

# **THE IRISH IN BRISTOL, 1938-1985**

**by**

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## List of Abbreviations

BBC – British Broadcasting Corporation.

BCC – Bristol City Council.

*BEP – Bristol Evening Post.*

BIS – Bristol Irish Society.

CHAS – Catholic Housing Aid Society.

CSI – Chief Sanitary Inspector.

DUP – Democratic Unionist Party.

EU – European Union.

G2 – The Directorate of Military Intelligence, Ireland.

GAA – Gaelic Athletic Association.

HA – Hillsborough Agreement.

HEC – Bristol City Council Health Committee.

HOC – Bristol City Council Housing Committee.

IEC – Irish Emigrant Chaplaincy.

INLA – Irish National Liberation Army.

*IP – Irish Post.*

IRA – Irish Republican Army.

*MG – Manchester Guardian.*

MI5 – The United Kingdom’s domestic counter-intelligence and security agency.

MOA – Ministry of Aviation.

MOH – Medical Officer of Health.

MOL – Ministry of Labour.

MOS – Ministry of Supply.

NICRA – Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association.

NSHC – National Service Hostels Corporation.

OIRA – Official Irish Republican Army.

PIRA – Provisional Irish Republican Army.

PTA – Prevention of Terrorism Act.

RTÉ - Raidió Teilifís Éireann.

UUP – Ulster Unionist Party.

*WDP – Western Daily Press.*

*WMN – Western Morning News.*

## **Abstract**

The main focus of this thesis is the Irish population of Bristol from 1938 to 1985. Up to now, the twentieth century Bristol Irish have been largely absent from the historical and sociological discourse on both Bristol and the Irish in Britain. This thesis seeks to address their absence as well as to locate the experiences of the Bristol Irish within the context of the Irish in Britain through comparisons to similar studies conducted in other British cities. In addition, it seeks to ascertain to what degree the Bristol Irish have integrated or been assimilated into the native populace.

It centres on several key issues such as the lived experience of the Bristol Irish, as well as the homogeneity of the migration process and the Irish experience in twentieth century Bristol. This necessitated an in-depth investigation relating to residential patterns in the city and the predominance of traditional Irish occupational groupings such as nursing for females and building work for males. It was also necessary to ascertain the importance of Irish spaces in the city. These include pubs, clubs and associations as well as the role of the Catholic Church.

This was achieved through several strands of investigation, which included several types of primary and secondary sources, as well as both quantitative and qualitative analysis. As we will see in Chapter Four, Bristol's Irish population have not always had the same level of cultural organisation as exists in British cities with higher Irish populations such as London and Birmingham. As a result of this, individual experiences became vital to the research. In fact, several historians have argued that the true details of migration can only be revealed by the migrants themselves. To this end, new interviews were undertaken with Irish-born people living in Bristol contacted through friend and family links as well as the snowballing technique. This allowed for a qualitative analysis of individuals' experiences of migration, housing and employment as well as social and cultural life in Bristol. This included an examination of the extent to which the Bristol Irish have integrated or been assimilated into the native populace.

This original material was supplemented by previously overlooked archival material which casts light on the experiences of Irish nurses and building labourers in post-war Bristol. These data also revealed further detail on the migration process during the Second World War, before any of the research participants came to Bristol. In addition to this, a quantitative investigation of two local newspapers allowed for an analysis of public opinion in Bristol on key points in twentieth century Anglo-Irish relations.

## Acknowledgements

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## **Introduction: ‘A very large and unlighted cavern’<sup>1</sup>**

*Now in many ways, the Irish diaspora is similar to a Faberge egg. It is a marvellously complex phenomenon. Details, though fascinating in themselves, are subordinated to the larger picture, since they all interrelate and all are subject to the whole. And, like a Faberge egg, the diaspora has to be viewed as a three-dimensional object if it is to be appreciated.<sup>2</sup>*

In 1996, Donald Harman Akenson fittingly described the literature on the Irish in Britain as a ‘very few candles in what is a very large and unlighted cavern.’<sup>3</sup> This statement was particularly true of the research on the twentieth century, the extent of which has, to date, been dwarfed by the amount of literature on the nineteenth century. Taking into account the imbalance in research, one could be forgiven for exclusively attributing Irish emigration to Britain to the first-wave emigration of the nineteenth century and particularly with the horror of the Great Famine of 1845-52. However, the study of the Irish in twentieth century Britain has made tremendous strides in recent years, especially since the 1990s. As a consequence, a flowering of new literature, the vast majority of which focuses on specific cities, towns or locations, has been published.

Indeed, migration from Ireland to Britain has never been more relevant since the global financial crisis of 2007-8 brought an abrupt halt to Ireland’s prosperous ‘Celtic Tiger’ period. In the twenty-first century, Irish emigrants can interact with home through new technologies, social media and online hubs such as the *Irish Times*’ ‘Generation Emigration’ section, now called ‘Irish Times Abroad’, which was established in 2011. These ongoing developments have brought the previously under-researched emigration of the twentieth century into focus and will no doubt continue to fuel the growth of literature on second and third wave Irish emigration to Britain.

In spite of these developments, the study of the Bristol Irish has been limited to a handful of essays, journal articles and chapters on the nineteenth century. This thesis is concerned with the Irish experience in Bristol from 1938 to 1985. The city of Bristol is of particular interest as, despite having had a considerable Irish-born population throughout much of the twentieth century, there is an almost-total lack of academic research on the city’s place in the Irish diaspora.

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<sup>1</sup> Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora. A Primer*. (Toronto: P. D. Meany, 1996), p.190.

<sup>2</sup> Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, pp.2-3

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid*, p.190.



## **Research aims**

Given the lack of previous research, this thesis is intended to provide an overview of the Irish-born population in Bristol between 1938 and 1985 on economic, political and social lines. This approach has necessitated a focus on several key themes relating to questions of diaspora, identity and belonging. The migration experience is considered, notably individuals' reasons for leaving Ireland, settling and living in Bristol. This thesis also examines experiences of employment, with a particular focus on 'navvying' and nursing - occupations with which Irish people have been associated in Britain. There is also an examination of Anglo-Irish relations through the period which has been partly achieved through a comprehensive survey of Bristol's two main newspapers. In addition to this, the immigrants' relationship with their new setting and the development of new communities and social structures in Bristol will be considered. The main research questions for this thesis are: was the migration experience of the Bristol Irish homogenous, and if so, to what extent? To what extent have the Bristol Irish been assimilated into the native populace? Were the Irish concentrated in stereotypical Irish occupations such as 'navvying' and nursing in Bristol? To what extent were the Irish accepted by their Bristolian neighbours and colleagues, as well as the regional press? What impact have Irish associations, clubs, pubs and events had in shaping and maintaining Irish identities in Bristol? To what extent have ties with Ireland and Irish identities been maintained and passed on to subsequent generations? The overriding purpose behind these questions is to uncover the lived experience of Irish people in twentieth century Bristol.

## **Research Methodology**

*Memory, I realize, can be an unreliable thing; often it is heavily coloured by the circumstances in which one remembers, and no doubt this applies to certain of the recollections I have gathered here.*<sup>4</sup>

Original national and local archival material was extensively utilised for this thesis. Student nurse staff data arising from the record books of Glenside hospital facilitated a remarkably detailed analysis of the hospital's Irish staff members. The analysis of Bristol City Council [BCC] records, notably those of the Housing and Health Committees uncovered valuable insight into the extent of the migration of Irish building labourers to Bristol in the immediate post-war period. National Archive sources have also shown the demand for and presence in Bristol of Irish labourers during the widespread labour shortages of the Second World War.

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<sup>4</sup> Kazuo Ishiguro, *A Pale View of Hills*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1982), p.156.

In addition to this, local and national radio and television material has been utilised. This thesis also considered material from local and national newspapers, principally the two most prominent Bristol newspapers, the *Bristol Evening Post* [BEP] and the *Western Daily Press* [WDP]. The newspapers were particularly important when analysing key events in Anglo-Irish relations throughout the period. To my knowledge, none of these sources have been studied previously and analysed as has been done in this research.

These original materials were integral to the compilation of this thesis. However, quantitative sources such as those outlined above reveal relatively little about the lived experience of the emigrants. Brendan McGowan has persuasively argued that the answers to these unquantifiable questions cannot be found in ‘skeletal data’ or census statistics but in the experiences of the emigrants themselves.<sup>5</sup> To this end, 20 new interviews, of which 17 were with Irish people who were born between 1926 and 1952 and came to Bristol in the period 1948 and 1986, as well as three with second-generation Irish people who have lived in the city were undertaken. Given the paucity of literature on the Irish in twentieth century Bristol, this process was essential to the thesis. The value of this method has been illustrated in several of the aforementioned twentieth century studies which have extensively utilised oral material. For example, the work of Lennon, McAdam and O’Brien on Irish women in London, Louise Ryan on Irish nurses, Sharon Lambert on Irish women in Lancaster, Sean Sorohan on the Irish in London and McGowan on the Irish in Leeds. Oral history has been recognised as an essential element in the study of the Irish in Britain by several commentators including Enda Delaney, who bemoaned the lack of research on the ‘actual experience’ of the largest migrant grouping in Britain:

the process of migration involves real people with real stories. A sense of displacement, a desire to return home and the sometimes painful adaptation to the forms of the new society feature prominently in the oral testimony of all migrants.<sup>6</sup>

The advantages of the oral history approach have also been outlined in recent literature on the Irish in Britain and the discipline of oral history.<sup>7</sup> In their pioneering 1988 oral history of

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<sup>5</sup> Brendan McGowan, *Taking The Boat, The Irish in Leeds 1931-1981*. (Mayo: Brendan McGowan: 2009), p.11.

<sup>6</sup> Enda Delaney, *Demography, State and Society, Irish Migration to Britain 1921-1971*. (Liverpool: University of Liverpool Press, 2000), p.160.

<sup>7</sup> Kathryn Anderson and Dana C. Jack, “Learning to listen, Interview techniques and analyses” in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, (London: Routledge, 1998), 157-171, p.157; Kathy Burrell and Panikos Panayi, “Immigration, History and Memory in Britain” in *Histories and Memories, Migrants and their History in Britain*, (eds.) Kathy Burrell and Panikos Panayi, (London: Tauris Academic Studies, 2006), 3-17, p.14; Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.297; Enda Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), p.46; Ronald J. Grele, “Movement without aim, Methodological and theoretical problems in oral history” in *The Oral History Reader*, eds., Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, (London: Routledge, 1998), 38-52, pp.41, 47-48; Sharon Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire 1922-1960*. (Trowbridge: The Cromwell Press, University of Lancaster Centre for North-West

Irish women in London, Lennon, McAdam and O'Brien argued that the majority of the historiography of the Irish in Britain had been 'written from the outside'. They also identified that women had been overlooked and therefore turned to oral history 'as the prime source of information for this study, so as to enable Irish women's history to be written, as far as possible, from their own perspective.'<sup>8</sup> In addition to this, Ann Rossiter has argued that oral history renders 'invisible groups and individuals visible, allowing the silenced to speak'.<sup>9</sup>

Whilst information arising from interviews forms a vital part of this thesis, it is important to recognise the disadvantages of oral history methods. Chief amongst these is the potentially unreliable nature of memory which has been comprehensively discussed in the literature.<sup>10</sup> Paul Thompson has argued that interviews are inevitably 'influenced by subsequent changes in values and norms' which can 'unconsciously alter perceptions' and 'distort' accurate recollection.<sup>11</sup> Another problem is the value of drawing conclusions from a sample of 20 participants. Whilst this qualitative approach has allowed a thorough analysis from the participants' own perspective, it is clear that any conclusions arising from a sample size such as this cannot be treated as representative of Bristol's entire Irish-born population. This research was not intended to exclude sections of Bristol's Irish population; I concede that the vast majority of the participants were Roman Catholics born in the Republic. The main reason for this was that new participants were identified through family and friend links, using 'snowballing' techniques and social media to recruit further participants. Whilst it was not the intention of the researcher to exclude groups such as individuals born in

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Regional Studies, 2001), pp.1-2; McGowan, *Taking The Boat*, pp.11-12; Mary Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish Women, An Oral History*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2007), pp.2-3; Alessandro Portelli, "What makes oral history different" in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, (London: Routledge, 1998), 63-74, p.68; Ann Rossiter, *Ireland's Hidden Diaspora: the 'abortion trail' and the making of a London-Irish underground, 1980-2000*. (London: Iasc Publishing, 2009), p.27; Samuel Schragar, "What is social in oral history?" in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson, (London: Routledge, 1998), 284-299, p.294; Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp.3, 6; John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*. (Harlow: Pearson, 2010), pp.313-17; Bronwen Walter, *Outsiders Inside, Whiteness, place and Irish women*. (London: Routledge, 2001), pp.3-4; Valerie Raleigh Yow, *Recording Oral History: A Practical Guide for Social Scientists*. (London: Sage Publications, 1994), pp.12-13.

<sup>8</sup> Mary Lennon, Marie McAdam and Joanne O'Brien, *Across The Water, Irish Women's Lives in Britain*, (London, Virago Press, 1988), pp.1-2.

<sup>9</sup> Rossiter, *Ireland's Hidden Diaspora*, p.27.

<sup>10</sup> Burrell and Panayi, Immigration, History and Memory, p.14; Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.140; Delaney, *The Irish*, p.123; Grele, "Movement without aim, p.41; Trevor Lummis, "Structure and validity in oral evidence" in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 273-283, p.280; McGowan, *Taking The Boat*, pp.11-12; Portelli, "What makes oral history different", p.68; Joan Sangster, "Telling our stories, Feminist debates and the use of oral history" in *The Oral History Reader*, eds. Robert Perks and Alistair Thomson (London: Routledge, 1998), 87-100, p.87; Schragar, "What is social in oral history?", p.294; Seán Sorohan, *Irish London During The Troubles*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2012), pp.4-5; Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp.128-9; John Tosh, *The Pursuit of History*, pp.313-4.

<sup>11</sup> Thompson, *The Voice of the Past*, pp.128-9.

Northern Ireland, or Irish Protestants, a more substantial sample was beyond the scope of this thesis. It is clear that there is considerable work to be done on these groups in the Irish diaspora and it is hoped that this thesis will serve as a starting point for further research on the Bristol Irish.

This thesis covers the period from 1938 to 1985 and includes all 32 counties of Ireland: the 26 which make up the Republic and the six which comprise Northern Ireland. 1938 marks an appropriate starting point as this was the year in which the Anglo-Irish Agreement – which caused such consternation during the Second World War – was signed. 1985 represents a fitting end point because this was the year in which the Hillsborough Agreement [HA] was signed by the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and the Taoiseach of the Republic of Ireland Garret Fitzgerald. Like its predecessor in 1938, the 1985 Agreement is regarded as a watershed event in Anglo-Irish relations. The period 1938 to 1985 also broadly encompasses second wave emigration from Ireland to Britain, which took place between the 1930s and 1970s.

In terms of the structure of this thesis, there are four main chapters. The first provides an overview of second wave Irish migration to Britain. This analyses Irish-born numbers in twentieth century Bristol and Britain as a whole. Using material from participant interviews, this chapter also considers the migration experience of leaving Ireland and arriving in Bristol. Chapter Two provides an analysis of two of the main occupational groupings in which Irish people have been overrepresented in Britain – building labourers and nurses. This is based on data arising from archival work and participant interviews, as well as a statistically-based analysis of student nurses in Bristol's Glenside hospital. Chapter Three considers Anglo-Irish relations in the Bristol context throughout the period. It is largely based on a substantial local newspaper survey throughout the Second World War and the Troubles in Northern Ireland, and, together with interview data, examines the reaction to Irish-born people living in Bristol at the time of these Anglo-Irish flashpoints. Chapter Four considers the extent to which the Bristol Irish can be said to have assimilated into the host population. This is achieved through an investigation into the impact of Irish institutions in Bristol such as the Catholic Church, as well as cultural and social institutions such as pubs, clubs, associations and sport. This chapter also provides an analysis of identity issues through case studies of the three second-generation participants as well as all participants' continuing contact with Ireland.

### **Definition of terms and census data**

It is now necessary to clarify some of the terms which appear throughout this thesis. Since the partition of Ireland in 1922, the 26 counties have gone by several names – the Irish Free State, Éire, Ireland, the Irish Republic and Southern Ireland. Conversely, the 6 counties have consistently been referred to as Northern Ireland or Ulster, although the latter designation overlooks the fact that three of Ulster’s nine counties are in the Republic. For the purposes of this study, the 26-county Irish Republic is referred to simply as ‘Ireland’, whilst the six counties are referred to as ‘Northern Ireland.’ Where appropriate, such as where statistics do not make a distinction between the two Irelands, the terms ‘the Republic’ and ‘Northern Ireland’ are utilised for the purposes of differentiation. Interviewees for this study are referred to as ‘participants’ rather than the commonly-used ‘respondents’ or ‘informants’. Whilst both have often been favoured by social scientists conducting oral-based research projects, the term ‘participant’ suggests a fuller contribution than ‘respondent’ or ‘informant’, which both imply that interviewees are simply responding to a proscribed questionnaire. This would not represent a fair reflection of the interview process, nor would it fully recognise the contribution of participants to the thesis.

Where British census data is utilised, the terms ‘Republic of Ireland-born’ and ‘Northern Ireland-born’ are used to differentiate individuals born in the 26 counties from those born in the six counties. However, the inclusion of a third – and far more ambiguous - category, ‘Ireland (part not stated)’ was addressed by a post-enumeration survey in 1961. This survey found that ‘practically all these persons were actually born in the Irish Republic.’<sup>12</sup> Another issue with the census figures is the definition of nationality as an individual’s place of birth. Therefore, an individual born to Irish parents in Britain would be categorised as British rather than Irish. Hickman and Walter, in their 1997 report on anti-Irish discrimination in Britain, have noted the importance of second-and-subsequent-generation Irish individuals and reasoned that their exclusion from the ‘Irish’ cohort of the British census has left the size of the Irish community ‘greatly understated’.<sup>13</sup> They have argued that the Irish figure should be multiplied by three to counter this statistical omission and reveal the true size of Britain’s Irish population.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> McGowan, *Taking The Boat*, p.9.

<sup>13</sup> Mary J. Hickman and Bronwen Walter, *Discrimination And The Irish Community In Britain. A report of research undertaken for the Commission for Racial Equality*. (London: Commission for Racial Equality, 1997), p.19.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid*, p.20.

Fortunately, the restrictions of Irish-born data will have less impact on the study of the Irish in twenty-first century Britain, as a new category of ‘White Irish’ was added to the census ethnic groups. This allows individuals born outside of Ireland to claim an Irish identity within the British census data and will no doubt be a valuable resource to future historians of the Irish in Britain. Even with these limitations in mind, the census information is vital in illustrating the size of Bristol’s Irish-born population and should be regarded as a valuable resource.

### **Importance of the research**

*Bristol and Ireland share a hidden history, reaching back 900 years to when Henry II gave Dublin to the men of Bristol. Centuries later, the armies of both Elizabeth I and Cromwell sailed from the city to occupy Ireland. Generations of people leaving Ireland since then have settled in Bristol and, in spite of prejudice, made important contributions to the city’s life. They now make up a tenth of Bristol’s population, and they are a diverse and vibrant community, still largely unrecognised here, across the water.*<sup>15</sup>

The lack of research and published material on the Bristol Irish, particularly in the twentieth century, is sufficient justification for this thesis. This lack of focus on the previous century is also not confined to the Bristol Irish. The paucity of study is such that there are only two full-length volumes which attempt to provide an overview of the Irish in Britain in the twentieth century. It is impossible to discuss the secondary literature without first mentioning Jackson’s 1963 text which was the only lengthy published work on the Irish in twentieth century Britain for an astonishing 43 years.<sup>16</sup> Despite its limitations, such as its near-total lack of interest in female emigrants and the fact that it was published before many significant events in Anglo-Irish history such as the Troubles in Northern Ireland, Jackson’s pioneering work is unfailingly cited in subsequent studies on the Irish in Britain. The second major treatise, Delaney’s *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, was published in 2009. This has been one of the most influential texts in my approach to writing this thesis, not least in terms of Delaney’s eschewing of the standard chronological approach in favour of a thematic style, which has also been utilised for this study. Delaney addressed some of the shortcomings of Jackson’s work, most notably by devoting considerable attention to Irish women in Britain. Delaney also challenged the theory that the Irish are readily assimilated into the host British population which has been forwarded by several academics such as Liam Ryan in his

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<sup>15</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. *Here, Across the Water*, produced by Liz White and Stephen Frear (1993, Bristol, BBC Bristol, screened 29/4/93).

<sup>16</sup> John A. Jackson, *The Irish in Britain*. (London: Routledge & Keegan Paul, 1963).

otherwise excellent article on Irish emigration to Britain after the Second World War. If Delaney's book has a fault, it is that the ambitiousness of the project – covering the entire post-war period and all of Britain – left considerably less space to discuss the intricacies of life in Britain than can be found in contemporary local studies. Delaney had previously written another prominent book, *Demography, State and Society*, an impressively detailed study of Irish migration to Britain from 1921 to 1971. This is particularly strong in terms of wartime emigration and employment and makes effective use of the British Ministries of Labour and Supply records relating to the Irish influx. Another highly influential text for this study is Wills' 2015 book on post-war Irish emigration and culture. *The Best Are Leaving* examines stereotypes of the Irish experience in Britain such as Catholicism, church and state concerns over the welfare of female emigrants in Britain and 'the drunken, fighting Irishman.'<sup>17</sup> It is no surprise, given her background in literary and cultural studies, that Wills' text is also interspersed with passages from contemporary British and Irish publications, as well as drama and literature, which adds great depth to her account.

In spite of these excellent recent studies, the study of the Irish population of twentieth century Britain still represents a significant opportunity for researchers. The bulk of published work has appeared in the last 30 years and has, for the most part, been confined to journal articles or contributions to edited collections on particular cities or locales. Some are based on areas which have consistently attracted a high number of Irish migrants since at least the mid nineteenth century, such as London, Lancashire, Leeds and Scotland.<sup>18</sup> Of these, MacGowan's study of the Leeds Irish, as well as Sorohan's text on the London Irish have been of particular interest to me. Like Delaney, MacGowan utilised a thematic approach which served as an inspiration to this study. *Taking the Boat* is heavily based on original oral interviews with 33 individuals. It is therefore very strong in terms of its exploration of 'real people' and 'real stories' although MacGowan's interest in the experience of emigration and continued contact with Ireland through letters, technology, holidays and the ever-present prospect of return migration somewhat overrides his focus on the Leeds Irish scene. Sorohan's book has a particular focus on the impact of the Troubles in Northern Ireland on the London Irish. He has also utilised the fruits of his own oral interviews very well and through this he was somewhat more successful in illustrating life in the receiving city than

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<sup>17</sup> Clair Wills, *The Best Are Leaving. Emigration And Post-War Irish Culture*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), p.xv.

<sup>18</sup> T. M. Devine (ed.), *Irish Immigrants and Scottish Society in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Proceedings of the Scottish Historical Studies Seminar, University of Strathclyde 1989-90*, (Edinburgh: John Donald Publishers, 1991); Catherine Dunne, *An Unconsidered People, The Irish in London*. (Dublin: New Island, 2003); Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire*; McGowan, *Taking The Boat*; Seán Sorohan, *Irish London*.

MacGowan. Sorohan also acknowledged the importance of institutions and organisations such as the Catholic church and the Gaelic Athletic Association [GAA] in the development and maintenance of Irish communities in London. Other studies focus on areas which emerged as important destinations through the Second World War and post-war expansion such as Luton, Birmingham and Coventry.<sup>19</sup> It is particularly striking that the only in-depth volumes on the Irish in Birmingham – one of the most important post-war Irish destinations – were only published in the current century.<sup>20</sup> Amongst these is James Moran's *Irish Birmingham*, which focuses on both the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In spite of less than half of the book being dedicated to the latter century, making it less relevant to this study, Moran compellingly countered Coogan's criticism of the Birmingham Irish scene as a 'dull tide of grey' through his vivid descriptions of the St Patricks Day parades in the city as well as his focus on notable Birmingham Irish playwrights.<sup>21</sup>

My interest in the Irish in twentieth century Bristol is, at least partly, a result of my status as a third-generation Irishman born in the city. To date there has been no lengthy published work on the Bristol Irish. Indeed, Kaja Ziesler, in her doctoral thesis on the Birmingham Irish, has described Bristol as a 'secondary destination'<sup>22</sup> whilst Donall MacAmhlaigh, in his evocative diary, expressed his surprise at the lack of visible Irishmen in the city centre during the 1950s.<sup>23</sup> However, Bristol has been described as having 'connections with Ireland of such longevity and significance' that even Liverpool and Glasgow - two British cities with perhaps the most visible and enduring Irish connections - cannot rival.<sup>24</sup> Brendan Smith has argued that Bristol's trading links with Ireland, as well as the city's 'intimate' involvement in King Henry II's 1170 conquest of Ireland and the

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<sup>19</sup> Henrietta Ewart, "'Coventry Irish': Community, Class, Culture and Narrative in the Formation of a Migrant Identity, 1940–1970," *Midland History*, Vol. 36, No. 2, Autumn, 2011: <http://docserver.ingentaconnect.com/deliver/connect/maney/0047729x/v36n2/s7.pdf?expires=1337078638&id=68823523&titleid=75003502&acname=University+of+the+West+of+England&checksum=E9C6E3FEA4C97E4620BE104D7762E43C> (accessed May 15, 2012); Russell King, Ian Shuttleworth and Alan Strachan, "The Irish in Coventry: the Social Geography of a Relict Community," *Irish Geography*, Vol. 22, No. 2, 1989: <http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/00750778909478772> (accessed April 4, 2012); Philip A. McCarvill, "An Examination of Ethnic Identity: A Case Study of Second Generation Irish People in Birmingham" (PhD Thesis, University of Warwick, 2002); Carl Chinn, *Birmingham Irish, Making Our Mark*. (Birmingham: Birmingham Library Services, 2003); Moran, *Irish Birmingham*; Bronwen Walter, "Ethnicity and Residential Distribution," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers*, Vol.11, No. 2, 1986, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/622001?seq=1> (accessed April 6, 2012); Kaja Irene Ziesler, 'The Irish in Birmingham 1830-1970', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Birmingham (1989).

<sup>20</sup> Chinn, *Birmingham Irish*; Moran, *Irish Birmingham*, p.1

<sup>21</sup> Coogan, *Wherever Green Is Worn*, pp.198-9.

<sup>22</sup> Kaja Irene Ziesler, "The Irish in Birmingham", p.1.

<sup>23</sup> Donall MacAmhlaigh, *An Irish Navy. The Diary of an Exile*. (Cork: The Collins Press, 2013), pp.60-1.

<sup>24</sup> Brendan Smith, *Bristol and Ireland*, Bristol University Newsletter, Vol. 26, No. 11, 14 March, 1996.



thirteenth century rebuilding of Dublin's Christ Church Cathedral with Dundry<sup>25</sup> stone, grants it a unique place in the history of Anglo-Irish relations.<sup>26</sup> Indeed, in the midst of Britain's impending exit from the European Union [EU], the *Irish Post*, a weekly newspaper published in Britain, has identified a charter which dates from Henry II's aforementioned campaign and grants Bristolians the right to live in Dublin.<sup>27</sup> The contribution made to the city by Irish people was also recognised by the then-Lord Mayor of Bristol Charles Budgett in 1935:

Irishmen have made their contribution to the uplift of this city and to its good features. I am glad you appreciate the city in which you are living, and I think it is safe to say that in Bristol, as in other towns, things are better and conditions of living are higher than at any previous time.<sup>28</sup>

In addition to this, the size of Bristol's Irish-born population in the twentieth century compares favourably with those of other similarly-sized British cities. Traditional Irish strongholds such as London, Liverpool and Manchester have all been well-represented, as well as the new industrial Irish centres in the Midlands and south east such as Birmingham, Coventry and Luton. Nonetheless, the study of the Bristol Irish to date reflects the pattern of the study of the Irish in Britain to a large degree. In his unpublished BA dissertation on Irish criminality in 1881 Bristol, Matthew Smith has noted that 'Bristol has been significantly undervalued in the study of the Irish diaspora', in spite of the city's sizeable Irish population.<sup>29</sup> Given that this has produced a small handful of chapters, essays, articles and unpublished theses which focus principally on the nineteenth century, it is difficult to take issue with Smith's argument.<sup>30</sup> This thesis seeks to begin to rectify the almost total lack of academic focus on the Bristol Irish, particularly in the twentieth century, itself an under-researched period in terms of the Irish diaspora.

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<sup>25</sup> Dundry is a village in Somerset, situated on the county's northern border with Bristol.

<sup>26</sup> Smith, *Bristol and Ireland*.

<sup>27</sup> <http://irishpost.co.uk/bristol-people-right-to-live-dublin-thanks-to-850-year-old-law-which-still-applies/> (accessed 3/1/17).

<sup>28</sup> "Irish "Exiles" Tributes to Bristol" *Bristol Evening World*, March 18, 1935. In Clifton Diocesan Archive press cuttings 1931-48, p.96.

<sup>29</sup> Matthew Smith, 'The readymade nucleus of degradation and disorder: An examination of Irish criminality in Victorian Bristol in 1881' unpublished BA Thesis, University of Bristol (2011), p.3.

<sup>30</sup> David Large, "The Irish in Bristol in 1851: A Census Enumeration" in *The Irish in the Victorian City*, eds. Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley (London: Croom Helm, 1985), 37-58; Graham Davis, "Little Irelands" in *The Irish in Britain 1815-1939*, (eds.) Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, (London: Pinter Publishers, 1989), 104-133; Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming (eds.), *Bristol, Ethnic Minorities and the City 1000-2001*. (Chichester: Phillimore and Co Ltd, 2007); Pamela Gilbert, "In the Midst of a Protestant People: The Development of the Catholic Community in Bristol in the Nineteenth Century." unpublished PhD Thesis, University of Bristol (1995).

Table A: Irish-born\* population in England and Wales: selected cities.

| City           | 1951      | 1961      | 1971    | 1981    |
|----------------|-----------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Greater London | 171,618** | 253,576** | 241,220 | 199,460 |
| Birmingham     | 28,098    | 47,582    | 44,865  | 37,375  |
| Manchester     | 16,280    | 24,577    | 23,040  | 18,135  |
| Coventry       | 7,689     | 13,396    | 15,830  | 12,606  |
| Liverpool      | 14,122    | 12,006    | 8,470   | 5,759   |
| Leeds          | 4,788     | 6,632     | 7,580   | 7,563   |
| Luton          | 1,485     | 6,611     | 7,670   | 6,591   |
| Bristol        | 3,642     | 4,477     | 4,831   | 3,911   |
| Leicester      | 3,102     | 4,814     | 4,920   | 3,886   |
| Nottingham     | 2,476     | 4,161     | 3,990   | 3,331   |
| Sheffield      | 2,622     | 3,186     | 2,945   | 2,458   |
| Cardiff        | 2,082     | 2,621     | 2,370   | 2,076   |
| Northampton    | 1,336     | 2,357     | 2,915   | 2,458   |
| Newcastle      | 1,326     | 1,356     | 1,040   | 1,093   |

Source: Adapted from Alan Strachan, 'Post-War Irish Migration and Settlement in England and Wales' in Contemporary Irish Migration. Geographical Society of Ireland Special Publications No.6. (Dublin: Geographical Society of Ireland, 1991). 21-31, p.22. Used with permission of the journal editor.

\*This table only includes individuals born in the Republic of Ireland.

\*\*Estimated.

## Historiography

The following is a brief critical overview of the aforementioned works. David Large's census enumeration of the Bristol Irish for 1851 acknowledged the absence of the Irish from Bristol's historical discourses as well as from national discourses, such as the *Report on the State of the Irish Poor in Great Britain* in 1836.<sup>31</sup> The minimal effect of the Famine on the size of Bristol's Irish population was examined, and the lack of appeal exerted by the city's economy was cited as the key factor in this.<sup>32</sup> Birthplace data revealed that Cork was, by a huge margin, the most-represented county, with over four times more returns than the second most represented county, Dublin.<sup>33</sup> Large recognised the importance of steam packet services to and from Bristol, and noted that the three most represented counties in the census returns were also the three principal destinations: Cork, Dublin and Waterford.<sup>34</sup> Madge Dresser also emphasised the importance of the port, and noted its influence in the early nineteenth century when the surge of British soldiers returning home from the Napoleonic Wars was

<sup>31</sup> Large, "The Irish in Bristol", p.37.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid, p.38.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, p.42.

<sup>34</sup> Graham Farr, *West Country Passenger Steamers*. (Lancashire: T. Stephenson and Sons Ltd, 1966), pp. 11, 27, 49.

compounded by increasing numbers of poverty-stricken Irish people entering British ports and towns.<sup>35</sup>

Graham Davis' 1989 chapter on Irish ghettoisation in nineteenth century British towns - which he expanded upon in his later text on the Irish in Britain<sup>36</sup> - into so-called 'Little Irelands' has a particular focus on Bristol and supports Large's assertion that there was no 'Irish ghetto' in the city.<sup>37</sup> Davis also emphasised the lack of homogeneity within the Irish in Britain and argued that Irish populations did not share a single common identity and could be divided on religious, county and familial grounds.<sup>38</sup> Davis also argued that, despite Bristol's overtly Protestant nature - also identified by Dresser and Steve Poole and illustrated by the 'bitter electoral battles' over Catholic Emancipation<sup>39</sup> - Irish immigrants drew a 'liberal response' in the city. He cited the comparative lack of anti-Irish antagonism over associations with disease.<sup>40</sup> In addition to this, he noted a leniency displayed by magistrates towards Irishmen on charges of drunkenness and even sympathy for those who had been swindled out of their possessions by 'sharper' or exploited by prospective employers.<sup>41</sup>

Davis and Dresser also highlighted the variations in the attitude of the local press towards the Irish. *The Bristol Times*, which Davis described as 'virulently anti-Catholic' frequently poked fun at the Irish in court reports but also printed regular updates on the condition of Ireland during the Famine and endorsed the Bristol Irish Relief Fund<sup>42</sup> by printing a list of subscribers in 1847.<sup>43</sup> Davis argued that this sympathetic attitude grew during the 1850s, and cited several articles which highlighted 'the implications of massive depopulation for Ireland's future.'<sup>44</sup> Matthew Smith's newspaper survey of 1876-1884 also identified that the ambivalence towards the Irish displayed by *The Bristol Mercury* was often at odds with other local and national newspapers.<sup>45</sup> Pamela Gilbert also made this point in her doctoral thesis on Catholics in Bristol, noting that *The Bristol Mercury's* sympathetic tone contrasted sharply with the 'damaging' anti-Catholicism of *The Bristol Times*, and the rabid

<sup>35</sup> Madge Dresser, "The Irish, 1685-1835" in *Bristol, Ethnic Minorities and the City 1000-2001*, edited by Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming, (Chichester: Phillimore and Co Ltd, 2007), 73-84.

<sup>36</sup> Graham Davis, *The Irish in Britain*. (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1991).

<sup>37</sup> Graham Davis, "Little Irelands", p.120; Large, "The Irish in Bristol", p.39.

<sup>38</sup> Davis, "Little Irelands", p.114; Jackson, *The Irish*, p.129; Kevin O'Connor, *The Irish in Britain*. (London: Sidgwick & Jackson Ltd, 1972 ), p.26.

<sup>39</sup> Davis, "Little Irelands", pp.4, 104-5, 119, 123-4.

<sup>40</sup> Davis, "Little Irelands", pp. 4, 104-5, 119.

<sup>41</sup> Davis, "Little Irelands", pp.123-4; Davis, *The Irish in Britain*, pp.4-5, 72-3.

<sup>42</sup> This raised £9,000 overall.

<sup>43</sup> Davis, "Little Irelands", pp.120-1; Davis, *The Irish in Britain*, pp.72-3; Madge Dresser, "Catholics and Jews, 1837-1910" in *Bristol, Ethnic Minorities and the City 1000-2001*, edited by Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming, (Chichester: Phillimore and Co Ltd, 2007), 117-134, p.119.

<sup>44</sup> Davis, *The Irish in Britain*, pp.75-6.

<sup>45</sup> Smith, 'The readymade nucleus of degradation and disorder', pp.7-10.

anti-Catholicism of *The Bristol Mirror* and *Felix Farley's Bristol Journal*.<sup>46</sup> This liberal journalism was also in evidence for much of the twentieth century, even at the zenith of the Troubles and Provisional Irish Republican Army [PIRA] bombing campaigns, as we will see in Chapter Three.

In terms of the twentieth century, there is no academic literature which deals specifically with the Bristol Irish. However, there was significant Irish emigration to Bristol. Anthony Richmond's study of ethnic minorities in the areas of St. Paul's and Montpelier<sup>47</sup> showed that, by 1966, there were 6,690 Irish-born<sup>48</sup> individuals living in Bristol.<sup>49</sup> This is significantly greater than the Famine-era 1851 census figure of 4,645 quoted by Large, and is even more striking when one considers that the Irish population in Bristol had dwindled to just 2,511 by 1891.<sup>50</sup> Of Richmond's sample of 7,261, six per cent of males and three per cent of females were Irish-born and comprised five per cent of the total.<sup>51</sup> Given that the corresponding figure for the city as a whole was just 1.45 per cent at this time, the Irish were clearly significantly over-represented in St Pauls and Montpelier. Of these, 58 per cent were aged between 15 and 44 and Richmond acknowledged the under-representation of females in all age groups, particularly given that 59 per cent of all Irish immigrants in 1963 Britain were female.<sup>52</sup> Of these 356 Irish participants, 110 were asked a question on when they had arrived in Bristol, and 52 per cent had arrived between 1950 and 1960, with 20 per cent arriving before 1950 and 18 per cent arriving between 1960 and 1965, the remaining ten per cent did not answer.<sup>53</sup> Richmond also found that more than half of the Irish heads of household in the survey area were engaged in semi-skilled or unskilled occupations, the majority of which were 'general labourers'.<sup>54</sup> Irish males were the highest-earning ethnic group, a fact which Richmond, in spite of there being no data on hours worked, attributed to a high amount of overtime.<sup>55</sup>

As we will see, the Irish diaspora has very clear and long-standing associations with practices such as remitting money home to relatives and the facilitation of chain-migration. Richmond's study found that around a third of the surveyed Irish-born adults sent remittances

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<sup>46</sup> Gilbert, "In the Midst of a Protestant People", pp.2, 37-8.

<sup>47</sup> Both inner-city areas close to the city centre.

<sup>48</sup> Includes all 32 counties.

<sup>49</sup> Anthony Richmond, Michael Lyon, Sylvia Hale and Roy King, *Migration and Race Relations in an English City: A Study in Bristol*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1973), p.43.

<sup>50</sup> Large, "The Irish in Bristol", p.38.

<sup>51</sup> Richmond et al, *Migration and Race Relations*, p.66.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid*, pp.71-2.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid*, pp.242.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid*, pp.88-9.

<sup>55</sup> *Ibid*, p.93.

home and that forty per cent had lived with family or friends when they first arrived in the city.<sup>56</sup> The study also addressed other Irish stereotypes. A question concerning organisation or association membership found that a quarter of Irish males belonged to a group connected with a public house, compared with a figure of just seven per cent of the adult population of the area as a whole.<sup>57</sup>

Beyond Richmond's study, which represents a useful but far from a comprehensive overview, there is precious little published material on the Irish in twentieth century Bristol. Madge Dresser has referred to the 'increased numbers' of Irishmen who came to Bristol to work on construction projects such as the M32 in the 1960s, as well as Irish women who 'continued to come to the city to work as nursing assistants, teachers, cleaners and midwives.'<sup>58</sup> She has also acknowledged the increased hostility that was directed against the Irish in Britain against the backdrop of the PIRA bombing campaigns in Britain, and in Bristol during the aftermath of the Park Street bombing in December 1974.<sup>59</sup> Clearly there is a great deal more to be said for the city's twentieth century Irish population, and the principal aim of this thesis is to begin to rectify their absence from the literature.

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid, pp.93, 119.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid, pp.172-3.

<sup>58</sup> Madge Dresser, "Ethnic Diversity in the Twentieth Century" in *Bristol, Ethnic Minorities and the City 1000-2001*, edited by Madge Dresser and Peter Fleming, (Chichester: Phillimore and Co Ltd, 2007), 135-156, p.144.

<sup>59</sup> Ibid, p.147.

## 1. ‘A mirror in which the Irish nation can always see its true face’<sup>60</sup>: Irish Emigration and Bristol

*People are drowning in floods.  
Only bodies come ashore.  
Lives go under, lost.  
Names, names, avoid names.  
Officially, inform all departments.  
None of this is happening.*<sup>61</sup>

The title chosen for this chapter is from Liam Ryan’s article on post-war emigration from Ireland to Britain and is perhaps the most apt description of the phenomenon.<sup>62</sup> Ryan has asserted that ‘to discuss Irish emigration in the twentieth century is virtually the same as to discuss Ireland, since there is scarcely a single political, social, economic, intellectual or religious problem which has not been influenced directly or indirectly by emigration.’ Several commentators have compellingly emphasised the enduring impact of emigration which, as Ryan has observed, ‘persist[s] with a nineteenth century intensity’ and ‘is at the centre of the Irish experience of being modern’.<sup>63</sup> This is illustrated by a participant in *Here, Across the Water* who left Ireland in the 1980s and recalled that ‘the general talk’ amongst her friends in Ireland ‘was leaving’:

It was terrible. It was terrible seeing them all leaving. It wasn’t like it was just a small group, it was just like a mass exodus all of a sudden you know. Just once we all left school all the chat was “where are you gonna head for next” or “are you gonna go to London or are you gonna go to New York” and the thing is it was just inevitable really, you know. It’s just the faraway hills of green thing again.<sup>64</sup>

Clair Wills has noted that migration discourses have remained an important element in Irish politics, and has argued that ‘it was commonplace for the opposition in the Dáil’ to cite continuing emigration ‘as proof of the failure of government.’<sup>65</sup> In addition to this, Arnold Schrier has emphasised the cultural weight of emigration from Ireland, which became part of the nation’s ‘daily consciousness’.<sup>66</sup> It is frequently argued that the impetus for second-wave emigration from Ireland to Britain has remained economic. Whilst this is irrefutable, there are often other factors such as chain migration and social or personal reasons for an individual’s migration which can only be unearthed through oral history. Indeed, this thesis has found that the majority of participants were economically motivated to leave Ireland for Britain. Of the

<sup>60</sup> Liam Ryan, “Irish Emigration to Britain Since World War II,” in *Migrations. The Irish at Home and Abroad*, ed. Richard Kearney (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1990), 45-68, p.46.

<sup>61</sup> From Joseph Horgan, “A Memo Regarding Those of Indeterminate Status” in *Slipping Letters Beneath the Sea*. (Tralee: Doghouse, 2008), p.30. Used with the permission of Joseph Horgan.

<sup>62</sup> Ryan, “Irish Emigration”, p.46.

<sup>63</sup> Ryan, “Irish Emigration”, pp.45-6.

<sup>64</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. *Here, Across the Water*, White and Frear.

<sup>65</sup> Dáil Éireann, the Irish Assembly; Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, pp.12-3.

<sup>66</sup> Arnold Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration 1850-1900*. (New York: Russell & Russell, 1970), p.83.

17 Irish-born participants, 15 came to Bristol either directly from Ireland or from elsewhere in Britain for economic reasons. In addition to this, some initially left Ireland for other reasons, such as the greater opportunities in Britain or to enter a more tolerant society. This chapter will establish the context for continuing mass emigration, before utilising information arising from participants' interviews to explain individuals' reasons for choosing Bristol as a destination.

### 1.1 – ‘The old sow that eats its farrow’<sup>67</sup>: Leaving Ireland

*On my way home I saw the young red-faced Paddies and the glowing childish Biddies, with their cheap brown suitcases boarding the train at Limerick, bound for Dun Laoghaire. ‘May God keep you,’ I said to myself, ‘you luckless wretches. What an awful inheritance is yours?’<sup>68</sup>*

In the first half of the twentieth century, the Irish-born population of Great Britain increased exponentially. Several commentators have concurred with Ryan in viewing emigration from Ireland as a continuation of patterns established by the Great Famine of 1845-52. Indeed, Robert Kennedy has noted that Ireland's population declined at every census but one between 1841 and 1961 and Cormac Ó Gráda has described the continuation of mass emigration into the twentieth century as ‘the Great Famine’s most enduring legacy.’<sup>69</sup> Great Britain replaced the United States as the principal destination for Irish migrants in the 1930s, and there was an 88 per cent increase in Britain's Irish-born population between 1931 and 1961. Immigration quotas in the US and the close proximity of Britain have been cited as the main determining factors in this shift.<sup>70</sup> The writer John B. Keane described the scene at Dún Laoghaire in 1951:

Of all the things I've ever felt or seen, nothing ever moved or affected me as the sight of these men and women being torn away from home. [...] For us, as it was then, it was the brink of hell and don't think I use the word hell lightly! [...] Watch

<sup>67</sup> Raymond Crotty, *Ireland in Crisis. A Study in Capitalist Colonial Underdevelopment*. (Dingle: Brandon Book Publishers Ltd: 1986), p.106; James Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*. (St Albans: Panther, 1977), p.185.

<sup>68</sup> John B. Keane, *Self-portrait*. (Cork: The Mercier Press, 1964), p.34.

<sup>69</sup> Robert E. Kennedy, *The Irish. Emigration, Marriage and Fertility*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973), p.1; Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland. A New Economic History 1780-1939*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), p.213.

<sup>70</sup> Tracey Connolly, “Irish workers in Britain during World War Two” in Brian Girvin and Geoffrey Roberts (eds.), *Ireland and the Second World War, Politics, Society and Remembrance*. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 121-132, p.121; Diarmaid Ferriter, *The Transformation of Ireland*. (Woodstock: The Overlook Press, 2007), p.330; Kennedy, *The Irish*, pp.74-5; MacGowan, *Taking the Boat*, p.61. Pauric Travers, “Emigration and Gender: the Case of Ireland 1922-60,” in *Chattel, Servant or Citizen. Women's Status in Church, State and Society*, eds., Mary O'Dowd and Sabine Wichert, (Antrim: W & G Baird Ltd, 1995), 187-199, p.190; Gavin Schaffer and Saima Nasar, “The white essential subject: race, ethnicity, and the Irish in post-war Britain,” in *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 32, Issue. 2, 209-230 (2018), p.212; Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, p.4.

the faces, and, unless you're a heartless inhuman moron, you'll feel something and your conscience will begin to bother you.<sup>71</sup>

The theme of exile has also been reflected in Irish literature. One pertinent contemporary example is John McGahern's 1965 novel *The Dark*. In this the central character's father was quite damning of the situation in Ireland. When presented with the view that new opportunities had been created for young Irish people, he simply replied: "You can go to England, that's all I see"<sup>72</sup> Another is found in Keane's 1988 novel *Contractors* when the protagonist's younger brother insists on accompanying him back to London for the simple reason that: "I'm alone in the bloody parish[...] Tis all oul' men and oul' women. There's no one of my age left here."<sup>73</sup> In spite of the enduring dominance of Jackson's assertion that 'the principal and immediate cause of emigration remains economic', migration from Ireland to Britain has also been shaped by other factors such as a lack of social mobility, persecution or discrimination in Ireland and even a simple desire for adventure.<sup>74</sup> Irish women in particular have found freedom from second class citizenship by leaving Ireland. Nonetheless, it is clear that the key determinant in movement from Ireland to Britain has been economic. Indeed, Ryan's view that 'given free access to any country with a standard of living higher than our own' the Irish 'will readily relocate' is difficult to counter.<sup>75</sup> This is particularly the case when one considers that per capita income in Ireland had converged on the British level by the end of the twentieth century, when emigration from Ireland had slowed considerably.<sup>76</sup> Several others, such as Ellen Hazelkorn, have convincingly attributed the 'culture of migration' in Ireland to a combination of 'persistent unemployment, poor economic prospects and state initiatives'.<sup>77</sup> Donald MacRaild has described emigration rates as an 'economically sensitive indicator' of the state of any nation.<sup>78</sup> In addition, Clair Wills has argued that the 'economic crisis' in post-war Ireland 'created a situation in which the country was unable to provide for vast numbers of the rural poor.'<sup>79</sup> This had been identified considerably earlier, notably in a June 1968 BBC Radio Four programme on Irish people in Britain. In this, one

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<sup>71</sup> Keane, *Self-portrait*, p.34.

<sup>72</sup> John McGahern, *The Dark*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1965), p.25.

<sup>73</sup> John B. Keane, *Contractors*. (Cork: Mercier Press, 1993), p.120.

<sup>74</sup> Jackson, *The Irish*, pp.26-7.

<sup>75</sup> Jackson, *The Irish*, pp.26-7; Ryan, "Irish Emigration", p.46.

<sup>76</sup> Cormac Ó Gráda, *A Rocky Road. The Irish economy since the 1920s*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1997), p.34.

<sup>77</sup> Ellen Hazelkorn, "'We can't all live on a small island': the political economy of Irish migration," in Patrick O'Sullivan (ed.), *The Irish World Wide. History, Heritage, Identity. Volume 2, The Irish in the New Communities*. (London: Leicester University Press, 1992), 180-200, p.193.

<sup>78</sup> Donald M. MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain, 1750-1922*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1999), p.11.

<sup>79</sup> Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, p.1.



contributor who worked with ex-prisoners in his role with The Circle Trust in London noted the huge wage difference between Ireland and Britain from the Irish individuals with whom he had worked:

the boy will seek work on the buildings sites as a labourer, usually paid by the day – it's around £4: 10: - or thereabouts per day[...] Quite a lot of money for the average Irish boy, who prior to this has been barely used to dealing with more than £5 per week. In fact, boys coming from country districts who've been working on their fathers' small farms would hardly be used to dealing with £1 or 30s. a week.<sup>80</sup>

This argument was taken up somewhat later by Jim MacLaughlin, who described Ireland as being a 'comparatively underdeveloped' state with 'peripheral' global status. He convincingly reasoned that young adults left simply because 'the supply of labour exceeded demand and stifled 'opportunities for economic and social advancement.'<sup>81</sup> Another related economic factor has been agricultural changes in Ireland, which have been compellingly cited by several historians and economists. Kennedy and MacLaughlin have noted that new labour-saving agricultural techniques 'paved the way for the destruction of the extended family' with the result that 'large numbers' of young people who would formerly have been supported within the family were 'banished[...] into seasonal or permanent emigration.'<sup>82</sup> Drudy has quoted a net loss of approximately 170,500 agricultural jobs in Ireland between 1926 and 1961, and noted that Britain became the 'first point of search' for many of these individuals.<sup>83</sup> These arguments are reinforced by the predominance of rural emigration - much of which was a consequence of unemployment or underemployment - from Ireland which has been comprehensively acknowledged in the literature.<sup>84</sup> Wills has fittingly described this period as one of 'exceptional crisis and change' in which 'Rural communities *were* failing'.<sup>85</sup>

These arguments are supported by the fact that over half of all emigrants between 1936 and 1956 were from just seven of Ireland's 32 counties – Cork, Donegal, Galway, Kerry, Limerick, Mayo and Tipperary - all of which are rural in character and all but

<sup>80</sup> "The Other Immigrants" – Leslie Smith looks at Irish immigration, BBC Radio 4, 9 June 1968.

<sup>81</sup> Jim MacLaughlin, *Ireland: The Emigrant Nursery and the World Economy*. (Cork: Cork University Press, 1994), p.30.

<sup>82</sup> Kennedy, *The Irish*, pp.108-9; MacLaughlin, *The Emigrant Nursery*, p.7.

<sup>83</sup> P. J. Drudy, "Migration between Ireland and Britain since independence," in *Irish Studies 5, Ireland and Britain Since 1922*, ed. P.J. Drudy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 107-124, pp.112,119.

<sup>84</sup> Mary E. Daly, *The Slow Failure, Population Decline and Independent Ireland, 1922-1973*. (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 2006), pp.22,78-9; Ferriter, *Transformation*, p.330; Desmond A. Gillmor, "Land and people, c.1926" in *A New History of Ireland VII, Ireland, 1921-84*, ed. J. R. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 62-85, Pp.74-5; Jackson, *The Irish*, p.26; Kennedy, *The Irish*, pp.66,73; F. S. L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*. (London: Fontana Press, 1973), 54; MacLaughlin, *The Emigrant Nursery*, p.7; Ó Gráda, *New Economic History*, p.213; J. J. Sexton, "Emigration and immigration in the twentieth century: an overview," in *A New History of Ireland VII, Ireland, 1921-84*, ed. J. R. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 796-825, pp.808-10; Travers, *Emigration and Gender*, p.190; Clair Wills, *That Neutral Island, A History of Ireland During the Second World War*. (London: Faber & Faber, 2007), pp.310-3; Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, 2, 13.

<sup>85</sup> Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, pp. 12, 13.

Tipperary are located on Ireland's western seaboard.<sup>86</sup> Tracey Connolly has noted that the 1956 Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems found that most Irish emigrants 'came from agricultural occupations or else were unemployed and unskilled' during the Second World War.<sup>87</sup> Wills has contended that the extent of rural emigration made Ireland's post-war exodus unique, as much European movement 'was taking place from areas considered to be overpopulated' whilst Ireland's population decline since the Famine - which had resulted in the loss of over half of the country's population by 1926 - 'showed no sign of ending - quite the reverse.'<sup>88</sup> The Irish exodus was perpetuated by chain migration, which has also been described as the "friends and relatives" effect by Timothy Hatton and Jeffrey Williamson:

It has been argued that past migration leads to future migration through the "friends and relatives" effect. These contacts are thought to reduce the uncertainty associated with emigration, to lower emigration costs by the remittance of tickets or fares, and to reduce the costs of a job search on arrival.<sup>89</sup>

This phenomenon in Irish immigration has been well documented in the literature,<sup>90</sup> and its longstanding association with the Irish diaspora has been illustrated by David Fitzpatrick who noted that it had become widespread amongst Irish emigrants to the United States and other destinations by the 1830s.<sup>91</sup> For the reasons outlined above, economic factors mark the most appropriate starting point to examine participants' experiences and possibly the clearest indication to the situation in Ireland was given by one of the participants for this study. Jim left Cork in 1945 at the age of 17 and, when questioned as to his motives for leaving, he simply

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<sup>86</sup> Jackson, *The Irish*, pp.167-8.

