

MISSION ATLAS PROJECT

WESTERN EUROPE

IRELAND

Snap Shot

Name: Ireland; Local, *Eire*

Population: 4,062,235 (July 2006 est.)

Founded:

Location: Western Europe, occupying most of the island of Ireland in the North Atlantic Ocean, west of Great Britain

Map:



Flag:



Language: Irish (official) but English is also considered official and is generally used. Gaelic or Gaeilge is spoken mainly in areas along the western seaboard

Area: *total:* 70,280 sq km; *land:* 68,890 sq km; *water:* 1,390 sq km

People Groups: About eight recorded people groups

Religion: Roman Catholic 88.4%,
Church of Ireland 3%,
Other Christian 1.6%,
Non-religious 4.60%

Ireland Country Profile

Name:

Ireland ; Local, *Eire*

Capital: Dublin

Demographics:

Population: (4,062,235 (July 2006 est.)

Growth rate – 1.16%

Population density – 56 persons per sq. kilometer

Age structure – 0-14 years: 20.9%; 15-64 years: 67.5% and 65+: 11.5%

Birth rate – 14.47 births per 1,000 population

Death rate – 7.85 deaths per 1,000 population

Infant mortality rate – 5.39 deaths per 1,000 live births (*male:* 5.91; *female:* 4.84)

Life expectancy for the total population – 77.56 years (male: 74.95; female: 80.34)

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3396.htm>

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ei.html>

Language:

Irish is the official language but English is more commonly used. Gaelic is spoken mainly in areas located along the western seaboard.

Only about 30% of the people know Gaelic well enough to use it in normal everyday conversation. There has been a national push since the late 19th century to reintroduce Gaelic and it is now a compulsory subject in school. Signs throughout the island are printed in both English and Gaelic.

Irish people speak English with an accent known as a brogue. Irish brogue commonly converts words like *please* into “*plaze*”, *plenty* into “*plinty*”, and *Jesus* into “*Jasus*.” A brogue often introduces a superfluous quantity of breath such that words like *broader* and *wider* become “*broadher*” and “*widher*”.

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ei.html>

Society/Culture

Society in General

Ireland is a resolutely Catholic nation. Roman Catholics account for a little over 88% of the population but conservative estimates indicate less than 50% regularly attend mass anymore. Catholicism is so strongly woven into the fabric of Irish life, however, that it influences the laws, educational system, and even architecture. Divorce is uncommon but is allowed in special circumstances and abortion is still illegal, both according to the Irish constitution.

Roman Catholicism is also deeply intertwined with Irish nationalism. Before Ireland gained its independence, the English tried to eradicate all traces of Catholicism from the island. This caused the Irish to hang even more tightly to their faith. In Roman Catholic families, a child is baptized within a week or so of birth. First Communion and confirmation are still very important events for Catholic children and their families.

The Irish have a strong Catholic view of family. The Irish constitution even recognizes it as “the natural primary and fundamental group of Society” and guarantees to protect it as “indispensable to the welfare of the Nation.” Elderly relatives are known to move back in with the nuclear family if they become infirm and children typically will live at home until they are married, often after the age of 30. Siblings are very close and if unmarried tend to live together. It is not uncommon for older widowed siblings to live together. Ireland has been a predominately patriarchal society with the male being the primary breadwinner and the females doing most of the chores and child-rearing but this is changing. Before 1972, married women were prohibited from working outside the home in the public sector.

The Irish typically wear Western-style clothing. Handknitted sweaters and tweed are Irish specialties. Since the 3rd century, the Irish have adorned and buttoned their clothes with specially-made bronze and silver brooches. The Irish love to tell stories and their tales and folk legends are renowned. In rural areas there is always a chance that a seanachai (“traveling storyteller”) might drop into a pub or restaurant.

The proper pronunciation of “Celtic” is with a hard “k”, although the French say *selts* and the Italians *chelts*.

Religious Holidays:

Ireland’s religious holidays are St. Patrick’s Day (March 17), Good Friday, Easter Sunday and Easter Monday, Christmas, and St. Stephen’s Day (December 26). There are six Mondays throughout the year that are designated as “Bank Holidays” and all banks, shops, and schools are closed.

Cultural Anomalies

The Irish are a very hospitable people. In the olden times, it was commonly believed that turning away a stranger brought you bad luck and some people even taught that the stranger may have been Christ in disguise coming to test the members of a household. It used to be that people would leave their front doors open so that those passing by would be welcome to join them at mealtimes. Many of the old superstitions have passed away but the Irish are still a very warm people. In a pub, anyone joining a group of folks will immediately buy a round of drinks for everyone at the table and no one lights a cigarette without first offering the pack to everyone present. Though they might not comment on it, everybody notices everything and nobody forgets anything. It is also considered extremely poor form to refuse someone's offer to buy you a drink.

The Irish have hearty appetites. The average person consumes over 160% of the daily recommended caloric intake. Potatoes are the staple of any diet and are eaten daily. Cabbage is also used regularly in dishes. Breakfast and lunch are the most important meals. Supper is usually sandwiches or cold meats. A full Irish breakfast is very hearty and delicious with the purpose of sustaining a person throughout the day. This meal generally consists of eggs, rashers (bacon), bangers (sausage), baked fresh tomatoes, fresh mushrooms, white pudding, black pudding, fresh fruit, brown bread, or toast, or scones, with a bit of butter and marmalade, juice, a pot of tea or freshly brewed coffee with cream and a bit of brown sugar to round out the meal. Soups and sandwiches are a favorite for lunch. Many of the soups are a puree of sorts or a broth, served piping hot.

Naturally-raised lamb is used in many recipes and a beef roast is the traditional Sunday meal. An order of coffee with cream will come with a big dollop that has been whipped to a stiff consistency, so if you don't like cream be sure to specify milk. Most Irish coffee is stronger than American coffee. Many drinks come in full pint-size quantities and most beers have higher alcohol content than those in America.

Often times when visiting with family or soon-to-be friends, you are treated to "a taste of Ireland" with a slice of homemade brown bread or soda bread. In the late 17th Century, tea was introduced in Ireland and became very popular and now the Irish drink more tea per capita than any other nation. Whiskey in Ireland dates back to the 12th Century. It is thought that the Monks brought the distilling techniques from Europe. In any pub, you will find that whiskey, mead, ale, and beer all flow freely.

The Irish take great pride in their two most popular sports, Gaelic football (a combination of soccer and rugby) and hurling. The Gaelic Athletic Association was founded in 1884 to establish the basic rules and regulations for these sports and many others. Horse racing is also a popular national pastime, and Ireland has two famous races: the Irish Derby and the Grand National (the race featured in the movie *National Velvet*).

By far the most popular recreational activity for men is to spend time in the neighborhood pub drinking beer or ale, playing darts, and/or just socializing with friends. Women sometimes

participate but generally this is a male activity. The Irish use the term *craic* (pronounced “crack”) to describe a particularly good time listening to music, joking around, getting drunk, or flirting with the opposite sex. “The craic was mighty” means that someone had a good time. In western Ireland, weddings are sometimes attended by “strawboys,” uninvited wedding crashers that generally carouse in a good-humored fashion while clad in straw disguises.

When the occasion dictates, it is considered proper for people form orderly lines, or “queues”. To “jump the queue”, or ignore the order of the line, and push your way to the front will almost automatically earn a person disapproving stares, and often, verbal confrontations. In America when people extend their index and middle fingers in a “V-shape” it is interpreted as a sign of peace but in Ireland be careful not to do that with palm facing inward– it is considered very offensive.

The Irish do not appreciate jokes or references to leprechauns, Lucky Charms, pots of gold, and the 'wee' people. Such comments will not earn you any friends. Abortion, divorce, gay marriages, and the “Troubles up North”, likewise, do not make for casual conversation. These topics are largely avoided in pubs and public places and discussing these subjects is likely to bring the questioner serious troubles.

