

IRISH IN BRITAIN HISTORY CENTRE



A COMMUNITY HISTORY

Today there are over 850 000 Irish born people living in Britain and as such they constitute the largest immigrant group. The majority have settled since the second world war but the history of the Irish in Britain is a very long one - stretching back to the sixth century when christian missionaries first travelled to Scotland.

The photo on the left shows an Irish woman arriving at Euston Station in the 1950's, a decade when half a million Irish settled here. These immigrants and their children make up a large part of the Irish community today.

Why a History Project?

Although the Irish have been settling in Britain in very large numbers since early in the last century, it is only during the last twenty years that historical study has begun to examine their particular experience of migration.

The Irish in Britain History Group was formed in 1980 and we organised a conference in order to highlight this recent research and to encourage further work. The speakers explored a number of themes - for example the important impact made by the Irish on the socio-economic and political life of Britain, the diversity of the immigration experience and the emergence of distinct Irish communities both in the 19th and 20th centuries. Despite this landmark, it was clear that much important work could still be done if we were to further develop the understanding of our own particular history. We therefore continued by organising monthly lectures which provided a forum for debate and discussion.

There was particular concern about the scarcity of sources and the gaps in our knowledge of the post war period - the most recent phase of 'mass' migration. The possibility of an oral history project which might fill some of these gaps was important as we wanted to produce a popular and community based history. It was also vital that an archive was set up to store all types of material which would reflect the full range of the Irish historical experience in Britain. In 1984 we achieved this aim when we established the first Irish historical archive in the Brent Irish Cultural and Community Centre.

The archive has hundreds of published volumes, papers, reports, pamphlets and other items of memorabilia. We are also compiling a photographic collection which, together with the recorded tapes, will go towards the creation of a truly popular history.

AIMS

1. To provide a central resource for use by all groups and individuals who have an interest in the Irish experience in Britain through the years.
2. To highlight the positive contribution made by the Irish to the socio-economic political and cultural life of Britain.
3. To document this area of popular history which has been, until recent years, largely invisible.
4. To give a voice to those people whose history would otherwise be lost and in so doing, help to change the negative attitude which exists about the Irish in Britain.

ACTIVITIES

PUBLICATIONS

Community based publications drawing on materials in the archive.

HISTORICAL ARCHIVE

The Irish in Britain History Centre's archive is the first of its kind in Britain. We are currently collecting books, diaries, manuscripts and photographs as well as other items of memorabilia which illustrate Irish life in this country. Examples of those items which we have already managed to locate are Gaelic League programmes, some dating back to the 1920's; copies of 'The Irish Leader', an Irish community newspaper from the fifties; Anti-Partition League pamphlets and an almost complete collection of past volumes of the Irish Post newspaper.

DISPLAYS AND EXHIBITIONS

We are developing a number of ways of making the archive collection accessible. For example, we assemble photographic displays and exhibitions which are used in local libraries, schools, community centres and at various Irish and history events.

HISTORY MEETINGS AND EDUCATION

Every month we organise a history meeting. These are held at the Camden Irish Centre on the first Thursday (except January and August). They are free and open to anyone who is interested. The guest speaker explores some aspect of the history of the Irish in Britain and the talk is followed by a lively discussion.

From time to time the History Group contributes to various Irish Studies courses by providing lectures on the history of the Irish in Britain, an area of history which is steadily gaining in popularity.

FUTURE WORK

Since the archive was set up over two years ago we have made excellent progress. We are based in the Brent Irish Cultural and Community Centre, another exciting new development for the Irish community. We see our permanent base in the centre but we are keen to establish contact with groups and individuals all over London who are working on oral history with the Irish community. Recently we have been contacting groups in other parts of Britain and we hope to eventually help establish a network of groups all over Britain who share our aims and objectives.

We see the work which we are doing as vital in illustrating the positive role played by the Irish community in Britain. The production of publications and educational packs as well as regular bulletins will be essential if we are to see the type of history which we want being taught in our schools and colleges.

THE IRISH IN BRITAIN HISTORY GROUP

presents 3 HISTORY LECTURES

at: THE CAMDEN IRISH CENTRE
murray st. n.w.1

7-30pm start:
free admission

thurs. Sept. 4th

FR. CLAUDE MALONE

The Irish Centre: Its Origins and Its Future

Fr. Claude Malone looks back at the origins of the Irish Centre here in Camden which first opened its doors in 1955. He will examine developments to date and discuss future work. Since its opening, the CAMDEN IRISH CENTRE has played an important role in welfare work among Irish emigrants, providing much needed advice and support. It has also been a major venue for various Irish community social and cultural activities and events. FR. CLAUDE MALONE is currently DIRECTOR of the Irish Centre, a position which he has held for the last 5 years. During the sixties and seventies he worked with Irish emigrants in the Kilburn area. His wide ranging experience of welfare work provides an interesting personal insight into the London Irish community over the past thirty years.

thurs. Oct. 2nd

CHARLES McCARTHY

The De La Salle Brothers 1855-1975

In this lecture Charles McCarthy examines the role of the Brothers of the Christian Schools (better known in Great Britain as the De La Salle Brothers) in education for delinquent boys in England and Scotland from the mid-nineteenth century. The Brothers first came to England in 1855 and they provided much needed support in the Catholic area of concern which had grown considerably with the arrival of hundreds of thousands of Irish in the years after the great hunger.