<sup>87</sup> Connolly, "Emigration from Ireland to Britain during the Second World War," p.58.

<sup>88</sup> Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, p.12.

<sup>89</sup> Timothy J. Hatton and Jeffrey G. Williamson, "After the Famine: Emigration from Ireland, 1850-1913," in *The Journal of Economic History*, Vol. 53, No. 3, Sept. 1993, 575-600, pp.582-3.

<sup>90</sup> Conrad M. Arensberg and Solon T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland*. (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1968), p.144; Tracey Connolly, "Irish workers in Britain during World War Two", in *Ireland and the Second World War: Politics, Society and Remembrance*, eds. Brian Girvin and Roberts, Geoffrey, Roberts 121-132. (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000) 121-132, p.127; Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.109; Enda Delaney, "Transnationalism, Networks and Emigration from Post-War Ireland," *Immigrants and Minorities*, Vol. 23, Nos. 2-3, November 2005, 425-446, pp.433-5; Colin Holmes, *John Bull's Island, Immigration and British Society, 1871-1971*. (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1988), p.175; Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire*, pp.24, 28; MacRaild, *Irish Migrants in Modern Britain*, p.11; Louise Ryan, "Becoming Nurses: Irish Women, Migration and Identity Through the Life Course," in *Gendering Migration, Masculinity, Femininity and Ethnicity in Post-War Britain*., eds. Louise Ryan and Wendy Webster, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2008), 121-135, p.131; Louise Ryan. "Migrant Women, Social Networks and Motherhood: The Experiences of Irish Nurses in Britain," in *Sociology*, Vol. 41, No. 2, 295-312 (2007), p.300; Louise Ryan, "Moving spaces and changing places: Irish women's memories of emigration to Britain in the 1930s," in *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 29, No. 1, 67-82 (2010), p.73; Schaffer and Nasar, "The white essential subject: race, ethnicity, and the Irish in post-war Britain," p.212; Schrier, *Ireland and the American Emigration*, pp.16-7; Sexton, *Emigration and immigration*, pp.804-5.

<sup>91</sup> David Fitzpatrick, *Irish Emigration 1801-1921*. (Dublin: The Economic and Social History Society of Ireland, 1985), p.21.

replied ‘No work in Ireland.’<sup>92</sup> Similarly, one of the *Here, Across the Water* participants attributed the exodus to economic factors:

there was plenty of employment here [in Britain], there was none in Ireland. We came ‘cos there was plenty of work here and that’s what we needed. There was work in Ireland if you were prepared to wait around and have it. I was one of the ones who wasn’t.<sup>93</sup>

Brendan also came to Bristol for work. He recalled that he had accompanied his neighbours to Bristol after responding to a newspaper advertisement:

English firms were recruiting in Ireland trying to get the labour into this country. They used to go around agencies in every small town recruiting. There was a big advertisement in the paper for plasterers and[...] one day the next door neighbour came in and he said to my Dad, would I be interested in going to England, to labour on them like, you know. Course I said ‘oh yeah, I want to go to England’ like you know I’d read all about it, heard all about it like, lads come home on holidays and all that ‘Oh yeah I wanna go to England’.  
[Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon].

Emily initially moved to Berkshire after receiving a job offer from a family acquaintance in 1967.<sup>94</sup> Trevor moved to Bristol in 1959, having lived in Swindon and Gloucester for the previous seven years, although his circumstances were somewhat different through his vocation as a Catholic priest.<sup>95</sup> Caitriona came to Bristol at the age of 15 with her family, although this was also economically motivated:

We just come over. For work more than anything, my Mum was working here, she worked in Southmead hospital, and I went to work in a Laundry.  
[Caitriona, b.1948, Kilkenny].

Whilst economic pressure gave - and continues to give - emigration from Ireland huge impetus, other factors such as chain migration have also had a significant impact. For many, the prior migration of family or friends was sufficient to sway them towards a particular destination. These circumstances applied to several of the participants for this study, and those who already had family or friends in Bristol tended to initially stay with them. This practice resulted in many newcomers being relatively unaffected by rent prices in Bristol before becoming economically stable and subsequently able to explore rental or purchase options. Some moved to friends or relatives elsewhere in Britain before arriving in Bristol. Maureen was 16 in 1943 when she moved to Crowthorne in Berkshire after initially visiting her cousin on holiday:

I was just gonna come over on a holiday you know and because the trouble was really my mother died like when I was twelve and I think my cousin sort of, my other cousins wanted me to go to America and my father wouldn’t let me go.

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<sup>92</sup> Interview with Jim, b.1928.

<sup>93</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. *Here, Across the Water*, White and Frear.

<sup>94</sup> Interview with Emily, b.1948.

<sup>95</sup> Interview with Trevor, b.1928.

[Maureen, b.1928, Longford].

Seán was around 18 when he came to Britain in 1956. Unlike Maureen, he came directly to Bristol from Cork and lived with his brother and sister-in-law who had emigrated in 1954. His description of adding to an already overcrowded house is a common theme in accounts of chain migration when newly arrived migrants would stay with their friends or relatives until finding their own accommodation:

I was there for about 12 months. I was living with me brother, he had a council house, he had four or five children and I didn't realise what a struggle it was for him you know, and me putting it on top of him as well, you know.  
[Seán, b.1937, Cork].

Margaret also came directly to Bristol from Tipperary at the age of 16. She described her family's history of migration to Britain through her uncle, a former labourer who owned a bed and breakfast in Avonmouth, and her father, who had moved to England in search of work and remitted money home to her mother. Margaret came to Bristol in 1966 to live with her uncle before moving out the following year after her marriage:

My father had to leave Ireland and come to work in England because there was no work in Ireland. So my mother basically reared us and my father sent home some money to help. When I was, when I was very young I used to clean houses in the evening after school to help my mother with the bills and whatever and then when I was 16 I left home and I moved to Bristol. And I had an uncle that lived in Avonmouth, so I went over to live and stay with him[...]He worked in the docks, he was, they were digging trenches, and he got badly hurt in a trench in Avonmouth and he got some money and he bought a bed and breakfast in Avonmouth, so that's how I got to go over to him.  
[Margaret, b.1950, Tipperary].

In addition to this, one of the participants in *Here, Across the Water* followed her sister to Bristol in the 1980s and noted that having 'a lot of relations in Bristol' was a form of 'security knowing they'd be here'.<sup>96</sup> In all of these individual cases, the transition to a new environment was eased by the familiarity of the people with whom they lived. This practice also removed some of the immediate pressure to obtain permanent accommodation or employment. It is undeniable that the "friends and relatives" effect has exercised considerable influence on an individual's choice of destination upon leaving Ireland. It is also clear that some left for greater freedom and opportunity in urban settings, abandoning the 'drab and austere nature of rural life' described by Delaney.<sup>97</sup> One of the *Here, Across the Water* participants referenced this freedom, although she conceded that it came at the price of 'terrible loneliness' in Britain:

<sup>96</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. *Here, Across the Water*, White and Frear.

<sup>97</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, pp.173-5.

We all think the grass is greener on the other side and we all want our freedom and to get away to England first thing was, there's parties every night and the streets are paved with gold and you know you have all this freedom and everything else.<sup>98</sup>

This was also identified in "The Other Immigrants", broadcast in June 1968. A Catholic chaplain emphasised the cultural differences between Ireland and Britain and believed that newcomers felt a considerably greater sense of freedom after crossing the Irish Sea:

Well, as you will understand yourself, the life here is totally different from what it is in any part of Ireland. They're not accustomed to it and they feel that, for one thing, their lives are more free of their family environment, and an environment which they would associate it with great conservatism. The Irish, I suppose, have always been regarded as very conservative and narrow-minded and so on. And they feel this tremendous freedom. They feel for the first time a life that really they never really thought existed, and this is if they can get away with it.<sup>99</sup>

In addition to this, the contributor cited above, on page 25, claimed that many of the individuals that he dealt with in his role at the Circle Trust were Irish, and that many were motivated to emigrate by the greater social freedom on offer in Britain:

Basically, I think it is in their initial goal of reason for coming over here, that it is to break away from the rather rigid control that's [associated] with the Irish life. They tend to do the same here, and in their first few months they certainly do cut loose and breaks [sic] most of the laws that were taught them at home, the Ten Commandments if you like, they've gone through them one after the other.<sup>100</sup>

Indeed, one of the Irish emigrants interviewed recalled that he was motivated to come to Britain by a combination of greater economic opportunities and the difference in lifestyle as he 'looked forward to having more freedom' in London. Whilst he 'Just came hoping to find work', his friends had told him that it would be 'better than at home' and that 'you'd have more clothes' and 'You can stay out late'.<sup>101</sup> Quoting Hazelkorn, MacLaughlin has argued that the Irish 'voted with their feet in their thousands to abandon De Valera's narrow nationalist dream of an Irish people 'satisfied with a frugal comfort and devoted to things of the spirit'.<sup>102</sup> Clair Wills has noted that the high rate of emigration from the West of Ireland indicated that 'It was no longer 'a question here of who is to inherit the holding, but who was to be stuck with it, and with it the task of seeing to the old folk'.<sup>103</sup> The desire to escape de Valera's post-war Ireland was particularly pronounced amongst young women. Much of the recent surge of work on Irish women in the twentieth century has noted that female emigration from Ireland to Britain exceeded that of their male cohorts in every decade from 1871 to 1971 excluding the periods of

<sup>98</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. *Here, Across the Water*, White and Frear.

<sup>99</sup> "The Other Immigrants" – Leslie Smith looks at Irish immigration, BBC Radio 4, 9 June 1968.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid.

<sup>101</sup> Ibid.

<sup>102</sup> MacLaughlin, *The Emigrant Nursery*, p.24.

<sup>103</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, p.310.

the two World Wars, the Boer War and the 1950s.<sup>104</sup> Bronwen Walter has noted that the predominance of male emigrants in the 1950s was largely accounted for by the fact that ‘men’s employment [in Ireland] fell by 35% compared with 12% for Irish women.’<sup>105</sup> It has also been convincingly argued that women had become increasingly marginalised in Ireland, notably through de Valera’s 1937 Constitution which, in only referring to women as mothers, confirmed their ‘inferior status’.<sup>106</sup> Sharon Lambert has cited pregnancy as another reason for women to leave Ireland. The stifling dominance of Catholicism over matters such as sex outside of marriage and abortion left unmarried mothers-to-be facing emigration or ostracism in Ireland.<sup>107</sup> In addition, Kate Kelly and Triona Nic Giolla Choille have acknowledged the lack of support services available to mothers as a key determinant in female emigration.<sup>108</sup> The difficulties faced by young Irish women were encapsulated in Liam’s engaging story of one of his aunts’ migration from Limerick after her father had arranged a marriage to a considerably older man and was ‘adamant that none of ‘em [his daughters] were going to leave Ireland’. This detailed account is a vivid illustration of the adversity that Irish women faced in their own country and it is little wonder that they emigrated in such numbers:

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<sup>104</sup> Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, p.157; Catriona Clear, “‘Too Fond of Going’: Female Emigration and Change for Women in Ireland, 1946-1961,” in *The Lost Decade, Ireland in the 1950s* (eds.) Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O’Shea and Carmel Quinlan, (Cork: Mercier Press, 2004), 138-149, p.138; Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*; Delaney, *The Irish*, pp.91-2; Ferriter, *Transformation*, pp.466-7, 473-4; Sean Glynn, “Irish Immigration to Britain 1911-1951: Patterns and Policy,” *Irish Economic and Social History*, Vol. VIII, 1981, 50-69, p.52; Breda Gray, *Women and the Irish Diaspora*. (London: Routledge, 2004), p.1; Brendan Halpin, “Who are the Irish in Britain? Evidence From Large-Scale Surveys,” in *The Irish Diaspora*, (ed.), Andy Bielenberg, (Edinburgh: Longman, 2000) 89-107, pp.101-2; Kate Kelly and Triona Nic Giolla Choille, *Emigration Matters For Women*. (Dublin: Attic Press, 1990) p.9; Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire*, p.1; Lennon et al, *Across The Water*, p.25; Donald M. MacRaild (ed.), *The Great Famine and Beyond: Irish Migrants in Britain in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2000) p.8; Patrick O’Sullivan, “Introduction to Volume 4: Irish women and Irish migration,” in *The Irish World Wide History, Heritage, Identity, Volume 4 Irish Women and Irish Migration*, (ed.), Patrick O’Sullivan, (London: Leicester University Press, 1995), 1-22, p.1; Ryan, “Becoming Nurses”, p.121; Pauric Travers, “‘There was nothing for me there’: Irish female emigration, 1922-71,” in *The Irish World Wide, History, Heritage, Identity Volume 4, Irish Women and Irish Migration*, (ed.), Patrick O’Sullivan, (London: Leicester University Press, 1995) 146-167, pp.146-7; Bronwen Walter, “Gender and Recent Irish Migration to Britain,” in *Contemporary Irish Migration*, Russell King (ed.), (Dublin: Geographical Society of Ireland, 1991), 11-19, pp.11-12; Bronwen Walter, *Irish Women in London: The Ealing Dimension*. (London: Borough of Ealing Women’s Unit, 1989); Walter, *Outsiders Inside*, pp.1-2, 147.

<sup>105</sup> Walter, “Gender and Recent Irish Migration”, pp.11-12.

<sup>106</sup> Connolly, “Emigration from Ireland”, p.57; Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, “Introduction,” in Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart (Eds.), *Irish Women’s History*, xi-xvi, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2004), p.xiii; Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire*, p.24; Lennon et al, *Across The Water*, p.25; Mary Muldowney, “Women Workers in Dublin and Belfast during the Second World War,” in *The Irish Women’s History Reader*, eds., Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2004), 168-186, pp.170-3; Yvonne Scannell, “The Constitution and the Role of Women,” in *The Irish Women’s History Reader*, eds., Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, (London: Routledge, 2001) 71-78, pp.72-4; Travers, *Emigration and Gender*, pp.191-2; Travers, “There was nothing for me there, pp.153, 163; Maryann Valiulis, “Neither Feminist Nor Flapper: The Ecclesiastical Construction of the Ideal Irish Woman,” in *The Irish Women’s History Reader*, eds., Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, (London: Routledge, 2001), 152-160, p.152.

<sup>107</sup> Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire*, p.21.

<sup>108</sup> Kelly and Nic Giolla Choille, *Emigration Matters*, pp.11-12.

there was not a way out. And she went and told her tale of woe to her older sister, who was by this time married. And her husband arranged to get her away, because one of my grandfather's sayings to all of 'em was 'you will never see Euston Station.' They all did in the end and the husband financed this, he settled up with probably one of the convents over here, got her a contact over here and without my grandfather's knowledge sort of, if you like, kidnapped her, put her on the train, give her some money with the note 'this is where you're going as soon as you get there' and she did and ended up a very happy person in the end. It was then self-financing. She got the next one over, who got the next one and so it went and so they all left in the end.

[Liam, b.1945, Limerick].

One of the participants in the film, *Here, Across the Water* recalled that she was undertaking midwifery training in London and moved to Bristol to be nearer the coast. Her initial emigration was motivated by a desire 'to get away from the family' and she argued that undertaking midwifery training was a 'very valid' reason to leave, in spite of the fact that she had encountered 'quite a bit of family opposition.'<sup>109</sup> The experiences of one participant, Paul, who initially moved to Glasgow from Belfast in 1969 at the age of 19, illustrated several other factors, not least the ongoing Troubles in Northern Ireland:

I first of all had a job in Glasgow actually, in the civil service, between leaving school and going to university. And then for three or four years in the summer vacation I worked in Belfast. That was at the height of the Troubles, which was pretty terrible, and I was in the centre of the city working when the Bloody Friday bombs went off all around me. I used to lie in bed at night counting the number of explosions it was that kind of thing. And for a range of reasons I decided to stay in England and work, I didn't really want to go back to Belfast.

[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

Paul also cited the greater degree of tolerance in England as one of the determinants in his migration. Homosexual acts were decriminalised in Britain in 1967, but remained illegal in Northern Ireland and Ireland until 1982 and 1993 respectively. Paul identified that 'a huge proportion' of gay men left 'because of the persecution that existed in Ireland' and cited this as one of the hidden stories in emigration from Ireland. To my knowledge, this remains a relatively neglected element in the study of the Irish diaspora and would provide a fascinating opportunity for future research.:

And that's a huge thing in terms of the Irish emigration, I don't know whether you've come across it, you may or you may not, it may remain spoken or unspoken in some people's cases, but a huge proportion of gay blokes from Ireland emigrated because of the persecution that existed in Ireland and the illegality. So that was somewhere in the back of my mind, I'm not saying it was the principal reason but it was one of the reasons I suppose which encouraged me to stay in England.

[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

One final significant factor was a simple desire for adventure.<sup>110</sup> The inwardness of de Valera's 'frugal comfort' was not enough to satisfy everyone, and some were no doubt eager for new

<sup>109</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. *Here, Across the Water*, White and Frear.

<sup>110</sup> Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, pp.2-3.

experiences. One such example was Jim, who said that he left Cork because there was no work, before adding that he joined the Royal Air Force, in search of excitement:

It was also to find a bit of adventure. I joined the Air Force. The RAF, the Royal Air Force. When the war was finished, I waited until the war was finished and I thought 'okay I can join up now'.  
[Jim, b.1926, Cork].

Whatever the motivation, it is clear that economic reasons, and chiefly a lack of available employment in Ireland, were the main contributing factors in emigration from Ireland to Britain. This is undoubtedly also partly explained by the economic position of Bristol. Indeed, Ollerenshaw and Wardley have identified that the city has enjoyed 'sustained economic growth' since the mid-nineteenth century and has experienced 'a more peaceful, prosperous and secure record of economic development' than 'some of the more peripheral regions of the British Isles.'<sup>111</sup> Whilst this was cited as the primary motivation for many participants, we have seen that others were enticed across the Irish Sea to Bristol or elsewhere by friends or relatives who had already emigrated. Some gave other reasons for their departure; Paul recalled that his emigration was partly influenced by the more tolerant society on offer in England, whilst Jim was partly induced to leave by the pursuit of adventure outside of Ireland.

## 1.2 - "You can go to England, that's all I see"<sup>112</sup>: The Irish in Bristol.

*We all know any fool can go to England once he gets his hands on a fiver.*<sup>113</sup>

The extent of Irish emigration to Britain was such that they represented the largest foreign-born element of the population throughout the twentieth and into the twenty-first century. The twentieth century peak was undoubtedly the second-wave migration of the 1950s - described as the decade of the vanishing Irish<sup>114</sup> - when average annual net emigration from Ireland was greater than the rate of annual natural increase.<sup>115</sup> Wills has described the 1950s as a period of apparently 'unstoppable decline' in population in which 400,000, 'nearly a sixth of the total population recorded in 1951, and a vastly higher proportion of the working population' left: 'The majority left for work in Britain, which would be home to one million Irish-born –

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<sup>111</sup> Philip Ollerenshaw and Peter Wardley, "Economic Growth and the Business Community in Bristol Since 1840," in Madge Dresser and Philip Ollerenshaw (eds.), *The Making of Modern Bristol*. (Bristol: Redcliffe Press, 1996), 124-155, p.150.

<sup>112</sup> McGahern, *The Dark*, p.25.

<sup>113</sup> *Ibid*, p.45.

<sup>114</sup> Enda Delaney, "The Vanishing Irish? The Exodus From Ireland in the 1950s," in Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O'Shea and Carmel Quinlan (eds.), *The Lost Decade, Ireland in the 1950s*. (Cork: Mercier Press, 2004), 82-88, p.82.

<sup>115</sup> Drudy, "Migration between Ireland and Britain", p.109.



then the largest migrant population in Britain – by the late 1960s.<sup>116</sup> The Irish-born population of Great Britain between 1921 and 1981 is shown in Table 1.1 below, and it is immediately clear that the period from 1931 to 1961 was one of exponential growth. Spurred by wartime recruitment and post-war reconstruction, the rate of increase in the Irish-born population between 1931 and 1951 was almost 42 per cent. Whilst this was the greatest inter-census increase, it must be acknowledged that this took place over a twenty year period rather than ten. The 1950s is generally viewed as the zenith of second wave migration from Ireland to Britain, and this is illustrated by the fact that four out of five Irish people born between 1931 and 1941 left Ireland.<sup>117</sup> These statistics are reflected in the massive Irish-born population increase of almost a third between 1951 and 1961. Although the Irish-born population peaked in 1971, the rate of increase had slowed to a trickle of less than one per cent. Whilst the 1970s saw many Irish people leaving Britain, as is reflected in the 11 per cent decline, the country's total Irish-born population had increased by 62 per cent since 1921 and 68 per cent since 1931 and the outset of second wave migration from Ireland.

Table 1.1: Irish-born population of Great Britain as a percentage of total population.

| Year | Irish-born | Increase/Decrease (%) | % of total population | Total population |
|------|------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------|
| 1921 | 523,767    | NA                    | 1.22                  | 42,769,196       |
| 1931 | 505,385    | -18,382 (-3.63)       | 1.13                  | 44,795,357       |
| 1951 | 716,028    | +210,643 (+41.7)      | 1.47                  | 48,854,303       |
| 1961 | 950,978    | +234,950 (+32.8)      | 1.85                  | 51,283,892       |
| 1971 | 957,830    | +6,852 (+0.72)        | 1.77                  | 53,978,550       |
| 1981 | 850,397    | -107,433 (-11.2)      | 1.58                  | 53,556,911       |

Sources: Census of Population, England and Wales; Census of Population, Scotland.

The impact of the 1950s is also reflected in the Irish-born percentage of the total population, which was at its highest in 1961. Thereafter this population declined somewhat, whilst remaining significantly higher than the corresponding figures for 1921 and 1931. The importance of the 1950s is also reflected in Johanne Devlin Trew's data on net migration, as shown in Table 1.2, below. Ireland's net migration loss during the 1950s was over 14,000, the greatest loss of the twentieth century. Northern Ireland also experienced a comparatively high net migration loss in the 1950s, losing around six and a half thousand where in the previous

<sup>116</sup> Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, p.1.

<sup>117</sup> *Ibid*, p.xii.

decade the net loss had been just over three and a half thousand. The figures also indicate the impact of the Second World War and the British post-war redevelopment programme, as the Irish net loss trebled from over three thousand in the previous period to over nine thousand between 1941 and 1951. The significant reduction in Ireland's net migration loss between 1961 and 1971 and the subsequent net migration gain in the next period marks the end of the second-wave migration period. Northern Ireland's significant population loss in the 1970s – the biggest net loss since the 1920s - can be partly explained by the Troubles which will be discussed below in the third chapter.

Table 1.2: Ireland net migration by decade (per 000).

| Decade  | Ireland | Northern Ireland |
|---------|---------|------------------|
| 1921-31 | -10.9   | -8.0             |
| 1931-41 | -3.1    | -1.9             |
| 1941-51 | -9.3    | -3.6             |
| 1951-61 | -14.1   | -6.5             |
| 1961-71 | -4.5    | -4.5             |
| 1971-81 | +3.2    | -7.3             |
| 1981-91 | -5.6    | -4.4             |
| 1991-01 | +3.3    | -0.2             |
| 2001-11 | +8.1    | +2.2             |

Source: Johanne Devlin Trew, *Leaving the North. Migration and Memory, Northern Ireland 1921-2011*. (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2013), p.31.  
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Census data for Bristol, shown in Table 1.3, below, reveal a marked increase in the city's Irish-born population during the 1950s, although the greatest increase came between 1931 and 1951, when the Irish-born population increased by 84 per cent. The rate of increase between 1951 and 1961 was only 26 per cent, but the ten year increase of 1,271 compares favourably with the 20 year increase of 2,226 in the previous period. Significantly, the 84 per cent increase also reflects the city's relatively low Irish-born population prior to 1951. Another similarity to the national figures is that the Irish-born peak occurred in 1971. The inflow had also slowed considerably from the previous ten year period, as we saw above in Figure 1. That, unlike the national figures, the Irish-born proportion of the city's total population increased from 1961 to 1971 owed much to an overall population contraction than the fairly modest Irish-born increase. In addition to this, Richmond's analysis of the 1966 census reveals that the city's Irish-born population was 6,690, slightly higher than the 1971

figure.<sup>118</sup> This indicates that Irish migration to Bristol only fell away towards the end of the 1960s. The substantial increase in the two decades from 1931 to 1951 indicates the impact of the Second World War and its immediate aftermath on movement from Ireland to Bristol.

As a result of census data for individuals born in Northern Ireland being unavailable, the 1981 figure is incomplete. This anomaly accounts for a significant part of the 40 per cent decrease in Bristol's Irish-born population from 1971. Another contributing factor is the near 20 per cent decline in the Republic of Ireland-born population from 4,831 to 3,911 in the same period. In spite of this statistical aberration, the trend of a significant reduction in the Irish-born population in the years following 1971 is clearly visible.

Table 1.3: Irish-Born\* population of Bristol, 1921-1991.

| Census Year | Irish-born | Net Population Gain/Loss | Total Population of Bristol | Irish-Born as % of Total |
|-------------|------------|--------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| 1921        | 2,609      | NA                       | 376,975                     | 0.69                     |
| 1931        | 2,646      | +37 (+1.42)              | 397,012                     | 0.66                     |
| 1951        | 4,872      | +2,226 (+84.1)           | 510,274                     | 0.95                     |
| 1961        | 6,143      | +1,271 (+26.1)           | 437,048                     | 1.40                     |
| 1971        | 6,571      | +432 (+7.03)             | 412,684                     | 1.59                     |
| 1981        | 3,911**    | -2,664 (-40.5)           | 384,870                     | 1.02                     |
| 1991        | 5,569      | +1,658 (+42.4)           | 376,113                     | 1.48                     |
| 2001        | 4,711      | -858 (-15.4)             | 380,615                     | 1.24                     |
| 2011        | 4,574      | -137 (-2.91)             | 428,234                     | 1.07                     |

Source: Census of Population, England and Wales.

\*Irish-Born figures include individuals born in all 32 Counties of the island of Ireland.

\*\*This figure only includes individuals born in the Republic of Ireland.

An assessment of the Bristol Irish by gender reveals something of a surprise. We have seen that female emigration from Ireland to Britain exceeded that of their male counterparts for all of the late nineteenth century and much of the twentieth century. However, the male Irish-born population of Bristol was higher than the female Irish-born population from 1951 until the end of the century. Indeed, the only point of the twentieth century at which there were more Irish-born females than males in the city was the inter-war period.

<sup>118</sup> Richmond et al, *Migration and Race Relations*, p.43.

Table 1.4: Irish-Born Population of Bristol by Gender, 1921-2001.

| Census Year | Irish-Born Population | Men   | %     | Women | %     |
|-------------|-----------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| 1921        | 2,609                 | 1,187 | 45.50 | 1,422 | 54.50 |
| 1931        | 2,646                 | 1,154 | 43.61 | 1,492 | 56.39 |
| 1951        | 4,872                 | 2,492 | 51.15 | 2,380 | 48.85 |
| 1961        | 6,143                 | 3,261 | 53.08 | 2,882 | 46.92 |
| 1971        | 6,571                 | 3,391 | 51.61 | 3,180 | 48.39 |
| 1981*       | 3,911                 | 2,019 | 51.62 | 1,892 | 48.38 |
| 1991        | 5,569                 | 2,787 | 50.04 | 2,782 | 49.96 |
| 2001        | 4,711                 | 2,261 | 48.00 | 2,450 | 52.00 |
| 2011        | 4,574                 | 2,192 | 47.90 | 2,382 | 52.10 |

Source: Census of Population, England and Wales.

\* Figures for 1981 do not include individuals born outside of the Republic of Ireland.

It is clear from Table 1.5 that the majority of twentieth century Bristol's Irish-born population hailed from the Republic. In the peak years of 1951-1971, the Republic-born accounted for over 70 per cent of the city's Irish-born population, although the Northern and Republic populations in Bristol increased steadily over this period.

Table 1.5: Irish-Born Population of Bristol by country of birth, 1921-2011.

| Census Year | Irish-Born | Northern Ireland Born | % of Total | Republic of Ireland Born | % of Total | Part of Ireland Not Stated | % of Total |
|-------------|------------|-----------------------|------------|--------------------------|------------|----------------------------|------------|
| 1921        | 2,609      | 437                   | 16.75      | 2,073                    | 79.45      | 99                         | 3.80       |
| 1931        | 2,646      | 442                   | 16.70      | 2,154                    | 81.40      | 50                         | 1.90       |
| 1951        | 4,872      | 1,040                 | 21.34      | 3,642                    | 74.75      | 190                        | 3.91       |
| 1961        | 6,143      | 1,380                 | 22.46      | 4,477                    | 72.88      | 286                        | 4.66       |
| 1971        | 6,571      | 1,740                 | 26.48      | 4,831                    | 73.52      | 0                          | 0.00       |
| 1981*       | 3,911      | NA                    | NA         | 3,911                    | 100        | 0                          | 0.00       |
| 1991        | 5,569      | 1,508                 | 27.08      | 4,059                    | 72.88      | 2                          | 0.04       |
| 2001        | 4,711      | 1,585                 | 33.64      | 3,119                    | 66.21      | 7                          | 0.15       |
| 2011        | 4,574      | 1,674                 | 36.60      | 2,900                    | 63.40      | 0                          | 0.00       |

Source: Census of Population, England and Wales.

\* Figures for 1981 do not include individuals born outside of the Republic of Ireland.

It is unfortunate that no data is available for Bristol residents born in Northern Ireland for 1981. However, given that Northern Ireland experienced its greatest post-war net migration

loss in the 1970s, it is not unreasonable to assume that the Northern Ireland-born would have retained a considerable presence in the city, particularly when one considers the 1991 figure of 1,508. Unlike the Republic-born, the Northern Irish-born population has continued to grow into the twenty-first century to the extent that this group accounted for more than a third of all Irish-born people in Bristol by 2011, where it accounted for just over 20 per cent in 1951. Whilst beyond the scope of this study, the increase in Northern Ireland-born individuals in Bristol between 1991 and 2011 could provide an intriguing opportunity for further research. We have seen that the troublesome ‘Part of Ireland Not Stated’ group were identified as being ‘practically all’ born in the Republic in a 1961 study.<sup>119</sup> Table 1.5 shows that, thereafter, this group ceased to exert much influence over the statistics.

### **1.3 - Patterns of settlement in Bristol**

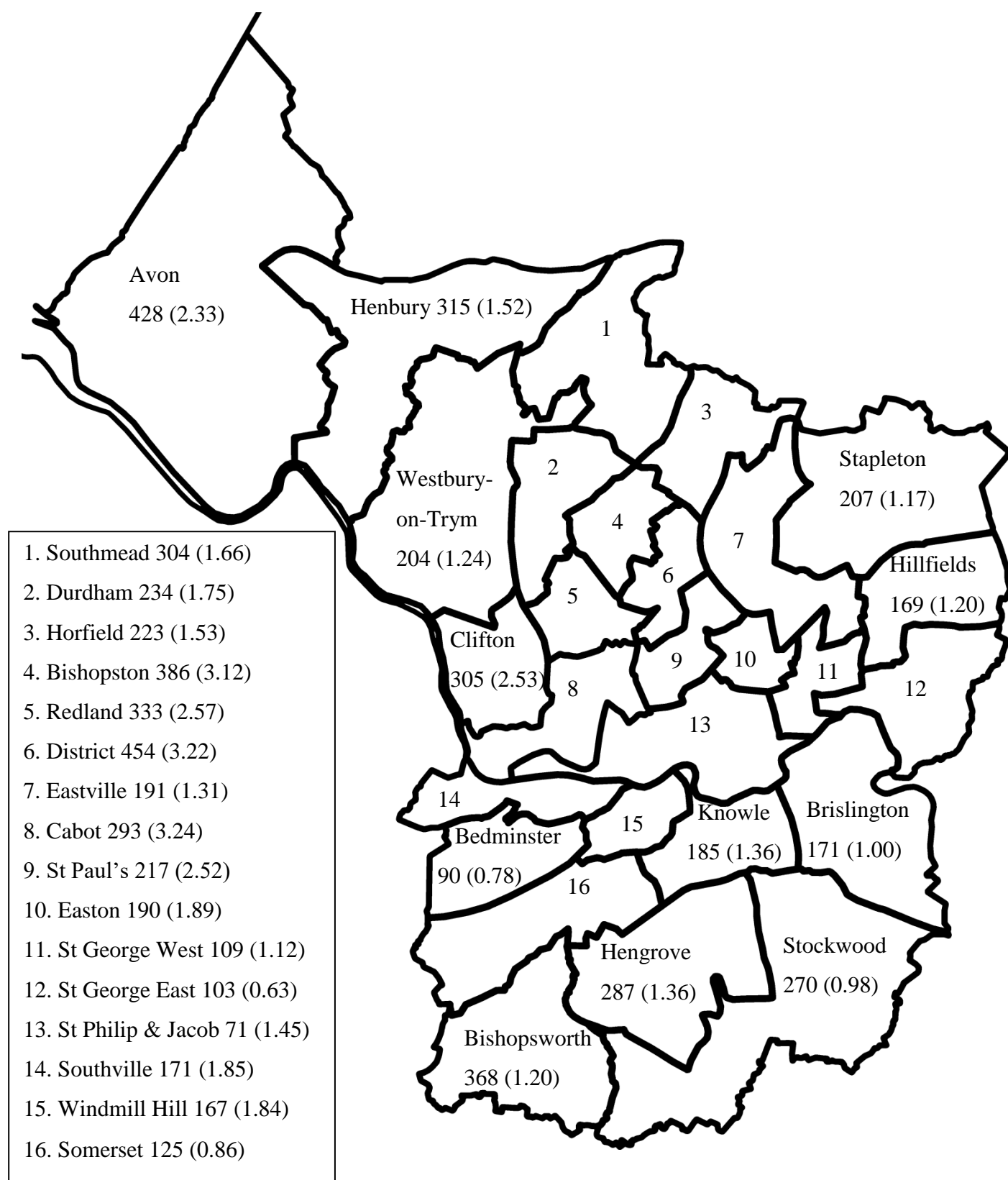
In terms of the residential distribution of Irish people in Bristol, very little work has been undertaken, even in the comparatively well-researched area of 19<sup>th</sup> century emigration. Large’s census enumeration for 1851 revealed that, whilst Bristol’s Irish were often concentrated within particular streets, they were fairly well-distributed throughout the city, including, perhaps surprisingly, the affluent area of Clifton.<sup>120</sup> Figures 1.1 and 1.2 provide a comprehensive and illuminating insight into the distribution of the Bristol Irish in 1971 and 1981 at the end of the period of second wave migration from Ireland. A table showing the Irish population changes by ward from 1971 to 1981 can be found in the Appendix A on page 206.

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<sup>119</sup> See above, p.6; McGowan, *Taking The Boat*, p.9.

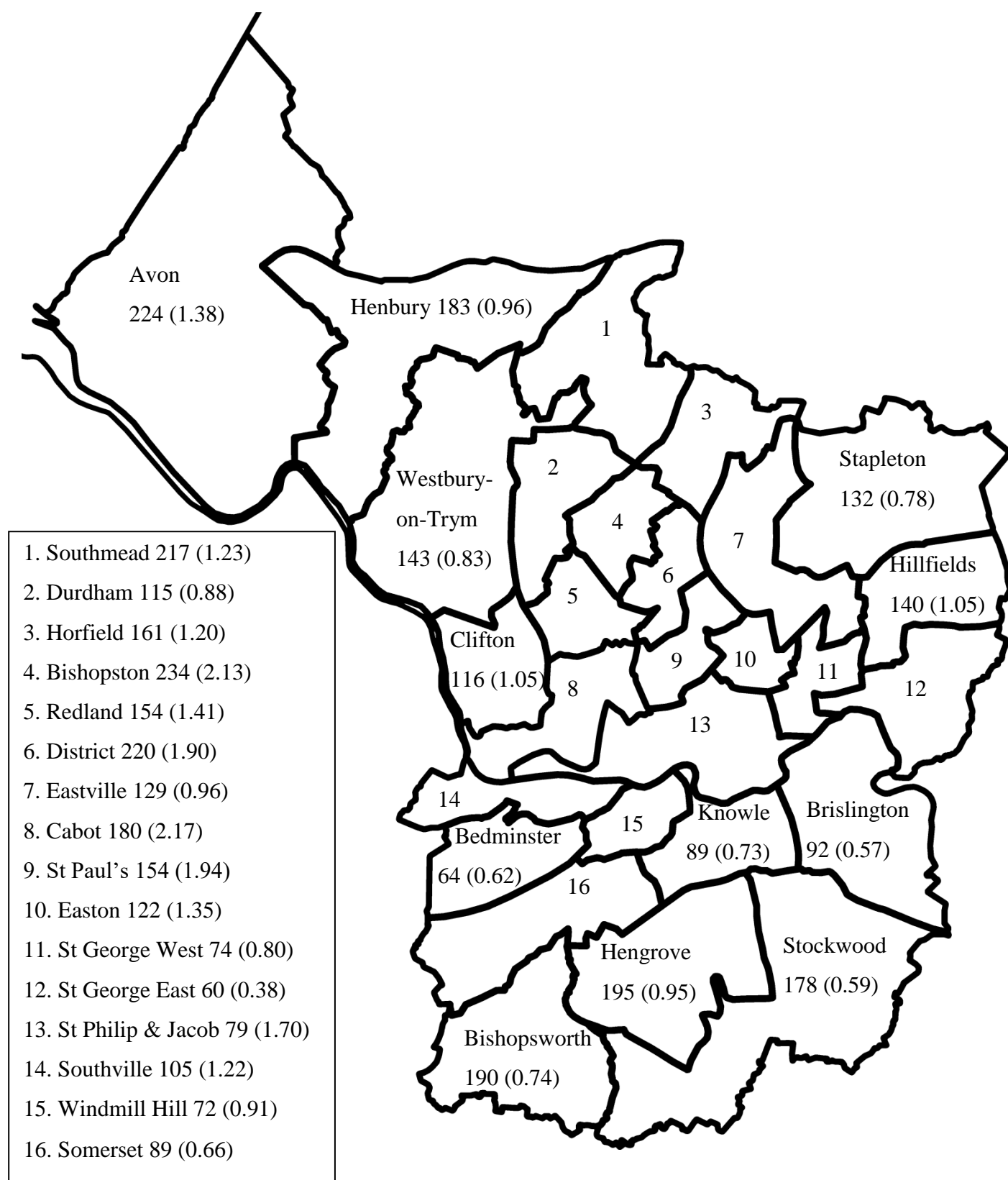
<sup>120</sup> Large, “The Irish in Bristol in 1851”, pp.39-41.

Figure 1.1 – Irish-born population of Bristol by council ward, percentages of Irish-born as proportion of total ward population in brackets, 1971.



Source: Census of population, England and Wales.

Figure 1.2 – Irish-born population of Bristol by council ward, percentages of Irish-born as proportion of total ward population in brackets, 1981.



Source: Census of population, England and Wales.

It is clear from these data that the residential dispersion of the nineteenth century Bristol Irish continued into the late twentieth century. Indeed, 14 of the 28 council wards had Irish-born proportions which exceeded that of the city's total Irish-born proportion of 1.31 between 1971 and 1981. The Irish-born population decrease in all wards except St. Philip and Jacob is misleading given the omission of the Northern Irish-born from the 1981 figures, as well as the city's population decline as a whole. For the purposes of this study, the wards have been divided into four categories: central, east, north and south. The central category includes Cabot, Clifton, District, Easton, Redland, St. Paul and St. Philip and Jacob; the east grouping comprises Eastville, Hillfields, St George East, St. George West and Stapleton; the north wards are Avon, Bishopston, Durdham, Henbury, Horfield, Southmead and Westbury-on-Trym and the remaining wards of Bedminster, Bishopsworth, Brislington, Hengrove, Knowle, Somerset, Southville, Stockwood and Windmill Hill comprise the south group.

Table 1.6 – Irish-born population of Bristol by area.

| Area    | Total population 1971 | Irish-born population 1971 | Irish-born as % of total 1971 | Total population 1981 | Irish-born population 1981 | Irish-born as % of total 1981 |
|---------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Central | 71,768                | 1,863                      | 2.60                          | 63,556                | 1,025                      | 1.61                          |
| East    | 68,002                | 779                        | 1.15                          | 68,579                | 535                        | 0.78                          |
| North   | 113,977               | 2,094                      | 1.84                          | 107,552               | 1,277                      | 1.19                          |
| South   | 154,429               | 1,935                      | 1.25                          | 145,183               | 1,074                      | 0.74                          |

Source: Census of Population, England and Wales, 1971 and 1981.

Table 1.6 clearly shows that the majority of Bristol's Irish-born population lived in the north and south areas of the city by 1971. However, the Bristol Irish accounted for a higher proportion of the the total population in the central and northern areas. The high numbers in the south of the city are partially explained by the fact that many of Bristol's post-war housing estates are located in southern areas such as Bishopsworth, Hartcliffe and Knowle. This also accounts for the area's comparatively high population compared with the other three areas. The Irish-born were clearly most heavily concentrated in the central area, where their 2.60 and 1.61 per cent of the total population in 1971 and 1981 more than doubled the 1.25 and 0.74 of the southern area and was also significantly larger than the northern area which also had a considerably higher total population. That there was a strong tendency towards long-term or permanent settlement in the southern area amongst the participants for



this thesis is partly explained by my own family having firm roots in south Bristol and my initial reliance on family and friend contacts. Figure 1.3 reveals that there was a strong outward movement from the city centre, much of which was directed southwards.

Figure 1.3 – Distribution of participants for this study, by area.

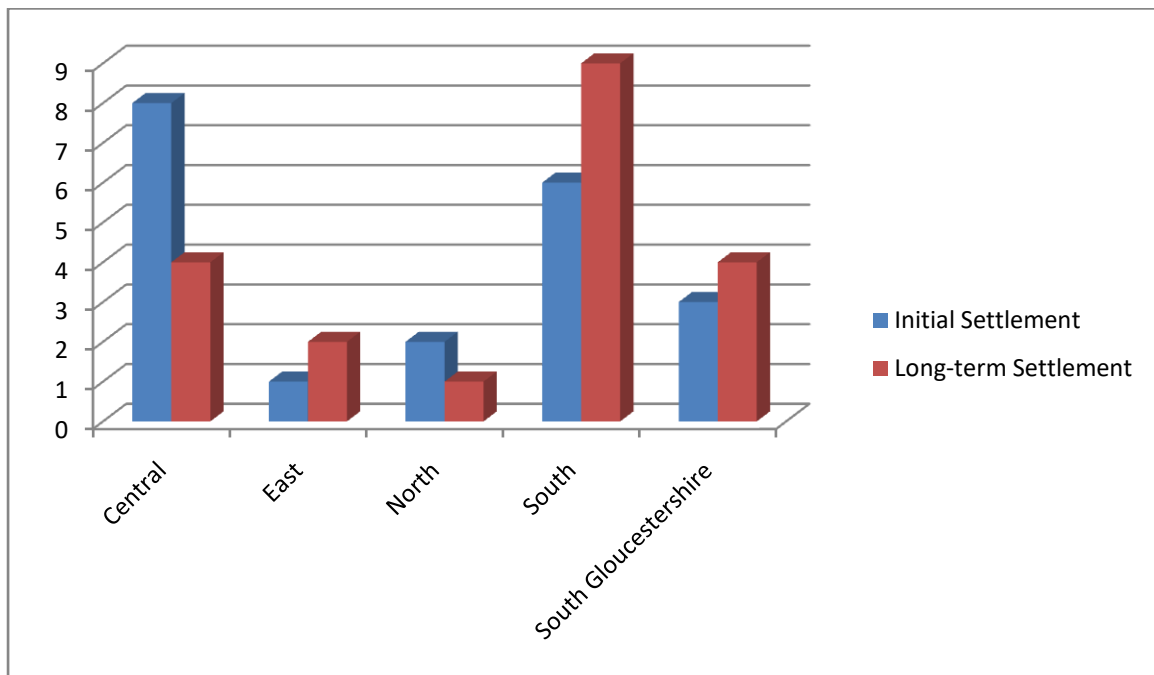


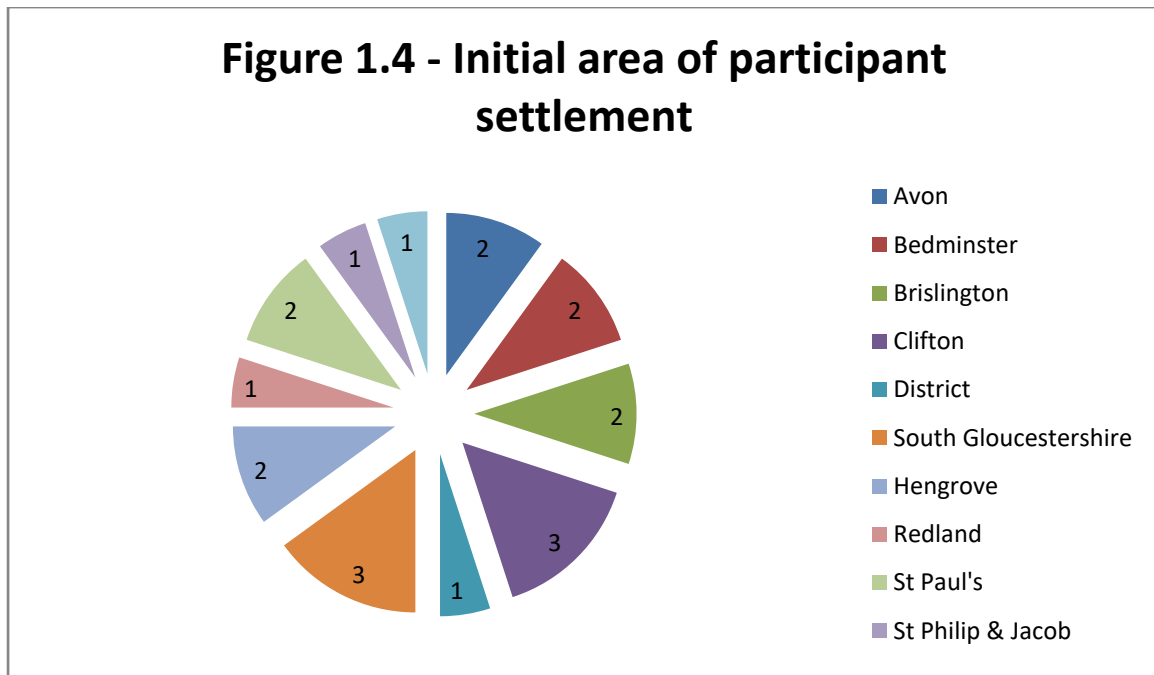
Table 1.7 lists all participants' original and main areas of settlement in Bristol, and this shows that the majority of the initial settlement in the central area was in Clifton and St Paul's. Of the three individuals who initially moved to Clifton, Trevor was a priest at the Pro Cathedral which was in the central Cabot ward. After building commenced in 1834, problems were experienced with its foundations and it was unused until 1848 when the building was utilised as a church. Upon the restoration of the Catholic hierarchy to Britain in 1850, the church was designated as the pro-cathedral until a suitable cathedral could be constructed. In the event, this did not occur until Clifton Cathedral was completed in 1973. From there, Trevor went on to establish and run the Clifton Irish Club which, as we will see in Chapter Four, was an integral element in the Bristol Irish framework. Indeed, Joseph found accommodation in Clifton after visiting the Irish Club upon his arrival in the city. He and his family went on to buy a house in St George East before ultimately settling in Kingswood. The third, Seán,

lived in the Hotwells area of the Clifton ward with his brother's family and was later able to buy a house in the same area. The other central residents were situated in St Paul's, Redland and District. Of these, Jack and Michael moved into digs in St Paul's and both went on to purchase properties in Withywood in the south and Horfield in the north respectively. Paul rented a 'dingy flat' in Redland after visiting estate agents in Clifton before moving to Southville and eventually buying his own home there. Finally, Caitriona moved to Montpelier in the District ward with her family at the age of 15.

Of the initial settlements, Emily was the single eastern resident, having moved to the Fishponds area of the Stapleton ward for work purposes in 1970. From there she moved a short distance to Redfield in the St George West ward which is also in the eastern area. Both of the initial northern residents, Jim and Margaret, moved to the Avon ward to join their friend and uncle respectively and both eventually moved to the southern area. Jim and his family moved into a council house in Withywood whilst Margaret and her family were able to purchase their own home in Bedminster via a Withywood council house. The six southern residents were distributed throughout Bedminster, Bishopsworth, Brislington and Hengrove. Of these, only two – Brendan and Dave - relocated to other areas of Bristol. Maureen and her husband bought a house in Bedminster when they came to Bristol from Bournemouth. She still lives in the same house and her son, Connor, was born there. Likewise, Vivian was born in The Dings in the St Philip and Jacob ward to an Irish father and a Bristolian mother. They moved to Withywood in Bishopsworth when he was four years old. Brendan first found temporary accommodation in Brislington upon his arrival with a group of Irish plasterers and building labourers. He and his wife Caitriona eventually moved to Montpelier in the central area where Caitriona's family had set up upon their arrival some years previously. Dave purchased a house in Brislington after moving to Bristol from London. From there he moved to Fishponds in the eastern ward. The two Hengrove residents were May and John, who bought a family house on their arrival from Derry. They subsequently moved to a larger home nearby in closer proximity to several amenities within the same ward. The final three participants all moved to South Gloucestershire. Two of these were Diane and Liam, who came to Hallen, close to the Avon ward border, from London, and Mary, who also moved from London to Kingswood, near the St George East ward border.

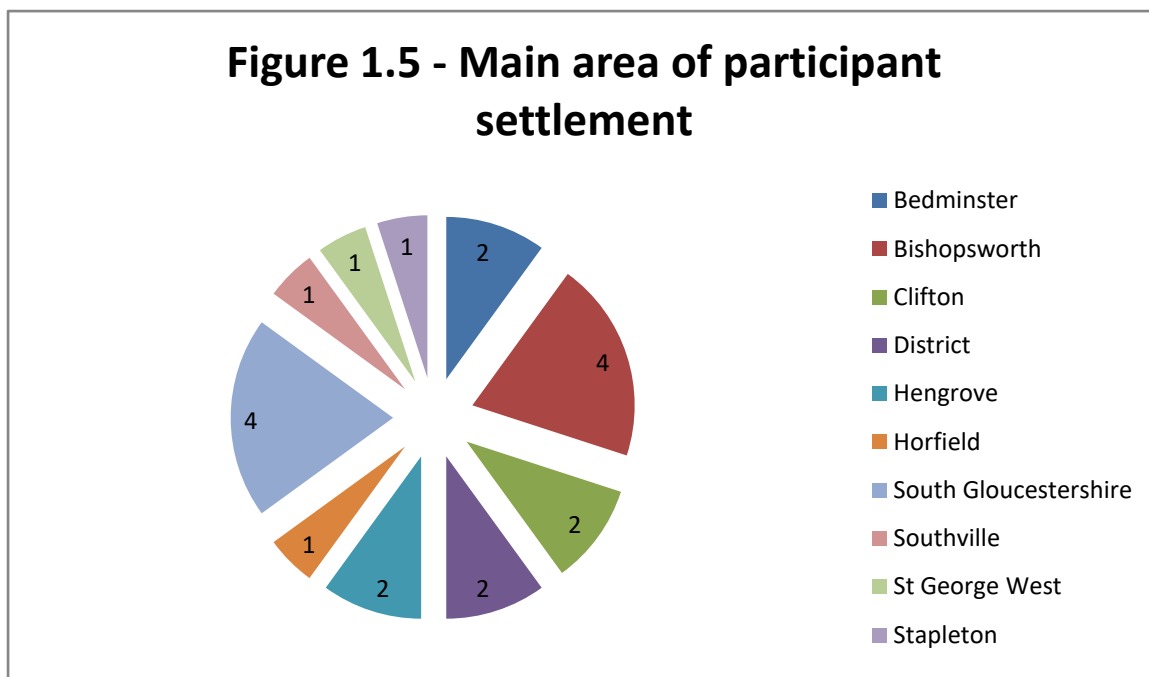
Table 1.7 – Original and main areas of settlement in Bristol for the participants of this study.

| Participant | County of origin | First settlement in Bristol | Original area of settlement in Bristol | Main area of settlement in Bristol |
|-------------|------------------|-----------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| Joseph      | Antrim           | 1973                        | Clifton (Central)                      | Kingswood (South Gloucestershire)  |
| Paul        | Belfast          | 1975                        | Redland (Central)                      | Southville (South)                 |
| Trevor      | Clare            | 1956                        | Clifton (Central)                      | Clifton (Central)                  |
| Dave        | Cork             | 1980                        | Brislington (South)                    | Fishponds (Stapleton/East)         |
| Jim         | Cork             | 1948                        | Shirehampton (Avon/North)              | Withywood (Bishopsworth/South)     |
| Mary        | Cork             | 1986                        | Kingswood (South Gloucestershire)      | Kingswood (South Gloucestershire)  |
| Seán        | Cork             | 1956                        | Hotwells (Clifton/Central)             | Hotwells (Clifton/Central)         |
| May         | Derry            | 1973                        | Whitchurch (Hengrove/South)            | Whitchurch (Hengrove/South)        |
| John        | Donegal          | 1973                        | Whitchurch (Hengrove/South)            | Whitchurch (Hengrove/South)        |
| Caitriona   | Kilkenny         | 1963                        | Montpelier (District/Central)          | Montpelier (District/Central)      |
| Liam        | Limerick         | 1971                        | Hallen (South Gloucestershire)         | Hallen (South Gloucestershire)     |
| Maureen     | Longford         | 1959                        | Bedminster (South)                     | Bedminster (South)                 |
| Michael     | Mayo             | 1959                        | St. Paul's (Central)                   | Horfield (North)                   |
| Brendan     | Roscommon        | 1959                        | Brislington (South)                    | Montpelier (District/Central)      |
| Emily       | Tipperary        | 1970                        | Fishponds (Stapleton/East)             | Redfield (St George West/East)     |
| Margaret    | Tipperary        | 1964                        | Avonmouth (Avon/North)                 | Withywood (Bishopsworth/South)     |
| Jack        | Wexford          | 1957                        | St. Paul's (Central)                   | Withywood (Bishopsworth/South)     |
| Connor      | Bournemouth      | 1959                        | Bedminster (South)                     | Bedminster (South)                 |
| Vivian      | Bristol          | 1954                        | St Philip & Jacob (Central)            | Withywood (Bishopsworth/South)     |
| Diane       | London           | 1971                        | Hallen (South Gloucestershire)         | Hallen (South Gloucestershire)     |



Figures 1.4 and 1.5 illustrate the diversity in experience of the Bristol Irish through the number of wards that the participants for this thesis initially came to and permanently settled. In all, 15 of the 28 council wards were represented, although only seven of these 15 had higher Irish-born proportions of the total population than the city as a whole. Given the post-war movement from the central area to the eastern and southern areas, it is unsurprising that the two individuals who lived centrally for the majority of their time in Bristol were Trevor, who was based at the Pro Cathedral in Clifton and therefore did not need to buy or rent his own home, and Seán, whose family owned their own home in Hotwells. The others were either living in digs or rented accommodation there and naturally found long-term accommodation elsewhere aside from Caitriona, who was 15 years old when her family moved to Montpelier. Aside from Trevor, every participant progressed from private rented accommodation to council housing - which they later exercised the option to buy - or outright home ownership. Given this, the shift away from the city centre is unsurprising.