Men and women over the age of 60 are recognized as being Senior Citizens or “Old Age Pensioners” and enjoy a variety of discounts and privileges. Students, likewise, gain some concessions like reduced rates/admission fees with a valid student I.D.

The Irish traditionally have had a great respect for the dead. The ancient practice of “waking” the dead used to be the standard in most Celtic countries. A wake was where mourners would keep watch over their dead until the burial. The Irish used the wake as an occasion for both sadness and merriment. Although this tradition has waned in most European countries, it seems to have survived quite nicely in Ireland. The funeral parlor, however, is becoming more popular and to some degree seems to be replacing the home as the venue for the traditional waking.

In a traditional wake the body would be laid out for everyone to see. Someone would then say a prayer and attendees would issue the usual compliments about the deceased – including how good he or she looked even in death. Accoutrement would include a crucifix, lighted candles on a small table, and a well-laundered linen on the bed. Some Irish families would keep special pure-white linen just for this purpose.

People would generally call the house all day long until midnight when the rosary was recited. Distant family members are given perfunctory handshakes and a muttered “Sorry for your trouble” but the real sympathy, however, is reserved for the spouse or immediate family. After the prayers, those who were not staying up would leave and supper would be served for those remaining. When supper was over the games and storytelling commenced. Although it may seem irreverent, this jovial practice actually brought some light relief and helped those who were keeping all night vigils.

There are some words that have different meanings in Ireland than in America. “Cheers” and “ta” mean “thank you”, something that is really good can be “brilliant” or “grand”, restrooms are

called “toilets” not bathrooms (to the Irish “bathroom” only means the room with the bathtub),. French fries are “chips” and potato chips are “crisps.” Homes do not have yards; they have “gardens.” .

Ireland has seen a very large increase in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) in recent years. Being a predominately Catholic nation, sex education has always been met with mixed attitudes. Many people simply were not getting clear facts. The government initiated a safe-sex campaign a few years ago but it was discontinued after a year in operation. Meanwhile, STIs continue to rise. The Irish people seem not to be very cautious in their sexual lives, and not just among the teenagers and young adults. According to the Department of Health, reported cases of certain STIs have soared. In just one year, 1999 to 2000, genital warts went from 3,049 cases to 3,735, Chlamydia cases rose from 869 to 1,343, Gonorrhea cases rose from 175 to 290, and Syphilis cases increased from 6 to 46. Although the safe-sex message is still out, the number of new HIV cases rose by 22% in 2002 compared to 2001 – many of these among heterosexuals.

Naturally, the government believes better education is the answer and is attempting a more aggressive awareness campaign. Studies have shown, though, that many teenagers are entering adulthood without a proper understanding of how the body works. Officials are now looking into the correlation between heavy alcohol consumption and the lowering in inhibitions.

<http://worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/europe/ie.htm>

<http://www.letsgo.com/IRE/03-SoftGI-51>

<http://www.irishcultureandcustoms.com/>

<http://allaboutirish.com/library/customs/dir-customs.shtm>

<http://www.executiveplanet.com/business-etiquette/Ireland.html>

<http://www.ireland-now.com/>

<http://www.irishhealth.com/?level=4§ion=&11&id=5230>

WorldMark Encyclopedia of the Nations

WorldMark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life

Government:

The Republic of Ireland (the whole southern part) consists of 26 counties covering five-sixths of the island. The remaining portion consists of the six counties of Northern Ireland, which belongs to the United Kingdom. The Irish constitution, adopted in 1937, allows for a national parliament (called the “Oireachtas”) consisting of a president and two houses. The president is elected by popular vote for a seven-year term. The members of the two houses are elected for five-year terms.

There are three main political parties but because the members of the House of Representatives (the “Dáil Eireann”) are elected by a proportional representation system, thus allowing some smaller parties the opportunity to win representation in the Oireachtas. In the 1980’s even the Sinn Fein, the political arm of the Irish Republican Army, registered for and won a seat in the Dáil (for more information on the split of the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland see the History section). The Senate is called the “Seanad Eireann” and consists of 60 members, 43 of which are elected from five panels of candidates representing educational, agricultural, labor, industrial, and social interests. The remaining 17 are elected by the universities (6 members) and

the prime minister (11 members). Supreme Court judges are appointed by the president on the advice of the prime minister and cabinet. Suffrage is universal at the age of 18.

Ireland has been in an upturn of prosperity in the last several years and joined the EU in 1999 without any problems, unlike the UK. Traditionally, Ireland took an isolationism stance toward the rest of Europe but has recently been part of the coalition supporting the NATO campaign against Serbia.

Ireland's military consists of an army and its reserves, an air corps, and a naval service. In the year 2000, the total number of servicemen was 11,500 with 14,800 in reserve. The soldiers are well-trained and recruitment is voluntary. Young men of 17 years of age may volunteer for military service but there are specialist positions that can recruit boys younger than this. To date, Ireland has only deployed one battalion (Lebanon) and has sent about 90 observers to six peacekeeping missions.

Independence Day is December 6. There is no established state church.

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ei.html>
WorldMark Encyclopedia of the Nations

Economy:

Ireland's trade-dependent economy averaged a healthy 7% growth in 1995-2004. Agriculture used to be the country's most important economic sector but is now dwarfed by both industry and services. Industry now accounts for 46% of the GDP, about 80% of all exports, and employs 28% of the labor force. Composition by sector: agriculture: 5% industry: 46% services: 49% (2002 est.). Labor force by occupation: agriculture 8%, industry 29%, services 64% (2002 est.).

The GDP purchasing power parity is \$31,900 (2004 est.). The unemployment rate is 4.7% (2004 est.) although it was as high as 7.7% in 1998 and an astounding 18% in the mid-1980's. It is estimated that 10% of the population lives below the poverty line (1997 est.).

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ei.html>
<http://www.travelblog.org/World/ei-econ.html>
WorldMark Encyclopedia of the Nations
WorldMark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life

Literacy:

Adult literacy is almost universal. Children are required to attend school between the ages of 6 to 15. Both English and Gaelic are taught in school.

<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ei.html>
WorldMark Encyclopedia of Cultures and Daily Life

Land/Geography

Ireland has a total area of 70,280 sq. kilometers (27,136 sq. miles) and is roughly the size of West Virginia. The urban /rural division stands at only 60% urban / 40% rural. The largest cities are the capital Dublin (pop. 495,101), Cork (123,338), Galway (65,774), Limerick (54,058), and Waterford (44,564).

Ireland's climate is unique and is a perennial subject of conversation. Although the old saying is, "You don't go to Ireland for the weather", it can be quite pleasant. The temperature remains relatively moderate throughout the year with winter temperatures ranging between 40 and 50 degrees Fahrenheit (4 to 10 Celsius) and in the summer, 60 to 70 degrees Fahrenheit (16 to 21 Celsius). It rains frequently but rarely snows. Snow accumulations are greatest in the West and occur most frequently in the summer months. Storms can blow in from the Atlantic without notice. It can be sunny one minute and raining the next. A quick shower may come in the middle of a sunny day and you would never know it rained at all. Often the rain does not last long and comes as soft showers or a fine mist. Showers often produce spectacular rainbows (no leprechaun jokes, please). During the summer months daylight can last well into the late evening, and the nights can be described more like twilight than darkness. In the summer it gets light as early as 4:00-4:30 a.m. and stays light until almost 10 p.m.

Ireland's terrain is mostly level and there are some rolling hills and low mountains. The highest point is Carrauntoohil (1,041 meters) and there are numerous sea cliffs on the west coast. Ireland produces natural gas, peat, copper, lead, zinc, silver, barite, gypsum, limestone, and dolomite. Water pollution is a major environmental problem. Most of the people (approximately 40%) live within 100 km of the capital city of Dublin.

