

## THE IRISH IN BRITAIN HISTORY GROUP-Statement of Policy

This History Group was founded in 1980 with the purpose of organising a conference on the history of the Irish in Britain. This was held in April 1981 at the Polytechnic of North London and was attended by more than four hundred people. There was an overwhelming wish expressed that the group should continue and provide a focus for the growing need for the Irish to rediscover their origins and experience.

Our policy is to continue as a group and coordinate monthly meetings at the Irish Centre in Camden Town. At these meetings, guest speakers relate some aspect of the history of the Irish in Britain which is then discussed by those attending the meeting.

During the ensuing months there emerged a positive expression of the need for courses to be run which would provide the background historical material people required in order to develop their own history projects. For example the subject which attracts the maximum participants is community history in all its aspects.

Needless to say there are no facilities established in London (or elsewhere in Britain) other than ourselves which provide this service. The significance of the Irish in the development and construction of social policy in the nineteenth century, and most important of all, their experiences as the first major group of migrants from a colony to come to Britain, have been very inadequately documented and nowhere brought together. In view of this our policy is to make headway with the archive.

Last year we achieved one of our main aims when we were able to set up a centre in the new Irish Cultural Centre in Kilburn. We are now collecting old books, films, manuscripts and photographs as well as all other items of memorabilia which throw light upon Irish life in Britain through the years.

We also intend to begin recording onto tape the memories of the Irish who have been in London, in some cases, for more than sixty years. With the appropriate funds we could establish a unique resource to be made available to people pursuing their own history.

Our present publishing plans include a subject bibliography, for use by those who wish to study the subject in some depth; a quarterly bulletin, with news of the work and progress of the group and pictorial booklets on selected subjects from the archive. Through these publications we will not only reach more Irish people, but broadcast to a wider audience.