**Figure 1.5 - Main area of participant settlement**



#### 1.4 – Experiences of Bristol

*Bristol had generally expressed its anti-Catholic feeling in a frenzy of words, rather than riots and physical attacks; it was prepared to move with the times, and by the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century it had become a more tolerant city.<sup>121</sup>*

To give these individual experiences more depth, this thesis will now discuss the participants' experiences of different areas of Bristol. Joseph moved to Bristol in 1973 and argued that Bristol was an unconventional city in that different areas were like separate villages rather than part of the whole:

my wife is a Bristolian and I found Bristol at the time was very much a set of little villages, it wasn't a city. The people who live in, you know I live in Kingswood cos my wife lived in St George and by and large my mates who were Bristolian, they would live where their parents lived.  
[Joseph, b.1951, Antrim].

Mary had a similar experience in Kingswood. She found that non-Bristolians who did not have existing family and friend networks had a tendency to 'gravitate toward one another' and that it was initially a lonely time for her young son

he'd see children playing in the garden and you know he couldn't play with them because they didn't need him to play with them, they had cousins.  
[Mary, b.1952, Cork].

Similarly, Liam and Diane believed that Bristolians were 'self-sufficient' in terms of socialising, and most of the friends they had made since moving to Hallen from Bristol were

<sup>121</sup> Gilbert, *In the Midst of a Protestant People*, p.292.

not Bristolian.<sup>122</sup> Since moving to Bristol in 1970, Emily has ‘always lived in east Bristol’ in Fishponds and St George after leaving Tipperary in 1967 and brief periods in Berkshire and on the Isle of Wight:

I never ever encountered any prejudice or insults or anything for being Irish[...] I would say most of my friends and acquaintances are not Irish. I have a good few of them as well, but always felt accepted, we always have, and my husband was the same. And never got any people, maybe we mixed with the right people, I don’t know! [laughs] But very good, very kind and very accepting, yeah.  
[Emily, b.1948, Tipperary].

Two of the participants for *Here, Across the Water* had different experiences. One woman who initially moved to Bath, found that she felt more at home in Bristol, where ‘the people were a lot friendlier and there was a lot more Irish people.’ Another who emigrated in the 1980s, believed that, in spite of cultural differences, Bristolians were very friendly:

So I went out a lot on my own when I come over here, just going into bars and whatever and people don’t really make the effort to talk to you but I wasn’t used to that at home you know everybody knows everybody and everyone is really friendly. I actually took a while to get in with the people but once you get in with them, you know, that’s what I found with Bristol people anyway, once you’re in, you’re in you know.<sup>123</sup>

Brendan and Caitriona moved into a flat in Montpelier. After getting married and the birth of their eldest daughter they were able to buy a house in the same area following a chance sighting of a council house being renovated. After checking with the council, they were able to rent the house just three weeks later. As they became more economically stable, their accountant advised them to buy the property:

So we looked into it and we got a hundred per cent mortgage off the Council like, sort of thing so we bought that house. Actually we bought it very cheap, it was thirteen and a half thousand pound, which was a gift in a sense.  
[Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon].

Caitriona’s mother also lived near the Montpelier area, and after she passed away, 39 years after Brendan and Caitriona had purchased their house, they moved to St George to be closer to their daughter and her family:

the daughter’s up the road, the school is there and that. I got a brother living in Bristol by the way, down in Kingswood, it’s probably about seven or eight minutes down the road as well, so it’s a great combination between the lot.  
[Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon].

Joseph got married in 1975, two years after his arrival in Bristol. After living in Henleaze and Clifton, he and his wife purchased a house in St George before later moving to Kingswood:

We didn’t have any money, her Mum was a widow and I was living in a bedsit so I couldn’t save anything, and in them days you couldn’t live together so we got

<sup>122</sup> Interview with Liam, b.1945, Limerick and Diane, b.1948, London.

<sup>123</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. *Here, Across the Water*, White and Frear.

married and lived in a flat in Clifton for a year, saved up some money and bought a house in St George. We lived there from 1975 till I finished college and got a job in about 83 I think, May 83. We moved in May 83 to Kingswood and I've lived in the same house ever since.

[Joseph, b.1951, Antrim].

Dave left Cork in 1974 to attend a rehabilitation centre in Torquay after losing much of his sight in an accident. From there, he moved to London and became a social worker. In 1980 he came to Bristol with the intention of eventually returning to Cork but has stayed in the city ever since:

So the opportunity came up to work in Bristol, where they were developing a service to support blind and partially sighted people. And they basically wanted somebody to set up the service and sort of get it off the ground. So I applied for that job and I got it and I then kind of moved to Bristol and I've been in Bristol ever since for you know, 30 years or more. So the idea of just using it as a little hop before I went over to Ireland kind of faded away. I married in Bristol and had a family and that really put the kibosh on any chance of going back to Ireland.

[Dave, b.1954, Cork].

Dave initially lived in Brislington, an experience which he found quite different from the one he had been expecting due to somewhat outdated references to 'Brislington village'. He also found that the vastly inferior public transport took some getting used to after leaving London:

I thought oh this'll be a nice little village community, I thought I could kind of see myself fitting into it quite easily but then sort of realised that there was a bit more to it than that and quite a busy road going through it which is a hell of a thing to get across and you know catch buses and all that from there. So that didn't... that wasn't a good start.

[Dave, b.1954, Cork].

Within a year, Dave relocated to Fishponds, where there were more Irish people to 'mix' with and he found this to be a far more close-knit and enjoyable place to live:

I enjoyed living there, and kind of settled there and I got married while I was there and we set up home there and you know had a nice neighbourhood that we lived in. Nice people and we got on well there really.

[Dave, b.1954, Cork].

Seán stayed in the Clifton area for the vast majority of his 60 years in Bristol after living there with his brother's family and then meeting his wife, whose family also lived in the area. After moving into a nearby flat, they were soon able to buy the entire house:

my brother's wife's sister ran a cafe in Hotwells and she used to take in lodgers and one of her lodgers was leaving, so I jumped in his bed [laughs]. And I stayed in the cafe for a while, we got married from the cafe, yeah. Next day, we stayed in Mum's [mother in law's] house, we had the front room sort of thing, you know. That was handy for work, the cafe was across the road from where I worked[...] Then we got a... a friend of my wife's in the fish and chip shop down the road, she said her next door neighbour was looking for a tenant in a flat in Clifton Wood, which was handy, for work and that. So we went to see it and we took the flat straight away. And we was there, we weren't there long, when the landlady decided to sell it, sell the house and we were very fortunate[...] mortgages weren't easy to come by in them days[...]

That set us back a lot. And we, somebody sent us down the council house, that was your best bet of getting a mortgage.  
[Seán, b.1937, Cork].

Seán and his wife came to buy the house after they had been tenants there with several other parties. The owners offered it to them first after Seán's wife had helped with cleaning the communal areas and Seán had decorated much of the interior. In spite of this good fortune, it was still difficult for them to carry out necessary improvements to the house. Seán recalled that much-needed new windows for the house would cost £100, which was 'unthinkable' given that his wages were £7 a week at that time. Ultimately, he asked his employer for a loan and paid back £2 a week:

So that was for 12 months, but we managed it, so we had a house to live in you know, it needed a lot of work but... We couldn't employ a decorator, we couldn't employ a builder, Jan was good at painting, anything that needed painting she painted. And then we had another child. So there were two children, two years, and that was busy, and eventually we had another child, three.  
[Seán, b.1937, Cork].

Paul came to Bristol from Cambridge in 1975 and initially lived in 'a couple of dingy flats' with his partner in Redland after visiting an agency in Clifton:

But that's what people did then, when they came to Bristol you know, the only place you could live really was a flat in west Bristol and so for until the late 70s, the first four years I was in Bristol I had no understanding of Bristol at all really[...] It was bedsit land really. So that's where I lived, and I used to get the train to Newport every morning or drive, when I managed to buy a car, so that's where I started in Bristol[...] I was living in Cambridge and the two of us moved in, because of my then-partner I moved and we both had jobs, he had a job near Bristol and I had a job in Newport so we came over one day during a summer month, August I remember and went to the agency and we got a flat that day because we were both starting work in September and he was working and I was doing research so that's how we handled it. We went to an agency at the top of Whiteladies Road and got a flat. At that time you could do that you know.  
[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

In 1981, Paul bought a house in Southville and has been there ever since:

I liked the house very much and I liked the area[...] Well I mean, what I like about Southville was that it was a mixed community you know. I suppose we were, looking at it objectively, we were part of the first wave of gentrification I suppose, but that was all people in the public services, that was all teachers or council workers or people working in the NHS those people can't move here now, well they might if there were 3 or 4 of them together, rent somewhere, but they couldn't possibly afford...and what was so nice about living in Southville was that you were surrounded by Bristolians.  
[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

Margaret has predominantly lived in south Bristol, although she initially lived with her uncle in Avonmouth and then briefly in Bishopston, both of which are in north Bristol. Margaret enjoyed Bishopston and met lots of people through her involvement with St Bonaventure's



church. She was, however, less happy in Withywood where she and her family lived in a council house, although she recalled that the people in Withywood were ‘lovely’:

I was happy in Bishopston, people were lovely, I got to know the people around. There was St Bonaventure’s church and club and you got to know people through the church and through the club. I had some nice neighbours, which were always friendly and then when I moved to Withywood, which I hated, but they were lovely people, they were really really nice people. You know, very friendly and...yeah I couldn’t...I was happy there as well. I didn’t like living in Withywood but I liked the people there. I was glad when I left it.  
[Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary].

In 1981, following twelve years in Withywood, Margaret and her husband bought a house in Bedminster. She also noted that there were a lot more Irish people in Bedminster at that time:

People are friendly, lovely neighbours, you can’t ask for any more[...] Everybody minds their own business and that’s all you want really[...] Years ago you used to have a lot of the Irish down round there.  
[Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary].

Connor recalled that, upon his family’s move from Bournemouth to Bedminster when he was around four years old, his accent made him quite popular with the neighbours:

neighbours used to send their kids in to see how I spoke because I had a very posh accent having been brought up in a nursery in Bournemouth. Spoke the Queen’s English very well. That didn’t last long as you can see now [laughs]. They used to come in: ‘why bissn’t talk like ee?’  
[Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth].

Connor also noted that the fact that he was an only child was a surprise for his neighbours, given the stereotype that ‘the Irish were coming with a load of kids’. He also recalled that Maureen, his mother, wasn’t ‘very well accepted in the early days’ because of her Irishness. In spite of this, he believed that she had been very happy in Bedminster during her long residence there.<sup>124</sup> Indeed, Maureen concurred that it had been difficult for her initially:

will you believe that I was here 18 months before my neighbour spoke, before anyone spoke to me[...] because of my accent. They thought I was going to have maybe fourteen kids and they were going to be crawling around in the gardens or something but I, I’ll never forget that, 18 months and no-one spoke to me, you know? I found it all around, just me neighbours around here. Nobody spoke to me, you know. Which was, which I thought was very funny and I think well they must have thought I’d come out of a caravan or something, or that I was a gypsy or something!  
[Maureen, b.1928, Longford].

One of the *Here, Across the Water* participants had a similar experience with one of her neighbours in Keynsham, a small town directly west of Stockwood:

she was a lovely gentle lady but she hadn’t a clue what... she had heard about Irish people she actually hadn’t mixed with them and of course she was quite surprised that the house was nice and clean, and expressed her amazement at this, and of

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth.

course we were Catholic as well and they were, they just hadn't mixed and met Irish people, you know.<sup>125</sup>

Maureen also recalled that, after her father became ill and moved into their house in Bristol, her next-door neighbour took issue with him trying to start a conversation over the garden wall:

And then I brought my father over here then, he had a bad leg[...] he'd lay across you know, to talk to people like and I said, 'well there's nobody talking around here' you know. And he laid across there and he looked in at my neighbour and she knocked the door and she said 'will you tell your dad to stop looking in to my garden'. So I said 'what?' and that was the first time she spoke to me[...] So that's what it was like then! So I dunno who they thought I was[...] I couldn't believe it. You know, I said 'well he's not in your garden, he's just'... cause he had a bad leg, I said 'he's just resting'. You know, but anyway I told him and he said to me 'what's wrong with the people over here?'

[Maureen, b.1928, Longford].

However, eventually Maureen was accepted and this was illustrated by the response of her neighbours when her husband died:

and then afterwards um... everybody was really nice to me[...] they were all coming in with tomatoes and they were all so nice to me, you know what I mean? And you don't forget how you've been treated when you come here first, you know what I mean?

[Maureen, b.1928, Longford].

Vivian was born in the St Philip and Jacob area of Bristol in his Bristolian grandparents' house. He described how 'housing estates were being built all across South Bristol' and when he was four years old, he and his parents moved into a council house in Withywood which he described as an ideal place to grow up:

But mostly all I can remember is it being a happy time. We were right on the edge of the countryside, you could walk three or four minutes and you were in open fields, so we had a lot of freedom. We'd go out for the day, we'd be out all day long, six, seven, eight years old.

[Vivian, b.1954, Bristol].

Vivian also recalled that there were a significant number of Irish families in Withywood and the other new housing estates such as Hartcliffe:

Like I said we had a new school, St Pius the Tenth which was all Catholic, so they were all local children, they would all be from Withywood effectively, or Highridge, and a few kids from Hartcliffe. So we had about, looking back on it, probably had about four or five hundred kids in St Pius, something like that, and they were all Catholic. It was a mixture, mostly Irish, obviously smatterings of Italians and Poles, but lots and lots of Irish, there'd be lots of Irish names there

[Vivian, b.1954, Bristol].

He also recalled that 'everyone mixed happily' in his area:

all my friends in the street were not Catholics, there was about six other families in my road with boys of my age, they were all Church of England, they all went to Gay

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<sup>125</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. *Here, Across the Water*, White and Frear.

Elms. But there was never any discussion about the fact that I went to a Catholic school and they went to a Church of England school or what that meant or whether that was different. No-one seemed to take any notice of it whatsoever. It was just something that was, it didn't matter.

[Vivian, b.1954, Bristol].

After leaving his friend's father's house in Shirehampton, Jim obtained more central digs with an English landlady and three other Irish lodgers in Kingsdown in the Cabot ward. From there, he moved to Bedminster to live with the friend who had originally induced him to move to Bristol. At that time he met his future wife, and moved in with her family in nearby Southville. From there, he and his family obtained a council flat in Hartcliffe and eventually a council house in Withywood.<sup>126</sup> John and May have lived in Whitchurch since 1973 when John was offered a transfer from his Royal Mail job in Derry. When he arrived, he was faced with the task of buying a house so that May and their children could join him:

the only way I could secure a house for the wife and the family so I could bring them over was to go to a builder and buy a new one. Well they were building all these new houses around here in this part of Whitchurch and I put a deposit in on one, it was an ordinary terraced house, three bedroom[...] I paid twice as much for the terraced house here as what I actually sold my house for in Derry. So it was difficult to get onto the property ladder but we managed it.

[John, b.1940, Donegal].

They have since moved twice within Whitchurch and enjoy its nearby amenities, as well as the friendliness of their neighbours. Jack first lived in digs with English landladies in St Paul's and then shared a room with 'two or three' Irish friends in Brislington who had told him that there was a bed free at their accommodation. From there, Jack married his wife and they moved into her parents' house in Hartcliffe. They then moved into a council house in Barton Hill near the city centre for a short period before moving to Withywood, which the whole family enjoyed:

We knew everybody in the road. It was only one road but when these big street parties come on, we closed the road off[...] Everybody knew everybody else's business[...] they built a big adventure playground up the back, the kids used to go up there, they loved every minute of it. It was at the back of our garden.

[Jack, b.1941, Wexford].

Mary moved from London to Kingswood in South Gloucestershire with her husband and child. It was considerably closer to her husband's place of work in South Wales and his mother's house in Somerset, but in spite of this, Mary did not want to leave London and has not 'bonded' with Kingswood. This was partly due to the fact that, as we have seen, many of her friends have not been from the local area:

It's an area where people are quite insular I think, a lot of people are, to generalise. I mean there's nice people there. After a few years of being there, a few of us mothers

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<sup>126</sup> Interview with Jim, b.1928, Cork.

at the school suddenly realised that all of us who had sort of made friends were not from Kingswood originally. And the thing that I found is that people said to us when we left London ‘oh they’re so friendly in Bristol, it’ll be lovely’ but I’d lived in an area where a lot of women wanted to make friends, so when you have a child you make friends really quickly. But when I moved to Kingswood, the neighbours had their children, but they had their mother-in-law, they had a huge set of family already so they didn’t need to get to know more people. So I think that’s when we realised that the people who didn’t have that set up sort of gravitated toward one another in the school playground or whatever.  
[Mary, b.1952, Cork].

Mary also found that her left-wing views were at odds with the views of many of her fellow Kingswood residents, and she was particularly shocked by some of the locals’ views on immigrants:

it’s difficult to say this but I think, for instance we have a Conservative MP who is very right wing and he got in on being a local, very much for local people. And I still hear people saying things like ‘it’s those immigrants doing the stealing’ and there weren’t any immigrants, well not any dark-skinned ones. It’s...I mean my children went to a Steiner school which then was in Bristol because I’d sent them to the local primary and realised that I had to try something else. And when they then went back to the local comprehensive at age fourteen, they were, each of them in turn, absolutely appalled at how much open racism there was. Non-stop using words like ‘Pakis’ and you know as my daughter said ‘what does that mean?’[...] So it sort of seems to me in a way, it’s not...there are much worse places to live, but I would you know, rather live somewhere where people were a bit more mixed you know.  
[Mary, b.1952, Cork].

This resulted in her keeping her ‘head down’ and not overtly displaying her Irishness by teaching her children Irish, for example.<sup>127</sup> Finally, Diane and Liam moved to Hallen from London in 1971. This came about when they were searching for a commercial and residential property and were alerted to the availability of a suitable property in Hallen. On the same day they got the train to Bristol and were instantly taken with the property and the village to the extent that they arrived in Hallen with all their belongings before the sale had gone through:

It was like Ireland, when we bought it, it was just a village and somebody was coming along on a horse and they said hello and you thought ‘right’.  
[Diane, b.1948, London].

We didn’t look into what business was like or anything like that, we thought ‘yeah, that’s the place’, took our chances on that and so that’s the complete chance. We had to jump through various hoops and the follow up story to that is when we actually moved down here in the removal van, we hadn’t completed the sale of it[...] I changed into my suit in the back of the removal van and went to see the solicitor in Bristol when we got here, so he could have said, ‘sorry you’ve been gazumped’ or something like that. But you’re young you’ll take chances like that, I wouldn’t do it now that’s for sure! So that’s how we ended up here and we’ve stayed ever since.  
[Liam, b.1945, Limerick].

From the outset, Diane and Liam had become heavily involved in social life in Hallen, through involvement with the local schools and youth clubs as well as the village football team. The extent of their contentment in Hallen was effectively summarised by Liam:

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<sup>127</sup> Interview with Mary, b.1952, Cork.

We're still here although the shop is closed down now, we still live here and we're part of the scenery here now. In that time, in our time here which is by some way the happiest times of my life really, our two children were born here and I served on the parish council. Still have an interest in everything local and here I stay till they remove me in a suit of a wooden material.  
[Liam, b.1945, Limerick].

## 1.5 – Conclusion

In terms of the motivation for migration from Ireland to Bristol, we have seen that the majority of participants were economically motivated. Several were also enticed to emigrate to pursue greater economic and social opportunities in Britain, or to avail of the more tolerant society, such as Paul. Some, such as Liam who came to Britain after enlisting in the Royal Air Force, simply desired ‘adventure’. Equally significant was the predominance of the “friends and relatives” effect in Irish migration. Of the 17 Irish-born individuals interviewed for this thesis, five followed family members or friends to Bristol. A further four came directly to Bristol such as Caitriona who came with her family, whilst the remaining eight had already moved to Britain before arriving in Bristol. In spite of this, that nearly 30 per cent of the participants for this study were enticed to Bristol by chain migration illustrates the enduring effect of the phenomenon, as well as its importance.

We have seen that the Irish-born population of Bristol generally conformed to wider patterns as the Irish-born population of Great Britain as a whole. One notable exception to this was the higher proportion of Irish-born males than females residing in the city from 1951 onwards which is the opposite of the trend identified throughout the literature. To my knowledge, this aberration has not been noted elsewhere in the historiography of the Irish in twentieth century Britain. We have also seen that the majority of Bristol’s twentieth century Irish-born population have been from the Republic of Ireland. However, in recent years the Northern Irish-born population has experienced a modest increase whilst the Republic-born group has continued to decrease. In addition to this, the rate of decrease from 2001 to 2011 slowed markedly to around a fifth of the previous Irish-born population loss for Bristol from 1991 to 2001. The resurgence of the Northern Irish-born grouping, as well as the moderate Irish-born population loss of the twenty-first century could represent an opportunity for further research. It is also hoped that the - albeit imperfect - ‘White Irish’ category added to the census question on ethnicity in 2001 will provide further material for future studies to continue to illuminate the ‘unlighted cavern’ of the Irish in Britain.

In terms of residential patterns, it is clear that the Bristol Irish were well-distributed throughout Bristol in a continuation of the trend identified by Large in his work on the 1851

census. Half of the 28 council wards between 1971 and 1981 had greater proportions of Irish-born residents than the city's total Irish-born proportion. Of the four areas – Central, East, North and South – identified in this thesis, all but the Eastern group had significant Irish-born populations, although the Central and North areas had considerably higher Irish-born proportions than the other two areas. The amount of southern residents identified in this study can be partially attributed to my family and friend contacts – used to identify potential participants – mostly living in the south of the city. This thesis also identified a significant outward movement from the Central area, which was mostly a result of large post-war housing estates being built in south Bristol, as well as participants moving from rented accommodation into permanent residences.

The most striking conclusion to be drawn from this chapter is that the comments from participants on their experiences of emigration and life in Bristol were overwhelmingly positive. Most enjoyed living in their respective areas, particularly Jack in Bishopsworth, Diane and Liam in Hallen and Emily in St George West. Margaret also expressed a strong affection for Bedminster and in spite of her dislike of her previous neighbourhood in Bishopsworth, she stressed that her neighbours had been 'lovely'. There was no particularly unfriendly or hostile area identified in the 15 council wards which were represented, although there were some negative experiences. For example, whilst Maureen had enjoyed living in Bedminster, she and her son Connor recalled that it had been difficult to adjust to an area where she was not 'very well accepted in the early days'. She found that her neighbours were not talkative and were generally wary of her and her husband's Irishness. This attitude seemed to change after the death of her husband but she could not forget the way she had been treated initially. In addition to this, Mary considered that she had 'never really bonded with Kingswood' and found that many Bristolians were somewhat insular and didn't necessarily feel the need to make new friends, sticking instead to existing family and friendship networks. This view was echoed by Joseph, who had viewed Bristol as more of 'a set of little villages; than as a city in the 1970s. He recalled that many of his Bristolian friends and acquaintances would 'by and large[...] live where their parents lived.' Liam and Diane had also noticed this trend, and observed that, whilst they got on very well with them, Bristolians tended to be 'self-sufficient in their own ways', with the result that many of Liam and Diane's friends were either from the Irish community or were people who had moved to Bristol from elsewhere. The only openly anti-immigrant attitudes and racism was experienced by Mary in Kingswood, although this was primarily directed against Poles and Pakistanis rather than Irish people. Mary found that these attitudes resulted in her 'keeping her head

down' and dissuaded her from displaying her Irishness more overtly, such as by teaching her children Irish:

Now I'm older I wish I'd taught my children some Irish but I realised recently why I couldn't have done that, I sang them Irish songs and they know a few Irish words but I suddenly had this vision of what it'd be like if I was walking around Kingswood with my children speaking Irish. I mean you hear what happens to people speaking Polish.  
[Mary, b.1952, Cork].

In spite of these examples, it is clear that Bristol was generally seen as a pleasant and tolerant place to live by the participants for this study. It is hoped that these findings have posed new questions which will, in turn, lead to further study of the lived experience of Irish people in Bristol and elsewhere.

## 2. 'Factory and building-site fodder'<sup>128</sup>?

*I don't know what I'd do without the bustle of a site now and then. I need it to sustain me, to comfort me. Whatever else there may be on a building site there is no loneliness. There's camaraderie and there's pride and there's life but, best of all, there are the sounds.*<sup>129</sup>

This chapter will consider the role of Irish people in Bristol's labour market with a particular focus on the building industry and nursing. These are two occupational groups in which Irish people in Britain were significantly over-represented in the twentieth century, and therefore both represent appropriate categories on which to focus. The predominance of Irish building workers and nurses is also reflected in the hitherto overlooked local records utilised here. To my knowledge a statistical-based analysis of a hospital's nursing student staff records such as the one found in this thesis has not been attempted elsewhere in the study of the Irish in Britain. We have seen that the main determinant in Irish migration is economic. Jackson has expanded on this, and effectively argued that the Irish are particularly responsive to economic conditions at home and abroad. He has also noted that, up to 1963, the incoming Irish labour force 'corresponded closely to the needs of the British economy'.<sup>130</sup>

This was particularly evident during the Second World War, which has been widely recognised as an important turning-point. The war not only intensified demand for Irish labour in areas in which it was well-established, but also opened new occupational pathways.<sup>131</sup> Indeed, Ultan Cowley has argued that 'The war changed everything',<sup>132</sup> and Jackson has effectively summarised its impact in allowing Irish workers to enter 'Industrial occupations, transport, catering and the like' where they had previously been 'almost bound to go into 'the building', general labouring or domestic service'. The net result of this, as Jackson put it, 'paved the way for direct Irish infiltration into almost every branch of industry in the period since the end of the war.'<sup>133</sup> Consultation of National Archive records for the Ministry of Labour [MOL] and the Ministry of Aviation [MOA] yielded the conclusion that Irish workers were in demand in Bristol during the Second World War. In addition to this, it

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<sup>128</sup> O'Connor, *The Irish*, p.70.

<sup>129</sup> Keane, *Contractors*, p.84.

<sup>130</sup> Jackson, *The Irish*, p.109.

<sup>131</sup> Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, pp.194,201; Connolly, "Emigration from Ireland to Britain during the Second World War", p.61; Connolly, "Irish workers in Britain during World War Two", p.121; Ultan Cowley, *McAlpine's Men, Irish Stories from the Sites*. (Wexford: Potter's Yard Press, 2010), pp.18-19, 139; Daly, *The Slow Failure*, p.144; Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, pp. 138-9, 151; Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, p.177; Lennon et al, *Across The Water*, pp.24-5; MacLaughlin, *The Emigrant Nursery*, p.28; O'Connor, *The Irish*, pp.86-8; Ryan, "Irish Emigration", p.61; Wills, *Neutral Island*, pp.313-4.

<sup>132</sup> Ultan Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain: A History of Irish Labour in British Construction*. (Potter's Yard Press, 2011), pp.112-3.

<sup>133</sup> Jackson, *The Irish*, pp.104.



was found that there were often severe logistical issues which blighted their timely arrival at their final destination in Britain.

The focus will then shift to post-war reconstruction and building work. We have seen that the population drain from Ireland in the post-war period, particularly in the 1950s, has been well documented. The corresponding increase in Bristol's Irish-born population between 1951 and 1961 indicates that there was a significant demand for Irish labour in Bristol. This demand is also indicated by the preoccupation of BCC's Housing Committee [HOC] with the difficulties of facilitating an Irish influx into a city suffering from a chronic post-war housing shortage. The predominance of building labourers is further evidenced by enduring stereotypes of the Irish in Britain. Mary Hickman has referenced former Labour Government Minister Roy Hattersley's description of the 'violent, unskilled Irishman, with a pick-axe in one hand, a bottle of stout in the other and the name of a building contractor stencilled on his back' as the 'most commonly held stereotype of the Irish'.<sup>134</sup> In short, the Irish were often seen as 'factory and building-site fodder'.

These stereotypes - as well as a sizeable portion of the twentieth-century literature on the Irish in Britain - have overlooked women entirely. Ann Rossiter has compellingly argued that emigration was seen as 'a 'man thing', dominated by the powerful image of the Irish navy's Herculean prowess on Britain's highways and byways.'<sup>135</sup> However, one occupational category on which more recent work on the Irish in Britain has concentrated is the predominantly female area of nursing. Therefore, this chapter also focuses on Irish nurses in Bristol. Nurses have been recognised as one of the few Irish groups to succeed in cultivating a positive stereotype in Britain. The staffing records of Glenside Hospital provide a fascinating window into the world of the twentieth-century Irish student nurse in Bristol. These data show that Irish women comprised a significant proportion of all student nurses in the hospital between 1920 and 1957. The Glenside data contain various strands of information which allow for a substantial analysis. These include next-of-kin addresses, religious affiliation, length of employment at Glenside and comments on the aptitude of an individual for nursing. This statistical-based case study breaks new ground in the study of Irish nurses – and indeed women – in local studies of the Irish in Britain.

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<sup>134</sup> Hickman, *Religion, Class and Identity*, p.215; O'Connor, *The Irish*, p.160.

<sup>135</sup> Rossiter, *Ireland's Hidden Diaspora*, p.55.

## 2.1 - “Only a short sea crossing”<sup>136</sup> World War Two workers

As we have seen, the Irish-born population of Britain increased exponentially between 1931 and 1951. This was partly a result of the massive demand for Irish labour during and after the Second World War. Margaret Gowing has argued that ‘manpower became the chief limiting factor on Britain’s war effort’<sup>137</sup> and the need for Irish labour has been well documented in the literature.<sup>138</sup> This was also indicated in the official account of wartime immigration from Ireland, where one 1942 commentator praised the work of the Ministry of Supply [MOS] in ‘facilitating the movement of labour from Eire to undertakings in this country’, particularly since ‘inducing employers to take Irish workers[...] has not always been easy.’<sup>139</sup> Mary Daly, John Hickey and Kaja Ziesler have argued that labour shortages ‘began to break down old barriers’ forcing many to ‘overcome their reluctance to hire Irish workers.’<sup>140</sup>

Consequently, as Jackson has identified, the range of occupations open to the Irish in Britain was greatly increased.<sup>141</sup> In her account of the wartime munitions industry, Peggy Inman stressed the importance of Irish labour, given the problems in recruiting sufficient numbers of skilled and unskilled workers.<sup>142</sup> Parker, the official historian of British war-time manpower, argued that Irish labour was particularly beneficial as it filled ‘vacancies which could not for the most part be filled by British labour’, particularly in the unskilled sector.<sup>143</sup> In addition, Postan’s history of British war production reveals that Irish immigrants helped to

<sup>136</sup> H.M.D. Parker, *Manpower, A Study of War-time Policy and Administration*. (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1957), p.334.

<sup>137</sup> Margaret Gowing, “The Organisation of Manpower in Britain during the Second World War”, *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 7, No. 1/2, (Jan-April, 1972).147-167, p.148.

<sup>138</sup> Angus Calder, *The People’s War, Britain 1939-45*. (London: The Literary Guild, 1969), pp.267, 322; Connolly, “Emigration from Ireland to Britain during the Second World War”, pp.52, 54; Connolly, “Irish workers in Britain during World War Two”, p.123; Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, pp.112-3, 119; Daly, *The Slow Failure*, p.144; Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, pp.112-3, 138; Ferriter, *Transformation*, p.383; Brian Girvin, *The Emergency, Neutral Ireland 1939-45*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2006), pp.178-9; P. Inman, *Labour In The Munitions Industries*. (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1957), pp.139,168; Lennon et al, *Across The Water*, p.24; Maclaughlin, *The Emigrant Nursery*, pp.24-5; Nicholas Mansergh, *Survey of British Commonwealth Affairs. Problems of Wartime Co-operation and Post-War Change 1939-1952*. (London: Frank Cass Co. LTD., 1968), p.301; James F. Meenan, “The Irish Economy during the War” in Kevin B. Nowlan and T. Desmond Williams (eds.), *Ireland in the War Years and After*, 28-38. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1969), p.32; Moran, *Irish Birmingham*, pp.162-3; Eunan O’Halpin, *MI5 and Ireland 1939-1945, The Official History*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2003), pp.32-3; Philip Ollerenshaw, *Northern Ireland in the Second World War. Politics, Economic Mobilisation and Society, 1939-45*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), pp.120-1; Parker, *Manpower*, pp.182-3; M. M. Postan, *British War Production*. (London: Her Majesty’s Stationary Office, 1952), pp.154, 221; Wills, *That Neutral Island*, pp.313-4; Ziesler, *The Irish in Birmingham*, p.167.

<sup>139</sup> TNA LAB 76/25 A. V. Judges, *Irish Labour in Great Britain, 1939-45* (1946), p.30.

<sup>140</sup> Daly, *The Slow Failure*, p.144; John Hickey, *Urban Catholics, Urban Catholicism in England and Wales from 1829 to the present day* (London: Geoffrey Chapman, 1967) p.124; Ziesler, *The Irish in Birmingham*, p.167.

<sup>141</sup> Jackson, *The Irish*, p.104.

<sup>142</sup> Inman, *Labour In The Munitions Industries*, pp.1, 156, 174.

<sup>143</sup> Parker, *Manpower*, p.335.

alleviate skilled and unskilled shortages in drop-forging.<sup>144</sup> There was a particular reluctance to employ Irishmen in shipbuilding. Fifth column concerns led to security fears over their employment on the South coast and an outright refusal to employ them in the north-east.<sup>145</sup> These fears represented an extension of Churchill's bitterness over Irish neutrality which, as we will see in Chapter Three, coloured his attitude towards Ireland throughout the war. In spite of his misgivings, he conceded, under pressure from the Minister for Labour Ernest Bevin, that Irish labour was necessary.<sup>146</sup> Indeed, MOL notes which described Irish workers as 'an important element in the war machine' leave the reader in no doubt as to their importance.<sup>147</sup>

## 2.2 Wartime Irish labour in Bristol

Records of wartime Irish labour in Bristol are somewhat sparse. However, given that Bristol's Irish-born population almost doubled between 1931 and 1951, it is clear that many came to Bristol during and after the war.<sup>148</sup> The significance of wartime migration is illustrated in Table 2.1, which shows that Ireland experienced a net population loss to Britain and Northern Ireland between 1941 and 1943 as well as in 1945.

Table 2.1. Direct passenger movement by sea from Ireland to Great Britain and Northern Ireland 1939-1945.

| Year | Outward | Inward  | Net outward/inward movement |
|------|---------|---------|-----------------------------|
| 1939 | 429,783 | 445,717 | + 15,934                    |
| 1940 | 90,831  | 102,328 | +11,497                     |
| 1941 | 120,287 | 102,681 | - 17,606                    |
| 1942 | 158,157 | 134,191 | - 23,966                    |
| 1943 | 198,083 | 173,907 | - 24,131                    |
| 1944 | 129,221 | 131,428 | +2,207                      |
| 1945 | 263,698 | 257,290 | - 6,408                     |

Source: TNA LAB 76/25 A. V. Judges, *Irish Labour in Great Britain*, Table 1, p.8.

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<sup>144</sup> Postan, *British War Production*, p.154.

<sup>145</sup> Inman, *Munitions*, p.139.

<sup>146</sup> Girvin, *The Emergency*, pp.178-9.

<sup>147</sup> TNA LAB 26/9 - Arrangements for the reception and accommodation of workers travelling to this country from Eire F.W.1027/4 DLB Spencer to Mr Wellwood (no date)

<sup>148</sup> Census of Population, England and Wales, 1931 and 1951.

Whilst it has been established that there was a significant inflow from Ireland to Britain and Northern Ireland, the number of Irish-born recruits to the British armed forces remains a matter of some debate. In his excellent article on Irish involvement in the British armed forces during the Second World War, Steven O'Connor has praised the 'rigorous statistical research' behind Yvonne McEwen's arrival at a figure of 50,644 army recruits, and most estimates fall between 50,000 and 60,000.<sup>149</sup> Although there are also no definitive figures regarding the numbers of Irish nationals living and working in Britain during the war, their importance is widely cited throughout the literature. O'Halpin has noted that there were 99,084 Irish travel permit holders in England, Scotland and Wales by July 1944 and has estimated that the total number of Irish-born workers in Britain and Northern Ireland 'cannot have been less than 120,000.'<sup>150</sup> Delaney has established that 228,041 new travel permits were issued to Irish citizens between 1940 and 1946.<sup>151</sup>

These figures indicate that there was demand for Irish labour in Bristol. Indeed, there were several previously unutilised wartime records from The National Archives which have illuminated the situation with regard to Bristol's labour force during the Second World War. MOA records confirm that there had been inquiries concerning the availability of Irishmen 'of suitable physique' for work in the furnaces at Avonmouth in North Bristol.<sup>152</sup> Although the MOL blocked this request, their reply did confirm the presence of Irish workers at Avonmouth:

Whilst we know that Irishmen are being used in the Fertiliser unit, we do not consider that this type of labour would be suitable for the heavy work in the furnaces, and further the wages offered are not sufficiently attractive.<sup>153</sup>

In August 1942, William Butler & Co., a tar and rosin works in East Bristol, requested six Irishmen but, in February of the following year, claimed that none had arrived. In March 1944 the company contacted MOA again, and complained that they had received no more men since the previous June.<sup>154</sup> The MOA records also contained numerous references to Magnal Products, an engineering firm based in South Gloucestershire, just outside Bristol. In September 1943, E. J. B. Tagg of the MOS wrote several letters to F. Kenny, the Dublin-

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<sup>149</sup> Steven O'Connor, "Irish identity and integration within the British armed forces, 1939-45", *Irish Historical Studies*, Vol. 39, Issue 155, May 2015, 417-438, p.418.

<sup>150</sup> O'Halpin, *MIS and Ireland*, pp.32-3.

<sup>151</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.129. Delaney also noted that this figure represents the total number of permits which were issued. It does not record how many permits were actually used, or the fact that a single individual could hold more than one permit.

<sup>152</sup> TNA AVIA 22/1190 – Recruitment of Irish Labour for non-ferrous metal industry 1/1/42-31/12/44.

<sup>153</sup> TNA AVIA 22/1190, 16/11/42.

<sup>154</sup> TNA AVIA 22/1190, 16/3/44.

based UK Liaison Officer for Labour. In these he stated that an outstanding demand for 20 Irish workers from the previous month had not been met:

I am continually being asked by Messrs. Magnal Products, Bristol, when they are going to receive any Eire males. They have an outstanding demand of 20 which were ordered on the 13<sup>th</sup> August, 1943. It is about time that some flow of labour was started to meet this demand. Up to the present they have received no-one.<sup>155</sup>

This firm is in urgent need of the 20 men they ordered on August 13<sup>th</sup>, while we have explained to them that[...] 5-6 weeks must elapse before the labour arrives this excuse is now wearing very thin and the firm want to know when they can expect to receive[...] will you therefore let me know by return when you will be putting these 20 men in for visa (if you have not already done so) and get a firm sailing date for them.<sup>156</sup>

In June 1943, the Bristol Aeroplane Company, based at sites in Filton on the South Gloucestershire-North Bristol border, and Corsham in Wiltshire, sought approval from the Admiralty to employ Irish workers at their factories:

This firm has made an application to employ Eire labour at their factories at (i) Corsham, Wilts, and (ii) No. 2 Engine Factory, Filton, Bristol, and our Security Officer has agreed in this instance to lift the embargo which has hitherto existed on the employment of Eire labour at these factories. He reminds me, however, that both your Department and the Ministry of Supply have interests here.

Would you therefore be good enough to let me know whether or not you would be agreeable to Eire labour being employed at these works on condition that the firm give an undertaking that the labour not be employed on Secret Work and that steps would be taken to prevent any leakage of information about Secret Work upon which the firm may be engaged.<sup>157</sup>

The Admiralty replied that ‘providing the firm are not engaged on Most Secret work on behalf of the Admiralty, there is no objection to the employment of Irish Labour in this factory.’<sup>158</sup> This exchange shows that there was a sufficient requirement for Irish labour to necessitate their introduction to Bristol’s aeronautical engineering sector. In addition to this, the opposition towards Irish workers taking up these positions is indicated by the ‘embargo’ placed on their employment. Once again, the removal of this employment bar demonstrated the need for additional manpower in the city.

### **2.3 – ‘The worst train journey I’ve ever had’<sup>159</sup>: Transport and housing problems**

As alluded to in the previous section, the facilitation of movement between neutral Ireland and belligerent Britain was not altogether tranquil. One of the main issues was the time it took for individuals to reach their new place of work. Inman has acknowledged that it was

<sup>155</sup> TNA AVIA 15/1855 – Irish labour in British aircraft during war 1943, Tagg to Kenny 25/9/43.

<sup>156</sup> TNA AVIA 15/1855 – Irish labour in British aircraft during war 1943, Tagg to Kenny, 27/9/43.

<sup>157</sup> TNA AVIA 15/1855 Colin Wyborn to Director of Labour, Admiralty, 28/6/43.

<sup>158</sup> TNA AVIA 15/1855, 5/8/43.

<sup>159</sup> TNA LAB 26/9, 3/7/41.

common for three months to elapse between the first interview with a potential recruit in Ireland and their eventual departure for Britain.<sup>160</sup> In addition, the recruitment drive was often blighted by travel problems in Britain. Parker has noted that in spite of the MOL's practice of stationing representatives at Holyhead and Crewe, it was not uncommon for Irish newcomers to board the wrong train or disembark at the wrong station.<sup>161</sup> Although the establishment of reception hostels in London, Birmingham and Lancashire improved the situation, the process of integrating immigrants continued to be affected by such issues. These complications were illustrated in a 1942 exchange between a representative of the home timber industry in Gloucester and the MOS. The former had been instructed by the MOS to provide overnight accommodation for Irishmen in Gloucester, but 'On several occasions the men did not arrive at all and on no occasion did they all arrive together at the time stated.'<sup>162</sup> One such occasion was on 20 January 1942, when none of the seven men due that day arrived. On 10 February none of the expected four materialised. On 31 March, only 12 of an expected party of 27 arrived on the correct train at 10pm with the remainder filtering in until 9am the following morning.<sup>163</sup>

This letter also identifies one of the other major issues in the wartime migration of Irish labourers, that of their accommodation upon arrival. On 22 October 1942, 34 men were due to arrive in Gloucester at 10pm, and arrangements had been made to house and feed 20 at a local hostel overnight. However, none of the men caught the correct train, and only two were early enough to make use of the arranged facilities whilst the remaining men arrived the following morning.<sup>164</sup> Another letter from T. H. Hill of the MOL's regional office in Bristol complained that 'there have been quite a number of occasions when Irishmen have been lost when travelling from Holyhead to their new job. In fact they have disappeared completely.'<sup>165</sup> The following month Hill commented that: 'Our experience shows that almost inevitably parties of Irishmen travelling unaccompanied continue to be reduced in number between the time of starting and the time of arrival to a surprising extent.'<sup>166</sup> These issues often resulted in individuals going hungry or being stranded overnight with nowhere to stay. One intercepted and subsequently censored letter home from a Bedford-based Irishman

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<sup>160</sup> Inman, *Munitions*, p.169.

<sup>161</sup> Parker, *Manpower*, p.338.

<sup>162</sup> TNA LAB 26/9 – "Irishman Transferred to Ministry of Supply."

<sup>163</sup> TNA LAB 26/9 – "Irishman Transferred to Ministry of Supply."

<sup>164</sup> TNA LAB 26/9 – "Irishman Transferred to Ministry of Supply."

<sup>165</sup> TNA LAB 26/9 – T. H. Hill to M. Geikie-Cobb, 22/10/42.

<sup>166</sup> TNA LAB 26/9 – T. H. Hill to Spencer, 16/11/42.

in 1941 described the journey from Holyhead as ‘the worst train journey I’ve ever had’ and added that ‘I was hungry as hell, we could not get anything to eat’<sup>167</sup>

Parker has described the housing of Irish workers as one of the main obstacles facing employers. To combat this, the MOL allocated them ‘as far as possible’ to ‘employers who could provide them with hostels where they could develop their own community life with a priest to attend to their spiritual needs.’<sup>168</sup> Cowley has also praised the MOL for attempting to provide such environments, and has argued that they ‘helped alleviate some of the stress involved’, and ‘enabled the Irish to retain a sense of community and cultural cohesion’.<sup>169</sup> The MOL’s Bristol office clearly had these problems in mind when presenting the following recommendations in August 1941:

Essential that Recruiting Officer in Eire should give men fullest information concerning their destination and should notify Reception Officer by telephone of numbers and destinations. Desirable that men should only be sent where cheap accommodation is available and not at any rate at first, be billeted on private householders.<sup>170</sup>

As the war progressed, hostels for migrants and transferred labourers were established to avoid any unnecessary exacerbation of already severe housing shortages.<sup>171</sup> Some of these hostels were retained in the post-war years and, as we will see, some were established after the war. Although they were not exclusively used to absorb Irish immigrants, it is clear from Table 2.2, below, that they catered for a significant amount of the wartime labour force. Indeed, Delaney, in quoting the MOL’s regional officer for Manchester, has shown that the utilisation of hostels had been under consideration since at least August 1941:

There is no doubt that, if Southern Irishmen are to be imported in large numbers, it will be necessary for many of them to be housed in hostels. Whether or not they are justified in doing so, the majority of householders in England are strongly unwilling to have Irishmen in their houses as lodgers and it may be difficult to persuade local authorities to compel their citizens to accept Irishmen, even of the better type.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>167</sup> TNA LAB 26/9, 3/7/41.

<sup>168</sup> Parker, *Manpower*, p.338.

<sup>169</sup> Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.115.

<sup>170</sup> TNA LAB 26/9 - Resume of replies to Minute of 23<sup>rd</sup> August, 1941, regarding reception arrangements for men from Eire FW.1027/4.

<sup>171</sup> Connolly, *Emigration from Ireland to Britain during the Second World War*, pp.54-5; Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, pp.115-7; Daly, *Slow Failure*, p.269; Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.142; Holmes, *John Bull’s Island*, p.178; Inman, *Munitions*, pp.160, 172, 245-6; Ollerenshaw, *Northern Ireland*, pp.120-1; United Kingdom. Parliament. Report of the Ministry of Labour and National Service for the Years 1939-1946, (1947), pp.116-7:

<http://parlipapers.proquest.com/parlipapers/result/pqpdocumentview?accountid=14785&groupid=95336&pgId=a44205bc-7a87-456e-892a-0bd4b8519408&rsId=152E684B850> (accessed 25/2/16).

<sup>172</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.142.

Table 2.2 – National Service Hostels Corporation and Ministry of Supply Hostels and capacities, 1944-45.

| Type of Hostel                        | No. Of Hostels | Total Capacity | Date           |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| National Service Hostels Corporation: |                |                |                |
| Industrial Hostels                    | 64             | 33,668         | November, 1944 |
| Miners' Hostels                       | 49             | 17,230         | May, 1945      |
| Ministry of Supply:                   |                |                |                |
| Large Industrial Hostels              | 22             | 16,366         | April, 1945    |
| Small Industrial Hostels              | 42             | 2,019          | March, 1945    |

Source: United Kingdom. Parliament. Report of the Ministry of Labour and National Service for the Years 1939-1946, (1947), p.117. <http://parlipapers.chadwyck.co.uk/fulltext/fulltext.do?area=hcpp&id=1950-041328&source=config.cfg&pagenum=22&resultNum=1&entries=6&queryId=.%2Fsession%2F139059973328026&backto=RESULTS&fromSearchHistory=&searchWithin=&showall=&enlarge=&gotoFirstHit=&SEARCHSTRING=> (accessed 4 March 2014).

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This reluctance to take in Irish workers was partly attributed to negative stereotypes of Irish drunkenness and dirtiness. These images remained synonymous with male Irish building labourers in Britain, in spite of a wartime welfare officer's assertion that 'only a small proportion of the Irish were verminous, dirty, drunken and diseased'. Nonetheless, this number 'was sufficient to terrify the ordinary housewife.'<sup>173</sup> Conversely, Wills has quoted a 'British nursing recruitment officer' on a 1944 visit to Dublin who 'claimed that even among the 'better class' of applicant the rate of women found to be verminous was 85 per cent.'<sup>174</sup> These concerns led to the much-hated medical examination - described by Delaney as a 'demeaning procedure conducted with ruthless efficiency' - that emigrants to Britain were forced to undertake before leaving Ireland.<sup>175</sup> In spite of this measure, fears of Irish disease endured. Kenny noted that:

It must be remembered that there is a type of workman Irish and English who would seek accommodation in a common lodging house. It would be a mistake to send this man to a good clean home. I shall try not to send any bad cases over but I should hate to have to refuse applicants who are healthy and strong and anxious to work

<sup>173</sup> TNA LAB 76/25 A. V. Judges, *Irish Labour in Great Britain, 1939-45* (1946), p.43.

<sup>174</sup> Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, p.83.

<sup>175</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, pp.142-4; Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.48; Inman, *Munitions*, p.160; Parker, *Manpower*, p.338; Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, p.83.



because lice have been found on them. Would it not be possible if an applicant is found to be in the state to have his clothes fumigated and give him a clean start.<sup>176</sup>

These fears were certainly present in Bristol. At a meeting of BCC's Health Committee [HEC] on 15 December, 1942, the Chief Sanitary Inspector claimed that complaints had been received relating to the 'verminous condition of Irish labourers arriving in the city to work who were provided with lodgings in private dwelling houses.'<sup>177</sup> It was recommended that new Irish arrivals in Bristol be subject to a further medical inspection before taking up residence in private dwellings. However, it was eventually concluded that 'the Committee had no legal power to enforce medical examination.'<sup>178</sup> This was followed by a report from the Medical Officer of Health [MOH] on 5 January, 1943:

the Medical Officer of Health submitted a letter from the Senior Regional Office of the Ministry of Health stating he had referred the complaint relating to the verminous condition of Irish labourers arriving in the city to the Ministry of Labour and National Service and that he had been told that everything that was practicable was being done in the matter but in view of the seriousness of the complaint he had written to his Ministry at Whitehall, asking them to ensure that control at the ports should be properly exercised and to consider whether there were any means of controlling men transferred within the country.<sup>179</sup>

There was nothing further on this request, but there was one brief report on the 'verminous' condition of Irish labourers in Bristol later in the year. At the HEC's meeting of 4 May, the MOH reported that 'complaints had been received regarding the arrival in Bristol of eight Irish labourers, who were in a verminous condition'.<sup>180</sup> The physical status of Irish immigrants was also a concern elsewhere. Delaney has noted that Irish people in Birmingham were blamed for an outbreak of scabies in October 1942.<sup>181</sup> However, there is evidence to suggest that the Irish were not indiscriminately blamed for such epidemics. For example, during a typhus outbreak in November 1942, the MOL's regional office in Birmingham played down associations between disease and the Irish:

little evidence has come to our notice which would suggest that scabies is more than usually prevalent among importees from Eire[...] We have no direct evidence that Irish importees are more subject to scabies than other people of the same type, but we are inclined to the view that as the standard of hygiene of Irish importees, at least in recent months, has been rather low, it is a fair inference that the latter importees should prove to be more liable to contract the malady while living in this country.

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<sup>176</sup> TNA AVIA 15/1853 – no date.

<sup>177</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.26, 'Importation of Irish Labour', December 15, 1942, p.52

<sup>178</sup> Ibid, p.52

<sup>179</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.26, 'Importation of Irish Labour', January 5, 1943, p.74

<sup>180</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.26, 'Importation of Irish Labour', May 4, 1943, p.172

<sup>181</sup> Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.96.