CHARLES McCARTHY is a teacher at St. Aloysius College, Highgate where he is currently Head of the Sociology Department. In 1982 he presented his Masters thesis on the work of the De La Salle Brothers in Britain to Manchester University. It was a very important and impressive study which involved much consideration of Irish involvement among pupils, teachers and administrators.

thurs. Nov. 6th

MOY McCRORY

Growing Up Irish in Liverpool

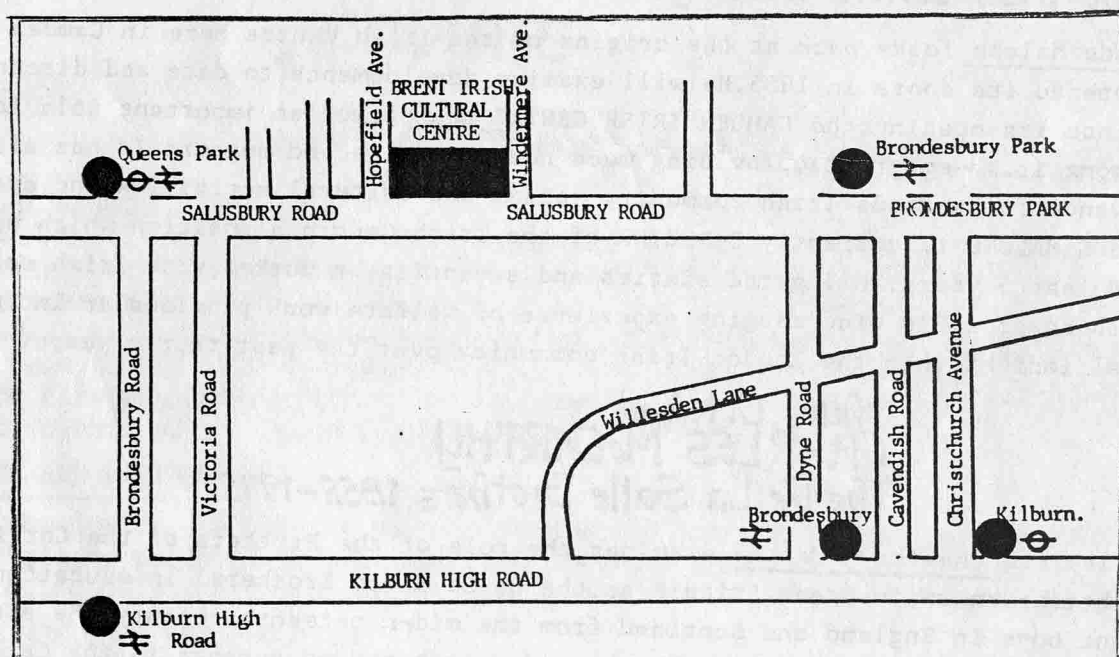
In this talk, Moy McCrory will discuss the themes of 'emigration' and the 'second generation' in general. She will offer her own verdict on what Irish emigration and being second generation has meant to her as a Liverpudlian born to parents of Irish origin. Among the more specific issues, she will examine the British education system of the 1960's and the structure of Liverpool itself.

MOY McCRORY is currently working in London as a teacher and she is also preparing her second collection of short stories. Her first compilation, THE WATER'S EDGE, based on the community life of Irish Liverpudlians, was published by Sheba in 1985

IRISH IN BRITAIN HISTORY CENTRE

LOCATION

The Irish in Britain History Centre is based in the Brent Irish Cultural Centre which is situated close to Queens Park station and is about fifteen minutes walk from Kilburn high Road.



OPENING HOURS

10am - 4pm Monday to Friday (Please ring for appointment)

management

The project is staffed by workers who are responsible for the day to day running of the centre, the organisation of centre activities, the development of the archive, liaison work, research and publicity.

The overall responsibility for the fulfilment of the aims of the Irish in Britain History Group and the archive centre rests with the Management Committee. Regular Management meetings are held where the centre workers report current work and progress.

The Irish in Britain History Group is a registered charity (Number 293844)

The Irish in Britain History Group is currently funded by the London Boroughs Grant Scheme.