Irish time is GMT and is 5 hours ahead of U.S. Eastern time.

<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3180.htm>

http://www.geographyiq.com/countries/ei/Ireland_map_flag_geography.htm

<http://www.unhabitat.org/habredd/conditions/northeurope/ireland.htm>

WorldMark Encyclopedia of the Nation

History

Prehistory

The only fragments of the earliest Irish culture come from some scant remains of stone structures left behind. The original civilization was replaced with the Celts, warrior tribes from Western Europe, around 300 B.C. Since the Romans had never come to Ireland, the island remained a strong European nation when the rest of Europe fell into the dark ages after the Celts sacked Rome in 390 B.C. The Celts prospered in farming communities and governed themselves with provincial kings and regional chieftains over territories called *tuatha*.

Early Invasions

St. Patrick is the most famous Irishman in history, although he was born in Scotland. Kidnapped by Irish pirates, he was forced into a life of slavery tending sheep in Ireland. He eventually escaped and went back to Scotland but was told in a vision to return to Ireland and spread the gospel to the Celts. Later monks came and helped Patrick bring Christianity to the island. The high cross is an example of the melding of Christianity with the existing pagan religion. It is a combination of the Christian cross and the Celtic circle, exemplifying the mixture of the two belief systems.

The monks began to build entire monastic cities and write illuminated manuscripts such as the famous Book of Kells. The Book of Kells is a religious document so beautiful it was believed to have been written by the angels themselves. It contains an illustrated pictorial of the four gospels but is now revered more for the glimpse of the art and style of an ancient time. The Book of Kells is considered by many to be the crowning glory of the Celtic art form. Its history goes back to the 6th century. It is estimated that this artwork took a team of illustrators thirty years to complete with all of it painstakingly done by hand and in amazing intricacy and color. The most glorious pages contain illustrations of the saints along with individual pages that depict events in the life of Christ. It is so detailed that not one symbol is duplicated elsewhere in the book. This work and others led to Ireland being dubbed the “land of saints and scholars.”

The society prospered until the Vikings invaded in the 9th and 10th centuries and began plundering monasteries. Eventually, the Vikings founded Dublin. In 1002, the high king Brian Boru instigated a period of inter-tuath strife and after he died the tribal chieftains enlisted the aid of the English Normans to help bring peace to the island once more. Richard de Clare (Richard Strongbow) arrived from England in 1169 to cut a bloody swath through southern Ireland. He then married the daughter of Boru’s successor and affirming his loyalty to the English King Henry II offered to rule the southern province of Leinster on England’s behalf – thus beginning England’s long and varied history with Ireland.

Feudalism and its Discontents

The English occupation of a large part of the island led to constant quarrelling between them and the Gaelic lords. Even though the two peoples were very similar, the English government disapproved of “cross-pollination” of the cultures.

In 1366 the Statutes of Kilkenny were written banning any English from speaking to, dressing like, or marrying anyone Irish. Fighting continued until the charismatic Earls of Kildare arose in the late 1400’s. The English were so threatened by the Earls’ power that they began to pass very strict and oppressive laws.

When Henry VIII created the Church of England he passed the 1537 Irish Supremacy Act declaring him the head of the Protestant Church of Ireland. This ultimately made Ireland the property of the Crown. There were a few uprisings after this but even with assistance from Spain the Irish forces were soon quashed by the English army and the Gaelic lords who opposed the king fled the country in the Flight of the Earls in 1607. After this, the English parceled out the land to the Protestants.

Planted Protestants and the Ascendancy

The act of displacing Irish Catholics and substituting Protestants (mostly Scottish laborers, themselves displaced by the English) was called the Ulster Plantation (Ulster is the common name for the six counties comprising Northern Ireland). In 1642 Owen Roe O'Neill came back to Ireland in an effort to lead the landless Irish in a revolt. Together they formed the Confederation of Kilkenny. This worked for a while because at the same time England was experiencing a civil war. When things were settled back in England, the Lord Protector turned his attention back to Ireland and ended up destroying everything he did not already occupy – which was standard English procedure at the time. Many Catholics were killed, many towns razed, and the land again was given to Protestant vagabonds. As early as 1660, most Irish land belonged to immigrants. Later on, in the Restoration period, Charles II passed a law relinquishing one-third of the land back to the “innocent papists” but very little actually came of this decree.

In 1688, Catholic king James II was driven out of England by William of Orange. James fled to Ireland to gain military support. His failed siege on the Derry and exile from Ireland at the Battle of the Boyne is still celebrated today in Northern Ireland on July 12 (called Orange Day in honor of the late king). By 1700 the strict Penal Laws were passed bringing further oppression – Catholicism was now banned. In Dublin the Anglo-Irish tried to raise support from the ground up but ultimately found they needed Anglican support if they were to elevate to a higher class level, thus the movement was named “Ascendancy.” Outside the capital, though, a more traditional Catholic merchant class emerged. They formed the clandestine “hedge schools” where storytellers and musicians secretly taught Irish history, tradition, and told tales of the Irish children's ancestry. History says these schools met under ruined walls, in dry ditches by the roadside, in barns, and even in the shadow of hedgerows. There they also practiced their religion.

Rebellion and Union

Apparently taking their cue from the American and French revolutions, a secret group comprised of peasants and priests formed calling themselves the United Irishmen. They led the deadly Rebellion of 1798. This proved to England that the peace-intending relaxation of anti-Catholic laws would not work. Thus, the English countered with the 1801 Act of Union forbidding any Irish self-government whatsoever. This was it. The Crown abolished the Dublin Parliament and “The United Kingdom of England and Ireland” was created. Although this certainly did not lead to peace in the countryside it did allow for Irish representatives to hold seats in the British Parliament. In 1829 Daniel O'Connell was elected, the benefactor of a very strong push by Irish farmers and priests. To avoid any more trouble, the English then repealed the anti-Catholic laws that would have prevented him from taking his seat in the Parliament.

The Famine and Social Reform

O'Connell's victory was a boon for the welfare of the Irish but a few years later the people faced an even more deadly foe: potato fungus. The potato had been the staple food of the fast-growing Irish population and their reliance on it had tragic consequences. During the Great

Potato Famine (1847-1851) it is estimated that between two and three million people died and another million left the country, all because the potato crops fell victim to a widespread fungal disease.

The poorest Irish farmers were eliminated and emigration became a way of life. During this time the British became even more unjust which fueled the formation of several angry young Nationalist groups, whether secret or otherwise. Arthur Griffith started a small movement called Sinn Fein (“Ourselves Alone”) that would become very significant over the next one hundred years. There were even Irish Protestants who opposed British Home Rule and organized semi-private armies like Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) or the Irish Volunteers.

The Easter Rising, Independence, and Civil War

By the middle of 1914, it looked as if Irish Home Rule might actually happen. At the start of World War I Britain passed a Home Rule Bill in return for Irish bodies to fill out the British army. Over 600,000 men enlisted. Back home, though, the Sinn Fein had planned a nationwide revolt on Easter 1916 but it was foiled because their weapon shipment was lost. On Monday, though, there was a rebellion in which the Dublin post office was seized.

The English caught and publicly executed 15 “ringleaders” which in turn led a strong anti-British sentiment to spread throughout Ireland. The Volunteers reorganized under Michael Collins, thus uniting them with the Sinn Fein. Eamon de Valera was elected their party president. The attempted institution of the draft in 1918 was the final straw for the Irish and it instigated the formation of the Irish Republican Army (IRA), Sinn Fein’s military arm. Seeing another War for Independence, England passed the Government of Ireland Act which divided the country into Northern and Southern Ireland. The Anglo-Irish Treaty created a 26-county Irish Free State but acknowledged British rule over the other six northern counties. This was not unanimously accepted, however, and the IRA waged a two year long civil war until finally the pro-treaty people won out. The Sinn Fein continued to deny the legitimacy of the Free State government.