This is, however, a very different thing from saying that the Irish importees are responsible for the spread of the complaint.<sup>182</sup>

This was supported by the city's MOH:

we have had no reason in Birmingham to associate the prevalence of scabies in any degree with the influx of workers from Ireland. Our records have not been concerned with nationality, so that I am not in a position to say whether or not in fact there has been any difference between Irish and other nationals coming to our clinics for treatment. There has, however, been no impression on our minds as to any such undue prevalence among the Irish.<sup>183</sup>

Delaney has convincingly argued that the Irish were 'objects of distrust and hostility' in wartime Britain. This was partly a result of Ireland's neutrality, as well as the view that 'Irish migrants were reaping the benefit of good wages when British men were compelled to serve in the armed forces.' He also highlighted a 1942 Mass Observation questionnaire in Birmingham, which indicated that the Irish were unpopular because of the perception that they 'did not mix' with other nationalities. However, Delaney contended that the 'overriding concern' was to meet the demand for labour, and that the 'few incidents of overt prejudice which have been unearthed by historians mostly emanate from the Midlands, an area which until the war was not a region of significant Irish settlement.'<sup>184</sup> This argument is supported by a passage from Penny Summerfield's book on female workers, in which she quoted a Birmingham manager who was reluctant to take Irish workers:

I see a girl there who looks intelligent enough to be trained. Supervisor goes over to her. Come [sic] back and says, 'She's an Irish girl – domestic servant.' I say hastily, 'No thank you!'

On another occasion, he reluctantly accepted an Irish woman. 'She's Irish (I groan) [...] However I daren't refuse her.'<sup>185</sup>

However, there were also firms that did their utmost to make the transition to life and work in Britain easier for Irish employees. Dorothy Sheridan has cited one example from Mass Observation files, that of a female welfare assistant at a Midlands factory who looked after two Irish women who had recently left the factory:

'I took them out to a meal that evening and gave my address at home in case they felt they'd like to come back after all' [...] She visited the Catholic hostel where the girls had spent a few nights, but the girls had left there, and tried every way to get in touch with them again. Finally the girls phoned her and asked to be taken back after all. 'We're very lucky with our Irish girls on the whole – they're exceptionally nice. We've only had one or two complaints from landlords about dirt and drunkenness.'<sup>186</sup>

<sup>182</sup> TNA LAB 26/9 – Incidence of scabies among workers imported from Eire, 17 November 1942.

<sup>183</sup> Ibid.

<sup>184</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.139.

<sup>185</sup> Penny Summerfield, *Women Workers in the Second World War, Production and Patriarchy in Conflict*. (London: Croom Helm, 1984), pp.59-60.

<sup>186</sup> Dorothy Sheridan (ed.), *Wartime Women, An Anthology of Women's Wartime Writing for Mass Observation 1937-45*. (London: Heinemann, 1990), pp.168-9.

Despite the apparent paucity of evidence of Irish people in wartime Bristol, this chapter has utilised previously overlooked evidence to establish that there were various requests for Irish workers from Bristol firms. In addition, BCC's HEC were apprehensive over potential health risks posed by the newcomers and the Bristol MOL office were concerned with their travel arrangements on the British side. With this in mind, as well as the 84 per cent increase in the city's Irish-born population from 1931 to 1951, there can be no doubt that there was a significant influx of Irish workers into Bristol during the war.

#### **2.4. 'We Import More Paddies Every Year'<sup>187</sup>: Building Labourers**

Towards the end of the war, the Irish government's fears ceased to centre on Allied or Axis invasion, but an influx of Irish nationals returning from the British armed forces, war industries and factories. Fortunately for the Dublin administration, the immediate post-war period was marked by extensive rebuilding and expansion in Britain, as well as a widespread labour deficit. These shortages were referenced by Ferdynand Zweig in 1952, when he noted that navvies were 'disappearing fast in this country, usually employed for his strength and his capacity for really exhausting work. There is a great shortage of navvies, and a lot of them are imported from Ireland or other countries abroad.'<sup>188</sup> Indeed, Joanna Bourke and Kevin Searle have estimated that the labour shortfall in Britain stood at 1.3 million by 1946.<sup>189</sup> We have seen that the majority of twentieth century Irish emigration was economically motivated, and that the post-war building boom made Britain a more attractive potential destination than ever before. Consequently, not only did the dreaded influx fail to materialise but the flood of migration across the Irish Sea intensified. The Irish-born population of Britain had increased by around 42 per cent between 1931 and 1951, and Bristol's Irish-born population increased at double this rate from 2,646 in 1931 to 4,872 in 1951. By 1961, following the 'decade of the vanishing Irish', the population had increased again to 6,143.<sup>190</sup> That economic reasons played a huge part in enticing Irish people to Bristol was illustrated by Trevor who recalled the opportunities that existed in the 1950s:

the Oldbury power station, Berkeley power station, and then you had the one in Bridgwater[...] And then you had the motorways, the M4 and the M5, and then I suppose you had the rebuilding of the city. And so there was employment here[...] I think it cuts both ways, they did very well[...] this country offered the facility to do

<sup>187</sup> Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.11.

<sup>188</sup> Ferdynand Zweig, *The British Worker*. (Harmsonsdsworth: Penguin Books, 1952), p.26.

<sup>189</sup> Joanna Bourke, *Working-Class Cultures in Britain 1890-1960. Gender, class and ethnicity*. (London: Routledge, 1994), pp.193-4; Kevin Searle, "'Mixing of the unmixables': the 1949 Causeway Green 'riots' in Birmingham" in *Race and Class*, Vol. 54, No.3, (2012), 44-64, p.45.

<sup>190</sup> Census of Population of England and Wales, 1931-1961.

well if you were prepared to do well yourself. So a lot of people did well because they tried hard, worked hard. So that's how I tend to see it.  
[Trevor, b.1928, Clare].

Irish migrants helped to alleviate one of the biggest issues facing post-war Britain; chronic housing shortages. This was a result of wartime bombings and the 'cessation of building' during the war.<sup>191</sup> Brendan, who came to Bristol in 1959, recalled how easy it was to find employment in the building industry:

work was no problem, you know. You could go out that morning and if you didn't like the job you could pack it in and get a start the same afternoon down the road, the work was so plentiful like, you know. It was a fantastic time for work, if you was prepared to work like, you know. No question about it.  
[Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon].

The impact made by Irish building labourers has been emphasised in the literature. In 1968, Kevin Boyle noted that the majority of London-based Irish-born males were employed in semi-skilled and unskilled areas. In 2010, Cowley estimated that 36 per cent - around 200,000 - of Irish-born males were working in construction by 1966, whilst Ryan, writing in 1990, estimated 38 per cent.<sup>192</sup> Delaney has cited a figure of around 150,000 Irishmen engaged in the construction of 'power stations, motorways, and airports as well as housing schemes, tunnels, and hydro-electric dams' in Britain by 1957.<sup>193</sup> Keogh has noted that yearly emigration from Ireland increased from 24,000 in 1945 to more than 30,000 in 1946 and 40,000 by 1948, with the majority bound for Britain. From 1951 to 1956, 176,000 crossed the Irish Sea, and 197,848 from 1956 and 1961.<sup>194</sup> With these figures in mind, as well as the exponential increase in Bristol's Irish-born population, it seems inevitable that a significant proportion of Irish males went into Bristol's building trade.

## 2.5 - "Their finest hour"<sup>195</sup>: Post-War Rebuilding

The predominance of the unskilled building worker or 'Irish navvy' stereotype in Britain has been well documented<sup>196</sup> and has been excellently summarised by Cowley who noted that the Irish concentration in the British building industry resulted in 'many British people' believing 'that all navvies were Irishmen' or indeed 'that all Irishmen were navvies'. In addition to

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<sup>191</sup> Hilda Jennings, *Societies In The Making, A Study of Development and Redevelopment Within a County Borough*. (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), p.121.

<sup>192</sup> Kevin Boyle, "The Irish Immigrant in Britain", *Northern Ireland Legal Quarterly*, 19, no.4, (1968), pp.431-2; Cowley, *McAlpine's Men*, p.24; Ryan, *Irish Emigration to Britain Since World War II*, p.57.

<sup>193</sup> Delaney, *The Irish in Post War Britain*, p.113.

<sup>194</sup> Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth-Century Ireland, Nation and State*. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd, 1994), pp.169, 222.

<sup>195</sup> Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.108.

<sup>196</sup> Boyle, "The Irish Immigrant in Britain", pp.440-1; Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, pp.11, 100; Cowley, *McAlpine's Men*, p.24; Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, pp.112-3; Ryan, "Irish Emigration", pp57-8.

postwar reconstruction, the Irish were also credited with ‘the civil infrastructure of the new Welfare State’ as well as ‘the canals, railways, docks, harbours, roads and utilities of the Industrial Revolution.’<sup>197</sup> Cowley has noted that several building companies became synonymous with Irish labour, to the extent that the name of the building firm Wimpey became an acronym for ‘We Import More Paddies Every Year’.<sup>198</sup> Cowley and Jackson have both argued that the English had ‘little desire to do the dirty work’ in the face of post-war full employment, having begun to move away from unskilled labour in the nineteenth century.<sup>199</sup> Keane also referred to this when he recalled his time working in steel production in Northampton:

No Englishman would consider working for long in the Hardening Shop. The heat inside the furnace was never less than 840 degrees and often, for special jobs, as high as 960 degrees. There were five nationalities employed in this part of the factory – Poles, Czechs, Taffies, Jocks and Paddies. There were no Limeys.<sup>200</sup>

Brendan was of the same opinion and recalled that: ‘There was a lot of jobs the English lads wouldn’t do, either it was below them or whatever’.<sup>201</sup> This gave the unskilled Irish a ‘clearly defined niche’, which they ‘seized with alacrity.’<sup>202</sup> One 1964 example of this ‘dirty work’ in the Bristol area has been described by Cowley:

As late as 1964, on the Chew Valley<sup>203</sup> Reservoir in the South-West of England, the heeling-in of puddle clay had to be resorted to when power ramming failed to deliver the required standard of workmanship. In a 1,553-foot-long cut-off trench five feet wide, forty-eight feet below ground level, labourers heeled in no less than 14,000 cubic yards of puddle clay.<sup>204</sup>

In spite of the willingness of Irish labourers to occupy these roles, Brendan recalled that working relationships between English and Irish builders were very positive:

I could never condemn an English contractor, or the majority of the lads I worked with, fantastic to me like, you know[...] there was never none of this[...] ‘Irish so and so’ or ‘what are you doing here?’[...] maybe you’d get the old banter ‘you Irish so and so’ and you’d go back ‘you English so and so’ but it never come to anything, usual building site material like[...] I loved working for the English contractors and in actual fact to be honest with you, they was probably more polite than what the Irish contractor was!  
[Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon].

This was also reflected in Donall MacAmhlaigh’s diary, in which he recalled an encounter at a site in Northampton with an Irishman who at first ignored his request for work before

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<sup>197</sup> Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.11.

<sup>198</sup> Ibid.

<sup>199</sup> Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.155; Jackson, *The Irish*, pp.97-8.

<sup>200</sup> Keane, *Self-portrait*, p.54.

<sup>201</sup> Interview with Brendan, b.1942.

<sup>202</sup> Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.155; Jackson, *The Irish*, pp.97-8.

<sup>203</sup> In North Somerset, twelve miles from Bristol city centre.

<sup>204</sup> Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.39.

turning his back and replying ‘We don’t want no wan yet a while.’ He then asked the same question to a West Country foreman, who gave him a ‘decent answer’:

Isn’t it strange that he could be so civil to me whereas a man from my own country wouldn’t even look at me while he was addressing me. It’s no wonder that Irish foremen have such a bad reputation here when the half of them haven’t the manners of a dog.<sup>205</sup>

We have seen that the wartime labour deficit created more opportunities for the Irish in Britain, and Akenson’s employment data, presented in Table 2.3, below, shows that Irish men had penetrated other occupational sectors in significant numbers by 1961. However, it is clear that unskilled labouring retained the highest Irish concentration, with around 20 per cent of all Irish males falling under this category. The need for a substantial house building programme has been illustrated by Angus Calder who notes that construction ‘had virtually ceased’ under the strain of war. This left around a million people residing in houses which would have been condemned as unfit in peacetime, and some two and a half million in bomb-damaged houses.<sup>206</sup> So drastic was this need that Ultan Cowley has described the contribution of Irish building labourers as ‘their finest hour’.<sup>207</sup>

Table 2.3 – Principal Occupations of Irish-born Males in Great Britain, 1961.

| Occupation                            | From Republic of Ireland % | From Northern Ireland % | 32 Counties total % |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Economically inactive (age 15 and up) | 7.4                        | 11.7                    | 8.6                 |
| Unskilled labourers                   | 21.7                       | 14.2                    | 19.5                |
| Engineering trades                    | 12.8                       | 14.5                    | 13.3                |
| Transport and communications          | 7.1                        | 7.8                     | 7.3                 |
| Construction workers                  | 6.7                        | 5.0                     | 6.2                 |
| Professional, technical, artists      | 5.6                        | 7.5                     | 6.2                 |
| Service, sport, recreation            | 5.5                        | 6.1                     | 5.7                 |
| All other occupations (combined)      | 33.2                       | 33.2                    | 33.2                |

Source: Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*. (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen’s University Belfast, 1996), p.202.

Used with permission of the Director of the Institute of Irish Studies, Queen’s University Belfast.

<sup>205</sup> MacAmhlaigh, *An Irish Navy*, pp.84-5.

<sup>206</sup> Calder, *The People’s War*, p.316.

<sup>207</sup> Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.108.

Delaney has argued that the post-war Labour and Conservative governments had an ‘impressive [housebuilding] record’, in spite of the fact that the programme simply could not meet demand.<sup>208</sup> Peter Malpass and Philip Ollerenshaw have observed that Bristol was ‘one of the most heavily bombed cities outside London’ and the former has described the post-war situation as ‘the worst housing shortage of the twentieth century’.<sup>209</sup> The bombing raids had destroyed over 3,200 houses and ‘badly damaged’ a further 1,800.<sup>210</sup> Hilda Jennings has illustrated the extent of the shortage in her account of the re-housing of residents in Bristol’s central Barton Hill area. She noted that Bristol’s pre-war waiting list of around 4,000 had increased to 13,000 by V.E. Day. This figure had doubled again by August 1946, swollen by applications from conscript returnees as well as a ‘spate of marriages and of applications from families in unfit or overcrowded dwellings’.<sup>211</sup> In spite of this, Jennings praised the efforts of the Housing Corporation in Bristol, which had ‘every right to be proud of its post-war housing achievements.’<sup>212</sup> The Corporation had overseen the completion of 20,004 new homes by March 1958 and ‘could claim a higher total of new permanent dwellings than any other local authority except the London County Council’ between 1948 and 1951.<sup>213</sup>

However, in November 1944, the city’s HOC were under no illusions as to the scale of their task and reported that ‘It is unnecessary to stress the gravity of the present housing situation... The number of applicants on the waiting list is now 7,429 and new applications are being received at the rate of approximately 100 per week.’<sup>214</sup> A significant factor in the housing deficit was the aforementioned shortage of labour. That this hindered house building in Bristol is clear from the HOC’s report to BCC in April 1945:

when it is remembered that there are other housing activities such as flat conversions, war damage repairs and all the general maintenance of private property in the city to be considered[...] as the work obviously cannot be carried out unless satisfactory labour arrangements are made[...] Your Committee desire to emphasise the fact that they cannot fulfil their obligations unless the necessary labour is available.<sup>215</sup>

By November, these problems were still in evidence, although the HOC had already begun to employ Irish workers for this purpose:

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<sup>208</sup> Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.108.

<sup>209</sup> Peter Malpass and Jennie Walmsley, *100 Years of Council Housing in Bristol*. (Bristol: UWE, Faculty of the Built Environment, 2005), p.5; Ollerenshaw, *Northern Ireland in the Second World War*, p.159.

<sup>210</sup> Malpass and Walmsley, *100 years of Council Housing*, p.5.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6; Jennings, *Societies In The Making*, p.121.

<sup>212</sup> Jennings, *Societies In The Making*, p.121.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p.121.

<sup>214</sup> Bristol City Council, Proceedings of the Council, No.63, ‘Housing Committee Report on Post-War Housing’, November 9, 1944, pp.35-6

<sup>215</sup> Bristol City Council, Proceedings of the Council, No.63, ‘Housing Committee Report on Post-War Rebuilding and Labour Shortages’, April 17, 1945, pp.123-4.

There is a substantial shortage of labour for work in connection with the preparation of permanent and temporary housing sites, and in consequence it has been necessary to recruit labour from Eire to facilitate the construction of roads and sewers to serve permanent houses to be erected at Southmead and Lockleaze.<sup>216</sup>

However, this created an additional difficulty - that of housing the newcomers. The HOC acknowledged that ‘Practically no billets were available’, and that it would be ‘necessary to find other ways’ of housing them.<sup>217</sup> This problem would be partially solved through the use of hostels.

## 2.6: NSHC Hostels for Irish building labourers

We have seen that Irish emigrants would often stay with friends or relatives after leaving Ireland. However, as Delaney, Jackson and Searle have identified, those with no friends or relatives near to their destination in Britain faced a dilemma.<sup>218</sup> The British government established the National Service Hostels Corporation [NSHC] in 1941 to provide accommodation for those living and working away from home during the war. This presented local authorities with a convenient means of temporarily accommodating Irish immigrants in the immediate post-war period.<sup>219</sup> Delaney has noted that this also allowed companies to house their employees close to their places of work or even on-site.<sup>220</sup>

This section utilises local and national archival material which has, to my knowledge, been previously ignored. Chief amongst there are the BCC records, which indicate the extent of the problem caused by the housing of Irish labourers in Bristol. They also illuminate the short history of two hostels which were established in South Bristol to absorb Irish labourers. Prejudice and the continuation of Irish stereotypes, such as the aforementioned association with dirt and disease, were additional factors in the necessity for this hostel accommodation. The presence of the infamous ‘No Irish, no blacks, no dogs’ signs, which appeared in the windows of many British accommodations at this time, have been acknowledged in Bristol by several commentators. Notably the city’s current mayor, whose father was met by these signs upon his arrival from Jamaica in the 1960s.<sup>221</sup> Guy Bailey, who arrived in Bristol from

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<sup>216</sup> Bristol City Council, Proceedings of the Council, No.64, ‘Housing Committee Report on Permanent Housing, Construction of Roads and Sewers and Transferred Workers’, November 9, 1945, p.30.

<sup>217</sup> Ibid, p.30.

<sup>218</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.109; Jackson, *The Irish*, p.102; Searle, “Mixing of the unmixables”, p.47.

<sup>219</sup> Cowley, *The Men Who Built Britain*, p.146. Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.109; Searle, *Mixing of the unmixables*, pp.45-6, 47.

<sup>220</sup> Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.113.

<sup>221</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2016/may/23/bristol-mayor-marvin-rees-racism-inequality> (accessed 22 May 2018).



Jamaica in 1961 also recalled that these signs were prevalent in the city.<sup>222</sup> Daly, Jackson and Searle have all noted that ‘no coloured, no Irish’ signs were commonplace in Birmingham, Manchester and London after the war, despite the fact that only a ‘small percentage’ of the newcomers were ‘dirty or verminous’.<sup>223</sup> Only one respondent for this study, Brendan, who came to Bristol in 1959, recalled seeing these signs in the city upon his arrival:

I did see ‘em with my own eyes in Bristol. Like I say, the whole town wasn’t covered with them like you know, it was only the bed and breakfast places or lodging rooms or something like that. But they were there.  
[Brendan b.1942, Roscommon].

Brendan also described how landlords in Brislington were initially reluctant to take in his group until they agreed to pay rent in advance:

we done about 6 houses and they weren’t that keen on taking us in. So the last one we went to, we went there and knocked on the door and this woman come out and we said we’re looking for accommodation[...] Oh, she said, Irish? Yeah we said. Oh, she said, I’m not sure. So this guy, was an older guy you know, he’s been in England before, he said listen here, we’ll give you a week’s money in advance, or two weeks if you’re happy with that? Oh, come on in, no problem like, you know. Which is true like, they was a bit wary of the Irish.  
[Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon].

Maureen, who moved to Bristol in 1958, did not recall seeing any such signs, although they had been visible in Bournemouth where she had previously lived.<sup>224</sup> A report from BCC’s Housing Manager in June 1945 indicated that the ‘deteriorated’ housing situation was aggravated by a general reluctance on the part of homeowners to take in Irish lodgers:

Housewives today are generally war-weary and, since the end of the war in Europe, are looking forward to the early return of the absent members of their own families and are not prepared to mortgage any spare accommodation they might possess. Persons making a living by taking in lodgers are growing more selective as the demand increases, and are not prepared to take on Irish labour if other types of lodgers are available.<sup>225</sup>

The report acknowledged that this problem was, to some extent, exacerbated by the poor reputation of the Irish in the city, although this surely owed much to the aforementioned prejudices as well as ‘the conduct of some of the recent Irish lodgers’. However, the Housing Manager also argued that ‘Men engaged on heavy constructional work cannot avoid returning to their lodgings with dirty boots and soiled clothes’.<sup>226</sup> It was recommended that Irish labourers for whom lodgings could not be found should be accommodated in camps to avoid the compulsory billeting of labourers in private dwellings.<sup>227</sup> The Housing Officer had also

<sup>222</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-23795655> (accessed 22 May 2018).

<sup>223</sup> Daly, *Slow Failure*, p.273; Jackson, *The Irish*, pp.63, 102; Searle, “Mixing of the unmixables”, p.47.

<sup>224</sup> Interview with Maureen, b. 1928, Longford.

<sup>225</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No.15, ‘Transferred Irish Labour’, June 4, 1945, p.157.

<sup>226</sup> *Ibid*, p.157.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid*, p.158.

identified a potential site at St John's Lane in Bedminster. This was described as 'suitably situated' with canteen facilities 'capable of supplying with ease regular meals to 150 persons.' Plans to establish this camp, subject to financial details, were approved at the same meeting.<sup>228</sup> Both the *BEP* and the *WDP* alluded to the problems of housing Irish immigrants. However, neither played on stereotypes of dirtiness or criminality, although both referred to the unwillingness of landladies and landlords to take them in:

The difficulties of finding accommodation for Irish labour to be employed on the construction of roads and sewers were discussed at today's meeting of Bristol Housing Committee, who propose setting up a canteen and making living arrangements to meet the situation.<sup>229</sup>

A report to the committee on the subject stated that few lodgings are now available in Bristol and that the problem is a serious one. Housewives are either war-weary or more "selective" and are not willing to take in Irish labourers[...] The committee agreed that everything possible should be done, despite the difficulties, to encourage labour, which will be much needed in the city.<sup>230</sup>

The *WDP* noted that the camp would boast 'comfortable sleeping accommodation, a canteen including three dining a recreation and rest rooms'[sic] and that men would pay 'a reasonable amount' of rent. This article also acknowledged that the additional labour 'will be much needed in the city.'<sup>231</sup> In addition to this, the *BEP* addressed the possibility of damage to the camp, presumably from residents, and noted that 'mention was made of safeguards against damage to the buildings.'<sup>232</sup> In July the HOC approved the expenditure of £2,400 to prepare the St John's Lane site to accommodate around 120 residents with canteen facilities for up to 300.<sup>233</sup> Two weeks later, approval was granted for the construction of additional huts to accommodate 83 men due to be transferred to Bristol. This brought the total number of residents up to 136.<sup>234</sup> In October of the same year, the HOC identified that a significant proportion of the St. John's Lane residents were engaged in road and sewer construction in Lockleaze, a northern inner-city suburb, and Keynsham in Somerset, both of which were around six miles from Bedminster. As such, the HOC made provisions for the commute but the Housing Manager advised that further camps were necessary:

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<sup>228</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No.15, 'Transferred Irish Labour', June 4, 1945, pp.159, 163-4.

<sup>229</sup> 'Housewives Reluctant To "Take In" Irish', *The Bristol Evening Post*, June 4, 1945, p.4.

<sup>230</sup> "Camp For Irish Labour" *The Western Daily Press*, June 5, 1945, p.3.

<sup>231</sup> "Camp For Irish Labour" *The Western Daily Press*, June 5, 1945, p.3.

<sup>232</sup> "In A.R.P. Huts" *The Bristol Evening Post*, July 2, 1945, p.5.

<sup>233</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No.15, 'Advance Preparation of Housing Sites – Billeting of Workmen', July 2, 1945, p.192.

<sup>234</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No.15, 'Advance Preparation of Housing Sites – Billeting of Workmen', July 16, 1945, p.213.

The Ministry of Labour have advised me that the recruiting officer of Eire has indicated that he is prepared to recruit a further 300 unskilled building trade operatives for transfer to Bristol for housing work in the immediate future.<sup>235</sup>

After further alterations, the St. John's Lane site could accommodate 220, but had just 28 places free, leaving the HOC with a potential shortfall of 272.<sup>236</sup> An additional site on Avonmouth Road in north Bristol which could accommodate 68 was acquired in November.<sup>237</sup> This left a deficit of over 200, and the HOC stressed the 'urgent importance' of securing further sites in their November 9 report to BCC.<sup>238</sup> An empty military camp at Purdown, near Lockleaze was identified as a potential site in January 1946. This would have provided a more convenient alternative to the existing camps for those working in Lockleaze, but curiously, there was no further mention of a shortage of hostel accommodation:

If this Camp is made available it will mean that the workers housed at Bedminster and Avonmouth who are engaged on the Lockleaze site can be transferred, thus reducing considerably the heavy cost of transport now involved.<sup>239</sup>

However, the Minister of Health informed the HOC that 'the camp was likely to be re-occupied by troops' and it was therefore 'impractical at present for the Camp to be made available for the accommodation of Irish labour.'<sup>240</sup> In September 1946, Bristol's Finance Committee advised BCC of the ongoing chronic shortage of labour in relation to the house building programme:

Your Committee have also considered the amount of labour required to carry out this programme of works and the amount of labour available, and it is clear that the labour available will fall far short of that required to carry out the whole programme.<sup>241</sup>

As a result, it was resolved to 'appoint representatives to discuss[...] the possibility of importing additional labour to Bristol because of the extensive rebuilding programme due to war damage, and to discuss the provision of accommodation for such labour.'<sup>242</sup> In addition to this, the HOC were urged to locate a new site by the company responsible for running the St. John's Lane Camp in January 1947:

Camps & Canteen (Caterers) Ltd., who were responsible for the Irish Labour Camp at Bedminster had drawn attention to the fact that the Camps at Bedminster

<sup>235</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 15, 'Billeting of Transferred Workers', October 22, 1945, pp. 281-2.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid, pp.281-2.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid, pp.281-2; Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 15, 'Billeting Of Transferred Workers – Hostel Accommodation', November 5, 1945, pp.290-1.

<sup>238</sup> Bristol City Council, Proceedings of the Council, No.64, 'Housing Committee Report on Permanent Housing, Construction of Roads and Sewers and Transferred Workers', November 9, 1945, pp.30-1.

<sup>239</sup> Ibid, pp.10-11.

<sup>240</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 16, 'Irish Labour – Proposed Camp At Purdown', February 4, 1946, p.29.

<sup>241</sup> Bristol City Council, Proceedings of The Council, No.64, 'Report of the Finance Committee on The Housing Programme and Labour Shortages', September 10, 1946, pp.212-3.

<sup>242</sup> Ibid, p.214.

and Avonmouth were not sufficiently large to accommodate all the men who had applied for admission. The Committee were informed that the Firm in question were prepared to take over any Camp within reasonable distance of the mens [sic] work that might become vacant in the near future, and to equip same and maintain it at their expense and place it at the disposal of this Committee and the Ministry of Labour for billeting purposes.<sup>243</sup>

Whilst the Housing Manager concurred that this would be beneficial, it was deemed ‘very unlikely that a suitable Camp would be available in the near future.’ Nonetheless, the HOC authorised the Housing Manager to ‘furnish any assistance possible to the Firm in question in their endeavour to establish further Camps for billeting purposes.’<sup>244</sup> No further evidence of additional hostel sites has been documented, but the records do allow some insight into the day-to-day running of the St. John’s Lane camp. These are limited to complaints concerning conditions or rent and references to damage caused by residents. There are no records relating to individuals’ tenancy, length of occupation or the turnover of residents. Therefore, the main points arising from these records are that there was a demand, however limited, for hostel accommodation in Bristol; that there were few complaints against the Irish inhabitants of either camp, and that the HOC were prepared to listen to concerns and finance improvements.

In January 1946, the Housing Manager reported that several meetings concerning conditions at the site had taken place between the Deputy Housing Manager and residents at the camp. This detailed several demands, including an objection towards the weekly two shilling charge for barrack damages; the provision of a drying room; urgent repairs to roofs; an accusation that the sick bay was being used for overspill accommodation; and complaints of damp conditions and insufficient hot water in the evenings.<sup>245</sup> Despite the tenants showing ‘Scant courtesy’ at these meetings, the HOC were receptive, and agreed to attend to all complaints and maintenance work ‘forthwith’.<sup>246</sup> That the medical facilities were utilised as additional accommodation indicates that, whilst the demand for hostel beds was not huge, the facilities at St John’s Lane and Avonmouth were insufficient. Given the continuation of anti-Irish stereotypes, it is also significant that there was no reference to damage or poor hygienic practices on the part of residents.

In July 1946, it was confirmed that the HOC were experiencing financial problems with the site, having initially paid £4,300 to adapt the camp to purpose, of which only £1,300

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<sup>243</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 17, ‘Camps For Transferred Workers’, January 27, 1947, p.24.

<sup>244</sup> Ibid, p.24.

<sup>245</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 16, ‘Billeting of Transferred Workers – Camp No.1’, January 21, 1946, pp.10-11.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid, pp.10-11.

was estimated to be recoverable.<sup>247</sup> In the same month the catering contractors for both camps gave notice of their intent to terminate their contracts ‘in regard to thefts, damage, etc.’<sup>248</sup> The following month, the HOC Chairman described the rent of 27s per week - 26s of which was paid directly to the catering contractor - as ‘uneconomic’. Consequently, an increase in rent to 30s per week, of which 2s 6d would go to the HOC was recommended.<sup>249</sup> He also alluded to ‘a small minority of the residents’ who had caused ‘damage to the bedding, beds etc.’<sup>250</sup> The wording of this, where the culprits are described as a ‘small minority’ indicates a reluctance to indiscriminately criticise the tenants. In the following year, the HOC experienced further problems. A *BEP* report from March 3, provocatively titled “‘Indescribable Filth’: Irishmen Wreck Two Huts’ described the conditions at the camp after an inspection by the Chief Sanitary Inspector [CSI]:

The hutments, kitchen, etc. had been found to be in a dirty condition, and parts of the woodwork had been removed, presumably to burn. The damage had gone beyond all bounds and it was recommended that the hut in which the roof had fallen in should not be repaired and the men responsible be asked to leave the camp.

If it was not possible to find out the culprits, all the men in the hut should be called upon to leave.

They had completely destroyed two huts, and now two more were damaged.<sup>251</sup>

At the HOC meeting the following day, the CSI reported that ‘the sanitation and general cleanliness of the camp, which was occupied by some 200 Irish building trade workers, left much to be desired.’<sup>252</sup> A subsequent report in June revealed that significant progress had been made:

1. Whole site cleaned up and gardens being planted with flowers where old accumulators stood.
2. All huts have been repaired.
3. Redecoration of most of the huts has been carried out.
4. Pillows and bedding have been replaced and thoroughly cleansed.
5. Exterior of huts etc. being tidied up, painted, etc.
6. A recreation room with games and full size billiard table provided.
7. Floors are now quite clean

Following these discussions, the attitude of the men occupying the camp had improved and they had carried out practically all the work referred to.<sup>253</sup>

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<sup>247</sup> Bristol City Council, Proceedings of the Council, No.64, ‘Housing Committee Report on Permanent Housing, Construction of Roads and Sewers and Transferred Workers’, November 9, 1945, p.30.

<sup>248</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 16, ‘Irish Labour – Bedminster And Avonmouth Camps’, July 1, 1946, p.157.

<sup>249</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 16, ‘Irish Labour – Bedminster Camp’, August 1, 1946, p.178.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid*, p.178.

<sup>251</sup> “‘Indescribable Filth’ Irishmen Wreck Two Huts’, *The Bristol Evening Post*, March 3, 1947, p.5.

<sup>252</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.29, ‘Irish Building Labourer’s Camp, Bedminster Rd’, March 4, 1947, pp.294-5.

<sup>253</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.29, ‘Irish Building Labourer’s Camp, Bedminster Rd’, June 3, 1947, pp.526-7.

It is clear that the CSI's criticism was far more restrained than that of the *BEP*. It is also significant that there was no mention of evictions and that, although the tenants had carried out 'practically all the work', the improvements were funded by the HOC who also provided a new recreation room.

The HOC also experienced financial problems with the Avonmouth site. In October 1947, the camp was found to be in need of structural and interior repairs totalling around £200. At this time, the Housing Manager observed that the site was running at a significant deficit, having lost £295 since November 1945.<sup>254</sup> This deficit was further increased by a fire in May 1948, which necessitated repairs totalling £46. 14s. 3d.<sup>255</sup> In order to offset these costs, the HOC began to lease out the land at the rear of the St. John's Lane site for private and commercial use. In 1948 there were numerous requests from institutions such as the Bristol West Labour Party and the Bristol South Conservative Association for fairs and carnivals.<sup>256</sup> The land was also rented out to Spillers Transport Services for a 12 month period 'and thereafter on a quarterly basis' for the purpose of breeze block manufacture.<sup>257</sup> In parallel to these financial issues, both camps had experienced a dramatic decline in numbers by 1949. Indeed, in January the residents at St. John's Lane had requested a rent reduction after the camp's population 'had been seriously reduced by the completion of certain contracts and the departure of the labour from Bristol.'<sup>258</sup> On 7 March, the HOC agreed to halve the annual rent to £300 'so long as the number of residents at the Camp does not exceed 50'.<sup>259</sup> Within six months of this announcement, both camps had been closed. On 18 July, 1949. The Housing Manager reported that:

as the average number of men in the Camp at Avonmouth Road had dropped to 33 it was no longer an economic proposition and that it was therefore proposed to close down the Camp<sup>260</sup>

The following month, the HOC confirmed the imminent closure of the St. John's Lane camp:

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<sup>254</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 17, 'Camp No. 2. Avonmouth', October 20, 1947, pp.303-4.

<sup>255</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 18, '47/49 Avonmouth Road – Camp No.2', October 25, 1948, p.340.

<sup>256</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 18, 'Knowle and Bedminster Estate – Land At Rear of Irish Labour Camp', January 5, 1948, p.9; Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 18, 'Land At Rear of Irish Labour Camp – Application To Use For Carnival', 26<sup>th</sup> January, 1948, p.31.

<sup>257</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 18, 'Land At Rear of Irish Labour Camp', June 28, 1948, p.203; Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 18, 'Knowle and Bedminster Estate – Land At Rear of Irish Camp – Spillers Transport Services Ltd', July 12, 1948, p.224.

<sup>258</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 19, 'Irish Labour Camp At St. John's Lane', January 24, 1949, p.37.

<sup>259</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 19, 'Knowle and Bedminster Estate – Irish Labour Camp', March 7, 1949, p.95.

<sup>260</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 19, 'Irish Labour Camp – Camp No.2. Avonmouth Road', July 18, 1949, p.255.

The Housing Manager reported that 28 days' notice as from the 13<sup>th</sup> August had been received from Industrial Catering Enterprises (Bristol) to terminate their contract in connection with this Camp because the number of men at the camp had been reduced to 36 and the Camp was no longer a paying proposition.

The Committee were of the opinion that the receipt of the notice offered a suitable opportunity to close the Camp and it was –

**RESOLVED** – That the notice be accepted and the Officers be requested to report to the Committee upon the action to be taken to close the Camp.<sup>261</sup>

The HOC cited the departure of men from Bristol after the completion of works as the main contributing factor in the depletion of numbers at both camps. However, we have seen from the census data that the Irish-born population of Bristol continued to increase, and only peaked in 1971. With this in mind, the fact that only around 300 beds were provided suggests that the overwhelming majority of the Irish who poured into the city were either able to stay with family or friends or were otherwise absorbed into existing residential housing. Whilst the hostel accommodation in Bedminster and Avonmouth provided an adequate short-term solution to Irish building labourers with no other housing provision, it is clear that most did not require this sort of provision. The absorption of the Irish influx into more conventional housing arrangements reaffirms the predominance of chain migration. It also indicates that prejudice against the Irish was not widespread in Bristol at this time.

## 2.7 - Irish Nurses in Bristol

This focus on the accommodation and behaviour of Irish-born males engaged in heavy labouring in the city is somewhat predictable, particularly when one considers the heavily racialised and negative images which are traditionally associated with the Irish in Britain, as well as the post-war need for manpower. However, one positive and - until fairly recently - somewhat overlooked stereotype is that of the Irish nurse.<sup>262</sup> Jackson has identified that Irish nurses were so ingrained in Britain by the 1960s that they were no longer perceived as 'immigrant labour'. To illustrate this, he noted that three matrons in Croydon did not include Irish-born nurses in a count of their hospitals' immigrant employees.<sup>263</sup> This is less surprising when one considers Bronwen Walter's 2001 argument that 'more than a quarter of all Irish women working in Britain since 1945 have been nurses.'<sup>264</sup> As such, nursing has received

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<sup>261</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Housing Committee, No. 19, 'Irish Labour Camp No. 1 – St. John's Lane, Bedminster', August 15, 1949, p.289.

<sup>262</sup> Halpin, Who are the Irish in Britain?, pp.101-2; Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish Women*, pp.78, 80; Walter, *Ealing Dimension*, pp.87-88; Walter, *Outsiders*, pp. 151, 183.

<sup>263</sup> Jackson, *The Irish*, p.108.

<sup>264</sup> Walter, *Outsiders*, p.2.

greater attention in more recent studies of the Irish in Britain, particularly in the pioneering work of Louise Ryan and Walter.<sup>265</sup>

We have seen that, excluding the periods of the two World Wars, the Boer War and the 1950s, twentieth century female emigration from Ireland to Britain exceeded that of their male counterparts. Although Irish-born males were narrowly more numerous than females in Bristol from 1951 to 2001, women represented no less than 46.9 per cent of the city's Irish-born population throughout the period. Cairíona Clear has argued that there was 'almost an epidemic of emigration among Irish girls and women as they fled to the plentiful work and training available in Britain' after the war.<sup>266</sup> Liam Ryan has noted that single Irish women, like Irish men, had few problems finding work in post-war Britain as many 'were satisfied to begin work in jobs which native labour was no longer willing to accept' such as domestic and factory work.<sup>267</sup> He also contended that they 'never had quite the same working-class image in Britain as their men-folk acquired'. This was partly a result of their relative invisibility as housewives, as well as the fact that many were recruited whilst still in Ireland.<sup>268</sup> In addition to this, most of those entering domestic work or nursing were housed privately or in hospitals.<sup>269</sup>

The majority of studies on Irish women in Britain have acknowledged the overrepresentation of Irish-born females working as nurses in Britain. Walter's volume on the simultaneous inclusion and exclusion of Irish women in the diaspora has perceptively described nursing as an 'unusual opportunity' for researchers, given that the demand for Irish nurses was 'quite evenly spread throughout Britain.'<sup>270</sup> Tracey Connolly's study of the 1954 *Report of the Commission on Emigration and Other Population Problems* identified that nursing was a significantly more attractive profession in Britain than in Ireland. This was a result of higher wages and free training in Britain, as well as the aforementioned perception that Britain provided greater opportunities and personal freedom. Indeed, Connolly also acknowledged that there were influential factors beyond economics in this emigration, and

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<sup>265</sup> Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, pp.201, 203; Connolly, "Emigration from Ireland to Britain during the Second World War", pp.58-9, 61; Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, pp.135-6, 160-1, 207; Delaney, *The Irish*, pp.91-2; Gray, *Women and the Irish Diaspora*, p.107; Halpin, "Who are the Irish?", pp.101-2; Hickman, *Religion, Class and Identity*, p.208; Jackson, *The Irish*, pp.106, 108; Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish Women*, p.78; Ryan, "Becoming Nurses"; Ryan, "Migrant Women, Social Networks and Motherhood"; Sorohan, *Irish London During The Troubles*, pp.8, 19; Walter, *Outsiders*, pp.2, 150, 151, 155, 179-87; Walter, *Ealing Dimension*; Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, p.81.

<sup>266</sup> Clear, "Too Fond of Going", p.138.

<sup>267</sup> Ryan, "Irish Emigration", 45-68. p.54.

<sup>268</sup> Up to 65 per cent in the case of nurses.

<sup>269</sup> Ryan, "Irish Emigration", p.54.

<sup>270</sup> Walter, *Outsiders*, p.280.



cited training, working conditions and working hours as equally important.<sup>271</sup> Nursing in Britain presented young Irish women with an opportunity for stable employment, income and independence in new surroundings. Another key factor was that prospective nurses in Britain availed of free training, which was not on offer in Ireland<sup>272</sup>, as Maureen pointed out:

quite a few come over here for, ‘cos[...] if I want to be a nurse in Ireland you know, I have to pay £150 to get me cap, so people came over here, trained free, you know?  
[Maureen, b.1928, Longford].

This was also cited as a key determinant in her emigration by Nancy Lyons, one of the participants in Lennon, McAdam and O’Brien’s study.<sup>273</sup> Nancy turned down an offer from her uncle to pay for her training in Ireland in favour of the free training and greater freedom available in Britain.<sup>274</sup> This ‘disparity in wages and working conditions between England and Ireland’ as cited by Daly undoubtedly pushed prospective nurses towards Britain.<sup>275</sup> Ferriter has also argued that nurses in Ireland received ‘poor pay[...] long hours and little provision for old age.’<sup>276</sup> Brian Abel-Smith’s history of nursing fittingly described the profession as ‘a means of rising in social class’ as well as ‘a means of leaving home’. Abel-Smith also noted that Irish-born nurses accounted for 12 per cent of Britain’s total nursing staff by 1946.<sup>277</sup> Sean Glynn’s analysis of Irish occupational patterns also demonstrated the increase in Irish-born nurses. The ‘Professional and Commercial’ category into which nursing falls accounted for just eight per cent of Irish women in Britain in 1911.<sup>278</sup> By 1951, this figure had almost trebled in rising to 22 per cent and Glynn concluded that nursing was ‘The most important profession’ for Irish women.<sup>279</sup> Table 2.4 shows Delaney’s analysis of travel permit data from the 1954 Commission on Emigration, and illustrates the strong representation of Irish nurses in Britain during the war.

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<sup>271</sup> Tracey Connolly, “The Commission on Emigration, 1948-1954” in *The Lost Decade, Ireland in the 1950s* (eds.) Dermot Keogh, Finbarr O’Shea and Carmel Quinlan, 89-107, (Cork: Mercier Press, 2004), p.95

<sup>272</sup> Daly, *Slow Failure*, p.172; Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire*, p.18; Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish Women*, p.78.

<sup>273</sup> Left Kerry in 1943.

<sup>274</sup> Lennon et al, *Across the Water*, p.173.

<sup>275</sup> Daly, *Slow Failure*, p.170.

<sup>276</sup> Ferriter, *Transformation*, p.401.

<sup>277</sup> Brian Abel-Smith, *A History of the Nursing Profession*. (London: Heineman, 1960), p.215.

<sup>278</sup> Glynn, “Irish Immigration to Britain”, p.58.

<sup>279</sup> *Ibid*, p.58.

Table 2.4 – Females in receipt of Irish travel permits and identity cards by last occupation, 1940-46 (%).

|                            | 1940 | 1941 | 1942 | 1943 | 1944 | 1945 | 1946 |
|----------------------------|------|------|------|------|------|------|------|
| Domestic service           | 59.5 | 41.0 | 41.8 | 48.0 | 46.9 | 44.5 | 62.9 |
| Nursing                    | 18.4 | 24.0 | 15.5 | 15.0 | 19.1 | 33.2 | 20.3 |
| Agriculture                | 5.5  | 5.4  | 4.5  | 2.2  | 5.2  | 4.4  | 1.7  |
| Clerical                   | 3.9  | 5.5  | 3.2  | 1.9  | 1.8  | 1.9  | 1.3  |
| Other (factory work, etc.) | 12.7 | 24.1 | 35.0 | 32.9 | 27.0 | 16.0 | 13.8 |

Source: Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.135.

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Delaney has acknowledged that around a sixth of Irish-born women in England and Wales were classified as professionals in 1951, with ‘most of them nurses and midwives.’<sup>280</sup> Louise Ryan has noted that Irish-born nurses accounted for more than ten per cent of all nurses in the south east of England by 1960.<sup>281</sup> Ryan found that there were 31,000 Irish-born nurses working in Britain by 1971, comprising around 12 per cent of the total figure.<sup>282</sup> Akenson has also illustrated the predominance of nursing amongst the Irish in Table 2.5, below. He noted that, by 1961: ‘The good reputation of Irish-trained nurses accounts for the strong professional element in the female occupational profile.’

Table 2.5 - Principal Occupations of Irish-born Females in Great Britain, 1961.

| Occupation                            | From Republic of Ireland % | From Northern Ireland % | 32 Counties total % |
|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------------|
| Economically inactive (age 15 and up) | 50.0                       | 60.1                    | 52.9                |
| Service, sport, recreation            | 13.5                       | 11.1                    | 12.9                |
| Professional, technical, artists      | 9.7                        | 6.2                     | 8.6                 |
| Clerical                              | 6.5                        | 7.3                     | 6.7                 |
| Engineering trades                    | 2.4                        | 1.8                     | 2.3                 |
| All other occupations (combined)      | 17.9                       | 13.5                    | 16.6                |

Source: Donald Harman Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora: A Primer*. (Belfast: Institute of Irish Studies, Queen’s University Belfast, 1996), p.203.

Used with permission of the Director of the Institute of Irish Studies, Queen’s University Belfast.

<sup>280</sup> Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.92.

<sup>281</sup> Ryan, “Becoming Nurses”, p.121.

<sup>282</sup> Ryan, “Becoming Nurses”, p.121.

Walter and Brendan Halpin have found that Irish-born nurses remained a significant group in Britain into the 1980s and 1990s. Walter has utilised census data to illustrate the over-representation of nurses amongst Irish emigrants in London, and indeed 17 per cent of Irish-born women engaged in medical services in 1981. The comparative ‘white UK-born’ figure was just eight per cent. In addition to this, the corresponding figure for Ireland was eight per cent, and the total number of Irish-born in medical services in London was half of the national figure in Ireland.<sup>283</sup> Halpin has cited the 1994 Labour Force Survey to show that Irish women were almost three times as likely to be employed in nursing as non-Irish women in Britain. He also found that nursing was the highest area of over-representation for Irish women.<sup>284</sup> It is also significant that Halpin only offers one sentence of commentary on this, the simplicity of which shows the extent to which Irish nurses have become an accepted and almost natural element in British society: ‘One stereotype is immediately confirmed: there are lots of Irish nurses and other health workers.’<sup>285</sup>

## 2.8 – ‘Why No Nurses?’<sup>286</sup> Nursing shortages

We have seen that Britain was in the grip of a national labour crisis at the outset of the post-war rebuilding programme, and there was also a severe dearth of nurses. In 1946, James Barclay, in his provocatively titled *Why No Nurses?* described the nursing shortage as ‘desperate’ and a ‘threat to national health and social progress.’<sup>287</sup> This view has been reinforced by Delaney and Muldowney, who have both noted that these shortages dated back to the late 1930s, and the former cited a deficit of 34,000 nurses by January 1947.<sup>288</sup> Barclay claimed that young women were no longer interested in nursing as it was a role which carried less freedom than that of a typist or secretary, given that the nurse ‘has no private life in the full sense. She is tied to her hospital in and out of the working day.’<sup>289</sup> It is curious that Barclay did not advocate further recruitment from Ireland since, as we will see, there was already a strong Irish presence in British nursing by 1946. It is similarly intriguing that there is no discussion of additional Irish recruitment in the minute books of BCC’s various Committees.

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<sup>283</sup> Bronwen Walter, *The Ealing Dimension*, p.71.

<sup>284</sup> Halpin, “Who are the Irish in Britain?” pp.101-2.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid*, p.102.

<sup>286</sup> James Barclay, *Why No Nurses? The Nursing Recruitment Problem Its history, terms and solution*. (London: Faber and Faber, 1946).

<sup>287</sup> Barclay, *Why No Nurses?* p.7.

<sup>288</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, pp. 135, 207; Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish Women*, p.78.

<sup>289</sup> Barclay, *Why No Nurses?*, pp.8-9.

Indeed, whilst there were numerous references to nursing shortages, there were no references to Irish women. In spite of this, there were several references to the city's nursing problems. In his 1938 report, the MOH for Bristol described the nursing shortages as a national problem. He drew similar conclusions to Barclay in citing the availability of less taxing and better paid employment which allowed individuals to remain at home. He emphasised the importance of existing policies to reduce the time between girls leaving school and entering paid employment through new training schemes, as well as 'the appointment of male orderlies and female attendants to undertake certain duties formerly performed by nurses.' In addition to this, he advocated the integration of fourteen to sixteen year old girls into hospitals as nursery assistants, clinic and health centre assistants and hospital kitchen workers before they could begin nurse training at eighteen.<sup>290</sup> Ryan found that there was significant direct recruitment from Ireland. 'Almost all' of the 25 oral participants in her 2008 study on nursing were recruited directly from Ireland, often after reading newspaper advertisements.<sup>291</sup> One of the participants in Muldowney's research recalled that the *Nursing Times* was 'thick with jobs vacant' during the Second World War.<sup>292</sup> Daly noted that, during the final three months of 1947, the *Irish Independent* newspaper contained 286 advertisements 'seeking nurses, probationers, and student nurses'.<sup>293</sup> Delaney has identified that, in some cases, the British authorities even paid travel costs for prospective nurses, including 3,000 of them in 1947.<sup>294</sup>

The situation had worsened by April 1941 when the HEC reported that, owing to the 'acute' nursing shortage, resignations would no longer be accepted.<sup>295</sup> In 1943, the MOH acknowledged that the situation was particularly acute at Ham Green Hospital in Pill, North Somerset, some six miles from the city centre, and Stapleton Institution in Fishponds where the resident Medical Officer described the situation as 'nothing short of deplorable'.<sup>296</sup> The following year, Stapleton's Medical Officer acknowledged that the nursing shortage 'continued to be serious' throughout 1944.<sup>297</sup> In 1945 the MOH reported that 'the problems of 1944 have continued into 1945' and remained 'a matter of urgency'.<sup>298</sup> This was followed by a January

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<sup>290</sup> Bristol City Council, Reports of the Medical Officer for Health of Bristol, 1938, p.30.

<sup>291</sup> Ryan, "Becoming Nurses", p.121.

<sup>292</sup> Muldowney, *The Second World War and Irish Women*, p.80.

<sup>293</sup> Daly, *Slow Failure*, p.157.

<sup>294</sup> Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.48.

<sup>295</sup> Although there were no details of how this measure would be enforced. Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.25, 'Nursing Shortage', April 29, 1941, p.115.

<sup>296</sup> Bristol City Council, Reports of the Medical Officer for Health of Bristol, 1943, pp.6-7.

<sup>297</sup> Bristol City Council, Reports of the Medical Officer for Health of Bristol, 1944, p.7.

<sup>298</sup> Bristol City Council, Reports of the Medical Officer for Health of Bristol, 1945, p.5.

1946 report of a nationwide MOL-led recruiting campaign for nurses for which there would be an exhibition at the City Art Gallery in March to which the HEC would contribute £80 costs as well as transport provision.<sup>299</sup> However, the Medical Officer of Ham Green later claimed that he had seen ‘hardly any benefit’ from the changes, and described the shortage as ‘tragic’.<sup>300</sup> The MOH’s March 1947 report to the HEC acknowledged that ‘the general nursing position[...]was at its lowest possible ebb’ and that further deterioration would lead to ward closures.<sup>301</sup> In April 1948, the HEC were advised that potential trainee nurses often preferred to undertake their training away from their home town. It was therefore resolved to liaise with education authorities to advertise Bristol training facilities to school leavers.<sup>302</sup>

The situation appears to have been particularly acute at Ham Green, perhaps owing to its status as an infectious diseases isolation hospital. In May 1948, the MOH reported that the hospital had been faced with 31 resignations that year alone, resulting in a deficit of 19 nurses.<sup>303</sup> Two months later, the outlook remained bleak. The MOH suggested that ‘unless the terms of employment for nurses in infectious disease hospitals were made more attractive, there did not appear to be any likelihood of the position being improved.’<sup>304</sup> These problems continued well into the following year with the news that an outbreak of infantile paralysis, combined with the nursing shortage, had necessitated the closure of a tuberculosis ward.<sup>305</sup> The departure of six more nurses in March 1948 sparked fears that the hospital would be unable to allow its remaining staff all or any of their holiday allowance for the year.<sup>306</sup> Although the situation was salvaged after twenty nurses from Southmead hospital volunteered to help, this example clearly demonstrated the precariousness of the nursing situation.<sup>307</sup>

With these constant shortages in mind, it is surprising that provision for Irish nurses was not mentioned in any the HEC minutes or reports. It may have been the case that Irish nurses

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<sup>299</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.28, ‘Recruiting Campaign For Hospital Nurses’, January 15, 1946, pp.167-8; Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.28, ‘Recruiting Campaign For Hospital Nurses’, January 22, 1946, pp.171-2.

<sup>300</sup> Bristol City Council, Reports of the Medical Officer for Health of Bristol, 1946, p.10.

<sup>301</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.29, ‘Recruitment of Nurses’, March 4, 1947, p.300.

<sup>302</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.30, ‘Recruitment of Nurses’, April 20, 1948, p.374.

<sup>303</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.28, ‘Ham Green Hospital – Shortage of Nursing Staff’, May 7, 1948, pp.378-9.

