Ireland, you run the risk of being associated with the Provos, or being labelled emotional, embittered, obsessive, etc., which is bad for your image and career.
3. Others, while they feel that there probably ought to be more space for Irish history and culture in the curriculum, feel that there aren't enough good, easily available resources and teaching materials on it, thus it can't be taught well without giving up all one's free time in preparation.

I would like to use this space to try to counter these three common objections.

★★★★★

The Irish are an ethnic minority – indeed, the largest and longest established in Britain. They are not black, and thus are more likely to escape certain forms of discrimination, many have achieved upwards social mobility, and many believe defensively in keeping a low cultural and political profile. However, most are still at the lower end of the social scale in terms of pay and status, and most continue to be seen, and to see themselves, as culturally different from the 'average' WASP.

The Irish in Britain face a brand of racism that has its roots in Britain's colonial involvement in Ireland. Because this has gone on for so many centuries, anti-Irish racism seems to be taken for granted as an acceptable and ineradicable

icable part of British culture. The Irish, like other ex-colonial subjects, still too often find themselves labelled as ignorant, irrational, prone to violence, lazy, dirty... or, equally damning, as quaint, humorous, good at music, dancing, heavy manual work, etc. These stereotypes tend to fly around more when republican activities are in the news, thus an entire race is made to bear the burden of revulsion at the actions of a few.

In recent years, and amongst second and third generation Irish in particular, there has been a strong drive to tackle this racism, to preserve and assert a specifically Irish cultural identity, and to make links with other ethnic minorities. This has shown itself in the mushrooming of local Irish community groups, of conferences on education, of cultural projects, etc., but so far there has been little response from LEAs to their demands. Surely it is time that the anti-Irish stereotypes were analysed and challenged in our schools. To support this, it is necessary to ensure that Irish culture, in terms of language, literature, music, games, art, is not invisible or belittled, and that aspects of Anglo-Irish history which can help explain the roots of this racism are dealt with by History departments.

★★★★★

Our Government and army are engaged in a war in Northern Ireland likely to last for some time. If we are educating pupils to become responsible citizens with an awareness of and concern for current affairs, it is surely essential, however difficult, that we give them a chance to find out what is going on over there, what the origins of the conflict are, and what the various solutions offered are. In my experience, pupils who are given the chance of finding out about and discussing the issue are deeply interested. They also learn that history can be relevant, and build up an understanding of words like 'democracy', 'state', 'propaganda', 'terrorist', 'nationalist', 'reformist', etc., which enables them to better understand other situations in other places and periods. There may be a few teachers who would go about 'doing' Northern Ireland in a tub-thumping, biased way, but this is not what is being advocated, and it doesn't work anyway.

The ideological legacy of Britain's years of involvement in Ireland seems to have made many British academics and educationalists feel that Irish history is unimportant, except where it can be seen as a 'problem' that British politicians had to deal with; that Irish culture doesn't exist, or is inferior to British culture; and that teaching about Northern Ireland is impossible, as the issues are far too complex, therefore best ignored. Teachers who still find a concern for Irish history and culture obsessive, indicative of political naivety, or downright dangerous, should analyse themselves for traces of the age-old British habit of ignoring, patronising or reviling the Irish.

★★★★★

There are masses of good and easily available resources that would enable more of an Irish input to be made in the curriculum, in a way that was educationally progressive, and not too demanding of teachers' time. Here are some examples on offer in London:

The Spring 1985 issue of the ILEA Multi-ethnic Educational Review carried an eight page pull-out resource list on Irish studies, including textbooks, videos, children's fiction, useful organisations, etc.

The ILEA History and Social Sciences Teachers' Centre has a section of attractive and easily available textbooks on Irish history in the library, and a collection of successful workbooks, games, exercises, etc., produced by schools 'doing' Irish history, which can be photocopied.

A new organisation, the Irish Commission for Culture and Education in London (ICCEL), is making a collection of teaching materials on Ireland at its centre in Brent, and is

keen to give advice and help to teachers.

The ILEA Production Division is shortly bringing out a pack on Britain and Ireland, aimed at third year history classes, consisting of an illustrated information book, a pupils' workbook, a teachers' book, and a supplementary sheet on the general concept of Imperialism. Several commercial educational publishers are also about to produce textbooks on Ireland.