Ireland Today

Led by Eamon de Valera, the voters approved a permanent Irish Constitution in 1937 establishing the country’s current legislative structure. There are two chambers, the Dail and the Seanud, a Prime Minister called the Taoiseach, and a President who is the ceremonial head of state. During World War II, Ireland remained neutral although many individuals sided with the Allies and about 50,000 served in the British Army.

In 1948 the Republic of Ireland was officially formed, altogether ending British Commonwealth membership. The next year, England recognized this and announced that the U.K. would maintain control of Northern Ireland until Ulster was ready to join the Republic. Ireland entered the European Economic Community (now the European Union) in 1973. The euro was officially introduced on January 1, 2002.

Lisa Gerard-Sharp and others, *Eyewitness Travel Guides: Ireland* (London: Dorling-Kindersley, 2004), 13-15, 29.

Harold Orel, ed., *Irish History and Culture: Aspects of a People’s Heritage* (Lawrence,

KS: The University Press of Kansas, 1976), 25-40.
WorldMark Encyclopedia of the Nations
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/ireland/history.htm>
http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/section/Ireland_History.asp
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ei.html>
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3180.htm>
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41687.htm>

Christian History

Because Roman Christianity never came to Ireland one of the most significant differences was its understanding of the gospel independent from what was taught by the early Catholic Church. Roman Christianity tended to be authoritarian, hierarchical, male-dominated, and strongly legalistic with a powerful need for control and uniformity. The Celtic church, however, embraced strongly the concept of the grace of God. The Irish also believed in the sacredness of all creation. That the Celts were nature lovers was woven into their new-found faith. The old Celtic prayers show a profound respect and appreciation for the created world without mistaking it for the Creator.

The Irish have always seemed to love mysticism and poetry, a deep respect for the feminine, and from the beginning allowed clerical marriages. The Celtic people seemed to have little concept of land ownership or taxes, thus, their understanding of church leadership was rooted in a rural and agricultural communal culture. The great Celtic monasteries were born from this tribal system. Although generally not ordained, the leadership and power in the Celtic church lay with the abbots of the monasteries. It has been said that the Irish were the only people ever peacefully converted to Christianity. Indeed, the Celtic approach to evangelism was peaceful and avoided bloodshed. As Christianity was spread in the Celtic countries by converted Celtic Christians, who were usually monks, martyrdom for the Christian faith was almost unknown.

Celtic Christianity is famous for its rigorously ascetic monasticism. Irish monks developed guides called "The Penitentials" which determined the appropriate spiritual discipline for various transgressions. Almost one-third of the Irish penitentials covered sexual infractions. A priest who lusted after a woman had to live on bread and water for one week but would get six years of the diet for impregnating a nun. Historical evidence shows that early Christians in Ireland only lived in monasteries but that is probably misleading. The only institutions capable of producing lasting manuscripts in the Celtic world were the monasteries. Just because there are no traces of rural Christians doesn't mean there weren't any. Today, there are more than 6,000 place names containing the element *cill-*, the old Gaelic word for church.

Perhaps the most famous Irishman of old is Patricius, better known as Patrick. He supposedly drove all the snakes out of Ireland and used the shamrock to explain the Trinity but was actually a humble servant of God with great courage who devoted his later life to evangelizing Ireland. Born in Britain, Patrick was sold into slavery as a teenager and shipped to Ireland in 430 A.D. He lived just like the animals he was forced to care for and endured long periods of thirst and hunger all while being segregated from other people. Being a nominal Christian at the time of his enslavement, Patrick began to call upon the name of the Lord during his forced solitude.

After six years of slavery he received a divine message in a dream: “You do well to fast. Soon you will return to your homeland.” Not long after, Patrick found himself onboard a ship bound for France but upon arrival they found only devastation left by the Goths and Vandals. Knowing Patrick’s testimony, the ship’s captain taunted him with claims that Patrick’s God brought him to this place only to starve. Patrick answered “Nothing is impossible with God” and at that moment a herd of pigs appeared. His companions offered their new-found food as sacrifice to their pagan gods. Patrick abstained completely.

Patrick was back in Britain when he received the call to evangelize Ireland. He had another vision, this time hearing an Irishman saying “Come and walk among us.” Patrick was not the first Christian to try to proselytize Ireland. Pope Celestine I sent a bishop named Palladius in 431 but history has said he was unsuccessful. By this time, Ireland was so dominated by paganism that Patrick wrote “I dwell among gentiles, in the midst of pagan barbarians, worshipers of idols, and of unclean things.”

Patrick found, though, that the Irish people’s belief in the supernatural paved the way for their belief in Christianity. They were taught to regard their old deities as demons and the fear of them was replaced with hatred. Historians have concluded that if Christianity had come to Ireland with only doctrine, ethics, and the hope of eternal life, then it would have failed. The Celtic heart was won with miracles, mysteries, and rites. Most of the opposition came from the druids who practiced magic, were skilled in learning law and history, and advised Irish kings. There are myriad stories of those who “wished to kill holy Patrick.”

Patrick’s missionary philosophy was to target the tribal kings spread throughout the land. He reasoned that if the king was converted, then the people would follow. After a number of pagans were converted in a particular area, one of the new disciples would be ordained to ministry and a monastery and a church would be built. Patrick would give the new converts a compendium of Christian doctrine and set of canons (rules) before departing to another area.

The fifth and sixth centuries are remembered for their large-scale conversions to Christianity in Ireland and Britain. The Celtic mission, as it had always seemed to be, continued its emphasis on the image of God in humanity, and its certainty of the essential goodness of creation. The Celtic mission had no central organizing force so there was considerable variation in liturgical practices and monastic rules. By the beginning of the sixth century, Celtic Christianity was wholly monastic in its structure. Roman and Irish missions did not collide until the Roman mission to Britain in 597 under Augustine of Canterbury. There then began a considerable disagreement over seemingly superficial things such as the dating of Easter Sunday, or the style of clerical tonsure. This conflict eventually led to the Synod of Whitby in 664. The Celts argued from the authority of St John, who was "especially loved by Jesus", while the Romans appealed to the authority of St Peter to whom Jesus said "you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church". The outcome: Roman judgment against the Celtic mission.

After the Synod the Celtic religious tradition of worshipping outdoors slowly was replaced with the indoor Roman church sanctuary. The Whitby decree did not immediately change the whole face of British Christianity, though, because for hundreds of years there were pockets of resistance to the Roman mission. For instance, in Iona the Celtic monastic community was not

finally dispersed until the Benedictines came in the 13th century. This period of tension was marked by some of the greatest achievements of the Celtic tradition. The Book of Kells was made here as were the beautiful high standing crosses with Scriptural imagery on one side and creation imagery on the other. There was, however, a gradual conformity to the Roman mindset and over time the Irish began to separate the mystery of God from the mystery of creation.

Mary Cagney, "Patrick the Saint", *Christian History*, November 1998, 10-15
Gilbert Markus, "Rooted in the Tradition", *Christian History*, November 1998, 19-21.
WorldMark Encyclopedia of the Nations
http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/section/Ireland_History.asp
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ei.html>
<http://www.irishchurches.org/>

Religions

The Irish Constitution provides for freedom of religion, and the Government respects this right in practice. The Constitution forbids promotion of one religion over another and/or discrimination on the grounds of religion or belief, and the Government does not hamper the teaching or practice of any faith. There is no state religion, and although Roman Catholicism is practiced almost exclusively, there is no official discrimination against nontraditional religious groups.

The 2002 census shows that, besides the major Christian denominations (Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterian, Orthodox, and Church of Ireland), there are 21,403 people who registered under the label "Other Christian Religions" (0.5% of the population). By contrast, other than Islam, there were 40,026 people registered as "Other Stated Religions" (1% of the population). Dividing the number of religious groups into the number of people classified as "other religion" proves it is very difficult to get an accurate count of everyone.