<sup>304</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.28, ‘Shortage of Nursing Staff’, July 17, 1946, p.466.

<sup>305</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.29, ‘Infantile Paralysis – Shortage of Nursing Staff’, September 2, 1947, pp.704-5.

<sup>306</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.30, ‘Shortage of Nursing Staff’, March 23, 1948, p.322.

<sup>307</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.30, ‘Shortage of Nursing Staff’, April 6, 1948, pp.323-4.

did not require any special provision as they were integrated into the aforementioned training and recruitment programmes that were aimed at school leavers and other groups.<sup>308</sup> However, in July 1946, the HEC did reference a proposal to bring nurses into Ham Green hospital from ‘Scandinavian countries’.<sup>309</sup> Although there are no specific references to Irish nurses in the reports of the MOH or the HEC, we will see that they worked in the city’s hospitals in varying but significant numbers.

## 2.9 – The Glenside Irish

This section is based on an analysis of the student nurse staff record books for Glenside Hospital, Bristol’s psychiatric hospital from the end of the First World War. To my knowledge, these records have never been utilised before, in spite of the fact that these data allow for a remarkably thorough analysis. This analysis is also unique in the existing local studies of the Irish in Britain. Most entries in the staff records include the religion and next-of-kin address of each nurse, providing a firm indication as to their nationality. The records cover the periods 1920-44 and 1947-57, and we can see in Figure 2.1 below that 256 of 972 - over a quarter – of all nurses employed by the hospital at this time were Irish-born.

It is clear that the proportion of Irish-born nurses increased over the period, as one might expect given the extent of wartime, post-war and 1950s emigration from Ireland to Britain. However, the records also show that, from 1953 to 1957, the proportion of Irish-born nurses fell away dramatically from 111 nurses at 55 per cent of the total nursing staff to just 17 nurses at eight per cent. One might have expected the proportion to be even greater in the latter period, particularly when we consider that the 1950s was the ‘decade of the vanishing Irish’.<sup>310</sup> Delaney’s argument that the British authorities would no longer pay prospective nurses’ travel costs does not fully explain this, as we have seen that Irish women remained overrepresented in nursing into the 1990s.<sup>311</sup> One possible explanation is that individuals moved to areas of greater Irish settlement such as London or Birmingham. However, given that the size of Bristol’s Irish-born population continued to increase until 1971, this seems equally unlikely. One plausible conclusion is that prospective Irish nurses wished to move away from mental health nursing and into other hospitals. Indeed, there was a very high turnover of nursing students at Glenside, as we will see.

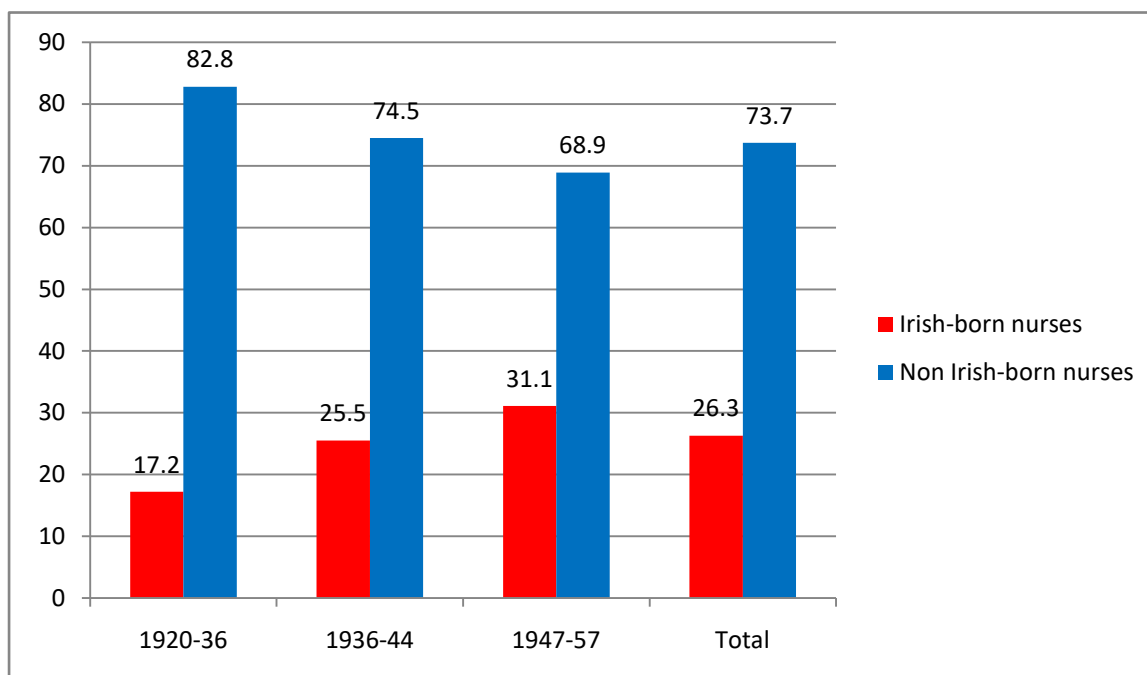
<sup>308</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.30, ‘Recruitment of Nurses’, April 20, 1948, p.374.

<sup>309</sup> Bristol City Council, Minutes of the Health Committee, No.28, ‘Nurses from Scandinavia’, July 17, 1946, p.467.

<sup>310</sup> Delaney, ‘The Vanishing Irish?’, p.82.

<sup>311</sup> Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.48.

Figure 2.1 – Irish-born nurses as a proportion of total nursing staff at Glenside Hospital, 1920-44, 1947-57.

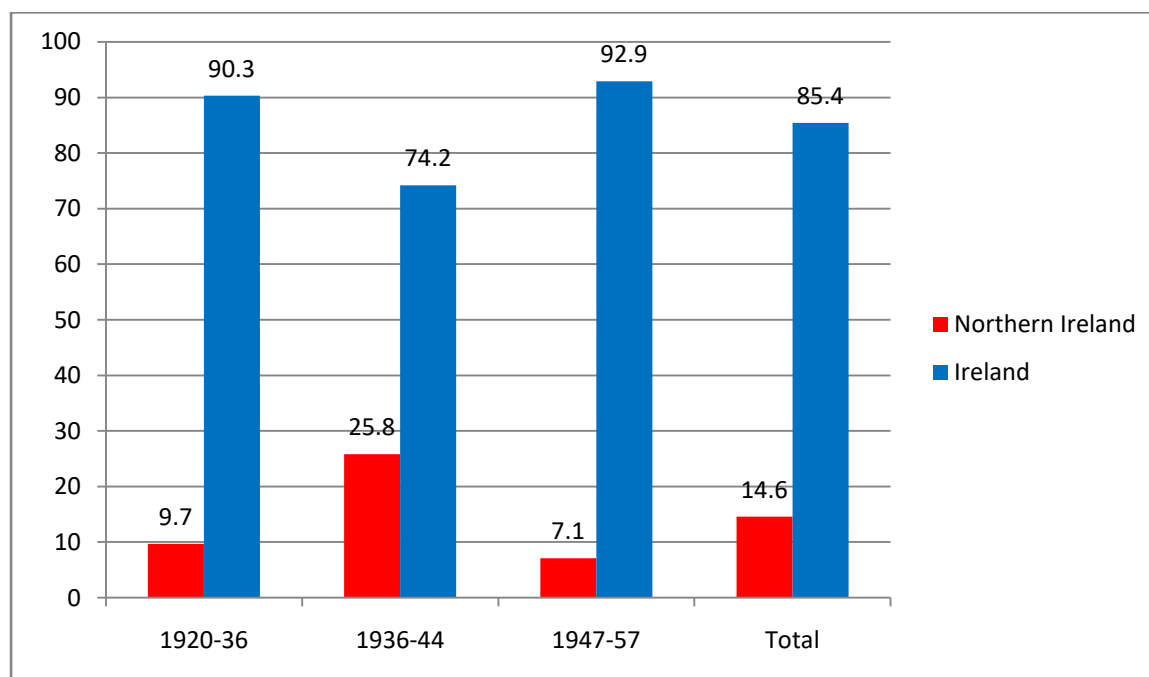


Source: Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 April 1920 to 22 October 1944, 19 February 1947 to 12 October 1957.

### 2.10 – Religious affiliation and Geography

All 256 records included legible next-of-kin addresses, from which reasonable assumptions about an individual's county of origin could be made. Whilst these addresses provide a strong indication as to an individual's place of origin, and despite the lack of internal migration in twentieth century Ireland, it is important to note that they may not all represent an accurate impression of every nurse's background. These data reflect the aforementioned theme of heavy depopulation from rural areas and the western seaboard counties – particularly those situated in the western province of Connacht. The vast majority of the Glenside Irish were born in the Republic, as is illustrated in Figure 2.2, below. In spite of this, Figure 2.3 shows that, when considered with the provincial data (a fairer means of comparison for a country made up of only six counties) a respectable proportion of the Glenside Irish were Northern Irish. Some of the Glenside records did not indicate a particular county, but all of these entries were simply marked 'Eire'. For this reason, the 'Eire' category has been included in the Republic numbers in Figure 2.2.

Figure 2.2 – Irish-born nurses at Glenside 1920-44, 1947-57 by country of birth (%).

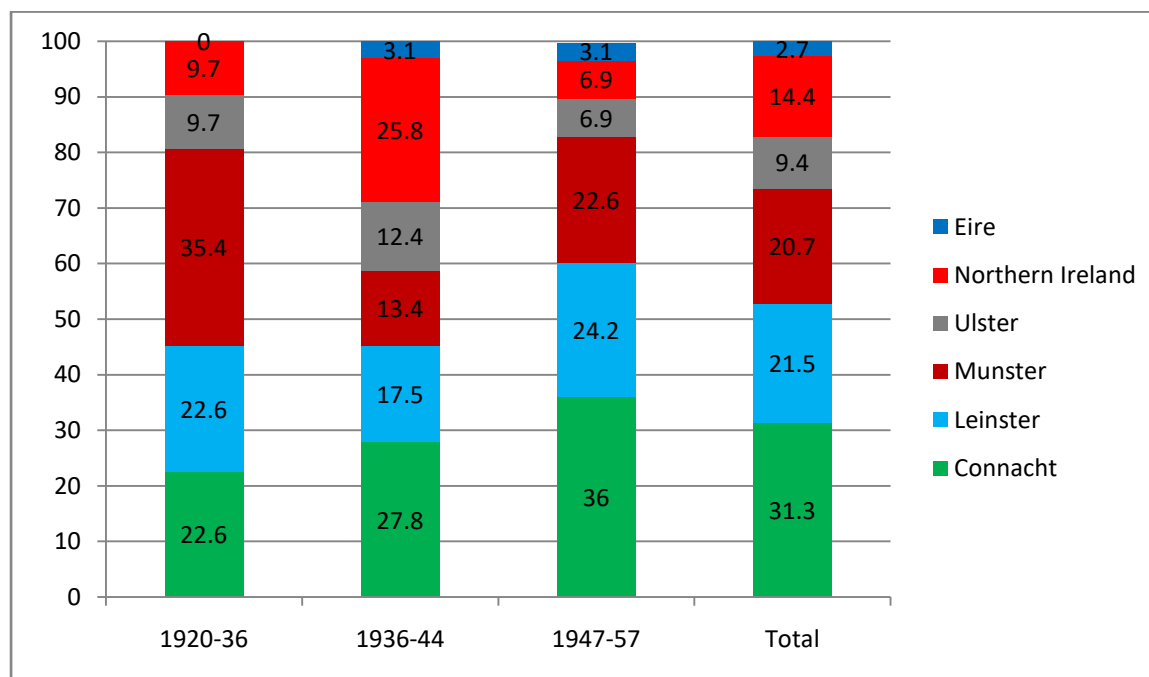


Source: Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 April 1920 to 22 October 1944, 19 February 1947 to 12 October 1957.

The provincial figures, shown in Figure 2.3, show that that all four provinces were well-represented at Glenside. It is clear that Connacht nurses were the most numerous throughout the period, particularly in the immediate post-war years when the Irish-born proportion was at its highest. The other three provinces were also strongly represented at over 20 per cent each with just over three per cent to separate them. There were comparatively few Irish-born nurses in the earliest period where Munster was strongly represented. Northern Irish nurses were particularly numerous from 1936 to 1944, as were the other three Ulster counties. Indeed, if taken together, the nine Ulster counties had the biggest proportion of nurses in the middle period. Leinster had a fairly even proportion throughout the period and – along with Munster - was particularly well-represented in the latter period when there were few nurses from Ulster. Connacht's over-representation in the latter period is reflected in the fact that, over the period as a whole, almost a third of all Irish-born Glenside nurses were from the province.



Figure 2.3 – Irish-born nurses at Glenside Hospital by country and province of origin, 1920-57, (%).



Source: Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 April 1920 to 22 October 1944, 19 February 1947 to 12 October 1957.

\*Only includes the three Ulster counties in the Republic of Ireland: Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan.

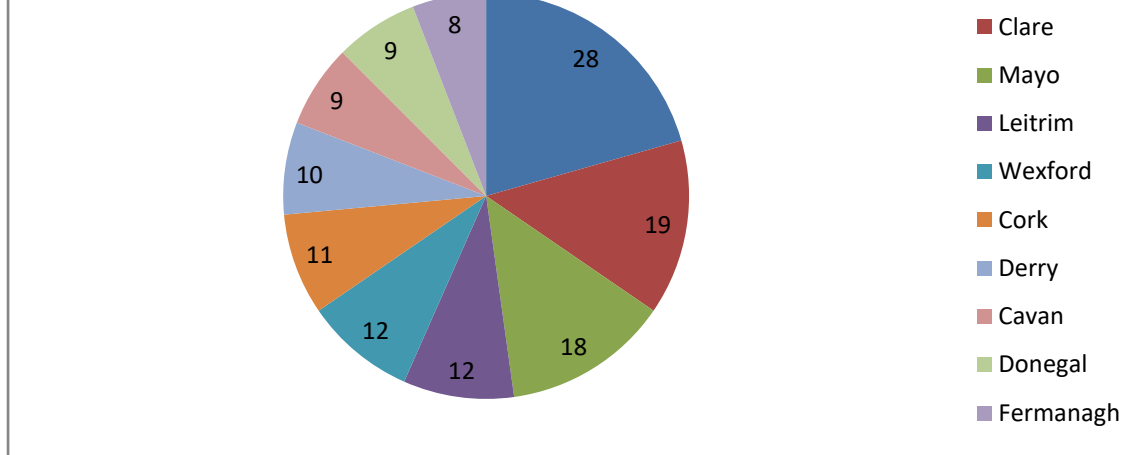
\*\*Figures for Northern Ireland have been included to differentiate between the six Ulster counties that make up Northern Ireland and the three Ulster counties in the Republic of Ireland.

In terms of county data, it is clear that the distribution of the Glenside Irish conformed to the aforementioned pattern of heavy depopulation from western counties as we saw in Chapter One.<sup>312</sup> Figure 2.4 displays the ten best-represented counties over the period. Connacht and western counties dominate this table, with Leitrim, Mayo and Roscommon – of which the first two are situated on the west coast - representing Connacht. In addition to this, the western seaboard counties Clare and Cork in Munster as well as Donegal in Ulster are well-represented. Whilst Leinster's Wexford, on Ireland's south east coast, as well as Cavan, Derry and Fermanagh in the North do not follow this trend, it is significant that seven of the nine best-represented Glenside counties corresponded to the aforementioned patterns.<sup>313</sup>

<sup>312</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.304.

<sup>313</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.304.

**Figure 2.4: Irish-born nurses at Glenside hospital by county of origin**

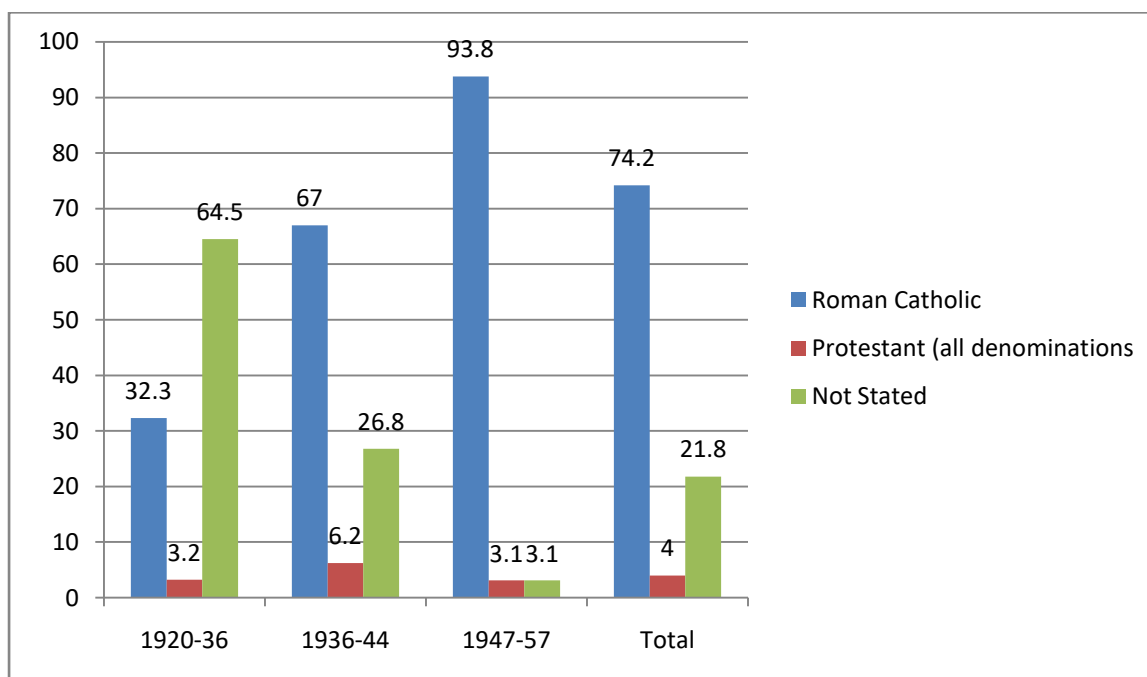


Source: Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 April 1920 to 22 October 1944, 19 February 1947 to 12 October 1957.

The results with regard to religious affiliation, as shown below in Figure 2.5, were even more emphatic, and rather predictable. Whilst over 20 per cent of the records were incomplete, the predominance of Roman Catholics was evident, with over 74 per cent listed as such. Indeed, if one were to omit the incomplete records, the Catholic figure would rise to 95 per cent. In comparison, there were only ten Protestant nurses over the period accounting for just four per cent of the total and five per cent of the adjusted total. Given the strong Catholic majority as well as the predominance of Catholicism in the Republic of Ireland - no less than 92.6 per cent of the population between 1926 and 1971 - one can conclude with some confidence that much the same pattern would be evident from the missing records.<sup>314</sup>

<sup>314</sup> W. E. Vaughan and A. J. Fitzpatrick (eds.), *Irish Historical Statistics. Populations, 1821-1971*. (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 1978), p.49.

Figure 2.5 – Religious affiliation of Irish-born nurses at Glenside Hospital, 1920-57 (%).

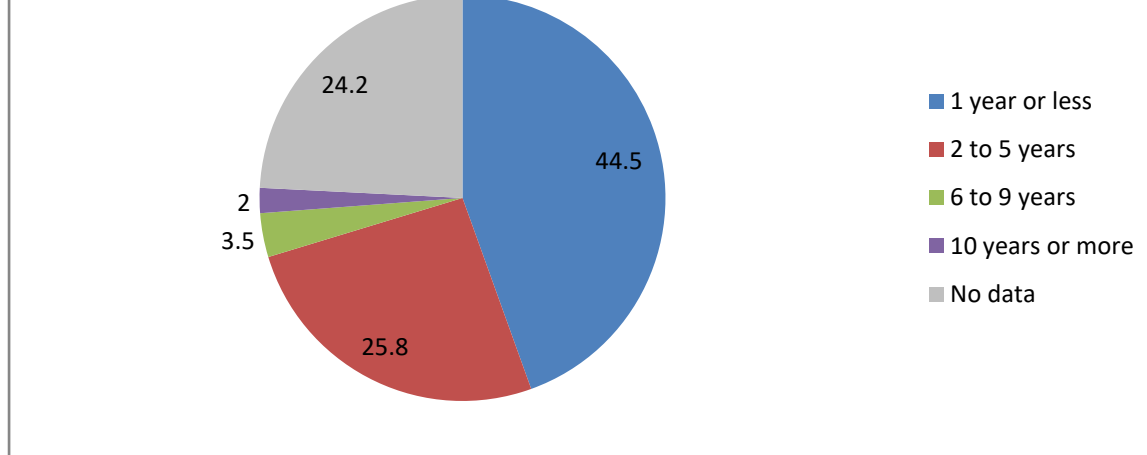


Source: Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 April 1920 to 22 October 1944, 19 February 1947 to 12 October 1957.

### 2.11 – Working at Glenside and further migration

The records also included starting and leaving dates for all nurses, as well as observations on their abilities and conduct. This information has been presented in Figure 2.6, below. It is immediately apparent that there was a very high turnover of Irish nurses throughout the period, as almost 45 per cent left within a year of taking up employment. This was particularly evident in the middle and latter periods when 44.5 and 48.4 per cent respectively departed the hospital within a year. There was also a significant proportion – over a quarter – of nurses that stayed for between two and five years. This group was particularly numerous in the first period, accounting for over half of the 31 Irish nurses employed at this time. The two other categories had modest numbers - particularly the ten years or more grouping – and only accounted for five and a half per cent overall. Around a quarter of the records did not indicate a leaving date. It was unclear whether this was a result of the individuals remaining at the hospital or incomplete records. For this reason they have been included in a separate ‘No data’ category.

**Figure 2.6 - Length of employment of Irish nurses at Glenside, 1920-44, 1947-57 (%).**



Source: Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 April 1920 to 22 October 1944, 19 February 1947 to 12 October 1957.

Given that there was very little return migration to Ireland from Britain, it seems likely that many of the nurses who left their positions early returned home to care for family members or as a stop-gap before subsequent migration. We have seen that chain migration was one of the most significant factors in determining the destinations of prospective Irish migrants throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and it is likely that many of the Glenside leavers were following friends or relatives elsewhere. This was also mentioned by Maureen, who recalled that that ‘of course you see one would bring over the other’.<sup>315</sup> In addition to this, one of the participants for Lennon, McAdam and O’Brien’s study recalled that her friend, a nurse in Scotland, had been urged by her matron to bring over any Irish girls who were interested in nursing.<sup>316</sup>

### **2.12 – ‘Dull, stupid, uneducated’<sup>317</sup>: A positive stereotype?**

Louise Ryan has found that whilst Irish nurses had cultivated a positive stereotype in Britain, there were also negative and racist elements which arose in the narratives of her participants. For example, several commented on the irony of their matrons ‘harbouring anti-Irish

<sup>315</sup> Interview with Maureen, b.1928, Longford.

<sup>316</sup> Lennon et al, *Across the Water*, p.106.

<sup>317</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 April 1920 to 15 September 1936, pp.113-4.

attitudes' whilst being simultaneously reliant on Irish nurses.<sup>318</sup> Ryan's participants recalled several incidents which display what Ryan described as 'open hostility towards the Irish[...] based on stereotypes of dirtiness, fecklessness and backwardness.'<sup>319</sup> One of Lennon's participants was the victim of anti-Catholic discrimination from English colleagues: 'there was a couple of them I can remember who were quite anti-Catholic, and they were telling me how stupid I was.'<sup>320</sup> The 'dirty Irish' stereotype was acknowledged by Maureen, although she did not experience this kind of hostility herself:

We all seemed to get on very well together you know. In fact we used to go to work very happy, you know.  
[Maureen b.1928, Longford].

Some of the Glenside records had short observations concerning the attitude, conduct and aptitude of individuals. Whilst there is no evidence of any of the Irish nurses being discriminated against, there are several comments which referred to the unsuitability of individuals for nursing work, and sometimes even their lack of education. These were often in the form of short descriptions, such as the following rather blunt assessment from 1936: 'Dull, stupid uneducated'.<sup>321</sup> Another entry from the same list read 'Poor intellect, found great difficulty in passing examination.'<sup>322</sup> However, these comments were sometimes tempered with more positive references. One entry from 1946 described a nurse who had failed to pass her examinations: 'Poor intelligence, but good nurse.'<sup>323</sup> Another entry from 1948 described the 'poor intelligence' of one Irish nurse and an entry from the following year noted that another student nurse possessed 'inadequate education'.<sup>324</sup>

There were also comments which addressed irrational or ill-tempered behaviour from some Irish nurses. One 1936 example described one as a 'childish, affected type' after she had reacted angrily to being given her notice.<sup>325</sup> In 1937, one was considered to possess a 'tactless manner' when dealing with patients and was eventually asked to resign after describing a patient as a 'prostitute'.<sup>326</sup> Another nurse was reprimanded in 1943 for 'shaking clenched fists' at a patient, although she was later given her notice as a result of being unable to qualify owing to her 'poor education'. She was also described as an 'agitator' and an

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<sup>318</sup> Ryan, "Becoming Nurses", p.126.

<sup>319</sup> Ibid, pp.126-7.

<sup>320</sup> Lennon et al, *Across the Water*, p.106.

<sup>321</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 April 1920 to 15 September 1936, pp.113-4.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid, pp.125-6.

<sup>323</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 May 1941 to 22 October 1944, p.61.

<sup>324</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 19 February 1947 to 2 March 1953, pp. 54, 100.

<sup>325</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 April 1920 to 15 September 1936, pp.255-6.

<sup>326</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 15 September 1936 to 5 January 1939, pp.3-4.

‘undesirable influence with our staff.’<sup>327</sup> One ‘bad tempered type’ resigned in 1946 following a reprimand for ‘slackness’ and was also accused of being unpleasant to new nurses, even assaulting one.<sup>328</sup> Accusations of stealing also occasionally arose, and one Irish nurse was dismissed in 1943 for stealing a blanket from one of the wards.<sup>329</sup> Another was dismissed in 1952 and branded a ‘persistent thief’ after stealing various items from the nurses’ home. In addition to this, her level of education was questioned and she was described as ‘mentally defective’.<sup>330</sup> Finally, one nurse left the hospital after four months, partly because she was ‘unable to attend Mass every Sunday’ and partly because she believed that she could earn more money elsewhere.<sup>331</sup>

Jackson has suggested that the Irish, and particularly Irish nurses, had a reputation for overstaying their annual leave: ‘Irish student nurses, for instance, were said to be adept at failing to secure a place on the boat back to England.’<sup>332</sup> However, over the period as a whole, there were only five reported cases of Irish nurses at Glenside overstaying leave. Of these, three were reprimanded. In October 1936, one nurse wrote to the hospital four days before she was expected back at work with a doctor’s note which excused her for an extra week.<sup>333</sup> There were two further reprimands in July 1941, one for a nurse returning two days late and another for a nurse who had taken an extra week after refusing to leave Ireland without her sister, who had been too ill to travel.<sup>334</sup> Only two nurses are recorded to have been dismissed after overstaying leave. The first was in August 1946, though no length of time was established and the second was in April 1950, when the nurse in question had overstayed her annual leave by three months.<sup>335</sup> In addition to this, there were eight recorded cases of Irish nurses absconding, including one who never returned from leave that she had taken for her wedding.<sup>336</sup> These examples certainly do not suggest that the reputation that Jackson alluded to was particularly justified in the case of the Glenside Irish. The total of thirteen recorded cases is a little over five per cent of all Irish-born nurses at the hospital over the period.

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<sup>327</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 May 1941 to 22 October 1944, p.75.

<sup>328</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 May 1941 to 22 October 1944, p.82.

<sup>329</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 May 1941 to 22 October 1944, p.57.

<sup>330</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 19 February 1947 to 2 March 1953, p.134.

<sup>331</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 19 February 1947 to 2 March 1953, p.10.

<sup>332</sup> Jackson, *The Irish*, p.108.

<sup>333</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 April 1920 to 15 September 1936, pp.175-6.

<sup>334</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 15 September 1936 to 5 January 1939, pp.135-6, 143-4.

<sup>335</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 May 1941 to 22 October 1944, p.69; Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 19 February 1947 to 2 March 1953, p.94.

<sup>336</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 2 March 1953 to 12 October 1957, p.53.

There were also several instances where the hospital was undoubtedly accommodating. This mostly involved the facilitation of swift returns to Ireland in the event of a family illness. This was not without precedent as one of the participants in Lennon's study recalled that her hospital had been very accommodating in allowing Irish nurses to take their 21 days of annual leave consecutively so that they could return home for an extended period.<sup>337</sup> In 1938, one nurse received a message urging her to return home to Ireland as soon as possible to treat her ill father. She was paid a week's salary in lieu of notice and released from her employment on the same day.<sup>338</sup> In 1946, another nurse was 'allowed to leave at once' without notice to return home and care for her mother.<sup>339</sup> In 1952 a nurse resigned by post, having been granted compassionate leave to return to Ireland to nurse her ill mother. Although the hospital was unable to grant her request for indefinite leave, she was offered 27 days leave and allowed to resign without notice.<sup>340</sup> The final example is from 1953, when an Irish nurse was given a month's salary in lieu of notice after being diagnosed with tuberculosis.<sup>341</sup>

In addition to this, there were ten overtly positive references on the character and ability of Irish nurses. This figure compares more than favourably with the seven references to aggressive behaviour or theft, as well as the thirteen references to overstaying leave or failing to return altogether. There is no evidence in the records to suggest that Irish nurses at Glenside were treated unfairly or discriminated against, and it is undeniable that special provision was sometimes made to ease their swift departure from the hospital and return home.

## 2.13 - Conclusion

This chapter has identified that, whilst wartime records are somewhat sparse, that there was a significant demand for the import of Irish workers into Bristol. This is made clear by the records of Bristol-based companies such as Magnal Products and the Bristol Aeroplane Company, both of which had significant dialogue with the appropriate ministries over filling gaps in their workforce with Irishmen. The wartime transport issues which blighted the transfer of Irish workers were also a serious concern of the MOL's Bristol office. In addition to this, evidence of concerns from health authorities in the city over the medical condition of

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<sup>337</sup> Lennon et al, *Across the Water*, p.175.

<sup>338</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 15 September 1936 to 5 January 1939, pp.247-8.

<sup>339</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 26 May 1941 to 22 October 1944, p.62.

<sup>340</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 19 February 1947 to 2 March 1953, p.95.

<sup>341</sup> Glenside Hospital Nursing Staff Records, 19 February 1947 to 2 March 1953, p.198.

incoming Irish workers has been uncovered. This also related to the problems that would be faced in housing them in a city with limited living space given the extensive war damage. All of this evidence firmly indicates the importance of Irish labour in Bristol during the war.

It is also evident that Irish building labourers came to the city in significant numbers during the post-war years, as they did throughout Britain's urban centres. The impact of Irish labour on Bristol's extensive rebuilding programme, as well as their contribution to the city over the period has been established. We have seen that the Irish-born population of Bristol grew exponentially between 1931 and 1961, and it is evident from the records of the HOC that housing provision for Irish building labourers was a significant problem, particularly when one takes the housing crisis of the post-war period into account. To this end, wartime hostels were continued and expanded to accommodate the newcomers. Given the alleged reluctance of private homeowners to offer lodgings to Irish men, as was referenced by Brendan, it is unsurprising that there were at least two hostels for this purpose in post-war Bristol.

This chapter has also uncovered groundbreaking new data regarding Irish nurses in Bristol. Whilst great strides have been made in the study of Irish nurses in Britain by researchers such as Louise Ryan, to my knowledge, there have been no detailed analyses such as that offered in this thesis. That there was no official dialogue concerning Irish nurses is somewhat surprising given that the records cited here show that the post-war situation regarding shortages in that profession was dire. In spite of this, the Glenside staff record books as well as Maureen's testimony indicate that there were a significant number of Irish nurses in Bristol throughout the period. The records examined in this thesis contain excellent data, and this has allowed for a remarkably detailed analysis. From this, it has been gleaned that over a quarter of all student nurses at the hospital between 1920 and 1944 and almost a third from 1947 to 1957 were Irish-born. Of these, the overwhelming majority were Catholics born in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Irish student nurses accounted for just under 15 per cent of the total over the entire period whilst only four per cent were Protestant. It was also apparent that there was a very high turnover rate of Irish student nurses at Glenside, and 44.5 per cent of individuals were in the hospital's employment for under one year whilst only five and a half per cent lasted longer than five years. This chapter failed to uncover any evidence of Glenside's Irish contingent being discriminated against at work. Indeed, the number praised for their abilities compared favourably to those whose level of education or temperament was criticised. In addition to this, the Glenside Irish conformed to several of the characteristics associated with the Irish in Britain which have been identified in the literature,



including heavy representation at Glenside in the immediate post-war period and a strong presence from Connacht and western counties many of which experienced the highest emigration rates in Ireland at this time.

There is very little evidence to suggest that either group – nurses or navvies – were targets for discrimination or prejudice. Brendan recalled that Brislington landlords and landladies were somewhat ‘wary’ of Irish building labourers. However, he unequivocally denied that any real antagonism had occurred between the Irish and English in his working life. Likewise, Maureen was aware of the ‘dirty Irish’ stereotype, but never experienced it herself and was very happy with the working relationships that she had built with colleagues of every nationality. Clearly more research is required on this topic, and the comprehensive Glenside data in particular could form the basis for more thorough research on Irish nurses in Bristol.

### 3. “Admirable Restraint”<sup>342</sup> Twentieth Century Anglo-Irish relations in the Bristol Context

*It is a hard responsibility to be a stranger;  
to hear your speech sounding at odds with your  
neighbours’;  
holding your tongue from quick comparisons;  
remembering that you are a guest in the house.*<sup>343</sup>

This chapter will examine several key twentieth century Anglo-Irish events in the Bristol context. These include the Second World War, the declaration of the Republic of Ireland in 1949, and the Troubles in Northern Ireland, as well as the PIRA bombing campaign in Britain during the 1970s. This will have a particular focus on the rarely remembered bombing of Park Street in the centre of Bristol on 18 December 1974. To my knowledge, this event has been all but ignored in the literature on PIRA’s British campaign. As well as this, it was found that the 1974 Prevention of Terrorism (Temporary Provisions) Act [PTA] had particular significance for several Bristol Irishmen who were detained and eventually excluded under the provisions of the Act. This series of events, as well as details concerning the British-based Sinn Féin support group Clann na h’Éireann, of which they were members, have rarely been recognised in the literature.

Aside from participants’ experiences, newspaper reports provide the most effective means of gauging public feeling and reaction in Bristol as well as nationwide. Whilst many other regional studies of the Irish in Britain have utilised local and national newspaper reports for this purpose, this comprehensive newspaper analysis is unusual in the study of the Irish in Britain. Through this exercise, it was identified that the tone of the two featured Bristol newspapers, the *BEP* and the *WDP*, tended to have much in common with the ‘liberal tradition’ of the *Manchester Guardian* [*MG*].<sup>344</sup> As we will see, this mirrored the experiences of participants to a large degree, which further reinforces the value of examining newspaper reports. In terms of the political leanings and editorship of both Bristol newspapers, the evidence is fragmented and somewhat contradictory. The *WDP* was founded in 1858 and remained an independent business until its purchase by the Bristol United Press group – which also owned the *BEP* - in 1959. The *BEP* was first published in 1932 by local businessmen and journalists in opposition to *Daily Mail* and *Daily Telegraph*-owned local

<sup>342</sup>F. Cormack, letter to *WDP*, printed March 20, 1944, p.2.

<sup>343</sup> From John Hewitt, “The Search” in *John Hewitt: Selected Poems*, eds. Michael Longley and Frank Ormsby, (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 2007), pp.83-4.

<sup>344</sup> “The Scott Trust: values and history” *Guardian*, July 26, 2015: <https://www.theguardian.com/the-scott-trust/2015/jul/26/the-scott-trust> (accessed March 1, 2017). The *Manchester Guardian* was renamed the *Guardian* in 1959.

newspapers. Bristol United Press was eventually taken over by the Daily Mail and General Trust in 1999 and the *BEP* and *WDP* were sold on again to Local World in 2012. Neither newspaper has displayed any particular political leanings over the period, and both have generally endorsed “mainstream” views in supporting the government of the day. This was particularly the case with regard to the Troubles in Northern Ireland, where the British government were never criticised. Indeed, it has been argued that ‘The ethos of local papers in the twentieth century has always been to keep politically neutral in order not to alienate one group of readers or another.’<sup>345</sup>

In spite of this, both newspapers occasionally strayed from the aforementioned liberal viewpoint. One example of this was in 1949 when the *WDP* criticised the manner of Ireland’s secession from the Commonwealth.<sup>346</sup> Another was when the *WDP* advocated the reintroduction of capital punishment following the assassination of Lord Mountbatten in August 1979.<sup>347</sup> Most strikingly, the *BEP* demanded that the city’s Irish population disprove their guilt through association by publicly denouncing PIRA following the Birmingham pub bombings in November 1974.<sup>348</sup> However, for the most part both newspapers displayed the ‘admirable restraint’ for which the *WDP* was praised by one Irish correspondent in 1944.<sup>349</sup> This coverage reflected the experience of the majority of the participants for this study. Indeed, not one recalled a discernible backlash against the Irish during the Troubles, not even in the aftermath of the Park Street bombings. Given the vilification of the Irish population identified in recent studies of other cities, such as Birmingham and London, both of which were targets for far more serious PIRA attacks, the reaction in Bristol, however muted, is more than worthy of further study.<sup>350</sup>

### 3.1 - Standing aloof?<sup>351</sup>: Irish Neutrality

*Going to Dublin was changing worlds – a dance of lights in the Liffey, bacon and eggs and Guinness, laughter in the slums and salons, gossip sufficient to the day. Dublin was hardly worried by the war; her old preoccupations were still preoccupations....*<sup>352</sup>

The impact of the Second World War on Anglo-Irish relations has been well documented. Neutrality provided the fledgling Irish state with its first significant opportunity to ‘stand

<sup>345</sup> Eugene Byrne, email to the author, October 19, 2015.

<sup>346</sup> “Irish ‘Problem’” *WDP*, October 18, 1948, p.3.

<sup>347</sup> “A Dagger in the Heart of Britain” *WDP*, August 28, 1979, p.6.

<sup>348</sup> “There can be no surrender to this evil” *BEP*, November 25, 1974, p.4.

<sup>349</sup> F. Cormack, letter to *WDP*, printed March 20, 1944, p.2.

<sup>350</sup> Moran, *Irish Birmingham*; Sorohan, *Irish London*.

<sup>351</sup> “Irish ‘Problem’” *WDP*, October 18, 1948, p.3.

<sup>352</sup> Louis MacNeice, *The Strings are False*. (London: Faber & Faber Ltd, 2007), p.213.

aloof' from Great Britain and this soured relations between the two countries for years to come. Indeed, Delaney has persuasively argued that Irish neutrality was 'widely misunderstood in Britain' and that it 'cast a long shadow over the Irish, as their 'loyalty' was always open to question in the 1940s and 1950s.'<sup>353</sup> Given that the majority of the participants for this study have little or no memory of the war, the main sources for this section are the *BEP* and the *WDP*. The tolerant views both newspapers displayed towards Ireland differed significantly from those of many other British newspapers, some of which depicted neutrality as a betrayal. Both Bristol publications recognised that neutrality was the preferred option of the majority of Ireland's populace, often ignored Anglo-Irish flashpoints altogether, and even occasionally defended Ireland's right to neutrality.

This restraint was established immediately, the *WDP* briefly summarised de Valera's Dáil speech of 2 September 1939 in which he confirmed Ireland's neutrality.<sup>354</sup> The *BEP* made no reference to Ireland until October when it quoted a *Spectator* article in which neutrality was defended as a reflection of 'the wishes of the Irish people'. The article also acknowledged the contribution of Irishmen to the British armed forces during the First World War and in the present.<sup>355</sup> *The Times* conceded that neutrality was probably the 'best possible policy' for Ireland.<sup>356</sup> In contrast, *The Dundee Courier and Advertiser* criticised Ireland as the only member of the British Commonwealth not to stand 'in line' with Britain, citing the old maxim – "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity".<sup>357</sup> On 23 October The *BEP* published a reader's letter which criticised Ireland for 'withhold[ing] their help' whilst 'depend[ing] for their very safety on this country's Army and Navy'.<sup>358</sup> In December 1939, it reprinted an excerpt from *The Irish Press* emphasising the widespread support for neutrality.<sup>359</sup> These examples illustrate the *BEP*'s willingness to present both sides of the debate, particularly given that *The Irish Press* had been founded by de Valera and was thus hardly politically impartial. The tone of these sparse reports set the tone for the Bristol media's coverage of Irish neutrality.

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<sup>353</sup> Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.119.

<sup>354</sup> "Eire Will Maintain Neutrality" *WDP*, September 4, 1939, p.6.

<sup>355</sup> "Eire and The War" from *The Spectator*, printed in *BEP*, October 21, 1939, p.3.

<sup>356</sup> Richard Doherty, *Irish Men and Women in the Second World War*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1999), 14.

<sup>357</sup> "Different Kinds Of Neutrality" *Dundee Courier and Advertiser*, September 6, 1939, p. 4.

<sup>358</sup> 'G.H'. letter to *BEP*, printed October 23, 1939, p.11.

<sup>359</sup> "Eire's Voice" from *The Irish Press*, printed in *BEP*, 29 December, 1939, p.3.

### 3.2 – “New Chapter”<sup>360</sup>: The Treaty Ports

Ireland’s refusal to grant Britain the use of the three so-called Treaty Ports<sup>361</sup> is recognised in the literature as one of the most fraught issues of Ireland’s war.<sup>362</sup> Indeed, Carroll has argued that the issue threatened ‘to lead to war between Britain and Ireland’ ‘at various critical times’.<sup>363</sup> The return of the ports in the 1938 Anglo-Irish Agreement was particularly significant as this allowed Ireland to exercise its sovereignty through neutrality, and David George Boyce has remarked that this agreement ‘was not a set of concessions that might be taken as typical of agreements normally concluded between a powerful country and its rather dependent neighbour’.<sup>364</sup> Whilst the issue of the ports put an enormous strain on relations with Britain, the lone dissenting voice at the time of the Agreement was Winston Churchill, who continued to rail against their loss throughout his premiership and described Ireland’s actions as ‘odious’.<sup>365</sup> He would later claim in his war memoirs that ‘a more feckless act [than the return of the ports] can hardly be imagined’.<sup>366</sup>

However, in January 1938, the *BEP* lauded the ‘amicable and commonsense basis’ on which Anglo-Irish negotiations were proceeding without referencing the strategic importance of the ports.<sup>367</sup> The *BEP* also printed excerpts from the *MG* and the Conservative-supporting *Daily Mail*, both of which praised the ‘practical efforts’ of both governments.<sup>368</sup> On 26 April 1938, the Agreement was formally announced, and the *BEP* published a raft of quotations from other UK newspapers, all but two of which were overwhelmingly positive. Indeed, the *MG* described the Agreement as ‘the best thing that has happened in the relations between the two countries since the treaty of 1921’.<sup>369</sup> Similar approval was expressed in local newspapers from Birmingham, Cardiff, Norwich and Sheffield, whilst two Belfast newspapers, the

<sup>360</sup> “New Chapter”, *BEP*, April 26, p.9.

<sup>361</sup> Cobh (formerly Queenstown), Berehaven and Lough Swilly.

<sup>362</sup> Paul Bew, *Ireland. The Politics of Enmity 1789-2006*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), pp.463, 473; D. G. Boyce, *The Irish Question and British Politics, 1868-1996*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press LTD, 1996), p.90; Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon, *The Irish Experience During the Second World War, An Oral History*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2004), p.9; David Harkness, *Ireland in the Twentieth Century. Divided Island*. (Basingstoke: Macmillan Press Ltd, 1996), p.61; Holmes, *John Bull’s Island*, p.164; Dermot Keogh, *Twentieth-Century Ireland*, p.156; Kevin B. Nowlan, “On the Eve of the War,” in *Ireland in the War Years and After*, eds. Kevin B. Nowlan and T. Desmond Williams (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1969), 1-13, pp.4-5; Trevor C. Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland, An Ambivalent and Unique Security Policy*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p.97; Ziesler, *The Irish in Birmingham*, p.163.

<sup>363</sup> Joseph T. Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years 1939-1945*. (Newton Abbot: David and Charles, 1975), p.24.

<sup>364</sup> Boyce, *The Irish Question*, p.90.

<sup>365</sup> Paul Bew, *Churchill and Ireland*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), p.143.

<sup>366</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Volume I, The Gathering Storm*. (London: Cassell & Co. LTD, 1948), p.216.

<sup>367</sup> “What Part”, *BEP*, Wednesday January 19, p.6.

<sup>368</sup> “Eire and Defence”; ‘Good Move’, *BEP*, June 1, p.18.

<sup>369</sup> “New Chapter”, *BEP*, April 26, p.9.

moderately unionist *Belfast Telegraph* and the nationalist *Irish News*, tentatively hoped that the Agreement signalled the roots of reconciliation.<sup>370</sup> Conversely, the *Belfast News Letter* was concerned that Northern Ireland's interests stood to suffer, and the [Belfast] *Northern Whig* predicted that the concessions would lead to the 'final scuttle of the British Government from points of great strategic importance.'<sup>371</sup> Two days later, the *BEP* printed a *Telegraph and Post* editorial which described the 'universal sense of relief' in Britain at the reconciliation, but lamented the 'surrender' of the ports.'<sup>372</sup> In addition, the *Aberdeen Journal and Press*, which would later be extremely critical of de Valera was extremely positive, and even criticised Churchill for speaking against the Agreement.<sup>373</sup>

Upon Britain's entry into the war, Churchill was appointed to the War Cabinet as First Lord of the Admiralty, and he immediately began to stress the importance of the ports.<sup>374</sup> His appeals failed to move the Cabinet until October 1939, when a U-Boat sank the battleship *Royal Oak* at Scapa Flow.<sup>375</sup> Canning has described this as a 'severe jolt to British pride and sense of security which left the Government considerably shaken', and the loss of the *Royal Oak* resulted in several unsuccessful efforts to regain the ports.<sup>376</sup> Paul Bew, in his book on Churchill and Ireland, has noted that Churchill was 'much troubled' by Irish neutrality, of which he was a 'bitter critic'.<sup>377</sup> This attitude has been described as a reflection of his 'imperialist attitude' and inability to come to terms with any measure of Irish independence.<sup>378</sup> In spite of this, his 'determination to teach [Ireland] a lesson' was tempered by his government's fear of the reaction in the U.S.<sup>379</sup> In November 1940, following the fall of France and heavy shipping losses, Churchill described the unavailability of the ports as 'a most grievous burden and one which should never have been placed on our shoulders, broad though they be.'<sup>380</sup>

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<sup>370</sup> Ibid.

<sup>371</sup> Ibid.

<sup>372</sup> 'Naval Bases', *BEP*, April 28, p.17.

<sup>373</sup> "An Act of Faith", *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, May 6, 1938, p.2.

<sup>374</sup> Paul Canning, *British Policy Towards Ireland, 1921-1941*. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1985), pp.246-7; Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years*, pp.26-7.

<sup>375</sup> Scapa Flow had proved impenetrable throughout the First World War.

<sup>376</sup> Canning, *British Policy*, p.247.

<sup>377</sup> Bew, *Churchill and Ireland*, p.8.

<sup>378</sup> Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years*, pp.24, 31-2; Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Volume III, The Grand Alliance*. (London: Cassell & Co. LTD, 1950), p.641; Eunan O'Halpin, *Spying on Ireland: British Intelligence and Irish Neutrality During the Second World War*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp.53-4; Wills, *That Neutral Island*, pp.115, 118.

<sup>379</sup> Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years*, pp.78-80; Sean Cronin, *Irish Nationalism. A History of its Roots and Ideology*. (Dublin: The Academy Press, 1980), p.164; Eunan O'Halpin, *Defending Ireland, The Irish Free State and its Enemies Since 1922*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.173.

<sup>380</sup> Arthur Mitchell and Pádraig Ó Snodaigh, *Irish Political Documents 1916-1949*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1985), p.222.

Wills has argued that there was a ‘concerted press campaign against the Irish’ following this speech. This campaign focussed ‘obsessively’ on the ports, and the accusation that Ireland was ignoring an ‘ethical requirement to save lives.’<sup>381</sup> Indeed, both Wills and Carroll have noted that much of the criticism centred on the theme of British sailors dying in the act of delivering supplies to Ireland.<sup>382</sup> Neither the *BEP* nor the *WDP* covered Churchill’s outburst at all, and it is therefore reasonable to assume that they did not share his views. However, many other British newspapers did. Canning has quoted *The Economist* and the *Daily Telegraph*, both of which advocated taking the ports by force in October 1939.<sup>383</sup> The *Aberdeen Journal*, which had previously praised the decision to return the ports, described de Valera as a ‘staunch disciple of the old doctrine that England’s necessity is Ireland’s opportunity’.<sup>384</sup> The *Dundee Courier and Advertiser* compared de Valera to Hitler in terms of his ‘mulish inability to negotiate’.<sup>385</sup> The *Lancashire Evening Post* incorrectly claimed that Irish neutrality was favourable to Britain’s enemies, and, similarly to *The Western Morning News*<sup>386</sup> [*WMN*], condemned the concession of the ports as ‘weak-kneed surrender’.<sup>387</sup> The *Exeter Express and Echo* acknowledged that the refusal to return the ports was ‘logical’, but argued that de Valera, in ‘exercising the right of self-determination’ was ‘aiding and abetting the enemy’. It also bitterly opined that Ireland would have been German-occupied long ago without the protection of the British navy.<sup>388</sup> Conversely, the *MG* openly criticised Churchill’s stance on the ports, and argued that Britain would have faced several other ‘grave embarrassments’ without the 1938 settlement.<sup>389</sup>

The refusal to concede the ports led to suggestions that Irish neutrality favoured the Axis. In fact, the opposite was the case: Allied pilots who crashed over Ireland were returned to the UK whilst Axis pilots were interned; British aircraft were allowed to use a corridor of Irish airspace for quicker Atlantic access; the Irish intelligence service [G2] provided their British counterparts [MI5] with reports of German submarine and aircraft activity in Irish territory; the British were supplied with meteorological reports and, most crucially, Irish-born citizens were not prevented from enlisting in the British Forces or seeking employment in the

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<sup>381</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, pp.114-5.

<sup>382</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, p.115; Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years*, p.24.

<sup>383</sup> Canning, *British Policy*, pp.292-3.

<sup>384</sup> ‘Irish Naval Bases Are Vital’ *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, November 9, 1940, p.2.

<sup>385</sup> ‘Naval Bases In Eire’ *Dundee Courier and Advertiser*, November 9, 1940, p.2.

<sup>386</sup> Of Cornwall, Devon, Dorset and Somerset.

<sup>387</sup> ‘The Ports Of Eire’ *Lancashire Evening Post*, Wednesday November 13, 1940, p.3.

<sup>388</sup> ‘Mr. D Valera’s “No”. Use Of Irish Bases Denied To Britain’ *Exeter Express and Echo*, November 8, 1940, p.3.

<sup>389</sup> ‘The U-Boats’ *The Manchester Guardian*, November 6, 1940, p.4.

United Kingdom.<sup>390</sup> The extent of the cooperation between G2 and MI5 has been revealed by Eunan O’Halpin in his excellent accounts of British and Irish wartime intelligence sharing. O’Halpin concluded that ‘Even at the political level, there was quiet recognition that Ireland had not let Britain down in security terms.’<sup>391</sup>

The ports remained a newsworthy issue later in the war, but attention had been diverted elsewhere. In December 1941, the *WMN* described neutrality as the continuation of an Irish trend of treachery which had seen the Easter rebels stab England ‘in the back’ during the First World War.<sup>392</sup> In 1943, the *Aberdeen Journal* argued that the navy’s ‘task[...] would have been greatly lessened’ had Britain retained the ports.<sup>393</sup> The ports were undoubtedly one of the most contentious factors in Irish neutrality for the British press, particularly after Churchill had fanned the flames. However, it is clear that the Bristol press did not take up his criticisms and rail against de Valera’s intransigence as many other British newspapers did.

### 3.3 – “Queues of recruits”<sup>394</sup>: Loyalists and Nationalists

Another popular wartime theme in the British media was to compare Irish neutrality unfavourably with Northern Irish loyalty. Brian Barton and Richard Doherty have noted that the Northern Irish government recognised the war as an opportunity to demonstrate their allegiance to the Union, and indeed Craigavon, the Northern Irish Premier, proclaimed that

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<sup>390</sup> Bew, *Churchill and Ireland*, pp.151-2, 157; Terence Brown, *Ireland, A Social and Cultural History 1922-2002*. (London: Harper Perennial, 2004), pp.160-1; Peter Collins, ‘British Labour and developments in Ireland in the immediate post-war years’ in *The British Labour Party and twentieth-century Ireland* (ed.) Laurence Marley, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 88-103, pp.92-3; Cronin, *Irish Nationalism*, p.164; Ronan Fanning, *Independent Ireland*. (Dublin: Helicon Limited, 1983), pp.124-5; Ferriter, *Transformation*, pp.388-9; Brian Girvin, “The Republicanisation of Irish Society, 1932-48”, in *A New History of Ireland VII, Ireland 1921-84*, ed. J. R. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 127-160, pp.152-3; Grob-Fitzgibbon, *The Irish Experience During the Second World War*, p.12; Cormac Kavanagh, ‘Neutrality and the Volunteers: Irish and British Government Policy Towards the Irish Volunteers’ in *Ireland and the Second World War, Politics, Society and Remembrance*, eds. Brian Girvin and Geoffrey Roberts (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 76-90, p.79; Keogh, *Twentieth-Century Ireland*, pp.100-120-1; J. J. Lee, *Ireland 1912-1985*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), pp.244-5; Laurence Marley, ‘Introduction’ in *The British Labour Party and twentieth-century Ireland* (ed.) Laurence Marley, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 1-16, p.7; John A. Murphy, ‘Irish Neutrality in Historical Perspective’ in *Ireland and the Second World War, Politics, Society and Remembrance*, eds. Brian Girvin and Geoffrey Roberts (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), 9-23, pp.14-5; Aengus Nolan, “‘A Most Heavy and Grievous Burden’: Joseph Walshe and the Establishment of Sustainable Neutrality, 1940” in *Ireland in World War Two Diplomacy and Survival*, eds. Dermot Keogh and Mervyn O’Driscoll (Cork: Mercier Press, 2004), 126-143, p.130; Donal Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland, 1939-1945. Neutrality, Politics and Society*. (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), pp.4-5, 6-7, 88; O’Halpin, *Spying on Ireland*, pp.263, 292-3; Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, pp.127-8, 129; T. Desmond Williams, “Ireland and the War” in *Ireland in the War Years and After*, eds. Kevin B. Nowlan and T. Desmond Williams (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1969), 14-27, pp.24-5; Wills, p.10.