★★★★★

No one is suggesting that the history syllabus be radically changed so that pupils have to spend months learning about Irish history from A to B, just like that:

— where Irish history does already crop up on the existing syllabus (i.e. the Famine, Home Rule, Northern Ireland today...) it is dealt with carefully, in sufficient detail, and without recourse to the usual cheap jokes one so often hears teachers using;

— where humanities departments, as is becoming increasingly common, focus on themes like 'migration and settlement', 'the roots of racism', 'colonialism', 'nationalism', 'the causes of underdevelopment', 'conflict in the community', Ireland be more often used as the case study.

Language, literature, music, art and games are the provinces of departments I know little about, but it seems to me very wrong that the rich cultural background of so many pupils should be totally ignored in their schools. History departments, however, could make more use than they do of the 'evidence' to be found in Irish art, songs and ballads, poems, short stories, autobiographies, etc.

★★★★★

I spent three years recently as an ILEA Advisor for secondary history. During that time I noticed a sizeable number of teachers – in and outside London – come round to the viewpoint that there should be more of an 'Irish dimension' in the curriculum. I've heard some Heads, Inspectors, Councillors on education committees, workers in anti-racist organisations etc. also recognise the validity of this view. However, in order to affect what actually goes on in the schools, this latter group are going to have to ensure that resources are made available to the teachers – in terms of time for INSET courses, and money for decent materials. So far, they haven't done so.

WHAT DO ALL THESE PEOPLE HAVE IN COMMON?

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WEST BELFAST ADULT EDUCATION CENTRE —An Appeal

CONWAY MILL EDUCATION CENTRE in West Belfast is no longer to receive funds from the Northern Ireland Office to employ four workers under the Action for Community Employment (ACE) programme.

ACE workers helped convert the disused Conway spinning mill. They built new classrooms and had maintenance, caretaking and reception duties. They assisted tutors, publicising courses and organising classes.

The Centre is a registered charity and its books are open for public inspection. Its educational work speaks for itself. Presently the Centre runs a range of WEA classes: second chance to learn, assertiveness, home maintenance, wine making and health choices. 'A' level classes are taught in English, Politics and Philosophy. 'O' level English and Maths are taught. There are also Irish language and access courses.

A theatre at the centre is used by two community drama groups and for other groups to use for meetings. The Centre has an open door policy for groups wanting to use the meeting space. Users have included the SDLP, Quakers, Relatives for Justice, and organisations including Sinn Féin concerned about continued use of plastic bullets by the security forces.

So why the cut in funding? The NIO Department of Economic Development refer the Centre to a reply by Douglas Hurd, then Secretary of State for NI, to a question in the House of Commons from Ulster Unionist MP John Taylor on 27 June 1985.

Mr John Mark Taylor asked the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland what plans he has to ensure that Government financial support for community activities is not used to foster the aims and objectives of paramilitary interests.

Mr Hurd: It is the Government's policy to encourage voluntary and community-based activity which has the genuine aim of improving social, environmental or economic conditions in areas of need, and various grant-aid schemes exist for such purposes. However, I am satisfied, from information available to me, that there are cases in which some community groups, or persons prominent in the direction or management of some community groups, have sufficiently close links with paramilitary organisations to give rise to a grave risk that to give support to those groups would have the effect of improving the standing and furthering the aims of a paramilitary organisation, whether directly or indirectly. I do not consider that any such use of Government funds would be in the public interest, and in any particular case in which I am satisfied that these conditions prevail no grant will be paid.

Now the Mill fear that funding from other statutory bodies is under threat. Rupert Stanley FE College pay tutor fees; the Arts Council help promote poetry and other events.

The Mill receives no capital funding. Costs of refurbishing and maintaining the building are met through monies from charitable trusts (including the NI Voluntary Trust and Cooperation North), through donations and from contributions from users of the theatre.

The need for more further and community education provision is well documented. The need in West Belfast is 'acute' according to the House of Commons Select Committee on Education Science and the Arts (2nd Report, June 1983).

Conway Mill Education Centre seeks support from adult education groups in Britain. Further information about their work, and petition forms demanding reinstatement for ACE schemes and continued support for adult education evening classes, are available from:

Conway Mill Education Centre,
Conway Street,
Belfast 12.
Tel: 0232-248543.

Letters to Tom King, Secretary of State for NI, Stormont Castle, Belfast. Send a copy of your letter to Conway Mill Education Centre, along with any reply.