The Irish government does not require but does permit religious instruction in public schools; however, most primary and secondary schools are denominational, and their school boards are controlled partially by the Catholic Church. The Department of Education provides equal funding to schools of different religious denominations (there is an Islamic school in Dublin). The Irish generally see religious instruction as an integral part of the curriculum but if so desired, parents may exempt their children. Immigrants and non-citizens encounter few difficulties in practicing their faiths.

In June 1998, an Employment Equality Act was amended outlawing discrimination in the workplace based on nine issues including religion. One year later, it was amended again to include areas such as education and the provision of goods. Adhering to Roman Catholicism can be politically advantageous, however, because members of the major political parties tend to be practicing Catholics.

According to the U.S. State Department, there were no reports of religious detainees or prisoners, no reports of the forced religious conversion of minor U. S. citizens who had been abducted or illegally removed from the United States, or of the Government's refusal to allow such citizens to be returned to the United States.

According to some statistics, there are over 100 different religious groups practicing in Ireland. Since many of them are very small or just getting started there is very little possibility of securing membership numbers. The traditional Roman Catholic Church has increasingly failed to reach the younger generation but these young people are still interested in spiritual things so other religions who offer some semblance of sense and purpose to life are thriving.

Non-Christian

Islam

Muslims started to arrive in Ireland in the early 1950's. Initially, they were South African students studying medicine at Royal College in Dublin. More students began to arrive from many other nations and soon the first Muslim organization in Ireland, the Dublin Islamic Society, was formed in 1959.

The 1991 census showed there were 3,873 Muslims living in Ireland but this had increased almost 500% to 19,147 in 2002 (still only 0.5% of the population). Muslims living in Ireland come from over 40 different countries but since the early 1990's large numbers of Muslim refugees have arrived from Bosnia, Somalia, and Kosovo.

The headquarters of the Islamic Foundation of Ireland is in Dublin where the New Mosque & Islamic Cultural Centre was built in 1996.

<http://www.islamfortoday.com/ireland.htm>

Judaism

Judaism has been present in Ireland for centuries, as far back as 1079. It wasn't until the end of the Napoleonic Wars that there was a remarkable difference in Jewish immigration to Ireland. Between 1880 and 1910 approximately 2,000 Jews came from Eastern Europe and settled in Belfast, Cork, Derry, Drogheda, Dublin, Limerick, Lurgan, and Waterford. They participated fully in all walks of life and in all professions, including politics.

Both Dublin and Cork have had Jewish mayors in the last forty years. Surprisingly, only a handful of Jews came during the time of the Nazis and World War II. There were about 5,500 Jews in Ireland in the late 1940's but that number has dipped to approximately 1,700 at present. There is an Orthodox Congregation in Cork. Dublin has both Orthodox and Progressive Congregations.

http://www.somethingjewish.co.uk/regional_jews/ireland_jews/index.htm

<http://www.teachnet.ie/fwilliams/communityoffaith/text/Commfaithprocess.html>

Buddhism

Buddhism came to Ireland in 1977. It is an offshoot of the mainstream Buddhist tradition but follows the teachings of the *Karma Kagyu* School. The Dublin center has hosted visits from Buddhist lamas, monks, nuns and a variety of lay teachers who offer talks and courses on the

philosophical and practical application of Buddha's teaching. The center has weekly and monthly meditation and study sessions. Both Buddhist and non-Buddhist are welcome at these sessions. There are seven centers throughout the Republic of Ireland.

<http://www.buddhism.ie/KSD/mainframe.htm>

Traditional Type Religions

There are numerous religious groups that fall under this heading: New Age, Druidism, white magic, and Shamanism are all found in Ireland. They are generally found in small groups, are tolerant of other views, and are very earth-centered.

There are just over 3,000 of these traditional religion followers in Ireland with the largest and most popular being witchcraft, more commonly called Wicca. Due its Celtic origins, this religion is gaining in popularity in Ireland. The occult is becoming most popular amongst angst-ridden teenagers.

A typical greeting from followers of these religions would be “Blessed Be” instead of “Good Morning.”

<http://anamspirit.com/links/earthpaths.html>

<http://www.esatclear.ie/~dialogueireland/wicca1.htm>

Non-Religious

Over 4.60 percent of the people in Ireland claim to be non-religious and the group shows a growth rate of + 3.5% (compared to +0.5% for all Christian groups).

Non-Classified

According to the 2002 census, there were 138,264 people who had registered as having “no religion” (3.5% of the population) and 79,094 registered as “not stated” (2% of the population). As stated above, there are over 100 religions in Ireland and most likely many of them are not “organized.” Some of these people may be counted in the non-religious segment.

The Way, International

The Way denies the deity of Jesus Christ, claims Holy Spirit is a Force, and teaches the Bible is corrupted. Most people are introduced through a friend's or contact's invitation to a home Bible study group. People are recruited through a course called “Power for Living” (which, incidentally, costs Euro 100-200). This course “teaches you how to pray in tongues” which they teach is a sign of salvation. This cult splintered after its founder died, floundered for a time, and it now slowly growing again. The Way International does not publish membership statistics but there is an Irish presence.

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/6528/cult.htm>

Jehovah's Witnesses

Including Ulster, there are 4,897 Jehovah's Witnesses in 114 congregations in Ireland. They baptized 122 people in 2004. In order to be a true Jehovah's Witness, one is required to witness house to house offering Bible literature, and recruiting and converting people to what they call "the truth". It is not uncommon for a JW to spend up to 70 hours a month in door-to-door witnessing.

http://www.watchtower.org/statistics/worldwide_report.htm

The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints

There are 2,300 Mormons in Ireland (0.06% of the population) although there are meetinghouses all throughout the country. Historically, most of the church growth was in Northern Ireland, but there is some current progress in the Dublin area as well. The Ireland Dublin Mission was organized in 1976, and the Dublin Stake was created on March 12, 1995. Irish mission work started as far back as 1840.

Catholic and Orthodox

Roman Catholic

For more information about Catholics in Ireland, see the history sections. In 2002 there were 3,462,606 Roman Catholics in Ireland comprising 88.4% of the population. The group counts 2198 congregations.

The Magisterium is made up of bishops, cardinals, and the Pope. The Roman Catholic Church believes it has been given its power by Christ Himself, thus making the Church infallible and authoritative. Tradition is seen as continuing progressive revelation by God handed down to Church leaders. Given equal measure are Scripture and oral traditions descended from the Apostles.

Salvation cannot be known for sure. It is a "sin of presumption" to claim one is definitely going to heaven. Catholic soteriology teaches both Christ's redeeming work and the sacraments are necessary for salvation. Catholics adhere to pedobaptism and the Virgin Mary is seen as a co-redeemer. The Roman Catholics believe that at the priest's command the bread and wine of communion actually become the body and blood of Christ. It is taught that taking part in the Eucharist sacrifice is apex of the whole Christian life.

Today, Catholicism is losing ground in Ireland. It seems increased secularism, prosperity of the people, and the sexual abuse scandals are working together to weaken the church's influence. At St. Patrick's College, the number of graduating seminary students is steadily decreasing. In fact, the number of graduates is not enough to replenish the priesthood and Ireland may need to look to South America or Africa for suitable replacements.

Secularism, like that now found in Western Europe, has had a negative impact on the Catholic Church. The days of church and doctrine being central to public policy are no more. In the

1970s, more than 90% of Irish Catholics claimed to attend Mass once a week but according a 2002 survey that number had dropped to 44%. An "a la carte" attitude began to infect Irish Catholics. Young adults began to reject the certain church teachings, such as the ban on premarital sex. People began practicing birth control, condom sales were legalized in 1979, and in 1995 a constitutional amendment was passed allowing for divorce (yet, it was soundly defeated just nine years previously).