<sup>391</sup> O’Halpin, *Spying on Ireland*, p.263.

<sup>392</sup> “None So Blind” *Western Morning News*, December 17, 1941, p.2.

<sup>393</sup> “Irish Neutrality” *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, November 17, 1943, p.2.

<sup>394</sup> “Ulstermen Irish to Join Up” *BEP*, October 31, 1939, p.9.



there would be ‘no slackening in loyalty’.<sup>395</sup> Churchill vowed that Ireland would ‘not be allowed to drag Ulster down into the ditch with them,’ and pledged to defend Northern Ireland as if it were ‘Kent or Lancashire’.<sup>396</sup> He would later describe Ulster as a ‘faithful sentinel’ in his war memoirs, although he had been critical of Northern Ireland’s war effort in 1941.<sup>397</sup>

The aforementioned restraint of the Bristol press was also evident in the coverage of an October 1941 lecture given by the author and journalist Dorothy Macardle, a close friend of de Valera.<sup>398</sup> Macardle somewhat unconvincingly identified English atrocities in Ireland as the main reason for neutrality, and argued that, whilst he did not support Nazism, de Valera ‘could not allow Ireland to enter a war as an ally of Britain after the way that she had been treated.’<sup>399</sup> That the *WDP* did not denigrate Macardle’s views further reflect the manner in which the Bristol press reported Irish affairs throughout the war. There was a hint of hostility in another article from May 1940 which discussed the value of food imports from Ireland. The *WDP* hoped that ‘with understanding and goodwill[...] an agreement profitable to both sides’ could be reached. In spite of this, there is a clear accusation of immoral profiteering levelled against Irish farmers, who were ‘not likely to be shaken out of [their] customary rut[...] unless it is made well worth [their] while’.<sup>400</sup> This also evoked the stereotype of the Irish as being lazy and feckless.<sup>401</sup> Even the *MG* observed that Ireland was ‘out of the path of armies and the deadly squadrons of the sky, with its normal trade routes almost free from disturbance.’<sup>402</sup> The *MG* was also critical of the Irish in November 1940, and accused them of ‘living (as some would say they have always lived) in an unreal world of their own creating’, as well as ‘by and on Great Britain’.<sup>403</sup> Later that month it noted that Ireland was doing ‘extremely well out of the war’ given that it had not yet introduced rationing.<sup>404</sup>

Whilst it is clear that they were not particularly critical of Irish neutrality, the Bristol newspapers were more than prepared to emphasise Northern Irish loyalty. In September 1939

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<sup>395</sup> Brian Barton, “Northern Ireland, 1939-45”, in *A New History of Ireland VII, Ireland 1921-84*, ed. J. R. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 235-260, p.235; Doherty, *Irish Men and Women*, p.9.

<sup>396</sup> Robert Fisk, *In Time of War, Ireland, Ulster and The Price of Neutrality 1939-45*. (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan Ltd, 1985), p.55.

<sup>397</sup> Winston S. Churchill, *The Second World War, Volume II, Their Finest Hour*. (London: Cassell & Co. LTD, 1949), p.529.

<sup>398</sup> This lecture was delivered to members of the Co-Operative Worker’s Education Association.

<sup>399</sup> “Reasons for Eire’s Neutrality” *WDP*, October 13, 1941, p.3.

<sup>400</sup> “Trade with Eire” *WDP*, May 1, 1940, p.4.

<sup>401</sup> Liz Curtis, *Nothing But The Same Old Story, The Roots of Anti-Irish Racism*. (Nottingham: The Russell Press Ltd, 1996), p.51.

<sup>402</sup> “Mr. De Valera and the I.R.A.” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 13, 1940, p.4.

<sup>403</sup> “IRISH NEUTRALITY” *The Manchester Guardian*, November 9, 1940, p.6.

<sup>404</sup> “Fooling the Pinch” *The Manchester Guardian*, November 13, 1940, p.4.

the *WDP* claimed that Northern Ireland was ‘throw[ing] her whole resources into the prosecution of the war.’<sup>405</sup> On the same day, the *BEP* praised the ‘queues of recruits crowding out of the streets’ at Northern Irish recruitment offices.<sup>406</sup> However, Northern Ireland’s contribution to the British war effort has been questioned in both the secondary literature and contemporary sources. Judges, the official historian of Irish labour in Britain during the war, noted that the British government had considered extending conscription to Northern Ireland in 1941. This was partly a result of the modest rate of volunteers from Northern Ireland, which was said to have fostered resentment amongst the British people.<sup>407</sup> Several historians have compellingly argued that high unemployment rates in Northern Ireland during the war, as well as Craigavon’s call for conscription in Northern Ireland were a result of disappointing volunteer rates.<sup>408</sup> Churchill also alluded to this in a letter to Herbert Morrison, the Home Secretary, in which he concluded that ‘Northern Ireland does not appear to be making its utmost contribution to the war effort’. Churchill also echoed the Minister for Labour Ernest Bevin’s view that Northern Ireland had “to display some initiative on their own if they wish to make a fuller contribution”.<sup>409</sup> The proposal to extend conscription to Northern Ireland was unpopular in large sections of the British press. Fisk has noted that the *Daily Mirror*, *The Times* and the *London Evening Standard*, all warned against the dangers of undermining Stormont by alienating the nationalist population in this way. The *MG* was particularly dismissive and somewhat bluntly suggested that Craigavon should ‘justify the peculiar loyalty he claims by putting England to shame by the success of his voluntary methods.’ The *MG* even went so far as to agree with de Valera in describing the proposal as ‘an act of folly for which no words of condemnation would be strong enough’<sup>410</sup>:

Mr. De Valera has said a great many foolish things at different times, but on Monday he said something that is profoundly true. No greater violence can be done to liberty and human rights than to force a man to fight for a country of which he is a subject by compulsion.<sup>411</sup>

Fisk has noted that the only support for conscription was from several loyalist Northern Irish publications. This included the ‘avowedly Unionist’ *Belfast Telegraph*, which condemned nationalist objections as ‘ignoble and contemptible’.<sup>412</sup> A *WDP* article in May 1940 briefly

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<sup>405</sup>“Recruits Pouring In” *WDP*, September 18, 1939, p.4.

<sup>406</sup>“Ulstermen Irish to Join Up” *BEP*, October 31, 1939, p.9.

<sup>407</sup>TNA LAB 76/25, A.V. Judges, *Irish Labour in Great Britain, 1939-1945* (1949).

<sup>408</sup>Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years*, p.108; Fisk, *In Time of War*, p.155; Ollerenshaw, *Northern Ireland in the Second World War*, pp. 56, 162.

<sup>409</sup> PREM 4/53/3, Churchill to Morrison, 5/5/41.

<sup>410</sup>“ON THE EDGE OF A BLUNDER?” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 26, 1941, p.4.

<sup>411</sup>“Wise Decision” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 28, 1941, p.4.

<sup>412</sup>Fisk, *In Time of War*, p.81.

summarised a speech by Captain Mulholland, the Speaker of the Northern Irish House of Commons, in which he appealed to the country's young men to join the war effort. A January 1941 article detailed unionist criticisms of Ireland's refusal to openly violate neutrality by collaborating with Northern Irish authorities on defence and expelling Axis diplomats from the country. Fisk has quoted the Ulster Unionist Council's annual report for 1941, which was typically bullish on the subject: 'such an attitude will never be taken up by the loyalists. They will remain with Britain to the last and place all Ulster's resources, both human and material, at her disposal.'<sup>413</sup> In May 1943, the *WDP* quoted Churchill who praised Northern Irish loyalty, without which 'we would have been confronted with slavery and death and the light which now shines so strongly throughout the world would have been quenched.'<sup>414</sup>

In spite of these reports on Northern Irish loyalty, neither newspaper compared Ireland unfavourably to Northern Ireland. In other newspapers, however, Ireland was criticised for what was perceived as an attempt to blackmail Britain by offering to join the Allies in return for an end to partition. De Valera's oft-repeated assertion that Ireland could not fight alongside Britain whilst partition endured did much to fuel this concern. *The Dundee Courier* recoiled at any suggestion of 'forcing patriotic Ulster to become part of Mr de Valera's niggardly neutral State.'<sup>415</sup> Conversely, the *MG* criticised Craigavon for his 'obstinate' demands that Ireland renounce neutrality, expel the Axis diplomats and pledge 'not to raise any issue of a constitutional nature.'<sup>416</sup> It is clear that, whilst the *BEP* and *WDP* emphasised the loyalty of Northern Ireland, neither were predisposed to criticise Ireland. In addition to this, neither argued for or against conscription in Northern Ireland.

### 3.4 – “Destructively Neutral”<sup>417</sup>: Fifth Column Fears

Another preoccupation for the British media was the suspicion of Irish collusion with the Axis. The chief fear was that republican groups such as the Irish Republican Army [IRA] would help the Nazis to gain a foothold in Ireland.<sup>418</sup> However, whilst the Nazis did make contact with the IRA, their dealings were far from fruitful, as has been outlined in the historiography.<sup>419</sup> This apprehension was nothing new. Steve Garner has convincingly argued

<sup>413</sup> “Ulster Unionists Criticise Eire’s Neutrality” *WDP*, January 6, 1941, p.3.

<sup>414</sup> “Glowing Tribute To Ulster” *WDP*, May 10, 1943, p.4.

<sup>415</sup> “Naval Bases In Eire” *Dundee Courier and Advertiser*, November 9, 1940, p.2.

<sup>416</sup> “The Defence of Ireland” *The Manchester Guardian*, July 1, 1940, p.4.

<sup>417</sup> “Ireland... It’s position To-day” *BEP*, August 22, 1941, p.4.

<sup>418</sup> Such was the IRA’s notoriety in Britain in the wake of their 1939 British campaign, it is likely that suspicion would have fallen on sections of the Irish population anyway.

<sup>419</sup> Cronin, *Irish Nationalism*, p.162; Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, pp.146-7; Fisk, pp.74; O’Halpin, *Defending Ireland*, p.240.

that the Irish have long been viewed by the British as an uncivilised, and notably Catholic, ‘other’, with ‘far greater allegiance to Rome than to the British monarch’.<sup>420</sup> This distrust may have fuelled fears that the Irish were aiding the Axis powers during the Second World War. Fisk has argued that Churchill’s distrust of the Irish was based upon a ‘historical suspicion’ that ‘Ireland might secretly provide assistance to Britain’s enemies.’<sup>421</sup> Delaney found that angst around the role of Ireland was particularly rife after the fall of France, whilst Benjamin Grob-Fitzgibbon has cited rumours of Irish-German collusion after U-boat sightings off the Irish coast.<sup>422</sup> As we have seen, this distrust led to Irish workers being barred from certain jobs, such as naval production.<sup>423</sup> In July 1939, *The Times* rather proved Garner’s point, when it warned that Ireland ‘as in the days of Elizabeth provides a possible spring-board for an assault upon this country.’<sup>424</sup> In October 1940, *The Times* quoted a House of Commons speech given by Churchill in which he warned that ‘German preparations to invade Great Britain or Ireland[...] are still going methodically forward.’<sup>425</sup> Even the *MG* viewed Ireland as ‘a vulnerable gateway to the British “fortress”.’<sup>426</sup> Clearly Irish neutrality, as well as the old fear of invasion via the Western island was a very real concern in the early years of the war. The allegation that U-Boats obtained fuel and supplies from Ireland has been comprehensively debunked in the secondary literature<sup>427</sup> but in October 1940 the *BEP* did print an allegation from the Ulster Unionist Party [UUP] MP, James Little.<sup>428</sup> He accused the Irish government of ‘putting the glass to the blind eye with a vengeance’ when denying allegations of Axis collusion.<sup>429</sup> Concerns also appeared in *The Dundee Courier*, *The Gloucester Citizen* and the *WMN*, which speculated that German technicians in Ireland during

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<sup>420</sup> Steve Garner, *Racism In The Irish Experience*. (London: Pluto Press, 2004), p.115-6.

<sup>421</sup> Fisk, *In Time of War*, p.127.

<sup>422</sup> Enda Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, pp.117-8; Grob-Fitzgibbon, *The Irish Experience*, p.23

<sup>423</sup> Holmes, p.197; Kenneth Lunn, “‘Good For a Few Hundreds at Least:’ Irish Labour Recruitment into Britain during the Second World War”<sup>423</sup> in *The Irish in British Labour History. Conference Proceedings in Irish Studies, No.1*, eds. Patrick Buckland and John Belchem (Liverpool: The Institute of Irish Studies, 1993), 102-114, p.103.

<sup>424</sup> “Against Invasion” *The Times* editorial, July 2, 1940, p.5.

<sup>425</sup> “Plain Facts” *The Times* editorial, September 18, 1940, p.5.

<sup>426</sup> “The Defence of Ireland” *The Manchester Guardian*, July 1, 1940, p.4.

<sup>427</sup> Tim Pat Coogan, *The I.R.A.* (London: Harper Collins, 1995), p.260; O’Halpin, *Spying on Ireland*, pp.1-2, 139; Wills, *That Neutral Island*, p.116.

<sup>428</sup> Fisk (pp.132-3) has noted that the Admiralty replied to Little’s allegations, promising enquiries, but in reality they viewed him as ‘a rabid Orangeman, and a thorn in the side of the Security Service. He is always glad to get hold of any sort of stick with which to beat Eire.’

<sup>429</sup> “Petrol For Nazis From Eire Ports?” *BEP*, October 12, 1940, p.1.

the 1925-29 Shannon hydroelectric scheme meant that ‘there must be a considerable German Fifth Column dating from that time.’<sup>430</sup>

It is therefore somewhat surprising that the IRA did not feature a great deal in the Bristol press during the war. Whilst there were reports of trials and imprisonments during the 1939 bombing campaign in Britain, there were very few pieces alluding to potential Fifth Column activity.<sup>431</sup> One exception was a *BEP* report in February 1941 concerning a Catholic Irish priest in Birmingham who was found in possession of ‘a document containing instructions for utilising means of secretly conveying information outside the United Kingdom’.<sup>432</sup> However, there was no suggestion of IRA involvement, and Irish neutrality was not questioned. Another example was a feature on Ireland from August 1941. This was based on excerpts from Irish journalist and author Jim Phelan’s upcoming book ‘*Ireland – Atlantic Gateway*’<sup>433</sup> in which he alluded to IRA-Axis collaboration.

In an earlier publication, ‘*Churchill Can Unite Ireland*’, Phelan argued that Britain was in ‘grave peril’ in any situation where Ireland was ‘neutral or hostile’ towards them. He also claimed that it was the view of ‘many Irish Republicans’ that ‘there would be a certain poetic justice in standing aloof and letting the British people stew in their own juice’ given the suffering imposed on Ireland by the British ‘which Hitler has not yet surpassed.’<sup>434</sup> Phelan argued that Britain had only been interested in ‘try[ing] for understanding and co-salvation’ with Ireland when faced with the threat of the Axis powers and that there ‘would be an emotional satisfaction in saying “Too late. Told you so for years. Now let the Black-and-Tans help you.”’ However, he acknowledged that Britain’s defeat would also bring ‘the Iron Heel of Hitlerism’ to Ireland: ‘The military fate of these two islands is as closely bound as that of Jersey and Guernsey.’<sup>435</sup> In his latter book, quoted by the *BEP*, Phelan went further and argued that Ireland was to ‘remain ‘destructively neutral’ until ‘the opportunity arose to

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<sup>430</sup> “Ireland And The War” *The Dundee Courier and Advertiser*, May 25, 1940, p.2; “Parachutists and Eire” *The Gloucester Citizen*, May 24, 1940, p.4; “Neutral Eire” *The Western Morning News*, May 31, 1940, p.2.

<sup>431</sup> Patrick Bishop and Eamonn Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*. (London: Corgi Books, 1989), p.36; J Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army, A History of the IRA 1916-1970 Revised Third Edition*. (Dublin: Poolbeg Press, 1998), pp.147-62; Coogan, *The I.R.A.*, pp.164-9; Cronin, *Irish Nationalism*, p.161; John P. Duggan, *Neutral Ireland and the Third Reich*. (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1985), pp.147-8; Richard English, *Armed Struggle. The History of the IRA*. (London: Pan Books, 2004), pp.61-71; Gary McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA In England. The Bombing Campaign 1973-1997*. (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006); pp. 34-45; Ed Moloney, *A Secret History of the IRA*. (London: Penguin Books, 2007), pp.48-9.

<sup>432</sup> “A Secret Code” *BEP*, February 10, 1941, p.5.

<sup>433</sup> This was described by David Pierce, author of ‘*Irish Writing in the Twentieth Century, A Reader*’ as ‘unusual’ and based on anecdotal evidence.

<sup>434</sup> Jim Phelan, *Churchill Can Unite Ireland*. (London: Victor Gollancz Ltd, 1940), p.8.

<sup>435</sup> Phelan, *Churchill*, p.9.

declare war on Britain'.<sup>436</sup> This prompted no reaction from the *BEP*, and, no reactionary readers' letters followed. Clearly, the Bristol press did not share the view that Ireland represented a grave risk as base from which Britain could be easily attacked. This coverage, which ignored Ireland for much of the time, was certainly consistent with the manner in which Irish issues were addressed during the war.

### 3.5 – “Insular Particularism”<sup>437</sup>: The American Note

The ‘American Note’ in early 1944, was the most contentious Anglo-Irish issue since the Treaty Ports. De Valera’s refusal to expel Dublin-based Axis diplomats in preparation for the D-Day landings resulted in a ban on travel between Ireland and Britain in March 1944. This had obvious consequences for Irish immigrants in Britain who had previously been entitled to one visit home every six months. In April, the Irish government responded by ending their involvement in facilitating British labour recruitment in Ireland.<sup>438</sup> In keeping with their coverage of Irish neutrality, both Bristol newspapers were rather sympathetic. The *WDP*’s editorial of 15 March was exceptionally restrained. Although ‘exasperated’ by de Valera, it defended Ireland’s ‘undoubted rights’ although it endorsed ‘legitimate steps’ to ‘safeguard’ British interests which might be ‘highly inconvenient to[...] Ireland’. It urged readers to view the situation ‘in a strictly objective and practical light’ and criticised any talk of reprisals.<sup>439</sup> This moved one Bristol Irishman to congratulate the newspaper on its ‘admirably restrained tone’, particularly given the ‘vengeful and spiteful effusions’ which he had ‘read in other papers.’<sup>440</sup> When compared to an *MG* editorial which criticised de Valera’s ‘little diplomatic zoo’, the *WDP* editorial was remarkably sympathetic:

most probably Eire will be allowed to stew in her own juice. She will be the worst sufferer[...] Eire must go on nursing her grievances, developing her insular particularism, acknowledging no obligations, and making no contribution to the wider human fellowship. It is an unenviable fate.<sup>441</sup>

*The Times* did not doubt the ‘good faith with which the Éire government attempts to prevent espionage’, but criticised de Valera and dismissed his constant references to partition as an ‘irrelevant grievance’. Indeed, de Valera’s ‘intransigence’, manifested in neutrality, was also blamed for reaffirming partition.<sup>442</sup> The presence of Axis diplomats in Dublin was frequently

<sup>436</sup> “Ireland... It’s position To-day” *BEP*, August 22, 1941, p.4.

<sup>437</sup> “EIRE AND THE ENEMY” *The Manchester Guardian*, March 11, 1944, p.4.

<sup>438</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.124.

<sup>439</sup> “The Allies and Eire” *WDP*, March 15, 1944, p.3.

<sup>440</sup> F. Cormack, letter to *WDP*, printed March 20, 1944, p.2.

<sup>441</sup> “EIRE AND THE ENEMY” *The Manchester Guardian*, March 11, 1944, p.4.

<sup>442</sup> “The Neutrality of Eire” *The Times* editorial, March 13, 1944, p.5.

referred to in the British media throughout the war. Several newspapers cited the continued presence of Axis diplomats in Dublin as evidence of Ireland's skewed neutrality after de Valera refused to lease the ports to Britain in November 1940. Even the *MG* bemoaned this and uncharacteristically complained that Ireland 'tolerates whatever advantages their presence across the Irish Channel may give to the enemies of Britain.'<sup>443</sup> A *Lancashire Evening Post* columnist was also critical of Ireland for 'helping Germany' through neutrality and its retention of a German Legation, whilst the *Dundee Evening Telegraph* linked the Axis representatives to espionage and 'recent U-Boat successes'.<sup>444</sup>

Whilst the American Note was a sore point which further soured Anglo-Irish relations, both Bristol newspapers were remarkably sympathetic to Ireland's position given the widespread public support for rigid neutrality. It is equally clear that the 'restrained tone' referenced by Mr Cormack was not, as he suggests, universally present in the British media.

### **3.6 – “The One Thing Eire Cannot Keep Neutral”<sup>445</sup>: Volunteers and Emigrants**

One thing for which Ireland could not be criticised during the war was the sheer volume of Irish-born volunteers in the British Armed Forces and in Britain's conscription-decimated war industries. Wills has quoted MI5 figures which indicate that there were around 120,000 Irish and Northern Irish war workers in Britain.<sup>446</sup> Several historians have noted that de Valera's government actively facilitated this movement for the majority of the war.<sup>447</sup> In spite of the Anglo-Irish cooperation on intelligence discussed earlier in this chapter, the free movement of people between Ireland and the United Kingdom was undeniably Ireland's greatest contribution to the Allied war effort. Even the harshest critics were forced to laud the contribution made by Irish citizens, often in the same paragraph in which de Valera was excoriated. Indeed, Churchill conceded that 'the superb gallantry' of 'thousands of Southern Irishmen who fought as volunteers in the British Army' assuaged his bitterness towards their country.<sup>448</sup>

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<sup>443</sup>“De Valera's Statement On the Ports. English Press Opinions.” *Derry Journal*, November 13, 1940, p.6.

<sup>444</sup> C. G. Grey weekly article, *Lancashire Evening Post*, November 19, 1940, p.4; “The Neutrality of Eire” *Dundee Evening Telegraph*, November 8, 1940, p.2.

<sup>445</sup> “If Hitler Passes to the Defensive What Will be the Effect on Neutrals?” *BEP*, October 22, 1942, p.2.

<sup>446</sup> Wills, *Neutral Island*, p.314.

<sup>447</sup> Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years*, pp.22-3; Tracey Connolly, “Emigration from Ireland to Britain during the Second World War”, p.60; Cronin, *Irish Nationalism*, p.164; Fanning, *Independent Ireland*, pp.124-5; Ferriter, *Transformation*, p.385; Girvin, *Emergency*, pp.178-9; Grob-Fitzgibbon, *The Irish Experience*, p.11; Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland*, p.122; Ó Drisceoil, *Censorship in Ireland*, p.4; Salmon, *Unneutral Ireland*, p.129; Williams, *Ireland and the War*, pp.24-5; Wills, *That Neutral Island*, p.110.

<sup>448</sup> Doherty, *Irish Men and Women*, p.54.

Ironically, Churchill had been opposed to mass Irish immigration for fear that they would undermine Britain's war effort. Wartime Prime Minister's Office records from the National Archives reveal that Churchill described the Irish as a 'hostile people' to Bevin in June 1941, and his fears were also evident in an exchange with Morrison in July and August.<sup>449</sup> Morrison's reply, in which he noted that, given the 'growing shortage of unskilled labour in this country', Britain's war effort 'would suffer considerably if the supply of such labour from Eire were excluded' was emphatic.<sup>450</sup> Churchill yielded, but remained suspicious, and complained that 'the German Embassy in Dublin can work in any German agents they wish through this channel' and that this was 'the best way to get spies and assassins into the United Kingdom'.<sup>451</sup> Wills has noted that MI5 conceded that without Irish labour, aerodromes needed for the Battle of Britain could not have been built.<sup>452</sup> In addition to this, Ronan Fanning has quoted Lord Cranborne, a 'bitterly anti-Irish' Dominions Secretary whose list of Irish concessions to the British included allowing its citizens to join the British Forces.<sup>453</sup> Such was the need for labour that the Admiralty overlooked the 'constant source of anxiety' elicited by an Irish presence at Scapa Flow. They also alleged that, 'although no conclusive evidence can be produced, it is considered that the enemy undoubtedly gained some information of value from certain Irish labourers when they returned to Eire. This risk had to be accepted, as it appeared that the only type of labourer who would put up with the somewhat arduous conditions were men from Éire.'<sup>454</sup>

The *BEP* quoted the grossly inflated figure of 200,000 Irish-born volunteers in the British armed forces in October 1942. Curiously, the newspaper used the estimate not only to praise Ireland's contribution, but also to question the commitment of its people towards neutrality. It claimed that 'no other neutral has intruded a twentieth as much of its manhood' to the war and that 'the feeling of nearly 200,000 of her sons in the British Services' was 'The one thing Eire cannot keep neutral'.<sup>455</sup> In April 1943, the *BEP* reprinted a *New York Times* piece in which Henry Steele Commager<sup>456</sup> cited an Irish contribution of 'perhaps 100,000' to the British Forces, and 'another 50,000 or 60,000' in war industries or farming. He also asserted that neutrality, with the support of '90 p.c. of the Irish people', was 'not even a

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<sup>449</sup> TNA PREM 4/53/3, Churchill to Bevin, 19/6/41.

<sup>450</sup> TNA PREM 4/53/3, Morrison to Churchill, 3/7/41.

<sup>451</sup> TNA PREM 4/53/3, Churchill to Morrison, 6/7/41 and 31/8/41.

<sup>452</sup> Wills, *That Neutral Island*, pp.313-4.

<sup>453</sup> Fanning, *Independent Ireland*, pp.124-5.

<sup>454</sup> TNA ADM 1/16713, from Director of Naval Intelligence, 1/8/43.

<sup>455</sup> "If Hitler Passes to the Defensive What Will be the Effect on Neutrals?" *BEP*, October 22, 1942, p.2.

<sup>456</sup> Professor of History at Columbia University.



debateable issue.<sup>457</sup> The *BEP*'s estimate was significantly higher than that of *The Times* or *The Irish Times*, which quoted 150,000 and 180,000 respectively.<sup>458</sup> Doherty and Fisk have quoted figures of 300,000 and 150,000 in the *MG* and *The Telegraph* respectively.<sup>459</sup>

In November 1941, the *WMN* drew attention to the high number of Irish volunteers, and, like the *BEP*, argued that the high numbers represented a significant rejection of de Valera's 'fatuous neutrality'.<sup>460</sup> It could be argued that the *BEP* questioned Irish neutrality through the argument that the proportion of volunteers in the British Forces represented a significant rejection of their country's non-partisanship. Other regional newspapers took a considerably harder line on Irish neutrality, such as the example from the *WMN*, cited above. With this in mind, it could be argued that this example is not an exception to the *BEP*'s restrained coverage. In spite of the implicit criticism of neutrality, the main focus of the article was to praise Ireland's volunteers, and not to criticise its politicians.

### 3.7 – “Crocodile tears”<sup>461</sup>: Condolences and Speeches

A *BEP* editorial from October 1944 described de Valera as 'vigorously pro-Irish' and not 'personally anti-British'. This also reiterated the newspaper's earlier argument that neutrality was not based on hostility or misunderstanding towards the British but on the weight of public opinion in Ireland. It hoped for a harmonious and profitable post-war Anglo-Irish relationship and argued that 'there is no apparent reason why[...] the foreign policies of Great Britain and Éire should not follow much the same general trend.'<sup>462</sup> However, de Valera committed what Carroll has fittingly described as an 'appalling blunder' by visiting Hempel, the German Minister in Dublin, on 3 May 1945 to express his condolences after the death of Hitler.<sup>463</sup> Historians have noted the effect of this on Allied opinion, and it is difficult to take issue with several who have described it as the low point of Ireland's war.<sup>464</sup> John Duggan has cited a letter to *The Times* which labelled de Valera the 'Casabianca of the Protocol' and 'a totalitarian termite'.<sup>465</sup> Where the Bristol press somewhat curiously made no mention of de Valera's visit, the *MG* was highly critical:

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<sup>457</sup> "The Price of Éire's Neutrality" *BEP*, April 27, 1943, p.2.

<sup>458</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.149.

<sup>459</sup> Doherty, *Irish Men and Women*, p.22; Fisk, *In Time of War*, p.451.

<sup>460</sup> "Men For Forces" *Western Morning News*, Thursday November 13, 1941, p.2.

<sup>461</sup> "Atlantic Fringe" *The Manchester Guardian*, May 7, 1945, p.4.

<sup>462</sup> "New Angle on De Valera and Éire" *BEP*, October 19, 1944, p.5.

<sup>463</sup> Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years*, p.261.

<sup>464</sup> Boyce, *The Irish Question*, p.98; Ferriter, *Transformation*, p.389; Fisk, p.461; Girvin, *The Emergency*, p.7; Wills, p.393.

<sup>465</sup> Duggan, *Neutral Ireland*, p.241.

Three only of the European neutrals shed crocodile tears and went into official mourning on the death of Hitler – Spain, Portugal, and Eire[...] In his war-time regulations Mr. De Valera has carried this to an extent which would be ludicrous if it were not tragic.<sup>466</sup>

The final significant Anglo-Irish event of the war was in its immediate aftermath. Churchill's victory speech has been described as 'scathing' by Bew who also argued that Churchill's words 'left behind scars that are still not entirely healed in the twenty-first century.'<sup>467</sup> Churchill expressed his regret over the unavailability of the ports, as well as the refusal to expel the Axis diplomats, though he also praised the contribution of Irishmen to the war effort. He also stated that Britain would have retaken the ports by force had it been deemed necessary.<sup>468</sup> In his response, delivered three days later, de Valera argued that it was difficult to conceive of 'any thinking person in Britain or elsewhere[...] fail[ing] to see the reason for our neutrality.' De Valera also admonished Churchill for his readiness to 'come to close quarters' with Ireland, and cited past British atrocities in Ireland as a key factor in Irish neutrality.<sup>469</sup> This exchange has been well documented in the historiography<sup>470</sup> and the *MG* praised the 'wisdom and restraint of Mr. De Valera's reply' which was '(for him) a statesmanlike speech' which 'should make possible a better understanding between our two nations.'<sup>471</sup> Neither Bristol newspaper gave coverage to Churchill's outburst, but they did give air to de Valera's riposte, although the *WDP* omitted de Valera's criticism of Churchill as well as his references to past British actions in Ireland.<sup>472</sup> The *BEP* quoted an *Irish Independent* editorial, and echoed its desire for greater understanding between the two countries.<sup>473</sup> The benign nature of the Bristol press coverage was reinforced for the final time when contrasted with the *MG*'s lasting impression of Ireland's war:

The "Irish Times[...] celebrates its new freedom by printing a list of Irish V.C.s. This will hardly impress the die-hards, but it may help the people of Eire to realise that they have been led blindfold through a period of history which might have brought their young nation fame instead of shame."<sup>474</sup>

Even in victory, neither Bristol newspaper was remotely antagonistic. The *BEP* referenced the *Irish Independent* which, as we have seen, was founded by de Valera, to illustrate that the Irish press had similar hopes for improved Anglo-Irish relations in the future. This

<sup>466</sup>“Atlantic Fringe” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 7, 1945, p.4.

<sup>467</sup> Bew, *Churchill and Ireland*, p.8.

<sup>468</sup>Grob-Fitzgibbon, *The Irish Experience*, p.35; Mitchell and Ó Snodaigh, *Irish Political Documents*, p.239.

<sup>469</sup>Ibid, pp.240-2.

<sup>470</sup>Bew, *Churchill and Ireland*, pp.157-8, 162-3; Carroll, *Ireland in the War Years*, pp.163-5; Collins, *British Labour*, p.93; Coogan, *The I.R.A.*, p.261; Fisk, *In Time of War*, pp.463-5; Girvin, *Emergency*, pp.9-13; Grob-Fitzgibbon, *The Irish Experience*, pp.35-6; Wills, *That Neutral Island*, p.392.

<sup>471</sup>“EIRE'S NEUTRALITY” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 18, 1945, p.4.

<sup>472</sup>“Reply To Premier By De Valera” *The Western Daily Press*, May 17, 1945, p.4.

<sup>473</sup>“Britain – Eire” *The Bristol Evening Post*, May 17, 1945, p.5.

<sup>474</sup>“Eire's Eyes Open” *The Manchester Guardian*, May 14, 1945, p.4.

represented a clear continuation of the measured analysis that both the *BEP* and the *WDP* had expressed throughout the war.

### 3.8 – “The best of both worlds”:<sup>475</sup> The Republic and the Commonwealth

The next significant act in Anglo-Irish relations was when Ireland seceded from the British Commonwealth in 1949. Curiously, the *WDP* was considerably more critical of the proclamation of the Republic of Ireland than it had been throughout Ireland’s neutrality in the Second World War. The Republic of Ireland Act was signed into law on 21 December 1948 and finalised on 18 April 1949 when Ireland became a twenty-six county Republic.<sup>476</sup> On 2 June, the British government passed the Ireland Act, which granted the Irish in Britain reciprocal non-foreign status and tied the six counties of Northern Ireland to Great Britain.<sup>477</sup> Ian Spencer has argued that the decision to assign non-foreign status to the Irish-born in Britain was a result of the ‘politically difficult and costly’ process of establishing border controls between the two islands, as well as between the two Irelands. Spencer’s description of a potential border between the two Irelands as ‘politically difficult and costly’ seems almost prophetic in early 2018, given the ongoing furore around the Irish border in the United Kingdom’s current negotiations with the EU. He also noted that there was a continuing need for Irish labour in Britain, which flowed in ‘at two or three times the rate of entry from the Caribbean’.<sup>478</sup>

The *BEP* warned that leaving the Commonwealth would further postpone any potential end to partition in Ireland, but the *WDP* was far more critical.<sup>479</sup> It accused Ireland of ‘standing aloof’ during the Second World War, whilst continuing to accept the advantages of Commonwealth membership. Given that the extent of Irish-Allied collusion had not yet come to light, this must have seemed a reasonable statement in 1948. In addition to this, the *WDP* was strongly opposed to the possibility of Irish citizens retaining non-foreign status in Britain. Its editorial of 18 October was titled ‘Irish Problem’ and argued that ‘In justice to others who pay freely and readily their moral and economic dues to our free community of

<sup>475</sup> “The Best of Both Worlds” *The Western Daily Press* editorial, 9 February, 1949, p.3.

<sup>476</sup> Brown, *Ireland*, pp. 212-3; Basil Chubb, ‘Britain and Irish Constitutional Development’ in *Britain and Ireland Since 1922*, ed. P. J. Drudy (Cambridge: University Press, 1986), 21-44, pp.38-9; Roy F. Foster, *Modern Ireland 1600-1972*. (London: Penguin, 1989), p.616; John H. Whyte, ‘To the Declaration of the Republic and the Ireland Act 1945-9’ in *A New History of Ireland VII, Ireland, 1921-84*, ed. J. R. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 261-277, pp.274-7; “‘Not Foreigners’ Eire: Premier Tells M.P.s” *The Bristol Evening Post*, November 25, 1948, pp.1, 8.

<sup>477</sup> Chubb, *Britain and Irish Constitutional Development*, p.39; Foster, *Modern Ireland*, pp.556-7, 616.

<sup>478</sup> Ian R. G. Spencer, *British immigration policy since 1939, The making of multi-racial Britain*. (London: Routledge, 1997), p.83.

<sup>479</sup> “‘Aliens?’” *BEP*, October 18, 1948, p.3.

nations there can be no compromise’, ‘Either Eire is in the Commonwealth or she is out of it.’<sup>480</sup> The following day, the *WDP* accused the Irish of harbouring ‘fervid nationalism and bitter out-dated animosities’. It also maintained its line that Ireland would be ‘in it but not of it’.<sup>481</sup> The *Guardian* adopted a similar position, and questioned how Ireland would cope without the safety valve of unrestricted emigration to Britain:

the politicians of Eire have never reckoned realistically what their claim to formal as well as actual independence involves. They have never faced the technical consequences for Eire citizens of the loss of easy access to work in Britain and the consequences to Irish trade of the loss of Commonwealth advantages[...] if Eire breaks, we should see no reason for pretending that she is not as much a foreign country as Albania or Bolivia. She and we will have to take the consequences and recognise that one of them is the confirmation of Partition.<sup>482</sup>

However, once it became apparent that the Irish in Britain would not be classified as foreign, the *Guardian*’s stance softened considerably and its editorial of 26 November argued that ‘nearly everybody in the country is sorry’ that Ireland was leaving the Commonwealth. It went even further and acknowledged that Ireland’s reasons for doing so would be ‘perfectly apparent to most Irishmen, if not to all Englishmen.’<sup>483</sup> *The Times* also adopted a friendly position in its editorial of the same day. This highlighted the Taoiseach John Costello’s ‘friendly spirit’ and praised the retention of freedom of movement, which was compelled by ‘All reasons of practical good sense’ as well as ‘geographical necessity’.<sup>484</sup> Conversely, the *WDP* resumed its offensive in its editorial of 9 February, 1949 and claimed that the British government’s Ireland Act ‘must have taxed their learning and their ingenuity, for only genius can explain how Eire is to be in two places at once’ – both inside and outside the Commonwealth.<sup>485</sup>

On 18 April, the day that the Republic of Ireland was proclaimed, the *BEP*’s editorial, simply titled ‘Neighbours’, referred to an ‘undercurrent of sorrow at this parting of the ways’. This piece indicated the progression in Anglo-Irish relations, and recognised that the new situation could, in ‘more turbulent times[...] have only been achieved by force of arms.’ The *BEP* also complimented King George VI who recalled the ‘services and sacrifices which Irish men and women rendered to Great Britain in the two world wars’.<sup>486</sup> In contrast, the *WDP* merely acknowledged the significance of the Republic being declared on Easter Monday: ‘the Southern Irishman has much upon which to congratulate himself on this significantly historic

<sup>480</sup> “Irish ‘Problem’” *WDP*, October 18, 1948, p.3.

<sup>481</sup> “Friendly And Reasonable” *WDP*, October 19, 1948, p.3.

<sup>482</sup> “THE COMMONWEALTH” *The Manchester Guardian*, October 18, 1948, p.4.

<sup>483</sup> “Commonwealth” *The Guardian*, November 26, 1948, p.4.

<sup>484</sup> “Eire” *The Times*, November 26, 1948, p.5.

<sup>485</sup> “The Best of Both Worlds” *WDP*, February 9, 1949, p.3.

<sup>486</sup> “Neighbours” *BEP*, April 18, 1949, p.3.

Easter Monday.<sup>487</sup> Meanwhile, *The Times* defended the Ireland Act for protecting the connection between the two islands, and acknowledged the contribution that Irish people had made in Britain:

The most bitter critic of what Eire has done must agree that to turn all her people, living here or travelling to and fro, into aliens would be folly. They are to be found as valuable members of society in all walks of British life, including the service of the Crown, and to embark on the gratuitous upheaval that would be necessary to ensure that they had all opted to be British or been registered as aliens (and, therefore, in many cases, required to resign from posts which they are holding efficiently) cannot be treated as a serious proposition.<sup>488</sup>

Overall, it is striking that the *WDP* adopted a considerably harder line on the proclamation of the Irish Republic than it had on Ireland's neutrality. It was extremely critical of the apparent contradiction between Ireland leaving the Commonwealth whilst its citizens retained non-foreign status in Britain. Although the *BEP* had initially criticised Costello for prolonging partition, it praised the political means by which change had been affected, as well as recalling the contribution of the Irish to the world wars.

### 3.9 - 'Speak up Mick'<sup>489</sup>: The Troubles

*...a people endlessly betrayed  
by our own weakness, by the wrongs we suffered  
in that long twilight over bog and glen,  
by force, by famine and by glittering fables  
which gave us martyrs when we needed men,  
by faith which had no charity to offer  
by poisoned memory, and by ready wit,  
with poverty corroded into malice,  
to hit and run and howl when it is hit.*<sup>490</sup>

As with the subject of Irish migration to Britain, Bristol might not be among the first British cities which come to mind when considering the Troubles in Northern Ireland. Even the 18 December 1974 PIRA bombing of Park Street in Bristol city centre has received very little attention in the literature. However, it is clear that PIRA bombings in the city, as well as the provisions of the 1974 PTA had significant consequences for sections of the Bristol Irish. Indeed, Delaney has argued that PIRA bombings shattered the 'degree of acceptance' attained by the Irish in post-war Britain.<sup>491</sup> The impact of the Troubles on the lives of many Irish people in Britain has been outlined by Mary Hickman and Bronwen Walter in their report on anti-Irish discrimination in Britain:

<sup>487</sup> "Eire Celebrates" *BEP*, April 18, 1949, p.5; "The Parting of The Ways?" *WDP*, April 18, 1949, p.3.

<sup>488</sup> "The Ireland Bill" *The Times*, May 4, 1949, p.5.

<sup>489</sup> "There can be no surrender to this evil" *BEP*, November 25, 1974, p.4.

<sup>490</sup> From John Hewitt, "An Irishman in Coventry" in *John Hewitt: Selected Poems*, pp.53-4.

<sup>491</sup> Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.2.

Anti-Irish hostility was dramatically increased by IRA bombing campaigns in Britain. Attitudes which had been expressed openly in the 1950s and 60s in the advertisements in newsagents windows as 'No Blacks, No Irish' and 'No Irish need apply', became raised to a new level of intensity.<sup>492</sup>

Other studies - particularly those which focus on oral interviews - have identified that Irish people living in Britain have suffered from increased anti-Irish racism in the wake of the Troubles, particularly in cities such as Birmingham and London. Indeed, Patricia Kennedy has noted that some Irish Catholic priests in 1970s London 'received hate mail and threats to burn down the church.'<sup>493</sup> Sean Sorohan, in his study of the London Irish, found that suspicion towards Irishness and Irish nationalism 'has often been seen as preventing the Irish in Britain from exercising an effective political voice' in the twentieth century.<sup>494</sup> It has also been argued that the British media often portrayed the Irish in an extremely negative light, frequently alluding to stereotypes of laziness, criminality, violence and drunkenness.<sup>495</sup> Liz Curtis has convincingly argued that people in Britain have little understanding of the conflict as they 'receive only a dribble of news from the North'.<sup>496</sup> This view was supported by Joseph, who recalled that, during the Troubles, he felt that there were certain things which could not be discussed with his English friends:

The problem is that nobody can see that actually there's two sides to this story. These kids are being misled, yes, but they're at least being fed stuff that has some merit, as a matter for discussion at least and the same thing applied to Northern Ireland. I came from a society that was...discriminated against. I came from a society where the Birmingham Six were in jail[...] They saw it completely differently so you had two choices. At one level I had a group of friends I played football with and went to football, I would probably not discuss it much with them. I would have another group like my mate who's from Ireland where you could say what you thought. And so, you tended to live at that time, being careful about what you said to who. I don't feel that I was ever discriminated against. I have a real problem in trying to explain to people, I'm married to my wife who's English, my children have been brought up without any attempt to try and turn them into little Irishmen although I want them to respect and understand their history, and with grandchildren who see themselves completely and utterly as English. So I've got nothing against and have had nothing but good things from English people individually, but it's really difficult to try and explain that at the same time you can see England as having done things that are horrible. I don't blame the soldiers who

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<sup>492</sup>Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish*, p.203.

<sup>493</sup> Patricia Kennedy, *Welcoming The Stranger. Irish Migrant Welfare In Britain Since 1957*. (Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2015), p.95.

<sup>494</sup>Sorohan, *Irish London During The Troubles*, p.80.

<sup>495</sup> Curtis, *Same Old Story*, pp.95-7; Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.181; Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish*, pp.180-2; Holmes, *John Bull's Island*, pp.59, 151; Sarah Morgan, "The Contemporary Racialisation of the Irish in Britain, an investigation into media representations and the everyday experience of being Irish in Britain" (PhD Thesis, University of North London, 1997) pp.4-5; E. J. B. Rose, *Colour and Citizenship, A Report on Race Relations*. (London: Oxford University Press, 1969), pp.17-18; Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.87. Walter, *Outsiders*, pp.87-94, 170-1.

<sup>496</sup> Liz Curtis, *Ireland: The Propaganda War. The British Media and the 'Battle for Hearts and Minds'*. (London: Pluto Press, 1984), p.2.

you know shot seventeen civilians on Bloody Sunday, but I don't blame the IRA either and that wasn't somewhere you could go.  
[Joseph, b.1951, Antrim].

Paul also recalled that the Troubles were misunderstood in Britain, particularly amongst his friends and acquaintances in the British Labour Party. However, he believed that this was, at least in part, a result of cultural differences between the English and the Irish:

what I found in England was that people didn't want to ask you about it, and I didn't want to talk about it. But if they ever did come up and you know there were several, they had this kind of, probably because I was in the Labour Party, their view was kind of 'well the English should have nothing to do with the Irish and we should pull out and Ireland's for the Irish' etc. Which is what most of the Labour Party's policy was to a degree. And there wasn't very much understanding of it. I mean they clearly thought people from Northern Ireland were completely mad, so there wasn't really a very fruitful conversation to be had about it, but I did, I thought myself that people from Northern Ireland were mad, that I came from a mad community, but then these wars broke out in other places you know. The Balkans was...I thought perhaps it's not just Northern Ireland! And they had three religions fighting each other. And because the English are on the whole so irreligious they have no concept whatsoever, I think it's a big factor in the way people talk about Muslim people now, I worked a lot with Muslim people in Easton, but the English don't have a concept of, most of the English people don't have a concept of religion being a dominant factor. They can't believe it, they think, they always think 'oh there'll be a class thing here, this has got to do with class' or 'this has got to do with colonisation' and they can't imagine that people's religious and cultural backgrounds lead to conflict. Or to a complete divorce or violence, they can't imagine it.

[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

In the 1993 BBC Bristol documentary, *Here, Across the Water*, one of the participants also felt that Irish issues were not well understood in England:

I was very shocked by the lack of knowledge that people had about Ireland. I mean yeah they have the thatched houses image and the peat and the bombs and all that but, as regards the history of...why Northern Ireland is happening at the moment, people knew very little. And I would have thought in schools they'd have been taught about that. Because you say the 1916 Rising to people over here and a lot of them don't know what you're talking about which is amazing really when you consider how Ireland is so close to England and how England has played such a large part in Irish history. That people don't know what Oliver Cromwell did in Ireland [laughs] what happened in the 1916 Rising and why people aren't speaking with an Irish language in Ireland.<sup>497</sup>

However, in some areas the reality of the conflict was clearly somewhat better understood. Merrifield's history of the Kingswood Catholic parish has identified that 'Families from all denominations in Kingswood' accommodated several Northern Irish children for a two week holiday in Bristol: 'Parishioner Dennis Whittle organised coaches to bring them to Our Lady of Lourdes School where they met their hosts. The children arrived on 17<sup>th</sup> August 1973 and stayed for two weeks.'<sup>498</sup> There were also at least two peace rallies in Bristol during the

<sup>497</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. *Here, Across the Water*, White and Frear.

<sup>498</sup> Brian Merrifield, *Souvenir History of Kingswood Catholic Parish*. (1997), p.40.

Troubles. The first was in November 1976, and was documented in the Catholic newspaper *The Universe*:

Mrs. Betty Williams, leader of Northern Ireland's peace movement, talks to Anglican Bishop Tinsley of Bristol and Bishop Alexander of Clifton (Extreme right) during Saturday's peace-rally at Bristol. Mrs. Williams, with Mrs. Nancy McDonnell, led 6,000 people who marched from Clifton Cathedral to the Council House in College Green, where they were greeted by Cllr. Charles Merett, leader of Bristol City Council. Also among the marchers were the Rev. Ron Cowley, the Baptist superintendent, and the Rev. Ian Lunn, chairman of the Methodist district. The Union of Catholic Mothers and the Church of England Mothers' Union marched side by side.<sup>499</sup>

The second instance was in September 1978 when around 800 people attended a 'special service' at Clifton Cathedral, led by the Bishop of Clifton and Jane Ewart-Biggs, wife of the former British ambassador to Ireland who had been murdered by PIRA in 1975. This service was part of an accompanying campaign, 'Thirty Days of Prayer for Peace in Northern Ireland':

Violence and murder in Northern Ireland must be replaced by tolerance, reconciliation and peace, the congregation was told at a "Service for Peace" at Clifton Cathedral, Bristol.

Mrs Jane Ewart-Biggs, wife of the assassinated British Ambassador to Eire, said: "Nobody at all is disqualified from caring about Northern Ireland and from showing that we share the conviction of all those men and women of goodwill across the Irish Sea.

"They are proving that the hatred and bitterness of the few cannot win when faced by the courage and love of the many."<sup>500</sup>

David Miller has described the 'guiding light of British policy' as attempting to 'push Ireland to the margins of British politics' and has likened the British cabinet post of Northern Irish minister as exile 'to a British Siberia'.<sup>501</sup> Such views have been somewhat reinforced in recent years given the ongoing confusion in Britain for the implications of the United Kingdom's exit from the European Union on its relationship with Ireland. The relative distance of Northern Ireland from Britain also lessened media interest and - consequently - public understanding. This is reflected in a *WDP* editorial following a civil rights demonstration in London which resulted in violence. This was simply titled "We don't want it here" and complained: 'We are fed up enough with the Irish violence in their own country, without having it here.'<sup>502</sup> However, as was the case throughout Ireland's neutrality during the Second World War, the Bristol press were generally restrained in their coverage of the Troubles. This

<sup>499</sup> *The Universe*, November 19, 1976. In Clifton Diocesan Archive press cuttings 1949-81, p.169.

<sup>500</sup> "Peace plea by West churchmen" *BEP*, September 7, 1978, p.6; "800 attend peace service at Cathedral" *BEP*, September 12, 1978. In Clifton Diocesan Archive press cuttings 1949-81, p.237.

<sup>501</sup> David Miller, *Don't Mention The War. Northern Ireland, Propaganda and the Media*. (London: Pluto Press, 1994), pp.2, 3.

<sup>502</sup> "We don't want it here" *WDP*, August 18, 1969, p.4.



was even evident after the Park Street bombing. In addition, none of the participants for this study experienced anti-Irish abuse during the Troubles, although some conceded that the situation in Northern Ireland and the actions of PIRA elicited feelings of guilt and embarrassment.

### 3.10 – Entering British political consciousness<sup>503</sup>: Civil rights to Bloody Sunday

The outbreak of the Troubles has been well-documented elsewhere, but received little attention in the Bristol press.<sup>504</sup> Paul Arthur and Keith Jeffery have argued that ‘Northern Ireland entered British political consciousness in the summer and autumn of 1968’ after Northern Ireland Civil Rights Association [NICRA] demonstrations. NICRA was established in January 1967 with the aims of ending discriminatory practices against Catholics and promoting nationalist interests in Northern Ireland.<sup>505</sup> It was also concerned with transforming ‘the Northern Ireland problem [into] an international issue’ and John Darby has argued that this movement ‘ushered in the most dynamic years in the history of Northern Ireland.’<sup>506</sup>

This marked the outset of a period of conflict and instability which has made the Northern Irish situation internationally newsworthy for decades. Clive Walker has noted that there were 1,649 civilian deaths and 759 security forces deaths between 1969 and 1984 in Northern Ireland alone. In addition to this, terrorist operations in Britain resulted in a further 100 deaths.<sup>507</sup> The subject of Northern Ireland only became a regular feature in the Bristol press from August 1969 during the Battle of the Bogside in Derry which followed the loyalist marching season and riots throughout the summer.<sup>508</sup> The *BEP* described the situation as ‘intolerable’ and somewhat naively, urged ‘the battling Ulstermen’ to ‘lay down their

<sup>503</sup> Paul Arthur and Keith Jeffery, *Northern Ireland since 1968*. (Oxford: Basil Blackwell Ltd, 1988), p.5.

<sup>504</sup> Paul Arthur, *The People's Democracy 1968-1973*. (Belfast: Blackstaff Press, 1974); Arthur and Jeffery, *Northern Ireland*; Paul Bew, *Ireland*; Boyce, *The Irish Question*; Curtis, *Propaganda War*; John Darby (ed.), *Northern Ireland. The Background To The Conflict*. (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1983); Michael Dewar, *The British Army in Northern Ireland*. (London: Arms and Armour Press, 1985); Brian Dooley, *Black and Green. The Fight for Civil Rights in Northern Ireland & Black America*. (London: Pluto Press, 1998); English, *Armed Struggle*. see chapter 3; Harkness, *Ireland in the Twentieth Century*; Henry Patterson, *The Politics of Illusion. A Political History of the IRA*. (London: Serif, 1997); Bob Purdie, *Politics In The Streets. The origins of the civil rights movement in Northern Ireland*. (Belfast: The Blackstaff Press, 1990); Clive Walker, *The prevention of terrorism in British law*. (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986); John H. Whyte, ‘*The north erupts, and Ireland enters Europe, 1968-72*’ in *A New History of Ireland VII, Ireland, 1921-84*, ed. J. R. Hill (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 317-355.