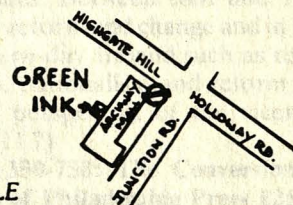
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BOOKS

RECENTLY PUBLISHED BOOKS

Recently arrived Irish-interest books on the 'Irish Studies in Britain' desk include:

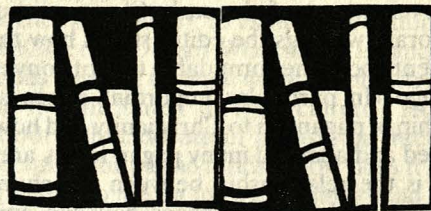
The Irish in the Victorian City (Croom Helm £18.95 hardback) edited by Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley. With the exception of perhaps Lynn Lees' 'Exiles of Erin: Irish Migrants in Victorian London', little has been written on the social history of the Irish in Britain especially when one compares this to the plethora of works published on the 'Irish Question'. Why this should be so and in particular why both Irish historians and British observers interested in the history of other ethnic minorities in this country should display such a remarkable lack of interest in the history of the largest minority community in the country is perhaps deserving of a piece of research in itself! However recently a start has at least been made and almost in an attempt to catch up on past inactivity a good deal of work has been done on the urban context of the Irish in Britain and this book brings together new studies by some of the foremost scholars in the field.

Dedicated by the editors 'to the Irish in Britain as a small contribution to a better British understanding of their common history', the book does just that. It ranges far and wide over aspects of the history of Irish people in this country and their relationship with the 'host' community throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries. The introductory chapter, 'The Irish in 19th century Britain: Problems of Integration', is by noted Irish historian Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh of Galway University; there is an interesting article by History Workshop writer Raphael Samuel on the Roman Catholic church and the Irish Poor and other chapters concentrate on the local histories of the Irish in Britain's major towns and cities – Bristol, London, Liverpool, Glasgow, York, Edinburgh, Wolverhampton and Stockport.

The book has been criticised for not sufficiently concentrating on the role of the Irish in Britain in Irish politics – the Fenians, Home Rule and the Republican movement – although surely this is the subject of a book itself. The alternative view is that the participation of the Irish working class in British politics, particularly in the labour and trade union movement, far outweighs its involvement in the Irish nationalist struggle. Read the book for yourself and see if the editors have got it right. (ISBN 0 7099 33339)

Emigrants and Exiles: the Irish Exodus to North America (Oxford University Press £25 hardback) by Kerby A. Miller. In a similar vein (and similarly expensive!) is this social history which provides probably the fullest account of the most important emigration movement since the discovery of the New World.

From the 1600s to the early 1900s over seven million people emigrated from Ireland to North America. This book covers the successive waves of emigration from the Ulster Presbyterians to colonial America to the masses who fled the Famine of 1845-55 to the huge procession of post-Famine emigrants (the largest wave of all). The author is concerned to highlight the resultant enormous social changes on both sides of the Atlantic, and concentrates on the



causes of emigration and its far-reaching impact – on the people themselves, on the country they left and on the new one they arrived in. He shows that while many were eager newcomers, many more saw themselves as involuntary exiles who had been forced to leave Ireland by British tyranny. This exile mentality influenced the course of Irish nationalism not only in Ireland itself but of course in Irish America where it continues to be a dominant influence to this day. The author also argues that this 'exile mentality' element in Irish nationalism constrained the more radical responses that might have led to the creation of a truly 'new Ireland' – one that could relieve the necessity of mass emigration by providing sustenance and dignity to all its inhabitants.

All in all a thoughtful and extremely readable book of particular relevance to Irish people in this country if only to discover the parallels and differences between the Irish experience in this country and that in America – and at nearly 700 pages it is extremely good value for money despite the price! (ISBN 0 19 503594 1)

A Biographical Dictionary of Irish Writers (Lilliput Press £18.50 hardback; £8.95 paperback) by Anne Brady and Brian Cleeve. Effectively a one-volume survey of Ireland's contribution to world literature and thought, this book covers the period from the 5th century to the present and reading it it really becomes apparent that, as the authors claim, no other small country has produced such a remarkable concentration of literary talent. For the first time, a comprehensive record of that achievement has been documented in one book for the student and general reader. There are over 1,800 author entries covering poets, novelists and dramatists as well as astronomers, biographers and critics, pamphleteers, scholars and theologians, writers of children's books, detective stories, erotica, thrillers and Westerns. (ISBN 0 946640 03 3)