The current prosperous upturn has people enjoying life and focusing on the temporal and not the eternal. Both of these things coincided with the country's explosion of sexual abuse scandals in the 1990's.

Church officials claim that Catholicism is still important to the Irish although, just as in America, people attend Mass more so on holy days and for baptisms, weddings and funerals. Most parents still rear their children as Catholics.

<http://www.catholicireland.net/pages/index.php>
http://home.att.net/~Local_Catholic/Catholic-Ireland.htm
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02278a.htm>
<http://www.zemeski.org/>

Orthodox

The Orthodox Church has been present in Ireland since before 640 A.D. They share the same Celtic Christian heritage as Protestant and Catholic churches. There are five official parishes and a number of other smaller areas where Orthodox adherents occasionally meet. There are Greek, Russian and Romanian Orthodox communities. Some of these parishes are in Dublin and Cork in the Republic of Ireland and in Belfast in Ulster. The town of Swords, just outside of Dublin, has the highest number of Orthodox residents in Ireland. Immigration from Romania and the Russian Republics has caused the Orthodox Church to grow substantially.

Orthodox groups now claim in Ireland 10,437 members (0.26% of the population).

In February 2004, Fr Godfrey was ordained the first Irish Orthodox Priest. A former Catholic priest, Godfrey left the RCC because he wanted to marry. He established the Romanian Orthodox Church in Dublin in 2000.

<http://www.orthodoxireland.com/> (non-working??)
<http://www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk/>
<http://www.teachnet.ie/fwilliams/communityoffaith/text/OrthIrl.html>

Protestant/Evangelical/Pentecostals

The Church of Ireland

There are approximately 75,000 adherents to the Anglican faith in Ireland comprising 1.9% of the population (compared with 275,000 and 16.9% in Northern Ireland alone). They belong to the worldwide Anglican Communion and claim to be an apostolic church, maintaining an unbroken link with the early apostles and drawing on the apostolic faith in its teaching and

worship. The Church of Ireland uses The Book of Common Prayer (2004) and they keep a balance in doctrine and worship between Word and Sacrament with the Eucharist as its central act of worship. There are two provinces, Armagh and Dublin, each with an Archbishop; 12 dioceses, 466 parochial units and 528 stipendiary clergy.

The Church of Ireland traces its roots back to the early Celtic Church of St Patrick and was heavily influenced by the Reformation. It is a self-governing part of the Anglican Communion, which means the English monarchy is not the head of the church nor is the Church under the authority of the Archbishop of Canterbury. The Church of Ireland is led by the Archbishop of Armagh (Primate of All Ireland) and the Archbishop of Dublin (Primate of Ireland). It is governed only by the preamble and declaration to its own constitution which requires it to (1) accept and believe all the canonical scriptures of the Old and New Testament because they contain all things necessary to salvation, (2) profess the faith of Christ as done so by the primitive church, and (3) maintain the three orders of bishops, priests or presbyters, and deacons in the sacred ministry. Besides the two Gospel Sacraments of Baptism and Eucharist, the church observes the sacramental ministries of confirmation, ordination, holy matrimony, absolution and healing.

The Church of Ireland claims to be both Protestant and Catholic, although not “Roman” Catholic. They believe in one holy catholic and apostolic Church and acknowledge one baptism for the forgiveness of sins. They look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the world to come. The Church of Ireland does not believe that the Pope has jurisdiction over the universal church nor are his utterances infallible. It also dismisses that the Immaculate Conception of the Blessed Virgin Mary, and in her Corporal assumption, are necessary for salvation because they believe neither Holy Scripture nor the understanding of the Scriptures by the early church fathers support these doctrines. However, it should be noted that the beliefs and practices held in common greatly outweigh those that separate the two Churches. The liturgical tradition within the Church of Ireland has been to honor the saints, including Mary, without invocation. In other words, while they honor Mary, their prayers are offered only to God.

The Church of Ireland is a Protestant Church in so far as it shares opposition to those innovations in doctrine and worship that appear contrary to Scripture and led to the Reformation. It differs from these churches in retaining elements of the pre-Reformation faith and practice which they have rejected or lost.

<http://www.ireland.anglican.org/home.php>

http://www.answers.com/main/ntquery?method=4&dsid=2222&dekey=Church+of+Ireland&gwp=8&curtab=2222_1&linktext=Church%20of%20Ireland

Presbyterian Church of Ireland

The Presbyterian Church came to Ireland by Scottish settlers to Ulster in the early seventeenth century. The first presbytery was formed in 1642. Today the Irish Presbyterian Church, a founding member of the World Alliance of Reformed Churches, has over 560 congregations in 21 presbyteries throughout Ireland with over 300,000 members, of which only 12,909 live in the Republic of Ireland (0.33% of the population).

The Church is evangelistic and has active social ministries in India, China, the Middle East, the Caribbean, Africa, Indonesia, Nepal and Brazil. Worship is centered on the Word of God and there is no fixed liturgy. The church emphasizes the individual and corporate responsibility of members.

<http://www.presbyterianireland.org/>

Methodist Church of Ireland

In 2002, there were 10,033 Methodists registered in Ireland (0.25% of the population). Many Methodists and Presbyterians worship together and share facilities.

<http://www.irishmethodist.org/>

Baptists

Baptists have been in Ireland since around 1650 in Dublin, Waterford, and Cork and are still there today. The Irish Baptist Association was organized in 1862, was replaced by the Irish Baptist Union in 1895, and is now called the Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland. The Irish Baptists were initially close with the English Baptists but the desire for independence and more conservative theological lines caused the Irish Baptists to distance themselves from their English brethren. This conservatism has also kept them from joining the Baptist World Alliance.

The Association of Baptist Churches in Ireland is comprised of over 100 churches. The majority of the churches are in Northern Ireland, but there are also churches in the Republic of Ireland. These member churches of the association have almost 8,500 active members. Departments include Baptist Women, Baptist Youth, Missions, Welfare, and Training, Irish Baptist Historical Society, and Irish Baptist College. There is a Baptist Life magazine serving the churches and an Irish Baptist College located near Moira, County Down, Northern Ireland.

They believe the New Testament teaches that the local church is independent but believers from all churches should come together and support one another. They consider themselves a fellowship of like-minded churches, not a denomination, and therefore claim no authority over member churches. The doctrinal statement of the association includes ten articles on doctrine and behavior, which must be affirmed by member churches in order for them to gain admittance into the Association.

<http://www.baptistireland.org/>

<http://www.mercer.edu/baptiststudies/mar04.htm#email>

Assemblies of God

This charismatic church came to Ireland in the late 1970's and found an audience in many Roman Catholics. Missionaries used weekend retreats and home Bible studies to reach the spiritually hungry. In 1983 the home meetings resulted in the formation of the first Pentecostal church in Dublin.

The Irish Assemblies of God was created and in 1985 was officially recognized by the Irish government. The Irish Bible College was formed in Dublin in 1982. Today, there are six missionaries, 18 ministers, 40 churches and/or preaching points, one Bible School, and 1,150 members.

<http://www.aog.org.uk/contact.asp>
http://www.2000.agcongress.org/01_abot/countries/ireland.html

Church of Christ

There are two churches, one in the province of Munster and the other shares a facility with a Seventh-Day Adventist church in Dublin. There are only about 150 adherents in the country.

<http://www.churchzip.com/countrysummary/EI>
http://church-of-christ.org/churches/Republic_of_Ireland/Ireland_S.htm

Seventh-Day Adventists

Seventh-Day Adventists organized in Ireland in 1902. Today there are seven churches and 362 members in Ireland and Northern Ireland combined.