<sup>505</sup> Harkness, *Ireland*, p.94.

<sup>506</sup> John Darby, ‘*The Historical Background*’ in *Northern Ireland. The Background To The Conflict*, ed. John Darby (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1983), 13-31, p.26.

<sup>507</sup> Walker, *The prevention of terrorism*, p.2.

<sup>508</sup> Boyce, *The Irish Question*, pp.113-4; Darby, *The Historical Background*, p.27; English, *Armed Struggle*, p.102; Harkness, *Ireland*, p.96; White, *From Conflict to Violence*, p.184.

weapons and abandon their senseless prejudices, to try to greet each other as friends before bloody deaths overtake them.<sup>509</sup> This bears out Curtis's aforementioned assertion that the Northern Irish conflict is not well understood in Britain. In response to the disorder, the Northern Irish government requested that British troops be deployed in Northern Ireland on 14 August 1969.<sup>510</sup> The *BEP* greeted this news with an air of resignation: 'It had to happen, and now it has.'<sup>511</sup> The *WDP* was similarly exasperated, and described the Irish as 'illogical' on several occasions in August.<sup>512</sup> In April 1970 the *WDP* accused the Irish of having 'the unenviable distinction' of being 'the only European race behaving in a 15<sup>th</sup> century manner in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.'<sup>513</sup>

Descriptions of the Irish as a separate race have been compellingly interpreted as an 'othering' strategy in which their 'alien identity' was established. Foster has argued that this attitude of the Irish as 'weaker brethren' was colonial: 'How could they not know what was good for them?'<sup>514</sup> This argument has been effectively summarised by Lewis Curtis Jr, who has contended that the Irish were seen as a 'peculiar race' who needed 'firm Anglo-Saxon control' to curb their 'temperament' which was 'unsuited to English norms of rational behaviour and political maturity' and would inevitably result in 'serious trouble'.<sup>515</sup> To return briefly to a contemporary analogy, this is reflected today with several British MPs and political figures and commentators arguing that, were Ireland to leave the EU, it would solve the ongoing border issue. These views, aside from being rather patronising, do not reflect the EU's very high approval rating in Ireland.<sup>516</sup> One particularly significant view, adopted by both Bristol newspapers, was evident in the early years of the troubles when both advocated reforms to remove many of the grievances held by the Catholic community in Northern Ireland. On 23 March 1971, the day of Brian Faulkner's election as Northern Irish Prime Minister, the *BEP* urged the new incumbent to continue with 'the line of reform of his

<sup>509</sup> "Live in peace" *BEP*, August 14, 1969, p.4.

<sup>510</sup> Boyce, *The Irish Question*, pp.113-4; Darby, *The Historical Background*, p.27; English, *Armed Struggle*, p.102; Harkness, *Ireland*, p.96; White, *From Conflict to Violence*, p.184.

<sup>511</sup> "The key" *BEP*, August 15, 1969, p.4.

<sup>512</sup> "British troops move in" *WDP*, August 15, 1969, p.6; "Ireland on the boil" *WDP*, August 16, 1969, p.6; "We don't want it here" *WDP*, August 18, 1969, p.4; "Violence again" *WDP*, September 29, 1969, p.4.

<sup>513</sup> "A dreary Irish story" *WDP*, April 4, 1970, p.6.

<sup>514</sup> Roy F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch. Connections in Irish and English History*. (London: Allen Lane, the Penguin Press, 1993), p.193.

<sup>515</sup> Lewis P. Curtis Jr, *Apes and Angels, The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997), p.94.

<sup>516</sup> [https://www.rte.ie/news/2017/0509/873610-eu\\_poll/](https://www.rte.ie/news/2017/0509/873610-eu_poll/) (accessed 29 March 2018); <https://www.irishtimes.com/news/politics/voters-want-to-stay-in-eu-even-with-hard-border-poll-shows-1.3369899> (accessed 29 March 2018); <http://www.thejournal.ie/ireland-leave-eu-poll-february-2018-3836085-Feb2018/> (accessed 29 March 2018); [http://www.europeanmovement.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/EM-RED-C-Infographic-2018-PAGES\\_correct-web.pdf](http://www.europeanmovement.ie/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/EM-RED-C-Infographic-2018-PAGES_correct-web.pdf) (accessed 8/5/18).

predecessors.<sup>517</sup> The *WDP* went even further in championing equality when it urged Faulkner to ban unionist marches and expressed the belief that Britain was determined to protect the rights of the Catholic minority:

There has been no urgency in tackling the complaints of the Catholic minority. Processions which should have been banned, have been inflammatorily permitted.<sup>518</sup>

Right, too that following Major Chichester-Clark's No. 10 meeting with Mr. Wilson, a statement should be issued saying that all Ulster citizens will have equal rights.

Undoubtedly, however speedily the reforms towards equality are put into operation, it looks as if the British troops have a long term of service ahead of them in Northern Ireland.

Everyone must hope that the Roman Catholics will realise that Britain means business on their behalf, and that the IRA will be deterred from drastic action which would operate against not only the Catholics' interests, but the interests of everyone.<sup>519</sup>

Most strikingly, the *WDP* was heavily critical of the Northern Irish administration following the publication of the Cameron Report<sup>520</sup> in September 1969:

For the Cameron Report published this morning lays bare the astonishing prejudice, injustice, bigotry, frustration, fear and downright malice that has finally brought Northern Ireland to the brink.

Neither side comes out of it unscathed, although the case of the Catholics is recognised unequivocally as we knew it must be.<sup>521</sup>

In August 1971, Faulkner implemented internment without trial in an attempt to neutralise PIRA.<sup>522</sup> This measure was endorsed in a *BEP* editorial, which was evidently weary of 'the embarrassment of the Ulster problem', and claimed that 'many people would like the Irish Sea to rise up and swallow the whole of the Emerald Isle.' The editorial urged the Home Secretary Reginald Maudling to 'sweep aside his natural hesitation to deny the freedom of any man without trial and [...] recommend internment of the known terrorist leaders.'<sup>523</sup> *The Guardian* and *The Observer* echoed this call, despite their humanitarian reservations towards internment. Indeed, the former claimed that internment as 'regrettably[...] inevitable' but

<sup>517</sup> "Reform is best hope" *BEP*, March 23, 1971, p.6.

<sup>518</sup> "British troops move in" *WDP*, August 15, 1969, p.6.

<sup>519</sup> "A hope of law and order" *WDP*, August 20, 1969, p.4.

<sup>520</sup> This concluded that the Northern Irish security forces had used "unnecessary and ill-controlled force in the dispersal of the demonstrators" at a Civil Rights march in Derry on 5 October 1968.

<sup>521</sup> "Ulster: Shame of a nation" *WDP*, September 12, 1969, p.6.

<sup>522</sup> Arthur, *The People's Democracy*, pp.110-1; Arthur and Jeffery, *Northern Ireland*, p.12; Stuart C. Aveyard, 'The Labour government and police primacy in Northern Ireland, 1974-79' in *The British Labour Party and twentieth-century Ireland* (ed.) Laurence Marley, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 164-181, p.164; Bew, *Ireland*, p.503; Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, pp.186-8; Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army*, p.381; Boyce, *The Irish Question*, p.116; English, *Armed Struggle*, pp.139-42; Lee, *Ireland*, p.437; Barry White, 'From Conflict to Violence: The Re-emergence of the IRA and the Loyalist Response' in *Northern Ireland. The Background To The Conflict*, ed. John Darby (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1983), 181-196, pp.185-6; John H. Whyte, *The north erupts*, p.347.

<sup>523</sup> "Act Now" *BEP*, August 6, 1971, p.4.

‘hateful, repressive, and undemocratic’.<sup>524</sup> The latter described it as a ‘serious infringement of civil rights whilst questioning whether civil rights could be maintained in ‘civil war’.<sup>525</sup> The *WDP* went further, and described the adoption of internment as the ‘trappings of dictatorship’ against the ‘savage, violent minority’ in Northern Ireland. Although it also warned that these measures only represented a ‘temporary cure for Ulster’s troubles’ and could not be implemented permanently.<sup>526</sup> Six days later, the *WDP* insightfully conceded that internment was so wide-ranging that ‘innocent men are caught up in it’, with the result that ‘any goodwill which might exist in infinite frailty among the Irish public, is lost forever.’ This editorial rejected calls for British troops to leave Northern Ireland, as this would result in a ‘bloodbath’. It argued that the troubles could only be resolved ‘in the minds of the Irish themselves.’ It also advocated long-term integration strategies such as ‘by taking education away from sectarian religious groupings’, rather than the reinforcement and extension of the ‘unworkable’ segregation.<sup>527</sup>

Ultimately, internment did not deliver the means of apprehending PIRA leaders, and several historians have persuasively argued that, as well as representing a massive failure, all that was achieved was to further alienate the Catholic population.<sup>528</sup> Given that internment almost exclusively targeted Catholics, this is not surprising, though this imbalance was rarely referenced in the British press. It is difficult to counter Lee’s view that the implementation of internment was a ‘colossal blunder’ which ‘merely offered a high profile set-piece’ for failure, whilst Bishop and Mallie have noted that ‘almost<sup>529</sup> every leading PIRA member’ in Belfast ‘escaped the net.’<sup>530</sup> Merlyn Rees, the future Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, was critical of internment in his memoirs, and criticised its morality as well as its failings:

It was not that the physical conditions as such were bad but that this kind of imprisonment could have been considered necessary at all. What sort of United Kingdom province was it that needed internment without trial? I did not realise then the incompetence of the Northern Ireland Department of Home Affairs nor the hearsay nature of the information that had led to the very inaccurate list of people to be picked up.<sup>531</sup>

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<sup>524</sup>“Self-destruction in Ireland” *The Guardian*, August 10, 1971, p.10.

<sup>525</sup>“THE DRIFT TO DISASTER” *The Observer*, August 15, 1971, p.6.

<sup>526</sup>“Ulster’s crisis of terror” *WDP*, August 10, 1971, p.6.

<sup>527</sup>“The big Irish question today” *WDP*, August 16, 1971, p.6.

<sup>528</sup> Aveyard, *The Labour Government*, p.164; Arthur and Jeffrey, *Northern Ireland*, p.12; Bew, *Ireland*, p.503; White, *From Conflict to Violence*, p.186.

<sup>529</sup> Of the 342 men arrested in the operation, only 56 were PIRA members.

<sup>530</sup> Lee, *Ireland*, p.437; Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, p.186.

<sup>531</sup> Merlyn Rees, *Northern Ireland, a Personal Perspective*. (London: Methuen, 1985), p.10.

Most damningly, Bew has irrefutably argued that internment ‘decidedly enhanced’ the popularity of PIRA, who were the ‘main winners’ from the failure.<sup>532</sup> Bishop and Mallie have also highlighted the aggressive PIRA response to this operation:

That the exercise was a failure was swiftly and dramatically illustrated within hours. In the next thirty-six hours, seventeen people were killed, and in Derry and Belfast hundreds of houses were destroyed by fire. In the Catholic areas of Belfast crowds hijacked buses and cars and turned them into burning barricades from behind which they stoned and petrol-bombed the police.<sup>533</sup>

The *BEP* were apparently oblivious to this failure when describing internment as a necessary measure to ‘save many more lives’ after the ‘regrettable’ ‘carnage’ of the retaliatory ‘bloodbath’.<sup>534</sup> However, by the following month it conceded that internment had been totally ineffective and had not stopped the ‘violent men of Northern Ireland.’<sup>535</sup> The *WDP* continued its previous line, and described internment as ‘a cumbersome, unwieldy device’ with ‘not much to recommend it’. This editorial once again highlighted the danger of imprisoning the innocent, and perceptively argued that ‘by most reasonable criteria’ internment had failed.<sup>536</sup> The *BEP*’s response to allegations of the torture of Northern Irish internees in October 1971 was laudable. The newspaper called for an investigation and demanded ‘no whitewash’. Remarkably, the *BEP* went as far as to concede that ‘If true, and there is any attempt at justification, those Irish who long for peace would be right to ask why they should accept and trust our authority rather than that of the I.R.A.’<sup>537</sup> It is striking that the *BEP* recognised the dangers of the British security forces targeting Northern Irish internees in this way, and argued that such discriminatory treatment could push moderate Catholics towards PIRA.

Indeed, it has been widely acknowledged that internment created an atmosphere of sympathy in which PIRA could flourish, and it is unsurprising that the systematic targeting of ‘Republicans and agitators, i.e. Catholics’,<sup>538</sup> as well as the political and social marginalisation faced by the Northern minority fuelled this atmosphere.<sup>539</sup> Internment also contributed directly towards Bloody Sunday on 30 January 1972, a day which, according to *The Guardian*, ‘dwarf[ed] all that has gone before in Northern Ireland.’<sup>540</sup> The events of

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<sup>532</sup> Bew, *Ireland*, p.503.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.186-8.

<sup>534</sup> “Deeds and Words, Mr. Lynch” *BEP*, August 10, 1971, p.4.

<sup>535</sup> “Day of Decision” *BEP*, September 6, 1971, p.4.

<sup>536</sup> “Ulster and the Pope” *WDP*, August 30, 1971, p.4.

<sup>537</sup> “Prompt probe needed” *BEP*, October 18, 1971, p.4.

<sup>538</sup> Bowyer Bell, *Secret Army*, p.381.

<sup>539</sup> Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, p.205; Coogan, *The I.R.A.*, pp.343-4; English, *Armed Struggle*, pp.140-1; Moloney, *Secret History*, p.107.

<sup>540</sup> “Ulster: how, when, and whether peace may be possible” *The Guardian*, January 31, 1972, p.12.

Bloody Sunday when 14<sup>541</sup> unarmed protestors were killed by British paratroopers during a NICRA march in Derry have been well documented.<sup>542</sup> Curtis has argued that Bloody Sunday ‘burn[ed] deep into the Irish consciousness’ yet left ‘little imprint in Britain’ where the media ‘fudged the events, suppressed investigations and blazened forth the idea that the British army had been ‘cleared’ of guilt.’<sup>543</sup>

Curtis’s view was a fair reflection of the Bristol media’s immediate reaction. Both newspapers somewhat abandoned their earlier pro-equality line and the *BEP* went no further than to call for another independent inquiry, declaring ‘We want no whitewash, or for that matter blackwash’ and that, although ‘Judges are as human as everyone else’ ‘a British judge is still as impartial as you will get.’<sup>544</sup> The *WDP* was more concerned with subsequent developments, such as the ‘deplorable’ and ‘calamitous scenes’ of the retaliatory razing of the British Embassy in Dublin, and the continuing death toll of British servicemen in Northern Ireland. It also accused the Irish of demanding a ‘monopoly on vengeful patriotic passion.’<sup>545</sup> Another *WDP* editorial later in February was heavily critical of NICRA and the protestors themselves. This piece argued that the march in Derry was ‘illegal’ and that protestors ‘had taunted and stoned soldiers’ before they had opened fire.<sup>546</sup> This followed the line adopted by many of the national newspapers. *The Times* also laid the blame for the killings on NICRA and PIRA, and argued that the latter ‘had directly brought on their own people so many deaths and so much suffering.’ This editorial turned the responsibility for the deaths onto the victims with alarming insensitivity:

British bullets will be found in most of their bodies...but the blood is on the consciences of irresponsible political leaders and the fanatical IRA.<sup>547</sup>

*The Daily Telegraph*, and the *Daily Express* took much the same line, and accused the civil rights movement of creating an environment which left the army with no choice but to shoot to kill.<sup>548</sup> Conversely, the *Daily Mirror* advocated a ‘five point plan’ to ‘end the killing in Northern Ireland which included replacing British troops with a UN peacekeeping force, an immediate end to internment and a newly appointed special minister to head talks on

<sup>541</sup> One of whom died of his injuries four months later.

<sup>542</sup> Arthur and Jeffrey, *Northern Ireland*, p.14; Bew, *Ireland*, pp.506-7; Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, pp.205-9; Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army*, p.384; Boyce, *The Irish Question*, pp.116-7; Coogan, *The I.R.A.*, pp.344-5; Curtis, *Propaganda War*, p.40; English, *Armed Struggle*, pp.149-50, 152-3; Ferriter, *Transformation*, pp.626-7; Harkness, *Ireland*, p.99; Moloney, *Secret History*, pp.110-1; Barry White, “From Conflict to Violence”, pp.185-6; Whyte, “The North Erupts”, pp.350-2.

<sup>543</sup> Curtis, *Propaganda War*, p.40.

<sup>544</sup> “No whitewash – and no blackwash” *BEP*, February 1, 1972, p.4.

<sup>545</sup> “Outrage at the Embassy” *WDP*, February 3, 1972, p.6.

<sup>546</sup> “Worst of the IRA” *WDP*, February 23, 1972, p.6.

<sup>547</sup> Curtis, *Propaganda War*, p.40.

<sup>548</sup> *Ibid*, p.40.

Northern Ireland's constitutional future.<sup>549</sup> The *BEP* printed a series of readers' letters which were representative of both sides of the debate. Some accused the press of reporting the situation in Northern Ireland with 'extreme sensationalism', and pointed to the 'extreme provocation' that troops in Northern Ireland had been exposed to.<sup>550</sup> One correspondent was particularly indignant:

Our soldiers are in Ireland to help keep order. They are shot at and killed but nothing is done about it. But when they at last retaliate they are condemned and a worldwide hue and cry ensues[...]I do not agree with all this killing but surely it is time they protected themselves properly.<sup>551</sup>

Astonishingly, the *BEP* also printed a letter which criticised the British army for 'bringing much pain and sorrow into the lives of the Catholics in the North' and even defended PIRA:

I object to the Irish Republican Army being called "terrorists," as their ranks are made up of Irishmen and women fighting for the freedom of a country they love and believe in.<sup>552</sup>

Although this view was subsequently criticised in several other letters, one of whom argued that 'I and many others have a worse name for them', the *BEP* adopted a far more conciliatory tone than many of its correspondents.<sup>553</sup> It also defended the rights of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland as the *WDP* had done. In addition to this, its u-turn on the moral justification for internment was remarkably quick, and the newspaper even suggested that an alternative to Stormont was necessary:

That bloody Sunday in Derry when 13 people died has not only hardened attitudes but changed them; the ultimate as we see it is the unity of Ireland. Nothing less[...] unity must be achieved by consent, not violence. That is Britain's guiding role – to let the Irish settle their destiny themselves, guaranteeing rights for minorities.

One big difficulty is Stormont itself. In the eyes of most Catholics it represents repression, while Protestants look upon it as their bastion. It may well have to go in its present form[...] it is no use keeping up pretences.

But the major obstacle to getting talks about talks started is internment without trial. Such a policy offends all who cherish civil liberties. What is more, it has outlived any usefulness<sup>554</sup>

The tone of this editorial was similar to the aforementioned *Daily Mirror* editorial of the previous week. Meanwhile, *The Guardian* argued that the majority of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland wanted a peaceful solution.<sup>555</sup> However, it went further than the *BEP* in its criticism of NICRA, who knew that 'the IRA might use the crowd as a shield' to attack the paratroopers. *The Guardian* was also more critical of the soldiers, and argued that enduring 'a wanton barrage of stones, steel bars, and other missiles[...] does not justify

<sup>549</sup> Ibid, p.46.

<sup>550</sup> D. Headlam, letter to *BEP*, printed February 4, 1972, p.44.

<sup>551</sup> J. Hawkesworth letter to *BEP*, printed February 5, 1972, p.6.

<sup>552</sup> Val McMahon letter to *BEP*, printed February 23, 1972, p.31.

<sup>553</sup> E. Slade, letter to *BEP*, February 26, 1972, p.7.

<sup>554</sup> "Grasp this chance" *BEP*, February 7, 1972, p.4.

<sup>555</sup> "Ulster: how, when, and whether peace may be possible" *The Guardian*, January 31, 1972, p.12.

opening fire so freely.’<sup>556</sup> That the *BEP* was prepared to argue for the rights of Northern Irish Catholics in the highly charged aftermath of Bloody Sunday is quite striking. Moreover, whilst *The Guardian* condemned NICRA for defying the ban on marches, as well as the army for opening fire, the *BEP* merely expressed the need for an independent enquiry to establish the facts without explicitly criticising either side. Whilst the *WDP* had described internment as a ‘cumbersome’ and ‘unwieldy’ failure, the newspaper was very critical of NICRA’s role in Bloody Sunday. It accused the organisation of being responsible for the killings, having presented PIRA with an opportunity to attack British troops from a position of relative safety.

### 3.11 - Park Street and Birmingham

1974 was another eventful year in Northern Ireland, and both Bristol newspapers ran almost-daily reports on the Troubles. The PIRA bombing of Park Street in Bristol city centre on December 18, 1974 brought the Troubles to Bristol but has barely received any attention in the literature. The unknown or forgotten nature of this event is illustrated by the fact that even some of the participants in this study had no recollection of the bombing. This certainly indicates that it has been, to some extent, forgotten. In contrast, *The Guardian* described the Birmingham pub bombings – in which 21 people were killed and nearly 200 injured<sup>557</sup> – as ‘an outrage beyond endurance’ and its legacy, in the form of the PTA, was described as ‘a watershed of our civil liberties.’<sup>558</sup> When one considers the evidence from other local studies in Birmingham and London, Delaney’s view that the 1970s PIRA campaign shook the ‘degree of ‘acceptance’ which the Irish had gained in Britain is very convincing. Delaney argued that the actions of PIRA ‘reinvigorated long-standing enmities and prejudices, which had only surfaced sporadically in the post-war years.’<sup>559</sup> However, as we will see, this was not the case in Bristol, where the participants for this thesis reported no discernable backlash against the city’s Irish population.

On 29 July there was a parcel bomb explosion at Wills’ factory in Bedminster which injured one.<sup>560</sup> The *WDP* published an editorial the following day lamenting the attack which had brought the ‘menace of Irish terrorism[...] close to home’.<sup>561</sup> The *BEP* printed an

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<sup>556</sup> “The division deepens” *The Guardian*, February 1, 1972, p.12.

<sup>557</sup> Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, p.257; Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish*, p.204; McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA*, p.90.

<sup>558</sup> “Savagery and the law” *The Guardian*, November 22, 1974, p.14.

<sup>559</sup> Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, p.2.

<sup>560</sup> “Parcel bomb explosion hits Wills” *BEP*, July 29, 1974, p.1; “My Gift Bomb Terror”, *WDP*, July 30, 1974, p.1.

<sup>561</sup> “Blast in the West”, *WDP*, July 30, 1974, p.6.



interview with the injured woman, who was able to return to work within a fortnight, and there were no calls for reprisals.<sup>562</sup> One readers' letter, printed in the *WDP* in October, bemoaned the 'undesirable' and 'dangerous' fact that 'any citizen of the Irish Republic, including IRA members or sympathisers, can arrange to have his name on the electoral roll'.<sup>563</sup> In its editorial of 25 November, the *BEP* dismissed calls for violent retaliation against the Irish, but demanded that the Irish government take 'firmer steps against the thugs who shelter there' and, most interestingly, that Irish people in Ireland and Britain denounce PIRA:

we are entitled to demand of those good and decent Irish people that we know that they, too, make their horror known both here and among their folk across the sea. The I.R.A. could not function without a tacit network of support. Silence indicates assent.  
Speak up Mick, Paddy, Kathleen and Siobhan – are you for them or against?<sup>564</sup>

These final lines are rather striking. It is not just the borderline racist use of stereotypical Irish names, but the assertion that 'silence indicates assent.' Given that subsequent studies have identified silence as a coping mechanism or 'avoidance strategy'<sup>565</sup> for many Irish people in Britain during the Troubles, the *BEP*'s demand is somewhat problematic.<sup>566</sup> The *WDP* were more restrained, and warned against the danger of the national mood turning to a 'dreadful mood of vengeance, where no Irishman, however innocent, however shamed he may be, will feel safe in this country.' The *WDP* argued that a backlash which reduced 'decent British people to a bloodlust as unquenchable as that of the bombers' was the 'real danger' of PIRA's campaign.<sup>567</sup> The Birmingham bombings prompted calls from some West Country MPs, including those representing Bristol West and South Gloucestershire, for the reintroduction of capital punishment.<sup>568</sup> However, the *BEP* perceptively advised against this for fear of vexing PIRA into further action and exposing 'the irreparable danger of hanging the innocent'.<sup>569</sup> The *WDP* also argued against the death penalty and urged Britain not to lose its 'tolerance of minorities'. It also bemoaned the lack of measures with which to fight PIRA:

None of the standard measures – banning the IRA, introduction of identity cards, detention without trial – will make the job of catching terrorists easier. Even the re-introduction of capital punishment would merely cause more martyrs [...] These measures might help satisfy an understandable sense of vengeance, but little more[...] The sentences for those caught must be long and severe. A deterrent, not a guarantee of a place in IRA mythology.

<sup>562</sup> "Injured Grannie counts her lucky stars" *BEP*, July 30, 1974, p.3.

<sup>563</sup> Grace Widdows letter to *WDP*, printed October 3, 1974, p.6.

<sup>564</sup> "There can be no surrender to this evil" *BEP*, November 25, 1974, p.4.

<sup>565</sup> Walter, *Outsiders Inside*, p.171; Wills, *The Best*, pp.157-8.

<sup>566</sup> Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish*, pp.203, 206, 208-12; Moran, *Irish Birmingham*, p. 198; Walter, *Outsiders*, p.171.

<sup>567</sup> "Unbowed by the maniac bombers" *WDP*, November 23, p.7.

<sup>568</sup> "Firing Squad for Bombers – M.P.s" *BEP*, November 26, 1974, p.1.

<sup>569</sup> "A swift and strong reaction" *BEP*, November 26, 1974, p.4.

But in all this Britain must not lose its sense of justice, of fairness and its tolerance of minorities.

If it does, the IRA will have achieved more than it could ever have hoped: It will have robbed Britain of its soul.<sup>570</sup>

This was a far more moderate stance than that adopted by *The Times*, which argued that, whilst capital punishment should not be reinstated for ‘ordinary murders’, calculated acts of ‘war against innocent civilians’ such as PIRA bombings, do not fall into this category. *The Times* also argued that the prospect of martyrdom was irrelevant as PIRA already had enough martyrs, and that ‘In the long run there is no reason to think that more people will be killed if the death penalty is reimposed than if it is not.’<sup>571</sup> However, it also stressed that most Irish people were ‘as opposed to terrorism[...] as anyone else’ and that the ‘danger’ that ‘the whole Irish community in England should be held to blame for what a small number of murderers are doing’ should be ‘guarded against’.<sup>572</sup> *The Observer* also argued that ‘It would not have a deterrent effect: men like these have little fear or imagination, and their leaders welcome martyrdom for its beneficial effect on the morale of their followers.’<sup>573</sup> The House of Commons voted overwhelmingly against the reintroduction of capital punishment on 11 December by 369 votes to 217. The three Bristol Labour MPs, Tony Benn, Michael Cocks and Ronald Thomas voted against the motion, whilst the Conservative MP for Bristol West, Robert Cooke, voted in favour.<sup>574</sup> The *BEP* praised this outcome, and reiterated that ‘the death penalty will not deter fanatics, will not increase safety and will only escalate the rate of violence.’<sup>575</sup> On 18 December two bombs went off in Park Street, resulting in seventeen injuries and a ‘scene of bomb-shattered property such as Bristol has not seen since the big blitz.’<sup>576</sup> Thirteen were hospitalised but the most serious injury sustained was a ruptured eardrum.<sup>577</sup> The *WDP* outlined the events as they occurred:

A man with an Irish accent telephoned a warning to police at Bridewell Headquarters at 7.30 p.m.

<sup>570</sup> “Unbowed by the maniac bombers” *WDP*, November 23, p.7.

<sup>571</sup> “This is an act of war” *Times*, November 23, 1974, p.15.

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>573</sup> “Confronting the terrorists” *The Observer*, December 1, 1974, p. 12.

<sup>574</sup> Bristol South East, Bristol South and Bristol North West respectively. All three voted against a failed motion to reintroduce capital punishment for terrorist offences resulting in death exactly one year later. The result was 361 to 232 and Cooke did not vote: <http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1975/dec/11/terrorist-offences-penalty> (accessed 22/10/15); HC Deb 11 December 1974, vol. 883, cc518-640 [http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1974/dec/11/capital-punishment#S5CV0883P0\\_19741211\\_HOC\\_191](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1974/dec/11/capital-punishment#S5CV0883P0_19741211_HOC_191) (accessed 22/10/15).

<sup>575</sup> “‘No’ to hanging the right decision” *BEP*, December 12, 1974, p.4.

<sup>576</sup> “Timetable of city devastation” *BEP*, December 19, 1974, p.3; “I view the holocaust left by the bombers” *BEP*, December 19, 1974, p.2. “13 injured as bombs shatter Bristol street” *The Guardian*, December 19, 1974, p.1; “Bristol bomb blast hurts seventeen” *Times*, December 19, 1974, p.1.

<sup>577</sup> “Two still in hospital” *BEP*, December 19, 1974, p.1; “The aftermath of the Park Street bomb” *BEP*, December 31, 1974, p.3.

He said a bomb would go off in 20 minutes to half an hour in Park Street.  
 Bomb No. 1 went off at 7.56[...]  
 Bomb No. 2 exploded just 13 minutes later[...]  
 The first bomb seems to have been the Come-on bomb, a familiar IRA device to get onlookers into the street.  
 No warning was given of the second bomb.  
 [...]The top of Park Street was a mass of glass, debris and hundreds of pamphlets blown out of the hearing aid shop.  
 Tailors' dummies lurched out of exclusive Moss Bros shop.  
 A Ford Cortina outside Dixon's was wrecked;  
 The bombs were hidden in dustbins, outside the shops.  
 Police following the tip-off, were clearing Park Street when they exploded.  
 The come-on bomb contained a pound of explosive. The next was five pounds.  
 Police had almost cleared Park Street of pedestrians when the first explosion came[...]  
 People were wandering around in a daze. Many were suffering from shock as the blasts shook nearby buildings.  
 Police searched cars and anyone carrying parcels and bags.  
 An Army bomb disposal squad was called in.  
 The bombers chose a good time and place to plant. Sacks of rubbish were piled waiting for collection outside almost every shop in Park Street.<sup>578</sup>

The bombings led to police raids on houses and extra police officers being drafted into bus stations, railway stations and airports in the region, but those responsible were never apprehended.<sup>579</sup> The *WDP*'s anger was such that they printed an outrageous editorial which criticised the British government for paying the miserly sum of £42,000 to relatives of the victims of Bloody Sunday two years earlier:

As Bristol's wounded are treated in hospital; debris swept up and damage repaired, the Government announced £42,000 compensation to the relatives of 13 Irishmen killed in Londonderry's Bloody Sunday.

The Irish say it is not enough; most people in this country say it is too much. How much is paid to the widows of soldiers forced to police Ulster on a Serviceman's wage?

It is a wild minority of the Irish population which has precipitated violence in Ulster.

If as a result of their challenge some of their number perish, there seems no reason why the British taxpayer should compensate them.<sup>580</sup>

The mother of two girls injured in the explosions called for the death penalty,<sup>581</sup> but the *BEP* was characteristically measured in describing PIRA's strategy as 'short-sighted' and issuing a 'passionate invitation to them to stop now before more of the innocent suffer on both sides.'<sup>582</sup> The *WDP* also acknowledged the activities of other terrorist groups in Northern Ireland, including 'Protestant gangs' whose existence was rarely recognised in the British press. However, the *WDP* dismissed the prospect of negotiations with PIRA, favouring instead 'the

<sup>578</sup> "Terror blast in Bristol" *WDP*, December 19, 1974, pp.1, 7.

<sup>579</sup> "West is terror target" *BEP*, December 19, 1974, p.1.

<sup>580</sup> "The war against Society" *WDP*, December 20, p.6.

<sup>581</sup> "Hang the bombers – mother of injured girls" *BEP*, December 19, 1974, p.3.

<sup>582</sup> "The day that terror came to Park Street" *BEP*, December 19, 1974, p.4.

capture and punishment of these despicable thugs'.<sup>583</sup> The restraint shown in the Bristol newspapers and particularly by the *BEP* was reflected in the responses of the participants for this study. Several only vaguely recalled the bombings when presented with the exact date and location, whilst some had no recollection of the event. Maureen was unsure if her hazy recollection of a bombing in Bristol had anything to do with the Irish, whilst Jim had no knowledge of the event and asked 'Was anybody killed?'.<sup>584</sup> Others recalled the events of 18 December vividly. Brendan was in the city centre on that evening with friends, the majority of whom were English, and recalled that he 'never got any hassle or anything like that'.<sup>585</sup> Trevor had been on a day trip to London, and a roadside police check on the outskirts of Bristol on his way home had imprinted the day's events on his memory. Like Brendan, Trevor noted that the bombings had little impression on the Bristol public:

it's just something that flowed over people's heads[...] I knew Park Street and I still know Park Street and I walked up and down Park Street, and to this day I wouldn't tell you where. That's the interesting thing, it's engendered if you like, you know, it was just a thing of nothing.  
[Trevor b.1928, Clare].

However it is striking that specific details, such as the damage done by the explosions, had been lost to memory, even when the damage was outlined in the interview:

I dunno whether there was any damage done if it was in a bin, I didn't know that, I can't recall that[...] Now isn't that amazing, I don't remember that[...] I tell you the other thing is, we would have been ashamed of it and we wouldn't want it and disown it. We weren't interested in it you know.  
[Trevor, b.1928, Clare].

Emily and Jim also highlighted the lack of anti-Irish antagonism in the city throughout the Troubles. Emily could not recall any prejudice or insults as a result of her Irishness, and argued that she had only experienced 'good hospitality' in Bristol. In addition to this, Emily emphasised that she wasn't a 'keep your head down, you're Irish type of person' and would 'proudly walk out of the shop with my *Irish Post* under my arm'.<sup>586</sup> Jim recollected that 'we [Irish and English people] all got on great together' and that he couldn't recall any instances of anti-Irishness in Bristol. Jim conceded that his experience might have been mediated by his frequent use of Irish pubs, where the only Englishman was often the landlord who naturally 'wouldn't want to get rid of good spenders'.<sup>587</sup>

It seems likely that the lack of fatalities and relatively minor injuries suffered on Park Street, particularly when compared to the Birmingham pub bombings the previous month,

<sup>583</sup> "Catch the bombers" *WDP*, December 23, p.4.

<sup>584</sup> Interviews with Maureen, b.1928, Longford and Jim, b.1926, Cork.

<sup>585</sup> Interview with Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon.

<sup>586</sup> Interview with Emily, b.1948, Tipperary.

<sup>587</sup> Interview with Jim, b.1926, Cork.

have contributed to this. Indeed, James Moran, in his book on the Birmingham Irish, has found that the pub bombings ‘prompted a widespread sense of crisis amongst the Irish in Birmingham’ and noted that the reaction of many was to ‘go to ground’.<sup>588</sup> This was also reflected in Schaffer and Nasar’s recent article in which several of their Birmingham participants claimed to feel ‘a sense of culpability’ and that ‘People changed their accents’: ‘When you were in certain situations you didn’t want to open your mouth. When we went to the shops we kept our heads down and our voices down; we didn’t feel good about it.’<sup>589</sup> Moran also acknowledged the response of a Birmingham Conservative MP, who blamed ‘local Irish activities’, and that even the *Guardian* equated Irish community groups and events with terrorism.<sup>590</sup> The backlash in Birmingham included the Irish community being targeted by hate-mail and fire bombings; fights and walk-outs at the Longbridge car plant; walk-outs at five other Rover factories and Irish workers in other areas being sent home over fears for their safety.<sup>591</sup> McGladdery has also noted the reaction of the Catholic Archbishop of Birmingham, who claimed that: ‘If you have an Irish accent, you are at once a suspicious person.’<sup>592</sup> Moran discussed the guilt that many of the Birmingham Irish felt, as well as apprehension over ‘previous political conversations with workmates, attendance at Irish events, or possession of republican pamphlets, all of which might be viewed in an incriminating light.’<sup>593</sup>

This was also identified in Hickman and Walter’s study, where participants described being ostracised in work and, in some cases, sent home ‘to avoid clashes between workers’. They also recalled harassment from neighbours, in shops, schools and in the street. One participant even received menacing telephone calls, in which her children were threatened and she was told to go home. Hickman and Walter also found that Irish people in London were victims of abuse and discrimination, with shopkeepers refusing to serve some.<sup>594</sup>

In spite of the participants’ positive experiences in Bristol, several acknowledged the hardship experienced by Irish people in other British cities during the Troubles. Brendan recognised the difficulties for Irish people in Britain, particularly in London and Birmingham, but not in Bristol where he, his family and friends never ‘got any hassle’.<sup>595</sup> Emily also acknowledged the problems that the Birmingham Irish faced, and noted that some Irish people

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<sup>588</sup> Moran, *Irish Birmingham*, pp.197-8.

<sup>589</sup> Schaffer and Nasar, “The white essential subject: race, ethnicity, and the Irish in post-war Britain,” in *Contemporary British History*, Vol. 32, No. 2, April 2018, 209-230, p.220.

<sup>590</sup> Moran, *Irish Birmingham*, p.198.

<sup>591</sup> Moran, *Irish Birmingham*, pp.198-202; McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA*, pp.93-4.

<sup>592</sup> McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA*, p.93.

<sup>593</sup> Moran, *Irish Birmingham*, p.198.

<sup>594</sup> Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination and the Irish*, pp.205-7, 207-9.

<sup>595</sup> Interview with Brendan, b.1942.

in Britain were ‘very ashamed’ during PIRA’s campaign.<sup>596</sup> Whilst Trevor discussed the ‘engendered’ nature of the Park Street bombings, he recalled that the Bristol Irish were ‘ashamed of it’ and ‘disown[ed] it’. He also recognised the impact of the Birmingham bombings on Irish people in Britain and argued that the majority of Irish people were against PIRA’s campaign. Trevor also recalled the guilt and suspicion that he and other Irish people felt as a result of the campaign:

But in a sense you felt so guilty, so hurt maybe, and you felt like, were people looking at you and saying ‘Did you know who it was? Are you involved? Do you have sympathy for them?’ you know? And we lay low, there was that kind of a feeling, that we were ashamed and we didn’t want it  
[Trevor, b.1928, Clare].

This went against the majority of participants who did not experience a compulsion to ‘keep their heads down’ as Emily put it. The experiences of Northern Irish participants were somewhat different, and some felt that their accents made them the objects of suspicion. Paul found that his Belfast accent and age meant that he belonged to the ‘suspicious generation’:

I was very conscious of my accent. And things happened to me like I was always stopped at airports because I’m more or less exactly the same age as you know, Martin McGuinness and all these people from the IRA you know. And I was always stopped because they thought I might...I was the suspicious generation.  
[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

Some also reflected on the lack of understanding of Northern Irish issues amongst sections of the British population. Paul noted that this was particularly the case amongst his fellow Labour Party members, some of whom supported for the Troops Out movement:

it had some adherents in Bristol but not very many[...] As a person from Belfast I knew that if the troops were withdrawn at that time there would be a civil war and hundreds of thousands of people, tens of thousands of people would be killed[...] I always said to myself that I would leave the Labour Party if any branch or constituency I was a part of passed a resolution in favour of Troops Out. So I had to turn up at all these meetings and tell people why it was a disastrous idea. Because in their naive way people were thinking ‘oh you know, it’s colonisation, the troops should come out and let the Irish sort it out’ and I thought ‘well yeah the Irish’ll sort it out but you don’t realise how it would be!’  
[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

Despite this, Paul, having also lived in Cambridge, described English people as ‘extremely tolerant’ and England as ‘about the least racist place I’ve ever been’:

people in England I find just allow you to get on with your life and get on with you as long as you don’t interfere with them or make trouble for them, they’re friendly, they’re welcoming, they’re tolerant and all[...]  
[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

Emily’s argument that the lack of anti-Irish racism and antagonism in Bristol reflected well on the city and its inhabitants in general provides a fitting summary. She recalled ‘thank God, we

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<sup>596</sup> Interview with Emily, b.1948, Tipperary.

didn't have anything. So it says a lot for where we're living I suppose, and for us too, perhaps for our attitude and our view'.<sup>597</sup> Interestingly, an unfortunate faux pas on the part of a bar near the top of Park Street brought the bombings to public attention again in 2014. In the build up to St Patrick's Day, The Brass Pig displayed a banner advertising 'Irish Car Bomb' drinks. The banner was subsequently removed after widespread criticism.<sup>598</sup> The near total lack of response to PIRA bombings in Bristol is also reflected in the almost total absence of the Park Street bombings from the literature. The bombings are limited to a brief mention in McGladdery's text on PIRA.<sup>599</sup> That none of the participants for this study reported a similar anti-Irish reaction to the Park Street bombings, as well as the moderate reaction of the *BEP* indicates that being Irish in Bristol, even in the height of the Troubles, was not nearly as difficult as it was in other English cities.

### 3.12 – The Prevention of Terrorism Act

The PTA has special significance for Bristol, given that a Bristol man was the first to appeal against an exclusion order issued to him by the Home Secretary Roy Jenkins. The PTA was introduced in the wake of the Birmingham pub bombings and passed through the House of Lords in just two minutes.<sup>600</sup> The Act made PIRA membership illegal, allowed police to arrest individuals upon reasonable suspicion of terrorist activity or affiliation, and to hold them for up to seven days without charge. It also gave police and immigration officials the power to deport or refuse entry to 'suspected terrorists and anyone suspected of harbouring them'.<sup>601</sup> Schaffer and Nasar have compellingly argued that the PTA created 'an atmosphere wherein Irishness became synonymous with terrorism'.<sup>602</sup>

These measures have received substantial criticism in the literature, particularly in Paddy Hillyard's groundbreaking study into people's experiences of the PTA, based on oral interviews with 115 participants. Hillyard identified that the PTA specifically targeted Irish people living in Britain and that it was 'commonplace for the police to try and pick up anyone

<sup>597</sup> Interview with Emily, b.1948.

<sup>598</sup> <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-england-bristol-26543952> (accessed 28/3/17); <http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Irish-Car-Bombs-St-Patrick-s-Day-drinks-promotion/story-20799783-detail/story.html#ixzz2vsezZyNr> accessed 13/3/14; <http://irishpost.co.uk/pub-near-ira-bomb-site-criticised-irish-car-bomb-drink-ad/> accessed 28/3/17.

<sup>599</sup> McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA*, p.99.

<sup>600</sup> Chris Mullin, *Error of Judgement. The Birmingham Bombings*. (London: Chatto & Windus, 1986), p.8.

<sup>601</sup> Bowyer Bell, *Secret Army*, p.414; Paddy Hillyard, "Law and Order" in *Northern Ireland, The Background To The Conflict*. ed. John Darby (Belfast: Appletree Press, 1983), 32-60, p.42; Paddy Hillyard, *Suspect Community. People's Experience of the Prevention of Terrorism Acts in Britain*. (London: Pluto Press, 1993), pp.6, 13; Mullin, *Error of Judgement*, p.8; Walker, *The prevention of terrorism*; Walter, *Outsiders*, pp.210-11.

<sup>602</sup> Schaffer and Nasar, "The white essential subject: race, ethnicity, and the Irish in post-war Britain," p.219.

who is related to, is friends with or has been connected with – however tenuously – someone who is suspected of a serious crime or has been charged with one.’ Hillyard noted that the vast majority of those questioned or detained under the PTA ‘are Irish or are married to someone who is Irish’ which allowed the police to ‘trawl the Irish community for information’.<sup>603</sup> Hillyard concluded that the PTA was ‘an example of institutionalised racism’ which criminalised Irish people and allowed the Home Secretary to control the movement of people between Britain and Ireland.<sup>604</sup> Jenkins himself admitted that ‘the powers[...] are draconian’ as well as ‘unprecedented in peacetime.’<sup>605</sup> Indeed, Hillyard has argued that ‘the United Kingdom’s reputation throughout the world in upholding human rights and civil liberties has been constantly compromised’ by the PTA.<sup>606</sup>

Reports and editorials from the *BEP* show that members of the Bristol Irish fell foul of the PTA, not through membership of PIRA, but of Clann na h’Éireann. Clann have generally been absent from the literature on the Irish in Britain, and to some extent that of the Troubles. Therefore, their prominent inclusion here breaks new ground. Clann had been established in 1964 as a Sinn Féin support group in Britain and several of its members were also associated with the Official IRA [OIRA]. Hanley and Millar have noted that Clann were particularly active in Birmingham and Glasgow and that one of its main objectives was to provide funding for the republican movement in Ireland through club and music nights.<sup>607</sup> The *BEP* praised the ‘swift and strong reaction’ of Jenkins in drafting the PTA so soon after the Birmingham bombings, although it did recognise that the PTA would make ‘severe inroads into personal liberty’ and that ‘blameless people may be put at considerable inconvenience.’<sup>608</sup> This reaction is comparable to that of *The Guardian*, which argued that Irish people being forced to ‘act to free themselves of suspicion or accept that infringement of their privacy is a small price to pay to prevent further terrorist outrages.’<sup>609</sup> Whilst the *WDP* concurred that the PTA was draconian – although ‘no more draconian than the majority[...] would wish’ - it claimed that PIRA was ‘so hideously repugnant[...] that its legitimate existence in any form in this country is no longer publicly acceptable.’<sup>610</sup> However, a later editorial stressed that ‘the

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<sup>603</sup> Hillyard, *Suspect Community*, p.258.

<sup>604</sup> Hillyard, *Suspect Community*, pp.6, 13, 33, 257-8.

<sup>605</sup> Hillyard, *Suspect Community*, p.4; Walker, *The prevention of terrorism*, p.22.

<sup>606</sup> Hillyard, *Suspect Community*, p.273.

<sup>607</sup> Brian Hanley and Scott Millar, *The Lost Revolution. The Story of The Official IRA and The Workers’ Party*. (Dublin: Penguin Ireland, 2010), p.49.

<sup>608</sup> “A swift and strong reaction” *BEP*, November 26, 1974, p.4.

<sup>609</sup> “Savagery and the law” *The Guardian*, November 22, 1974, p.14.

<sup>610</sup> “The ban Britain wanted to hear” *WDP*, November 26, 1974, p.6.



vast majority of Irish people in Britain are law-abiding' and 'must not be harassed.'<sup>611</sup> Hillyard has quoted *The Sunday Telegraph*, which echoed the *BEP*'s previous assertion that 'silence indicates assent', described Irish people in Britain as legitimate suspects and accused many of harbouring PIRA sympathies:

Such people may not positively help the IRA. But nor are they, properly speaking, innocent. Certainly they withhold information which would help catch the bombers, and serve the IRA in other ways[...] If they are not guilty themselves of terrorism, all these hangers-on, as much on the mainland as in Ulster itself, are certainly accomplices either before or after the act.<sup>612</sup>

The PTA was passed on November 26. On the same day, Danny Ryan, the Bristol-based national organiser of Clann maligned its infringement on civil liberties.<sup>613</sup> He also claimed that Clann 'were solely a political organisation' and should, as such, be unaffected by the PTA.<sup>614</sup> Ryan had already featured heavily in the *WDP* that year after voicing his support for PIRA bombing of military targets in Britain, as well as his subsequent condemnation of the Birmingham bombings.<sup>615</sup> Ryan and Adrian Gallagher, Clann's south west regional organiser, had also complained about police raids on Clann members' homes in October following the Guildford pub bombings. Ryan claimed that police seized 'address books, diaries, personal correspondence and other items'. They also forced Ryan's 18-year-old daughter to 'transcribe her shorthand notes and read letters from her boyfriend.'

This supports Hillyard's argument that the PTA was used to establish connections between members of the Irish community in Britain. Gallagher and other Clann members staying in Ryan's house were 'questioned for four hours by 14 policemen' and '31 bags containing items from the house' were taken away. Gallagher also complained that the police demanded an account of their movements in the previous week, and had been 'keeping surveillance on us'. He described this as 'purely harassment.'<sup>616</sup> Ryan's support for the bombing of 'military targets' resulted in his receiving death threats, and his 'repugnant views' as well as his apparent lack of gratitude for police protection brought further criticism from the *WDP*.<sup>617</sup> This editorial prompted Seamus Collins, Clann's President, to accuse the *WDP* of 'Right-Wing bias' and 'gutter journalism' in a letter to the newspaper. Collins also defended

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<sup>611</sup> "Now to stamp out the IRA" *WDP*, November 30, 1974, p.7.

<sup>612</sup> Hillyard, *Suspect Community*, pp.259-60.

<sup>613</sup> "'Liberty threat' of law" *WDP*, November 27, 1974, p.7.

<sup>614</sup> "Ban is not for us, say Irish group" *BEP*, November 26, 1974, p.3.

<sup>615</sup> "Dawn raid man: I back bombers" *WDP*, October 26, 1974, p.1; "West Irish leader attacks outrage" *WDP*, November 22, 1974, p.1.

<sup>616</sup> "Dawn raid man: I back bombers" *WDP*, October 26, 1974, p.1.

<sup>617</sup> "Threat to murder bombing row man" *WDP*, October 28, 1974, p.1. "What a nerve, Mr. Ryan" *WDP*, October 29, 1974, p.6.

Clann's views on PIRA's bombing campaign, and evoked de Valera's wartime criticisms of Britain's role in Ireland's past:

Clann na h'Eireann does not agree with, and has often condemned the arbitrary bombing campaign of the Provisional IRA.  
 But while internment remains, while torture remains, and while Irish people have a foreign imperialist army stalking their streets, then we will defend their right to extend the boundaries of their battlefield.  
 [...]The emotive clap-trap about Mr. Ryan's acceptance of British "hospitality" will be treated with the contempt it deserves by those who read it who understand the history of Britain's relationship with Ireland.  
 The same Union Jack that has[...] for more than 800 years dominated Ireland, and exported Irishmen as cheap and convenient units of labour.  
 The families of the thousands of Irishmen killed or forced to premature old age working on British building sites and motorways, may well not agree fully, or even partly, with the views of the Republican Movement.  
 But they certainly will not agree with the Press's patronising sensationalism about the hand that feeds them.

Collins also sarcastically opined that Clann members had no need of police protection as the 'constant police surveillance will adequately deter any would-be assailants.'<sup>618</sup> The *WDP* offered no riposte, and simply claimed that Collins' letter 'speaks for itself'.<sup>619</sup> Following the Birmingham bombings, an interview with Gallagher, scheduled for broadcast on Bristol Channel Television's 'Newsspeak' programme was banned by the Home Office and Liz Curtis has revealed that 'Bans on republican interviews punctuated the seventies.'<sup>620</sup> Clann featured in the *BEP* again on 2 December when Gallagher and Jim Flynn, another Bristol-based Clann member, were arrested at Collins' home in Birmingham.<sup>621</sup> Hanley and Millar have found that Flynn was one of a number of Clann members who had been recruited to the OIRA.<sup>622</sup> It is little surprise that Flynn was issued with an exclusion order the following day and became the first individual to appeal against this.<sup>623</sup> In addition, Ryan reiterated his defence of Clann as a 'bona fide political organisation' and pledged to 'fight any move to keep him [Ryan] out of England'.<sup>624</sup>

Gallagher was arrested again the following week for selling Republican newspapers outside an Irish dance in the city centre. Gallagher was critical of the way that the police were applying the PTA by arresting and holding Irish people 'for the night for no reason.' He claimed that the newspapers in question had been approved by the Home Office, yet he had

<sup>618</sup> Seamus Collins, letter to *WDP*, printed October 31, 1974, p.6.

<sup>619</sup> Seamus Collins, letter to *WDP*, printed October 31, 1974, p.6.

<sup>620</sup> "TV ban on a West Irish Chief" *WDP*, November 30, 1974, p.1; <sup>620</sup> Liz Curtis, *Propaganda war*, p.154.

<sup>621</sup> "Clann man detained in Bristol" *BEP*, December 2, 1974, p.1; "Terror swoop: Two held" *WDP*, December 2, 1974, p.1.

<sup>622</sup> Hanley and Millar, *The Lost Revolution*, p.165.

<sup>623</sup> *Ibid*, p.230.

<sup>624</sup> "Bristol man tests new anti-terror laws" *BEP*, December 3, 1974, p.1; "I will risk the Terror law" *WDP*, December 3, 1974, p.1.

still been arrested and detained for four hours.<sup>625</sup> The PTA also affected apparently innocuous social events in Bristol. In December 1974, a fundraising raffle game, organised by Canon Richard Norris, of Bristol's Holy Cross church in Bedminster, was banned from the King's Arms pub in Kingsdown, near the city centre. The raffle was a fundraiser for the Church social club and social housing for the elderly. The landlord claimed that he had withdrawn the game because he was not sure if any of the money raised was for 'factions like the IRA' as well as due to demand from his customers, '60 per cent' of whom were Irish and were 'careful' because of the risk of being detained under the PTA.<sup>626</sup> This reflects Trevor's recollection that Irish people 'lay low' during the bombings.