Crown and Castle: British Rule in Ireland 1800-1830 (O'Brien Press £6.00 paperback) by Edward Brynn. This interesting book deals with a relatively neglected period in Irish history – namely the period between the Act of Union and Catholic Emancipation. More specifically, it analyses the way in which British power in Ireland was exercised during this 30-year period by the eight lords lieutenant, the symbols of British authority. Curiously enough the interests of Crown and Castle were not always the same as the lords lieutenant often identified the survival of their own office with at least a partial accommodation of the growing sense of nationalism in Ireland. Between 1801 and 1829 they faced rising demands for reform and change and in this book issues familiar to modern-day Ireland such as religious antagonism, civil rights, nationalism and reform are examined from the unique perspective of the viceroys themselves. (ISBN 0 905140 11 7)

Christianity and Paganism 350-750: The Conversion of Western Europe (University of Philadelphia Press £25.00 cloth; £10.95 paperback) edited by J.N. Hillgarth. Although obviously not exclusively about Ireland, this book should be of great interest to Irish readers simply because

of the fundamental importance and contribution of Ireland to the development of the early Christian church. Using contemporary writings the editor shows how the Christian church went about the formidable task of converting Western Europe. In particular important issues such as the relationship of paganism to Christianity and how Christianity adopted and adapted many pagan forms are covered in detail as is the relationship between the church and the Roman state and the divergence between episcopal and monastic Christianity of which the Celtic church in Ireland and northern Britain was the best example. (ISBN 0 8122 1213 4)

Heritage and Other Stories (O'Brien Press £3.95 paperback) by Eugene McCabe. With the publication of this book the short stories of Monaghan-based Eugene McCabe appear in paperback for the first time. Set in the border counties they describe vividly the tensions and troubles of contemporary South Ulster (in its nine counties context). The best example is the title story, describing a world of murders and reprisals and a young Protestant farmer's struggle to live at peace despite his family's rabid fanaticism and his name appearing on a Provisional death list. (ISBN 0 86278 079 9)

Proud Island (O'Brien Press £3.50 paperback) by Peadar O'Donnell. 93 year old Peadar O'Donnell was born near Dungloe, Co. Donegal, and has divided his life between literature and radical politics. In 1918 he became a full-time organiser for the ITGWU until he resigned to join the IRA. During 2 years imprisonment in Free State jails he commenced writing novels of which 'Proud Island' is the latest. It tells the story of a closely-knit island community whose livelihood is threatened when the herring shoals move beyond the reach of the islanders' small boats. They know that bigger boats are the only answer but the government is less sure. The problem then emerges which has dogged all such island peoples – survival or emigration? The central character (obviously at least semi-autobiographical) is Hughie Duffy who has spent time in prison and developed his political ideas there. (ISBN 0 86278 093 3)

Beyond the Shore: The Irish within us (Northampton Connolly Association £3). This is a selection of Irish poetry written by Irish exiles in Paris, the USA but mostly in Britain. Familiar names include Samuel Beckett, Thomas Kinsella and Ewart Milne, but most of the work seems to be by just ordinary Irish people living in this country. All of it is interesting; some of it is excellent. (ISBN 0 951 06710 9)

Don't Hang About (Oxford University Press £6.95 hardback) by Brian Keaney. This is an extremely funny and wistful book which will evoke memories amongst all those born in Britain of Irish parents. The author himself was born in Walthamstow, East London, of Irish background and set out in this book to, in his own words, 'describe what it feels like to be growing up slightly at odds with your surroundings. As a boy I felt not entirely at ease with either my Irish parents or my English companions. I think this is something that a lot of the children of immigrants feel.' (ISBN 0 19 271532 1)

★★★★★

Settlements (Taxus Press £3.25) by Catherine Byron. Belfast raised Catherine Byron has written a series of accurate and observant poems detailing the women's side of the Irish tragedy – and of exile from Ireland. (ISBN 1 85019 021 6)

W.B. Yeats's Second Puberty (Library of Congress, Washington, free) by Richard Ellman. This is the text of a lecture delivered at the Library of Congress by well known Joyce and Yeats scholar Richard Ellman. It is a lucid account of Yeats's final years (the poet himself described them as his 'second puberty') in which he seemed to recover a great deal of his emotional and intellectual vigour, resulting in a series of works in prose and verse, including 4 verse plays, and a revision of his book, 'A Vision'. An interesting interpretation of a relatively neglected phase in the life of Ireland's foremost modern poet. (ISBN 0 8444 0486 1)

field day

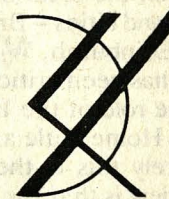
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Field Day Pamphlets 3: The Protestant Idea of Liberty (Field Day £5.00 set of 3). A collection of three pamphlets on the Protestant contribution to Irish thought and tradition written by Terence Brown and Marianne Elliott, two eminent Irish historians, and Robert McCartney, barrister, liberal Unionist and member of the Northern Ireland Assembly.