<http://www.adventist.org.uk>
<http://www.adventistyearbook.org/default.aspx?&page=ViewAdmField&Year=2005&Search=ireland&AdmFieldID=IRIM>

Lutheran Church of Ireland

The Lutheran Church has existed in Ireland for roughly 300 years and currently belongs to the worldwide association of Lutheran Churches. It maintains a special relationship to the something called the “Evangelische Kirche in Deutschland” (EKD). Most Lutherans in Ireland come from German speaking regions in Europe.

Today more than 3,000 Christians of German Lutheran and Reformed background live in Ireland. The mother parish is in Dublin. According to Lutheran World Foundation (LWF) statistics, Lutheran church membership has grown from 1,045 in 2001 to 3,068 people in 2003. This still is only 0.07% of the population of Ireland but represents almost 300% growth in two years time.

Christian Brethren

The Brethren report some 28 congregations with 1250 members.

<http://www.lds.org.uk/>
<http://www.ldsep.org/ireland/index.html>
<http://www.irishlds.com/>
WorldMark Encyclopedia for Cultures and Daily Life
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ei.html>
http://www.cesnur.org/testi/irf/irf_ireland99.html
<http://www.cso.ie/census/Vol12.htm>

http://www.eirestat.cso.ie/census/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx?CS_referer=&CS_ChosenLang=en
<http://www.theology.ie/linksch.htm>
<http://www.reformedreader.org/history/vedder/contents.htm>
<http://www.irishchristian.com/links.html>
<http://www.irishchurches.org/>
<http://www.gmi.org/ow/updates/country/irel/links.html>
<http://www.armaghbaptistchurch.co.uk/links.php>
<http://www.btinternet.com/~baptistyouth/index.htm>
<http://www.esatclear.ie/~dialogueireland/frameset.htm>
<http://www.factnet.org/>
<http://www.cyndislist.com/ireland.htm>
<http://www.biblebc.com/Ireland%20Info.htm>
<http://www.tolc.org/watchdog.htm>
http://www.adherents.com/adhloc/Wh_155.html
<http://www.2beirish.com/2be/directory/category/248/>

People Groups

<http://www.peoplegroups.org/MapSearch.aspx?country=Ireland>

PopEntID – 22254

Irish (3,834,838)

See History and Culture sections on the Irish.

PopEntID – 42320

Bosnian (780)

Bosnians living in Ireland are refugees who arrived in 1992 fleeing the political situation in their homeland. They were forced to leave after the Serbs occupied their cities. The first wave of immigrants included a total of 178 refugees.

Bosnians brought with them their Islamic beliefs, in part accounting for the large increase in Muslims in the last decade.

Their primary language is Serbo-Croatian.

Other sources indicate there are over 1,000 Bosnians now living in Ireland – this includes those who were born to refugees who have taken up permanent residence.

<http://www.iol.ie/EMPLOYMENT/integra/6refugee.html>

PopEntID – 22253

Irish Deaf (4,500)

When the United Nations declared 1981 was to be the international Year of the Disabled Person, Stan Foran and Maura Buckley decided it was time to highlight the societal needs of deaf people. Foran and Buckley held a series of informational meetings during the summer of 1980 where they developed a litany of grievances that Deaf people wanted to address. The Deaf Irish felt they had experienced too much direct and indirect discrimination in their lifetimes and they

believed this discrimination came about not only because of their handicap but their language, Irish Sign Language (ISL), as well.

They formed a new organization called the "Deaf Action Group". Their aim was to raise deaf awareness and fight for equality. A formal constitution was drafted on September 22, 1982. In 1983, the group adopted its current title, the "Irish Deaf Society."

ISL still is not recognized as an official language by the Irish government. There are also no public funds provided neither for the promotion of ISL, nor for the Deaf community in general. The Irish Deaf feel that ISL has been unfairly suppressed in schools since the 1950's and this in turn has negatively affected the lives of Deaf people in the areas of education, employment, and equality. This is most likely the reason they are seen as an independent people group from all other Irish. In dealing with the Irish Deaf, use of the capital D for Deaf is essential. The official Irish Deaf Society claims there are over 5,000 Deaf living in Ireland.

<http://www.irishdeafociety.ie/home/home.htm>

PopEntID – 299 Irish Traveller (6,000)

Irish Travellers, also known as "White Gypsies," consist of members of an ethnic group of no known origin. Some believe that they are descended from a nomadic race of pre-Celtic minstrels and that their numbers increased greatly with the inclusion of displaced farmers during the time of Oliver Cromwell in the mid-1600s. Irish Travelers are generally considered rootless and evil. They were targeted by Hitler during his reign and most living in German-occupied territories were killed during the Holocaust. It seems no one seriously objected to their murder. They are sometimes called "Rom" or "Romnichels".

Historically, travellers would roam from town to town in horse-drawn carts, looking for work and earning their keep by performing music in public (busking) and/or tinsmithing. Because of the latter vocation, they were nicknamed "Tinkers" but that is now considered a slur. Modern Irish Travellers still live like gypsies although some have secured permanent housing. Travellers have been stereotyped as thieves, scam artists, and troublemakers. Although this prejudice has abated over the years, a recent poll showed 70% of Irish citizens would not accept a Traveller as a friend. Many vagrancy laws have been passed and this has been criticized by Travellers as an attempt to eradicate their culture.

There is a secret Traveller language, sometimes called Shelta, Gammon, or Cant, which includes elements of Gaelic, English, and even Greek and Hebrew.

Most Travellers are devout Roman Catholics who rarely marry outside their own group. They live in very tight knit clans often looking for work as itinerant roofers, pavers, painters, and other odd-jobs. In many areas, they are mistrusted and some for good reason – there are myriad reports of extremely unethical business dealings. There are many online newspaper articles detailing such abuses.

Irish Travellers generally experience living conditions that other people groups would not tolerate. A 1998 study showed that 24% of Travellers were living in areas that had no regular trash collection, running water, or even electricity. Because of this, Traveller life expectancy is much lower than the rest of the population. Another study showed that only 5% of Travellers were over 50 years old and only 2% over 65. The Housing (Traveller Accommodation) Act of 1998 places an obligation on each local authority to adequately meet the accommodation needs of Travellers.

Because of their transient nature, it is almost impossible to know how many Travellers there are in Ireland. One source claimed there were over 25,000. That number could be misrepresented by 400% in either direction.

<http://www.travellersrest.org/greeleypariah.htm>

PopEntID – 42321

Nigerian (4,000)

Nigerians came to Ireland in the late 1990's seeking sanctuary from what was happening in their own country. Most of them live in Dublin and many are integrating themselves in the culture with little difficulty. Most Nigerians are seen as law-abiding citizens who contribute positively to Irish society. Many are thankful for the opportunity to live in Ireland.

There are some estimates that there are as many as 15,000 Nigerians living in Dublin alone (as opposed to the reported 4000 officially claimed). Because Ireland has experienced significant immigration recently, and with the economic success attached to it, immigration laws have been pushed to the forefront of the political agenda. The influx of Nigerians into the country is one of the reasons Islam has made significant strides in Ireland.

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3618590.stm>

PopEntID – 302

Russian (1,100)

There is a strong economic relationship between Russia and Ireland. Most Russians currently living in Ireland came looking for work. There are many websites devoted to Irish-Russian relationships and culture. Russians seem to have a great interest in Celtic culture and there are many Russian pop groups that play Celtic music. Russian immigration has also led to an increase in the number of Orthodox Church members. In Limerick about one in twenty people is Russian-speaking, making that language more common there than Irish.