In the first pamphlet Terence Brown argues that many Protestants have an impoverished sense of history and cultural tradition and considers the reasons for this pervasive sense of imaginative dispossession.

Marianne Elliott in 'Watchmen in Sion: the Protestant idea of liberty', examines the radical, libertarian, Protestant tradition and explores the complexities of this influential, anti-authoritarian strand of Irish culture.

Robert McCartney in 'Liberty and Authority in Ireland', outlines the intellectual foundations on which a lasting pluralist society might be constructed.

The three pamphlets have attracted a lot of comment and also criticism being attacked from both the unionist and republican sides alike for romanticising the contribution of Protestants in Ireland. Read them and judge for yourselves. (ISBN 0 946755 08 6; 0 946755 09 4; 0 946755 10 8)

Ireland's Field Day (Hutchinson £6.95 paperback). This is a collection of six essays originally published in pamphlet form by the Field Day Theatre Company, Derry. The intention is to allow leading writers and poets to contribute to a lively and provocative debate on arts and politics in Ireland, in search of a middle ground between the country's entrenched positions. All the essays are stimulating and well written. They appeal to everyone interested in Ireland's literary, historical and political past and have the utmost relevance to its present and future. Tom Paulin examines the social and political implications of the evolution of the language of modern Ireland; Seamus Heaney provides a poetic response to being included in 'The Penguin Book of Contemporary British Poetry'; Seamus Deane contributes two essays on political terms and traditions; Richard Kearney looks at the relationship between myth and the Irish historical experience and Declan Kiberd examines English attitudes towards the Irish, and Irish exploitations of them in literature and politics. He also demonstrates the failure of the English to take account of Ulster Unionism and the consequences of this in the present situation. All in all, some thought-provoking articles which should shake our collective complacency. (ISBN 0 09 162641 2)

'The Female Line—Northern Irish Women Writers' (Northern Ireland Women's Rights Movement, £3.00 paperback) edited by Ruth Hooley. A collection of women's writing ranging from first-time published to such established authors as Jennifer Johnston and Polly Devlin as well as playwrights Anne Devlin and Christina Reid. (ISBN 0 948599 00 6)

★★★★★

'The Complete Fursey' (Wolfhound Press, £15 hardback; £7 paperback) by Mervyn Wall. Two comic classics ('The Unfortunate Fursey' and 'The Complete Fursey') feature the gentle self-effacing medieval Irish monk trying to cope with an Ireland full of rapacious devils, witches, vampires, bishops and Vikings. Both stories in one volume for the first time. (ISBN 0 86327 074 3 hardback; 0 86327 093 paperback)

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★★★★★

Please ask at your local bookshop if you are interested in any of the above books. The bookshops advertising in 'Irish Studies in Britain' or the shop where you bought your copy of the magazine all specialise in Irish books and should be able to assist you.

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NEW SUMMER SCHOOL IN DONEGAL

Ár nOidhreacht— Our Heritage

A new summer school, catering specifically for the needs of the discerning holiday-maker, has been formed in Donegal Town. Under the title "Ár nOidhreacht" (Our Heritage), three courses took place this summer and the organizers are expecting the event to become a considerable success on account of the strength of the American dollar.

The idea of a summer school in Donegal has long been the ambition of Seoirse Ó Dochartaigh and Antóin Ó Braoin, teachers of art and drama, respectively, in the local vocational school. Antóin originally contemplated establishing a drama course catering for a variety of tastes and ages, and Seoirse, who is a musician as well as an art teacher, felt that there was also a demand for art and music courses which local people as well as holiday-makers could attend. "The setting" says Seoirse, "would be ideal in the pleasant, relaxed atmosphere of our town". Donegal, a little coastal town tucked into the corner of Donegal Bay, is famous for its scenery, its fishing resources and its crafts.

Summer courses have taken place before in the area—"Dún na nGael" was one particularly successful venture—but this new course is likely to be a winner as it combines both the academic and the social. Indeed, the extent of the project's community involvement is probably its most unique attraction. As Antóin pointed out, "Visitors stay with local families and each week a different guest-house area is selected to allow for the widest possible community involvement".

While Donegal Town and its immediate environment is not an official Gaeltacht area, many native Irish speakers work and live there and the standard of Irish is quite high among the general population. As a school subject, for instance, Irish fares extremely well compared to other regions, and the soft Donegal "blás" is always in the air whenever Irish is spoken.

"A lot of preparation has gone into this project", said Seoirse, "since a good deal of people are likely to benefit from it. We hope to employ some students to look after our guests, produce will be bought locally, drivers will be needed for coach trips, B & B houses will have extra guests and we hope that the influx of tourists will help local trade. In fact, the town should have something of the atmosphere of an arts festival and the general feeling is that the summer school will re-awaken local interest in Irish cultural traditions".

The courses cover, in the span of one week, a broader spectrum than the original idea of a drama/music/art course. Visitors will hear illustrated lectures not only on the aforementioned subjects but also on Irish history, literature (Gaelic and Anglo-Irish) and folklore.

The title of this last lecture is "The Hidden Culture", but according to Antóin the real essence of all Irish culture is to some extent "hidden"—even to Irish people. There are various historical reasons for this as well as for the lack of real awareness of what exactly makes Ireland distinct from other countries. These lectures are aimed at redressing the situation. "Explore the Hidden Ireland in Historical Donegal" is, appropriately, the subtitle to this year's programme. The lectures, incidentally, will be delivered by teachers who are resident in the county and highly qualified in their particular specialised areas of study.

"Ár nOidhreacht" is not just an academic exercise, just in case one might get that impression from the series of morning lectures. There is much activity too. Afternoons are taken by two historical tours, a workshop and visits to craft-centres. Magee's and Hanna's are on the latter schedule. "Family Names" is the title

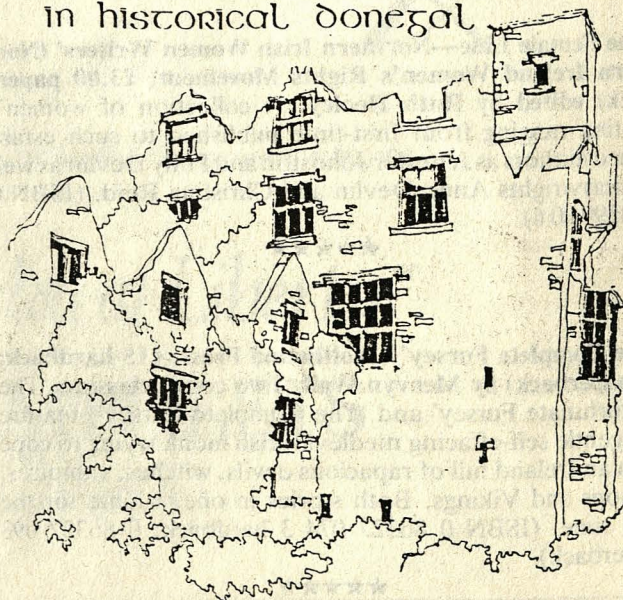
of this year's workshop and this section should be of particular interest to Irish-Americans in search of their roots.

The evenings on the course are almost purely social—singing, tin-whistle and dancing sessions referred to on the programme, quite romantically, as "twilight sessions" (7.00 pm—9.00 pm). The Irish Classes, incidentally, take place each morning of the course immediately before the lectures start. But the real fun begins later in the evenings: locally organized entertainment in the town itself laid on specially for the guests. Talent is drawn from the community—a community with a long tradition of social entertainment—and already local musicians, story-tellers and dancers have offered their services. Visitors are encouraged to participate in these traditional "airneáil"—a special name in Donegal for this kind of folk entertainment where nearly everyone contributes something.

The week closes with a visit to the theatre (inclusive of the fee) and a grand "Céilí Mór" organized by the local céilí clubs. The fee for each course (from Sunday to Sunday) is £189 and this includes full-board, tuition and ancillary expenses. It's quite a reasonable offer, the directors feel, when one considers the whole range of activities available to the guests. Antóin's final words about "Ár nOidhreacht" are self-explanatory: "We want to provide our visitors not only with good Irish entertainment and social life but with quality lectures delivered in an entertaining manner. The simple criteria for the "Ár nOidhreacht" courses is (1) the content must be academically sound, (2) the manner of delivery must be interesting and (3) people must be brought together".

For further details write to Antóin Ó Braoin, "Naomh Iúd, Cranny, Inver, Co. Donegal, or phone (073) 21784.

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