<http://www.russianireland.com/>

http://www.ireland.ru/e_index.html

PopEntID – 303

Spaniard (3,570)

Most people of Spanish descent came to Ireland to study abroad and many have stayed to live and raise families. There is evidence that Spaniards have been integrated into Irish culture (or perhaps vice versa) for many years. Interestingly, since the Irish predominately have red(ish) hair, when an Irishman has black or dark hair they are considered to be descended from another race. The term “Black Irish” refers to these people. Many theories abound but some think these darker-haired Irish are descended from shipwrecked Spanish Armada sailors who stayed in Ireland. Not everyone believes this – some hold to African or Italian descent. It may not matter much to the indigenous people but in some circles the “Black Irish” theories have taken on a mythical status. It is uncertain if this affects relations between the Spanish and Irish.

<http://archiver.rootsweb.com/th/read/FERMANAGH/2001-03/0985620309>

PopEntID – 304 **Urdu (2,000)**

Urdu is actually an Indo-European language very similar to Hindi. It is considered to be a very beautiful spoken language and is used by people all around the Indian subcontinent. Urdu is spoken by both Pakistanis and Indians currently residing in Ireland. Study-abroad programs, work opportunities, and a religious openness to other belief systems all contribute to their immigration to Ireland. Pakistan is 95% Muslim and many immigrants have brought Islam to Ireland, finding many opportunities for growth. A Hindu temple was also dedicated in Dublin in 2004.

<http://www.irelandinformationguide.com/Urdu>
<http://www.irelandvinayakatemple.org/>

Missiological Implications

1. Evangelical Christians and churches should recognize the strong position of the Roman Catholic Church and the great failing of this Church to address the needs of the people. Since the Catholic Church has experienced such dramatic decline in recent years, evangelicals should seek ways to evangelize these peoples. Courses in ways to witness effectively to Catholics should be promoted.
2. Evangelical Christians and churches should seek evangelistic openings among several of the minority peoples in Ireland—Nigerians, the Travellers (itinerants), Islamic peoples from Bosnia, the Urdu speaking groups, and the Irish speaking minorities in the western part of Ireland.
3. Evangelical Christians and churches should teach the methods of starting and developing house churches and other small group approaches to evangelism and church starting
4. Evangelical Christians and churches should aid in leadership training for the Christian groups in Ireland.
5. Evangelical Christians and churches should consider visiting Ireland with the purpose of sharing the Good News while there.

- For centuries the Catholic Church has been a strong defender of the Irish people. Pray more Catholics would come to have a personal relationship with Jesus
- Father James Noonan, prior of St. Teresa of Avila Church (which even today still draws large crowds on Sundays) believes that when the priests are willing to sit and listen, the people will come.
- Catholicism is still rooted into Irish culture there but it needs something to tap into. The Church is realizing that people are in search of something deeper.
- Those of other faiths are finding Irish people very open and interested in different teachings. The Church has failed in the sense that the attrition rate is steadily high.
- Young people are steadily leaving the Catholic Church (or at least leaving the practice of the religion) and are replacing/melding their faith with other belief systems
- Sexually-transmitted diseases are on the rise, especially among the young who have not been properly educated about such things
- The Deaf are still discriminated against by the government. Pray that God will use this to make them receptive to the gospel

<http://www.telleurope.org/Ireland.htm>

<http://www.jesusfilmmissiontrips.org/>

Links:

<http://allaboutirish.com/library/customs/dir-customs.shtm>

<http://anamspirit.com/links/earthpaths.html>

<http://archiver.rootsweb.com/th/read/FERMANAGH/2001-03/0985620309>

http://church-of-christ.org/churches/Republic_of_Ireland/Ireland_S.htm

http://home.att.net/~Local_Catholic/Catholic-Ireland.htm

<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/3618590.stm>

<http://worldatlas.com/webimage/countrys/europe/ie.htm>

http://www.2000.agcongress.org/01_abot/countries/ireland.html

<http://www.2beirish.com/2be/directory/category/248/>

http://www.adherents.com/adhloc/Wh_155.html

<http://www.adventist.org.uk>

<http://www.adventistyearbook.org/default.aspx?&page=ViewAdmField&Year=2005&Search=ireland&AdmFieldID=IRIM>

http://www.answers.com/main/ntquery?method=4&dsid=2222&dekey=Church+of+Ireland&gwp=8&curtab=2222_1&linktext=Church%20of%20Ireland

<http://www.antiochian-orthodox.co.uk/>

<http://www.aog.org.uk/contact.asp>

<http://www.armaghbaptistchurch.co.uk/links.php>

<http://www.baptistireland.org/>

<http://www.biblebc.com/Ireland%20Info.htm>

<http://www.btinternet.com/~baptistyouth/index.htm>

<http://www.buddhism.ie/KSD/mainframe.htm>

http://www.carla.umn.edu:16080/ctl/vpa/Irish/org_grid.html

<http://www.catholicireland.net/pages/index.php>

http://www.cesnur.org/testi/irf/irf_ireland99.html
<http://www.churchzip.com/countrysummary/EI>
<http://www.cia.gov/cia/publications/factbook/geos/ei.html>
<http://www.cso.ie/census/Vol12.htm>
<http://www.cyndislist.com/ireland.htm>
http://www.eirestat.cso.ie/census/ReportFolders/ReportFolders.aspx?CS_referer=&CS_ChosenLang=en
http://www.encyclopedia.com/html/section/Ireland_History.asp
<http://www.esatclear.ie/~dialogueireland/frameset.htm>
<http://www.esatclear.ie/~dialogueireland/wicca1.htm>
<http://www.executiveplanet.com/business-etiquette/Ireland.html>
<http://www.factnet.org/>
<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Parthenon/6528/cult.htm>
http://www.geographyiq.com/countries/ei/Ireland_map_flag_geography.htm
<http://www.gmi.org/ow/updates/country/irel/links.html>
<http://www.iol.ie/EMPLOYMENT/integra/6refugee.html>
<http://www.ireland.anglican.org/home.php>
http://www.ireland.ru/e_index.html
<http://www.irelandinformationguide.com/Urdu>
<http://www.ireland-now.com/>
<http://www.irelandvinayakatemple.org/>
<http://www.irishchristian.com/links.html>
<http://www.irishchurches.org/>
<http://www.irishcultureandcustoms.com/>
<http://www.irishdeafcommunity.ie/home/home.htm>
<http://www.irishhealth.com/?level=4§ion=&11&id=5230>
<http://www.irishlds.com/>
<http://www.irishmethodist.org/>
<http://www.islamfortoday.com/ireland.htm>
<http://www.jesusfilmmissiontrips.org/>
<http://www.lds.org.uk/>
<http://www.ldsep.org/ireland/index.html>
<http://www.letsgo.com/IRE/03-SoftGI-51>
<http://www.lonelyplanet.com/destinations/europe/ireland/history.htm>
<http://www.mercer.edu/baptiststudies/mar04.htm#email>
<http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/02278a.htm>
[http://www.orthodoxireland.com/ \(non-working??\)](http://www.orthodoxireland.com/)
<http://www.peoplegroups.org/MapSearch.aspx?country=Ireland>
<http://www.presbyterianireland.org/>
<http://www.reformedreader.org/history/vedder/contents.htm>
<http://www.russianireland.com/>
http://www.somethingjewish.co.uk/regional_jews/ireland_jews/index.htm
<http://www.state.gov/g/drl/rls/hrrpt/2004/41687.htm>
<http://www.state.gov/r/pa/ei/bgn/3396.htm>
<http://www.teachnet.ie/fwilliams/communityoffaith/text/Commfaithprocess.html>
<http://www.teachnet.ie/fwilliams/communityoffaith/text/OrthIrl.html>
<http://www.telleurope.org/Ireland.htm>
<http://www.theology.ie/linksch.htm>
<http://www.tolc.org/watchdog.htm>
<http://www.travelblog.org/World/ei-econ.html>
<http://www.travellersrest.org/greeleypariah.htm>
<http://www.unhabitat.org/habrdd/conditions/northeurope/ireland.htm>
http://www.watchtower.org/statistics/worldwide_report.htm
<http://www.zemeski.org/>