On the day of the Park Street bombings, Ryan accused police of harassing his wife and daughter after they were detained at the ferry terminus in Liverpool upon their arrival from Belfast.<sup>627</sup> The following day it was announced that Flynn's appeal had failed and that he would be flown from Bristol to Belfast that afternoon.<sup>628</sup> After Flynn had been remanded in custody upon his arrival in Belfast, Ryan was forced to deny that the Park Street bombing was 'a tit-for-tat reaction to the exclusion order.'<sup>629</sup> Flynn's deportation precipitated a minor walk-out at Spiller's Mill in Avonmouth. George Anderson, an Irish employee, was suspended on full pay after seven of his colleagues pressed for his dismissal following his participation in a protest against Flynn's deportation outside Horfield prison. One of the seven reasoned that 'When I see this man waving a banner and more or less condoning the bombing, what is a red-blooded man to do?'<sup>630</sup> It is clear that these men had failed to gauge the difference between protesting against the terms of the PTA and condoning terrorism. Hillyard has identified this tendency to conflate issues, and argued that it is 'extremely difficult to have an open and intelligent debate about such legislation in contemporary Britain. Anyone who questions the legislation is seen (particularly by the popular press) as assisting terrorism.'<sup>631</sup> Anderson referred to this in a televised interview with BBC Bristol news on 20 December:

They worked out I must have been an IRA supporter but, well when I am at work I just carry on with my work, my own, what happens outside the work, I, cos well if I was boastin' about being an IRA supporter, which is wrong... But I know myself

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<sup>625</sup> "Thrown into cells – Irish Republican" *BEP*, December 9, 1974, p.1; "The IRA errors, by freed suspect" *WDP*, December 3, 1974, p.1.

<sup>626</sup> "Church fund game barred by pub" *WDP*, December 9, 1974, p.5.

<sup>627</sup> "Detained wife harassed says Danny" *BEP*, December 18, 1974, p.1; "Irish leader's wife held in port swoop" *WDP*, December 18, 1974, p.7.

<sup>628</sup> "Flynn loses battle to remain here" *BEP*, December 19, 1974, p.1; "Flynn flown out to Ulster" *WDP*, December 20, 1974, p.1.

<sup>629</sup> "Now Flynn is held by Irish police" *BEP*, December 2, 1974, p.1.

<sup>630</sup> "Factory Peace Bid in Strike After Bombings" *BEP*, December 21, 1974, p.3.

<sup>631</sup> Hillyard, *Suspect Community*, p.266.

that I wasn't asking for trouble now. At work now, well I've been trying to avoid these kind of things. I've often been asked questions at work about the bombers now, "what do you think of bombers? What have you to do with them?" Well I have colleagues saying at work that I've got nothing at all to do with the bombers, and anything that happens in Northern Ireland has got nothing to do with me, or I do not want anything whatsoever to do with it.<sup>632</sup>

Joseph also referred to this when he recalled living in Bristol during the Troubles. He noted that it had been 'uncomfortable at times of particular bombings.' He took the view that 'You've kind of got to avoid the subject, because you try to explain it and you are... you can only end up as an apologist.'<sup>633</sup> Ultimately, the protest cost Anderson his job as he was dismissed with a payment of £1,000 on 2 January. A union representative was also forced to resign after defending Anderson at the hearing.<sup>634</sup> In a subsequent interview with the *BEP* Anderson expressed his bitterness towards the strikers and noted that 'It was only half-a-dozen out of 600 men who caused it.'<sup>635</sup> The *WDP* also failed to comprehend that Anderson had been protesting against the PTA when it declared that 'Decent folk will have nothing to do with Irish extremists and their supporters.'<sup>636</sup> Ryan and Gallagher continued to feature in the *BEP*. Gallagher once again criticised the PTA, after the police 'virtually wrecked' a house in the central St. Michael's Hill area 'occupied by Irish Republican supporters' and arrested a '17-year-old Irish building labourer' on suspicion of the Park Street bombings. Gallagher claimed that he had 'no objection to the police questioning people[...] but not ripping up mattresses and breaking furniture.'<sup>637</sup>

Ryan gave a press conference on 30 December 1974 at the Grand Hotel in Bristol city centre. He claimed that he had 'slipped into Britain using an assumed name and a thin disguise' to avoid being detained.<sup>638</sup> *The Guardian* quoted Ryan and Gallagher, who both condemned the PTA, as 'repressive' and 'internment without trial'. Gallagher also complained that 12 Clann members had been 'arrested, detained overnight, and subjected to "pure harassment."' He also claimed that one Clann member, Brendan Phelan, had been warned by unnamed detectives: 'We will shoot members of the Clann and blame it on the IRA.'<sup>639</sup> Ryan's fears proved to be well-founded as he was detained by police at Heathrow airport the following week whilst boarding a plane to Dublin. Clann released a statement in

<sup>632</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. Park St Bomb (ARC213, 20/12/74).

<sup>633</sup> Interview with Joseph, b.1951, Antrim.

<sup>634</sup> "Irish demo man loses his job" *WDP*, January 3, 1975, p.1.

<sup>635</sup> "£1,000 Pay-Off For Gaol Demo Irishman Who Was Shunned" *BEP*, January 6, 1975, p.1.

<sup>636</sup> "Can the IRA be trusted?" *WDP*, January 3, 1975, p.6.

<sup>637</sup> "Police quiz labourer as homes searched" *BEP*, December 19, 1974, p.8.

<sup>638</sup> "We Won't Be Driven Out – Says Ryan" *BEP*, December 30, 1974, p.1; "How I beat security net, by Ryan" *WDP*, December 31, 1974, p.5; "Danny disguised but unwanted" *The Guardian*, December 31, 1974, p.6.

<sup>639</sup> "Danny disguised but unwanted" *The Guardian*, December 31, 1974, p.6.

which they claimed that Ryan was ‘the twelfth member of the organisation to be questioned in the Bristol area since the new laws were passed.’<sup>640</sup> Within a few days Ryan had been issued with an exclusion order.<sup>641</sup> Clann claimed that this was an attempt to stop the organisation from raising funds, as Ryan had frequently carried money to and from Ireland.<sup>642</sup> Ryan’s wife, Bridie, was interviewed by the *BEP* the following day, and described the PTA as “internment in Britain.”<sup>643</sup> After his appeal had failed, Ryan was transferred from Brixton prison to Horfield Gaol ‘to be near his family and clear up his personal affairs before being flown out of the country’.<sup>644</sup> On 25 January, he was deported to Dublin from Bristol airport, and Bridie expressed her fear that their children could face discrimination because of Ryan’s connections.<sup>645</sup> She was also quoted in the *WDP*, and insisted that Ryan ‘has never been connected with terrorism’. She criticised Jenkins, who she believed had established himself as ‘judge, jury and prosecutor’ through the provisions of the PTA.<sup>646</sup> *The Guardian* quoted Ryan’s solicitor, who said that Ryan was considering appealing to the European Court of Human Rights. This was based on the argument that the PTA ‘contravened the European Convention of Human Rights in two ways: first by introducing detention without trial, and, secondly, by discriminating against people on the grounds of nationality.’<sup>647</sup> His solicitor was also quoted by the *WDP* and he argued that it was difficult to answer Ryan’s case as no charges had been established. In addition, he noted that Ryan believed he had been targeted ‘as part of an attempt to demoralise the Irish community here’ and consequently ‘wasn’t very hopeful of the order being revoked’.<sup>648</sup>

The final Bristol-based Clann member to be issued with an exclusion order was Brendan Phelan, who had lived in England for over ten years and was arrested at his home in Lawrence Weston on 28 January.<sup>649</sup> His Slough-based father travelled to Bristol to campaign for his release, and criticised the PTA in an interview with the *BEP*: “I don’t care for bombings, but this Act seems to be used against people who hold political views.”<sup>650</sup> In

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<sup>640</sup>“Danny Ryan ‘held by police at Heathrow” *BEP*, January 6, 1975, p.1.

<sup>641</sup>“Banned after 20 years in UK” *The Guardian*, January 11, 1975, p.22; “Ryan is told: Get Out!” *WDP*, January 9, 1975, p.1.

<sup>642</sup>“Ryan – Clann’s cash courier” *BEP*, January 9, 1975, p.1.

<sup>643</sup>“It’s internment in Britain says wife” *BEP*, January 23, 1975, p.1.

<sup>644</sup>“Ryan in gaol switch before deportation” *BEP*, January 23, 1975, p.6; “Britain expels Danny Ryan” *WDP*, January 22, 1975, p.1.

<sup>645</sup>“Farewell salute by defiant Danny” *BEP*, January 25, 1975, p.1.

<sup>646</sup>“Visitor for Ryan” *WDP*, January 24, 1975, p.5.

<sup>647</sup>“Plan to challenge Jenkins’s law” *The Guardian*, January 25, 1975, p.22.

<sup>648</sup>“Britain expels Danny Ryan” *WDP*, January 22, 1975, p.1.

<sup>649</sup>“Bristol Clann man held: MP to act” *BEP*, January 29, 1975, p.1; “Phelan is held” *WDP* January 29, 1975, p.1; “Clann man No.4 may be ousted” *WDP* January 30, 1975, p.3.

<sup>650</sup>“Father in bid to free Clann member” *BEP*, February 3, 1975, p.2.

February, both newspapers reported that Phelan had lost his appeal after he had been detained at Horfield for 11 days. His solicitor outlined the impact that the exclusion order would have on Phelan, as well as on his family: ‘He has nowhere to go when he arrives in Dublin’ and there had been no time to arrange for his family to join him.<sup>651</sup> In addition to this, Phelan’s family were not allowed to see him before his flight departed.<sup>652</sup> *The Times* identified this problem for the families of those excluded under the PTA, which made no provision for ‘the future of families left behind in Britain’.<sup>653</sup> Phelan and Ryan’s cases were brought up in the House of Commons by Ron Thomas, the Labour MP for Bristol North-West, on six occasions between May 1975 and March 1979.<sup>654</sup> In the first instance, Thomas discussed the dangers of the PTA being used to target members of political groups like Clann, despite the fact that such groups were not proscribed. The Home Secretary ‘stressed that nobody was issued with an exclusion order on political grounds’. Thomas asked again for clarity of the status of Clann in March 1977, and added that ‘I would hate any of my young constituents to join what is to all intents and purposes a perfectly proper organisation only to be picked up in the dead of night and sent away’.<sup>655</sup>

The two cases in Bristol with which I am familiar involve members of Clann na h'Eireann. I wrote to my right hon. Friend suggesting that he should make clear whether this organisation is or is not a proscribed organisation. There is a growing feeling in Bristol that the police will be picking up members of. [sic] Because of the extension of police powers it is believed that human frailty will lead the police to use those powers to the full and periodically to detain people. I am concerned at the fact that many politically naïve youngsters will find themselves involved in that organisation and might well find themselves being picked up and harassed by the

<sup>651</sup>“Phelan to be deported” *BEP*, February 14, 1975, p.1; “Phelan is deported to Dublin” *WDP* February 15, 1975, p.6.

<sup>652</sup>“Phelan deported after plane delay” *BEP*, February 15, 1975, p.1.

<sup>653</sup>“Families are stranded by anti-IRA laws” *The Times*, February 20, 1975, p.4.

<sup>654</sup> HC Deb 28 November 1974 vol 882 cc753-836

[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1974/nov/28/proscribed-organisations#S5CV0882P0\\_19741128\\_HOC\\_493](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1974/nov/28/proscribed-organisations#S5CV0882P0_19741128_HOC_493) (accessed 21/10/15); HC Deb 26 November 1975 vol 901 cc875-1003

[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1975/nov/26/prevention-of-terrorism-temporary#S5CV0901P0\\_19751126\\_HOC\\_336](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1975/nov/26/prevention-of-terrorism-temporary#S5CV0901P0_19751126_HOC_336) (accessed 21/10/15); HC Deb 28 January 1976 vol 904 cc506-19

[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1976/jan/28/exclusion-orders-general#S5CV0904P0\\_19760128\\_HOC\\_341](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1976/jan/28/exclusion-orders-general#S5CV0904P0_19760128_HOC_341) (accessed 21/10/15); HC Deb 09 March 1977 vol 927 cc1472-570

[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1977/mar/09/prevention-of-terrorism#S5CV0927P0\\_19770309\\_HOC\\_322](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1977/mar/09/prevention-of-terrorism#S5CV0927P0_19770309_HOC_322) (accessed 21/10/15); HC Deb 15 March 1978 vol 946 cc543-97

[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1978/mar/15/prevention-of-terrorism#S5CV0946P0\\_19780315\\_HOC\\_485](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1978/mar/15/prevention-of-terrorism#S5CV0946P0_19780315_HOC_485) (accessed 21/10/15); HC Deb 21 March 1979 vol 964 cc1505-624

[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1979/mar/21/prevention-of-terrorism-shackleton-report#S5CV0964P0\\_19790321\\_HOC\\_295](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1979/mar/21/prevention-of-terrorism-shackleton-report#S5CV0964P0_19790321_HOC_295) (accessed 21/10/15).

<sup>655</sup> HC Deb 09 March 1977 vol 927 cc1472-570

[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1977/mar/09/prevention-of-terrorism#S5CV0927P0\\_19770309\\_HOC\\_322](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1977/mar/09/prevention-of-terrorism#S5CV0927P0_19770309_HOC_322) (accessed 21/10/15).

police. However, the only response I received from the Secretary of State, through one of his colleagues, was to refer me to the schedule to the Act setting out the fact that only the IRA is a proscribed organisation.<sup>656</sup>

Thomas also criticised the implementation of the PTA, and argued that ‘in the two cases with which I am familiar in the Bristol area the individuals concerned were given no such indication’ as to the evidence against them. As a result of this, Phelan’s solicitor had contacted Thomas to ask how he could prepare a defence with no knowledge of the evidence against Phelan. This prompted Thomas to conclude that:

We all protest when this kind of procedure, which is contrary to all the tenets of natural justice, is practised in other countries. It is completely unacceptable, and I will not be voting for this extension. Given the opportunity, I will vote against it.<sup>657</sup>

In a further debate on the PTA in November 1975, Thomas recounted the experiences of Ryan and Phelan, and reiterated his concerns that detainees under the PTA had no opportunity to mount an effective appeal given the lack of available evidence. Thomas later described the appeals process as a ‘complete charade’<sup>658</sup>:

I want to recount the experiences of two Bristolians, members of Clann na Eireann. One of them was a constituent of mine. Both were taken into custody. Their families contacted me. The police refused to give any indication of the evidence against the men.

One point which has been raised is whether the Secretary of State could ensure that such persons secured representation by a solicitor pretty quickly. That is a complete waste of time, anyway. There is no point in such a person having a solicitor. My constituent secured the services of a good solicitor, who spent a considerable sum on telephoning[sic] me here at the House and asking me to appeal to the Secretary of State to give some indication of the evidence against his client so that he could prepare a defence. I assume that there are plenty of lawyers in the House who would hate to be asked to prepare a defence brief for somebody and then to be told that they were not to be given any indication of the evidence against their clients. I tried. I certainly was given no indication of the evidence. Indeed, I was told that I could not be given any such indication. The families of the men were not told of the evidence.<sup>659</sup>

He was also highly critical of the impact of the PTA on family life for those detained and excluded. Thomas contended that, far from serving justice, the PTA merely ‘dumped’ individuals in Ireland.<sup>660</sup> As a result of this, Ryan was unable to get a job in Ireland and his

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<sup>656</sup> HC Deb 19 May 1975 vol 892 cc1082-144  
[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1975/may/19/prevention-of-terrorism#S5CV0892P0\\_19750519\\_HOC\\_290](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1975/may/19/prevention-of-terrorism#S5CV0892P0_19750519_HOC_290) (accessed 21/10/15).

<sup>657</sup> Ibid.

<sup>658</sup> HC Deb 09 March 1977 vol 927 cc1472-570  
[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1977/mar/09/prevention-of-terrorism#S5CV0927P0\\_19770309\\_HOC\\_322](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1977/mar/09/prevention-of-terrorism#S5CV0927P0_19770309_HOC_322) (accessed 21/10/15).

<sup>659</sup> HC Deb 26 November 1975 vol 901 cc875-1003  
[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1975/nov/26/prevention-of-terrorism-temporary#S5CV0901P0\\_19751126\\_HOC\\_336](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1975/nov/26/prevention-of-terrorism-temporary#S5CV0901P0_19751126_HOC_336) (accessed 21/10/15).

<sup>660</sup> HC Deb 15 March 1978 vol 946 cc543-97  
[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1978/mar/15/prevention-of-terrorism#S5CV0946P0\\_19780315\\_HOC\\_485](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1978/mar/15/prevention-of-terrorism#S5CV0946P0_19780315_HOC_485) (accessed 21/10/15).

wife and children in Bristol experienced ‘extreme difficulties.’<sup>661</sup> He also argued that the House of Commons ‘should be the watchdog of civil liberties, not the Home Secretary’s poodle’, a phrase which he repeated on several occasions.<sup>662</sup>

What happens to these people who are portrayed as bombers and terrorists and are made the subject of an exclusion order? They are put on a boat or aeroplane and sent to Northern or Southern Ireland. They are set free. But the evidence against them is such as to split up the families, and the two men to whom I have just referred left wives and children behind them. They have been sent back to Northern or Southern Ireland and set free.

Clann were criticised by *The Guardian* for their view that the PTA was being used to ‘harass[...] the Irish community’ and ‘reduce Republican support’. *The Guardian* noted that only 21 exclusion orders had been issued at the start of January 1975, and reiterated that the evils of the PTA were worthwhile. In spite of this, it did concede that the PTA exclusively targeted Irish people which validated many of Clann’s, as well as Hillyard’s, arguments:

If even one Irish<sup>663</sup> person has been wrongly served with an exclusion order then civil liberties have been badly damaged by the new Act. And even if none has been wrongly served, civil liberties have still been eroded. No-one can defend the Act from a civil liberties platform[...] But the Act was drafted not to deal with public protests but public terrorism. The liberty to bomb, mutilate, or murder is one liberty we can do without[...] Even the temporary sacrifice of some civil rights[...] is a high price but if this saves lives and limbs the Act will have been worth it.<sup>664</sup>

It is clear that the PTA had significant implications for the Bristol Irish given the presence of several prominent Clann members in the city. Their deportations from Britain attracted the attention of the national press, not least because the first legal challenge to an exclusion order issued under the PTA came from a Bristol Irishman. Their stories, particularly those of Ryan and Phelan, fittingly illustrate the scrutiny that Irish people were subjected to in Britain during the Troubles. Elsewhere, the moderate reaction in the city is further indicated by the fact that only a very small group of George Anderson’s colleagues successfully agitated for his dismissal after his participation in an anti-PTA demonstration. Although the *WDP* described Anderson as a terrorist sympathiser, the *BEP* made no similar accusations. It is also significant that there were no similar stories of Irish workers being ostracised at work at the height of the bombing campaign. In addition to this, the *BEP* and *WDP*, whilst not explicitly critical of the PTA, did concede that its provisions were ‘draconian’. Whilst the *WDP* were

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<sup>661</sup> Ibid.

<sup>662</sup> HC Deb 28 January 1976 vol 904 cc506-19  
[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1976/jan/28/exclusion-orders-general#S5CV0904P0\\_19760128\\_HOC\\_341](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1976/jan/28/exclusion-orders-general#S5CV0904P0_19760128_HOC_341) (accessed 21/10/15).

<sup>663</sup> The *Guardian*’s admission that the PTA was directed at Irish people validates Hillyard’s arguments.

<sup>664</sup> “One liberty too many” *The Guardian*, January 9, 1975, p.12.



particularly critical of Ryan before his deportation to Ireland, it did explicitly state that ‘the vast majority of Irish people in Britain are law-abiding’ and ‘must not be harassed.’

### 3.13 - ‘A Dagger in the Heart of Britain’:<sup>665</sup> The Mountbatten Assassination

Another low point in Anglo-Irish relations was the murder of Lord Mountbatten and three others including his teenage grandson in county Sligo on 27 August 1979. Coogan has described this as ‘the most shocking single political assassination in Irish history’, and convincingly argued that it represented ‘a high-water mark in ferocity for the Provisionals’ campaign, and a correspondingly low one in Anglo-Irish relations.’<sup>666</sup> Bowyer Bell argued that Mountbatten ‘was more important[...] than anyone so far lost to the Irish Troubles’ and that his assassination dominated the world media, with the result that ‘Ireland was news once again.’<sup>667</sup> Indeed, *The Guardian* described Mountbatten as ‘the IRA’s most illustrious victim’.<sup>668</sup> Curtis has compellingly argued that the British coverage ‘had strong ritual overtones, with Mountbatten symbolising goodness, civilisation and the British nation at its mythic best, while the IRA were portrayed as the irrational faces of evil.’<sup>669</sup> This murder reverberated worldwide and its impact has been well documented in the literature.<sup>670</sup> Coogan and Bowyer Bell have also emphasised the now infamous *Daily Express* and *Daily Star* headlines, which simply labelled PIRA ‘BASTARDS’.<sup>671</sup> These headlines gained notoriety in Britain and Ireland and were well-remembered by some of the participants for this thesis, including Brendan and Joseph, who even recalled seeing the headline cut out and stuck to the inside of a car window in Bristol.

Both the *BEP* and the *WDP* described Mountbatten’s murder as ‘a dagger in the very heart of Britain itself’.<sup>672</sup> Both also criticised PIRA even more heavily than they had after the Park Street bombings. The *BEP* described the events as ‘A proud day’s work for the sick and evil men of the Provisional IRA[...] they don’t care who they maim and slaughter to keep proving their virility.’ The editorial also urged ‘political and religious leaders’ in Britain and Ireland to collaborate on ‘new initiatives to ‘break up and punish this villainous Irish mafia.’ It also appealed for an end to the ‘conspiracy of silence among many Irish both here and in

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<sup>665</sup>“A Dagger in the Heart of Britain” *WDP*, August 28, 1979, p.6.

<sup>666</sup>Coogan, *The I.R.A.*, p.469.

<sup>667</sup>Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army*, pp.451-2.

<sup>668</sup>“The carnage: despair of a new resolve?” *The Guardian*, August 28, 1979, p.14.

<sup>669</sup> Curtis, *Propaganda War*, p.114.

<sup>670</sup>Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, pp.312-3; Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army*, pp.451-2; Coogan, *The I.R.A.*, pp.469, 471; Moloney, *Secret History*, pp.175-6.

<sup>671</sup>Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army*, p.452; Coogan, *The I.R.A.*, p.471.

<sup>672</sup>“A Dagger in the Heart of Britain” *WDP*, August 28, 1979, p.6.

Ireland', none of whom had initiated a 'popular revolt against the IRA'. This recalled the *BEP*'s previous accusation of 'silence indicates assent' in the immediate aftermath of the Birmingham pub bombings.<sup>673</sup> The *WDP* went further and described PIRA as 'mindless fanatics' and 'insane terrorists', and, most strikingly, demanded the reintroduction of the death penalty: 'Today we must make clear there will be no sympathy for the craven psychopaths who are the architects of our grief.'<sup>674</sup>

The House of Commons had once more rejected the reinstatement of capital punishment in July of the same year by 362 votes to 243. The Labour MPs Benn and Cocks voted against the motion, whilst the two Conservative MPs, William Waldegrave and Thomas's successor in Bristol North West, Michael Colvin, voted against and for respectively.<sup>675</sup> Three days later, the *BEP* demanded Irish support for the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher in her attempts to counter PIRA, but doubted the direction from which this support would come, dismissing the credentials of the Taoiseach, Jack Lynch who had 'bask[ed] in Portugal while his country shuddered', as well as those of the Democratic Unionist Party [DUP] leader, Ian Paisley, 'who booms as loudly as loud.'<sup>676</sup> The *BEP* called for stronger action against PIRA again the following week and suggested that ridding 'all affronted humanity of the IRA' would be 'the most fitting memorial' to Mountbatten. It also claimed that the British army were 'too nice' to do what had to be done in the fight against PIRA.<sup>677</sup>

The *WDP* criticised Lynch for his refusal to allow British authorities to pursue PIRA suspects into the Republic. It accused him of 'allowing his country's sovereignty to be exploited by murderers' and described the Republic as a 'haven' for PIRA.<sup>678</sup> In early September, Anglo-Irish talks between Lynch and Thatcher yielded a joint statement which emphasised the desire 'to stamp out terrorism, and substantially improve border security'. However, the *WDP* remained 'suspicious of how far Mr Lynch will move away from allowing Eire to be a sanctuary for killers.'<sup>679</sup> The willingness of the *BEP* to criticise a unionist leader such as Paisley in the same breath in which it criticised Lynch is significant. The same was true of the *WDP* which, despite its harder stance on Lynch, delivered a stinging rebuke to the

<sup>673</sup> "We Must Find an Answer" *BEP*, August 28, 1979, p.4.

<sup>674</sup> "A Dagger in the Heart of Britain" *WDP*, August 28, 1979, p.6.

<sup>675</sup> HC Deb 19 July 1979, Vol 970, cc2019-125:

[http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1979/jul/19/capital-punishment#S5CV0970P0\\_19790719\\_HOC\\_367](http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1979/jul/19/capital-punishment#S5CV0970P0_19790719_HOC_367) (accessed 22/10/15).

<sup>676</sup> "Who Will Show the Way?" *BEP*, August 31, 1979, p.4.

<sup>677</sup> "The Best Memorial to Lord Louis" *BEP*, September 5, 1979, p.4.

<sup>678</sup> "Haven of Terror" *WDP*, September 3, 1979, p.6.

<sup>679</sup> "Word, or Action?" *WDP*, September 7, 1979, p.8.

Ulster MEP John Taylor who called on loyalist paramilitary groups to concentrate on targets in the Republic, rather than in Northern Ireland, for revenge attacks. Its editorial described Taylor's speech as 'contemptible', and added that there was 'no place for incitement' in parliamentary democracy and that 'he should withdraw his words now, before he has blood on his conscience' and resign from the European parliament 'if he believes in the supremacy of violence over debate.'<sup>680</sup> Taylor was also criticised in *The Guardian*, which argued that he 'could not have offered a more dangerous prescription for sectarian conflict if he had taken his words from an IRA manual of instruction.'<sup>681</sup> Mountbatten's murder led the *WDP* to call for the reintroduction of capital punishment, and prompted the *BEP* to reiterate their view that 'silence indicates assent'. However, the *BEP* also advocated greater Anglo-Irish co-operation and, whilst both newspapers questioned Lynch's commitment to this, both also criticised unionist figures for advocating further violence in Ireland.

### 3.14 – The Hunger Strikes

*We're not certain  
of our part in this madness;  
we wrangle over right and wrong  
when our blood's up in the pub;  
we wait for the latest bulletins  
the latest videoed opinions.*<sup>682</sup>

The hunger strike undertaken by Irish republican prisoners in Belfast's Maze prison between 1 March and 3 October 1981 is arguably the most pivotal event in the Troubles. Indeed, Hillyard has argued that 'The hunger strikes and the authorities' response did more to unite Catholic opinion than any other single event since internment in 1971 or Bloody Sunday in 1972.'<sup>683</sup> The hunger strike, in which ten men died, was an attempt to regain concessions such as political prisoner status from the British authorities. It also pushed Sinn Féin into electoral politics after Bobby Sands, the first man to die, was elected to the House of Commons as the MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone on 9 April. This by-election victory has been described as 'a world-wide propaganda harvest' for the republican movement.<sup>684</sup> In addition to this, Sinn Féin had electoral success in Ireland after Kieran Doherty and Paddy Agnew were

<sup>680</sup> "A Speech Stained with Hate" *WDP*, August 31, 1979, p.8.

<sup>681</sup> "Ireland: now the real talking has to start" *The Guardian*, September 1, 1979, p.6.

<sup>682</sup> From Michael Davitt, For Bobby Sands on the Day Before he Died. *An Crann Faoi Bhláth The Flowering Tree. Contemporary Irish Poetry with Verse Translations* eds Declan Kilberd and Gabriel Fitzmaurice (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1991), p.255.

<sup>683</sup> Hillyard, *Law and Order*, p.57.

<sup>684</sup> Brendan O'Brien, *The Long War. The IRA and Sinn Féin 1985 to Today*. (Dublin: The O'Brien Press, 1993), p.21.

elected to the Dáil.<sup>685</sup> The effect of these victories was such that *The Guardian* later conceded that the hunger strikes had been ‘a propaganda nightmare for Britain.’<sup>686</sup> The details of the hunger strikes have been covered in great detail elsewhere,<sup>687</sup> as has Sands’s by-election victory.<sup>688</sup>

Although the government’s response to the hunger strikes was praised in the British media, it was widely criticised in other countries, and the resulting boost this gave to the nationalist movement, PIRA and the Irish National Liberation Army [INLA] has been well documented in the literature.<sup>689</sup> Coogan has compared the impact of the hunger strikes on PIRA to the effect that the executions of the 1916 Easter Rising leaders had on the IRA, and Joe Lee has described Thatcher’s handling of the strikes as ‘inept to the point of criminality.’<sup>690</sup> Curtis has identified that ‘the British media almost unanimously supported the government’s stance’ throughout the crisis.<sup>691</sup> The *BEP* and the *WDP* certainly conformed to this, as both expressed no empathy for the hunger strikers, and both were supportive of Thatcher’s stance. The *WDP* described the hunger strike as ‘another attempt at blackmail’ before imploring the government to cede ‘no concessions’. The editorial also downplayed the impact that Sands’s martyrdom would have on the Northern Ireland conflict and claimed that ‘it should be plain to all those who are swayed by such acts, that there are nobler martyrs.’<sup>692</sup> The *BEP* expressed similar views in late April and described Sands as ‘a criminal, a hooligan and a bank robber’ and praised Thatcher for ‘refusing to be influenced by his self-imposed suffering’. The editorial also displayed a clear sense of frustration with the ‘feudal religious passions’ in Northern Ireland, and criticised republican and loyalist paramilitary groups:

If Sands dies – and he may well have done so by the time you read these words – there will be increased violence from the IRA.

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<sup>685</sup> Both were involved in the Maze protest, but only Doherty was on hunger strike.

<sup>686</sup> “Home truths from abroad” *The Guardian*, June 22, 1981, p.10.

<sup>687</sup> Rogelio Alonso, *The IRA and Armed Struggle*. (London: Routledge, 2007), p.104; Arthur and Jeffrey, *Northern Ireland*, p.15; Bew, *Ireland*, pp.528-31; Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, pp.375-6; Coogan, *The I.R.A.*, p.498; Curtis, *Propaganda War*, pp.202-6; English, *Armed Struggle*, pp.204-9; Hillyard, *Law and Order*, pp.55, 57-8; Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland*, pp.361-3; Lee, *Ireland*, pp.454-5; Moloney, *Secret History*, pp.208-10; O’Brien, *The Long War*, p.21; Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, pp.193-4.

<sup>688</sup> Alonso, *The IRA*, p.106; Bew, *Ireland*, p.528; Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, pp.386, 376; Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army*, p.501; Coogan, *The I.R.A.*, pp.344-5; Curtis, *Propaganda War*, p.206; English, *Armed Struggle*, pp.199-200; Ferriter, *Transformation*, p.640; Roy Foster, *Luck and the Irish, A Brief History of Change, c.1970-2000*. (London: Allen Lane, 2007), p.122; Keogh, *Twentieth Century Ireland*, pp.362-3; Lee, *Ireland*, pp.454-5; O’Brien, *The Long War*, p.21. Patterson, *Politics of Illusion*, p.194; White, *From Conflict to Violence*, p.195.

<sup>689</sup> Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, pp.375-6; Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army*, p.504, 510-12; English, *Armed Struggle*, pp.204-9; McGladdery, *The Provisional IRA*, p.128; Miller, *Don’t Mention The War*, pp.84-5.

<sup>690</sup> Coogan, *The I.R.A.*, p.480; Lee, *Ireland*, p.454.

<sup>691</sup> Curtis, *Propaganda War*, p.203.

<sup>692</sup> “IRA man in new fast” *WDP*, March 2, 1981, p.6.

If his demands are granted, there will be increased violence from the Protestant militant organisations.  
 In Northern Ireland history has taught us that one cannot win.  
 All Ireland, it seems, is determined to keep the clock turned back to feudal religious passions which the rest of Europe exorcised centuries ago.<sup>693</sup>

*The Times* placed the blame on Sands and PIRA and argued that ‘if he dies he will die by no hand other than his own.’<sup>694</sup> The *WDP* described Sands’ by-election victory as a ‘vote for violence’ which would ‘only encourage the IRA in its murderous mission and intensify the answering battle-cries of the Protestant extremists.’<sup>695</sup> Ten days later, the *WDP* maligned the ‘fair and democratic’ election of Sands which had ‘won the IRA worldwide publicity and put new heart into a flagging terrorist movement.’ This editorial added that, should Sands die, ‘the victory for the IRA will be even greater’ and the resulting violence ‘may be as bad as anything the province has suffered in the past decade.’ However, it predicted that, should Thatcher concede to the strikers’ demands, it would ‘spur the IRA to more.’<sup>696</sup> Both *The Guardian* and *The Times* disputed the claim that Sands’ election represented a political victory for PIRA and the latter argued that ‘The myth of Fermanagh must not be allowed to gain credibility.’<sup>697</sup> The former believed that it represented a deep dissatisfaction with the ‘political climate in which they have to live their lives whilst the latter argued that, whilst there was sympathy for Sands, it was primarily the rejection of the unionist candidate and indeed ‘Any Catholic candidate would have won.’<sup>698</sup>

Upon Sands’s death on 5 May, both Bristol newspapers were unrelenting. The *BEP* declared that ‘sympathy should not be for Sands, but for the roll of innocent dead created by the IRA’. It also continued its previous criticism of Ireland, and argued that Sands was as misguided as ‘all the feudal fools of Ireland, North and South, who in basic reality perpetuate the kind of religious strife outlawed by the rest of Europe centuries ago.’<sup>699</sup> In terms of the *WDP*, its editorial ‘The man who killed himself’ on the following day revealed much about the newspaper’s view on his death. This editorial described Sands as ‘a convicted criminal’ who ‘chose to die and praised Thatcher’s refusal to negotiate, as any ‘capitulation’ would have been seen as a ‘license for terrorism’ and ‘a recruiting call for gunmen on both sides of the Ulster conflict.’<sup>700</sup> *The Times* took the same view, and repeated their earlier assertion that

<sup>693</sup> “No one wins in Ireland” *BEP*, April 29, 1981, p.10.

<sup>694</sup> “The politics of suicide” *Times*, April 24, 1981, p.13.

<sup>695</sup> “Vote for Violence” *WDP*, April 11, 1981, p.9.

<sup>696</sup> “Visitors at the Prison” *WDP*, April 21, 1981, p.6.

<sup>697</sup> “Who killed Bobby Sands?” *Times*, May 6, 1981, p.18.

<sup>698</sup> “Little cheer in the Irish- mist” *The Guardian*, June 13, 1981, p.8.

<sup>699</sup> “The death of Sands” *BEP*, May 5, 1981, p.6.

<sup>700</sup> “The man who killed himself” *WDP*, May 6, 1981, p.6.

Sands - 'determined to reject all initiatives designed to save his life' – had 'committed suicide'. Their editorial also exonerated the British government, which bore 'no responsibility whatever' for his death.<sup>701</sup> Conversely, Curtis has noted that '*The Sunday Times*' chief European correspondent, Keith Richardson, was quoted as noting that 'World opinion has begun to shift away from the British government and in favour of the IRA.' Richardson also found that 'General European impression ranges from pig-headed Thatcher obstinacy, through scandalous misgovernment, to outright genocide. In other words, it could not be worse'.<sup>702</sup>

The *BEP* once again accused Irish people in Britain and America of supporting the hunger strikers by 'send[ing] money for murder' to PIRA, and questioned whether Irish emigrants would treat PIRA as 'political dissidents, or as terrorists' if 'their country's soldiers were in the front line'.<sup>703</sup> The *BEP* and *The Observer* also criticised Tony Benn, the Labour MP for Bristol South East, after his claim that Sands should be allowed to take his seat in the House of Commons, which produced 'shock and dismay' in the House.<sup>704</sup> Benn had previously attempted to convince the Speaker of the House of Commons that Bernadette Devlin, the MP for Mid Ulster, should be allowed to take her seat upon her release from prison in 1970.<sup>705</sup> However, the *BEP* saw merit in Benn's suggestion that British troops should be withdrawn from Northern Ireland and argued that 'The average Briton[...] is not so sure that British soldiers should die for the benefit of the Irish.'<sup>706</sup> This editorial prompted several readers' letters, and several indicated the low point to which Anglo-Irish relations had sunk by evoking the memory of Irish neutrality in the Second World War:

presumably we have to forget that during 1939-45 quite a few North Irishmen died for a Britain they presumably were under the impression they were a part of.<sup>707</sup>

May I then remind you that many Irish died for Britain, in two world wars?  
Have we forgotten then heroism of Ulstermen on the Somme? And, surely, men who served at sea will remember Ulster's loyalty in allowing them the use of her ports in World War 2?  
Unlike the South, which basked in safe neutrality, Belfast was terribly bombed.<sup>708</sup>

<sup>701</sup> "Who killed Bobby Sands?" *Times*, May 6, 1981, p.18.

<sup>702</sup> Curtis, *Propaganda War*, p.203.

<sup>703</sup> "The I.R.A.'s harmony of hate" *BEP*, May 6, 1981, p.8.

<sup>704</sup> "Benn in call for Sands to sit as MP" *BEP*, May 1, 1981, p.1; "Ulster's need for calm" *The Observer*, May 3, 1981, p.14.

<sup>705</sup> HC Deb 22 July 1970 vol 804 cc536-47; Devlin was sentenced to six months imprisonment after being convicted of incitement to riot in December 1969 following Derry's Battle of the Bogside in August of the same year.

<http://hansard.millbanksystems.com/commons/1970/jul/22/hon-member-for-mid-ulster> (accessed 21/10/15).

<sup>706</sup> "Now Benn gets it right" *BEP*, May 12, 1981, p.6.

<sup>707</sup> 'Ex-Seaman' letter to the *BEP*, printed May 15, 1981, p.32.

<sup>708</sup> Jean White, letter to the *BEP*, printed May 15, 1981, p.32.

However, these views were criticised in a letter from a ‘Southern-Irish born and bred’ ex-British army sergeant:

Any Briton old enough will remember the contribution made by Irishmen from all over Ireland, not just Ulster, who fought and died for Britain and freedom in the World Wars.

Southern Ireland was a newly formed nation at the outbreak of World War Two and, like some other nations, it decided to stay neutral. However, this didn’t satisfy Mr. Churchill.<sup>709</sup>

The *BEP*’s suggestion that British troops in Northern Ireland should be replaced by a UN peacekeeping force was also criticised by a correspondent who defended Benn’s categorisation of the Troubles as a civil war. This letter also accused the *BEP* of a desire for soldiers of other nationalities to die ‘on Cromwell’s altar’ in the act of policing a British problem:

Mr. Benn’s arguments that what is happening in Ulster is not a disturbance but a civil war, that our continued armed presence is counter-productive and that the authorities in Northern Ireland are doing things that should not be acceptable in any part of the UK, seem quite cogent.

Your comment that “The Average Briton is not sure that British soldiers should die for the benefit of the Irish” appears less so.

Presumably it is perfectly acceptable that gang men from other parts of the globe should be sacrificed on Cromwell’s altar.

How refreshing!<sup>710</sup>

The end of the hunger strikes was met with renewed press criticism of PIRA. The *BEP* proclaimed it to be the ‘end of an evil mission’ which was ‘one of the most revolting even the IRA has ever undertaken’ as well as ‘one of the most sordid episodes in the long struggle against lawlessness in Ulster’. This editorial also triumphantly – and misguidedly - judged that the hunger strikes had ‘achieved little support except among fanatics’.<sup>711</sup> The *WDP* praised the government’s refusal to ‘negotiate with murderers’, and proclaimed the hunger strikes as ‘pointless’, ‘tragic’ and a ‘futile waste of ten lives’. This editorial also naively predicted that the hunger strikes were ‘a major victory for Mrs Thatcher – and a stunning blow to the IRA propagandists’.<sup>712</sup> *The Times* adopted a similar position in their editorial: ‘Ten wasted lives’ which described the strikers as ‘men convicted of heinous criminal offences’ who ‘must serve their sentences in the manner of other convicted criminals’. It also described the government’s handling of the strikes as ‘manifestly just.’<sup>713</sup> As we have seen, both Bristol newspapers had, on the whole, adopted incredibly restrained approaches – comparable with the *Guardian* - to previous Anglo-Irish developments, such as Ireland’s neutrality and the

<sup>709</sup> ‘Ex-Sergeant’, letter to the *BEP*, printed May 22, 1981, p.32.

<sup>710</sup> T. Cawley, letter to the *BEP*, printed May 15, 1981, p.32.

<sup>711</sup> “End of an evil mission” *BEP*, October 3, 1981, p.6.

<sup>712</sup> “Futile waste of ten lives” *WDP*, October 3, 1981, p.1.

<sup>713</sup> “Ten wasted lives” *The Times*, October 5, 1981, p.3.

PIRA bombing campaigns. But both took a much harder line with the hunger strikers, and their editorials were more in line with those of *The Times* than their views on other Anglo-Irish events of the twentieth century had been.

### 3.15 – ‘A few feet away from history’<sup>714</sup>: The Brighton Bombing

During the Conservative party conference at the Grand Hotel in Brighton on 12 October 1984, PIRA attempted to assassinate Thatcher, as well as a large section of her cabinet. This was profoundly shocking. Coogan has described the bombing, in which five people were killed, as ‘a direct and calculated response to Mrs Thatcher’s handling of the hunger strike[...] intended to avenge the deaths of the ten strikers.’<sup>715</sup> Several historians have acknowledged the impact of the bombing on British and Irish people, given that ‘the entire British Cabinet had nearly been wiped out by the IRA’.<sup>716</sup> This fact was also referenced by *The Times*, which described the bombing as ‘the most destructive single assault on the organs of the state since the attempt to blow up parliament 380 years ago.’<sup>717</sup> *The Guardian* noted that acts of terrorism were ‘often more remembered for the headline count of lives lost and bodies maimed than for their precise circumstance’. However, in this case ‘The Prime Minister, and many others, were only a few feet from obliteration. The bombers of the night were only a few feet away from history.’<sup>718</sup>

This was also reflected in the *WDP*, which conceded that ‘the IRA was able to penetrate the heart of the British Government and so nearly thrust a dagger into it.’<sup>719</sup> The bombing was met with a furious response in the Bristol newspapers. The *WDP* described it as ‘the most grotesque and foul attempt at political assassination in modern history’ as well as ‘an attempt to massacre democracy’. The editorial also praised Thatcher and commended the Labour Party for uniting with the Conservative government against PIRA. It claimed that ‘democracy cannot be bombed into submission’ and that PIRA could not understand that the British people were ‘dedicated to something more precious than political factionalism.’<sup>720</sup> Having supported its re-introduction in 1979, the *WDP* now argued against capital punishment. Not on the basis that it was morally indefensible, but that ‘a martyr’s crown would suit these warped thugs greatly’.<sup>721</sup> The *BEP* declared that PIRA’s ‘cowardly business

<sup>714</sup> “Holding hard to business as usual” *The Guardian*, October 13, 1984, p.14.

<sup>715</sup> Coogan, *The I.R.A.*, p.516.

<sup>716</sup> Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, p.430; Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army*, p.551; Coogan, *The I.R.A.*, pp.515-6; Lee, *Ireland*, p.455.

<sup>717</sup> “From darkness to light” *The Times*, October 13, 1984, p.9.

<sup>718</sup> “Holding hard to business as usual” *The Guardian*, October 13, 1984, p.14.

<sup>719</sup> “Beware of the fall-out at Brighton” *WDP*, October 15, 1984, p.12.

<sup>720</sup> “An attempt to massacre democracy” *WDP*, October 13, 1984, p.16.

<sup>721</sup> “Beware of the fall-out at Brighton” *WDP*, October 15, 1984, p.12.



of killing, maiming and destroying' had failed to 'strike fear and disharmony into the nation'.<sup>722</sup> It also argued against capital punishment, reasoning that 'civilised nations do not fight barbarism with barbarism, or give evil thugs the mantle of martyrdom.'<sup>723</sup>

However, the Brighton bombing would help to assuage Anglo-Irish relations in the long-term. Bishop and Mallie have convincingly argued that the effect on Thatcher helped to create an environment in which Anglo-Irish talks would come to fruition in the Hillsborough Agreement [HA] of the following year.<sup>724</sup> *The Guardian* also perceptively alluded to the part that the Taoiseach, Garret Fitzgerald, would have to play in shaping the future of Anglo-Irish relations.<sup>725</sup> Fitzgerald would indeed play a significant role in the shaping of the HA, and 1985 would be a watershed year in Anglo-Irish history. It is clear that, whilst the severity of the bombing was not in question, the Bristol press followed the same line that they had pursued throughout the Troubles. They did not, for the most part, equate PIRA terrorism with the majority of Irish people living in Britain, and nor did they waver in their criticism of PIRA. It is also significant that both continued to argue against the restoration of capital punishment, although not always for moralistic reasons.

### 3.16 – The Hillsborough Agreement

The signing of the 1985 HA was a landmark event in Anglo-Irish history, and several historians have compellingly emphasised its importance. Anthony Kenny has praised the HA as a remarkable feat of diplomacy and Richard English has argued that it 'formally changed the dynamic between the two governments'.<sup>726</sup> Tom Hadden and Kevin Boyle have described this as 'the most significant and carefully prepared development in the relationship between Britain and Ireland since the partition settlement of the 1920s.'<sup>727</sup> It has been well noted in the literature that the HA was significant in giving the Republic a consultative role in Northern Ireland, as well as in the pledge of the two governments to work together.<sup>728</sup> The HA was very

<sup>722</sup> "United by this terror" *BEP*, October 12, 1984, p.6.

<sup>723</sup> "Murderous thugs" *BEP*, October 15, 1984, p.6.

<sup>724</sup> Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, p.430.

<sup>725</sup> "Outrage is not a reason for inaction" *The Guardian*, October 15, 1984, p.14.

<sup>726</sup> Anthony Kenny, *The Road to Hillsborough. The Shaping of the Anglo-Irish Agreement*. (Oxford: Pergamon Press, 1986), p.101; English, *Armed Struggle*, p.243.

<sup>727</sup> Tom Hadden and Kevin Boyle, *The Anglo-Irish Agreement. Commentary, Text and Official Review*. (London: Sweet & Maxwell Limited, 1989), p.1.

<sup>728</sup> Paul Arthur, "Northern Ireland: the 'unfinished business' of Anglo-Irish relations" in *Ireland and Britain since 1922*. Ed. P.J. Drudy (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986), 161-177, 161-2; Arthur and Jeffrey, *Northern Ireland*, pp.16-7; Bew, *Ireland*, p.532; Bishop and Mallie, *The Provisional IRA*, pp.438-9; Bowyer Bell, *The Secret Army*, p.558; Boyce, *The Irish Question*, p.90; Brown, *Ireland*, p.333; English, *Armed Struggle*, pp.241, 243; Ferriter, *Transformation*, p.643-4; Foster, *Luck and the Irish*, pp.65, 99-100; Kenny, *The Road to Hillsborough*, pp.95-6; Harkness, *Ireland*, pp.108-9; Lee, *Ireland*, pp.456-7, 682-3, 685; Moloney,

warmly welcomed in the British press, including, as Miller has noted, in right wing newspapers such as the *Sun* and the *Daily Express*.<sup>729</sup> The Bristol newspapers were particularly enthusiastic and both – quite significantly - reserved special acclaim for the role of Fitzgerald in shaping the Agreement. The *BEP* exalted his ‘calm and sense in approaching a problem which has as many pitfalls for him as anyone.’<sup>730</sup> The *WDP* described his role in shaping the HA as a ‘personal triumph’ for Fitzgerald, and praised his ‘unpretentious homely charm and courtesy which has been so important in persuading the British public that the Irish government firmly rejects the violence of the terrorists.’<sup>731</sup>

Both newspapers were also critical of hard line unionists who saw the HA as republican appeasement and a betrayal of the loyalists by the British government. Prominent figures such as Ian Paisley and Enoch Powell of the UUP came in for particularly strong criticism from the *WDP*, which argued that ‘Their inflammatory outbursts are shamefully typical of the wall of unreason which has blocked progress so many times before.’<sup>732</sup> The criticism of Paisley intensified after Tom King, the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland and Conservative MP for Bridgwater in Somerset, was ‘jostled, grabbed around the neck and crudely insulted by a 30-strong mob of Loyalists’ in Belfast. After Paisley had ‘warned, with pride, of further outrages unless the new Anglo-Irish agreement is scrapped’, the *WDP* reproached him for his ‘belly-aching bigotry’, adding that Paisley could not ‘drown that overwhelming voice of reason’ of ‘The decent, peace-loving majority’.<sup>733</sup> The *BEP* also emphasised that the HA had the support of the ‘battered, suffering majority’ of Northern Ireland, and accused critics such as Paisley of being ‘more interested in division than unity.’<sup>734</sup>

*The Guardian* adopted a similar position and praised the HA as a ‘monument to Irish realism rather than to the Irish mythology in which some of the island’s political leaders, North and South, have their being.’<sup>735</sup> In addition to this, *The Observer* lauded Thatcher’s ‘courage and far-sightedness’ in signing the Agreement despite the risk of ‘a serious

*Secret History*, p.241; Melinda Sutton, ‘Anglo-Irish diplomatic relations and the British Labour Party, 1981-94’ in *The British Labour Party and twentieth-century Ireland* (ed.) Laurence Marley, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), 216-232, p.220.

<sup>729</sup> Miller, *Don’t Mention The War*, p.86.

<sup>730</sup> “Acts of shame” *BEP*, November 15, 1985, p.6.

<sup>731</sup> “Garret’s triumph” *WDP*, November 16, 1985, p.7.

<sup>732</sup> “The first steps to peace...” *WDP*, November 16, 1985, p.18.

<sup>733</sup> “Paisley’s praise for the mob” *WDP*, November 21, 1985, p.14.

<sup>734</sup> “Acts of shame” *BEP*, November 15, 1985, p.6.

<sup>735</sup> “A unique way to find some wider reality” *The Guardian*, November 16, 1985, p. 12.

escalation of violence in the province' from disaffected unionists and nationalists.<sup>736</sup> It is significant that both Bristol newspapers went considerably further than *The Guardian* in praising the role of the Irish, particularly the Taoiseach. Significantly, as both newspapers had been at the outset of the Troubles, the Bristol press were supportive of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland. Both the *BEP* and *WDP* condemned staunch unionists such as Paisley and Powell for their intransigence whilst going even further than *The Guardian* in commending the role of Fitzgerald in the reconciliation that had taken place.

### 3.17 - Conclusion

For the most part, the Bristol newspapers were exceptionally restrained in their coverage of Anglo-Irish relations throughout the Second World War and the Troubles in Northern Ireland, particularly when compared to many other British publications. This approach was clearly recognisable in the Second World War. Many newspapers complained bitterly about issues such as Irish neutrality, the refusal to concede the 1938 Treaty Ports and Ireland's response to the 'American Note'. Conversely, the Bristol press recognised that the policy of neutrality had widespread support in Ireland and did not criticise Ireland at all for its stance on the ports. It was particularly significant that the *WDP* argued that Ireland was acting within its 'undoubted rights' to refuse to expel Axis diplomats from Dublin in 1941. Compared to the *MG*'s criticism of Ireland's 'little diplomatic zoo' this approach from a local British newspaper was quite remarkable.

The significant exception to the moderate coverage of Anglo-Irish events in the Bristol press came in the wake of Ireland's secession from the Commonwealth. The *WDP*, which had previously emphasised Ireland's right to neutrality, now complained bitterly that Ireland would continue to enjoy the benefits of association with Britain after leaving the Commonwealth. The *BEP* were also less than enthusiastic, and perceptively claimed that Ireland's secession from the Commonwealth would leave the prospect of a united Ireland further away than ever. The newspaper also accused Ireland of 'standing aloof' during the war, an accusation which had been rarely made during the conflict.

The coverage of the Troubles was also remarkably moderate, even in the aftermath of the Park Street bombing on 18 December 1972. The evidence from the participants for this study also reflects the lack of anti-Irish antagonism in Bristol at this time. None recalled experiencing any hostility from the native population, although Trevor claimed that some

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<sup>736</sup> "Ireland still needs tough nerves" *The Observer*, November 24, 1985, p.12.

Irish people were ‘ashamed’ and lay low, others such as Emily reacted in the opposite way and did nothing to hide their Irishness. Although both Bristol newspapers welcomed the implementation of internment and the PTA, the *BEP* argued for greater Catholic representation in Northern Ireland in the wake of Bloody Sunday and both maligned the words and actions of Unionist figures such as Paisley as well as those of PIRA. The *BEP* also reported on the Bristol-based Clann na h’Éireann member deportations in a neutral manner, accusing neither the organisation nor the individuals of any wrongdoing or PIRA sympathy. This was also reflected in the response of the Bristol North-West MP Ron Thomas, who raised the subject of the PTA on behalf of some of the cases identified in this thesis six times in the House of Commons. Thomas argued vehemently that the PTA was fundamentally flawed and was ‘contrary to all the tenets of natural justice’. The only occasion where either newspaper equated PIRA terrorism with the Bristol Irish as a whole was in the aftermath of the Birmingham pub bombings and the Mountbatten assassination, when the *BEP* demanded that the Bristol Irish openly declare their opposition to PIRA. The *WDP* went further and demanded the reinstatement of capital punishment for ‘the craven psychopaths who are the architects of our grief.’ The infamous *Daily Express* and *Daily Star* headlines of ‘BASTARDS’ were also recalled by Brendan and Joseph. However, both Bristol newspapers also demonstrated once again that they were prepared to criticise public figures on both sides, including Jack Lynch, the Taoiseach, and Ian Paisley. Most notably, the *WDP* described an Ulster MEP’s plea to loyalist paramilitary groups to target the Republic as ‘contemptible’.

The hunger strikes in 1981 were also covered in detail by the Bristol press, and, unlike several previous events, were reported in a manner which was wholly consistent with the majority of other British publications. Curtis’s assertion that the British media ‘almost unanimously’ supported Thatcher’s stance in refusing to negotiate with the hunger strikers was borne out by the findings of this thesis. Both the *BEP* and the *WDP* attempted to portray the strikers as criminals, as well as ignoble martyrs for the Irish republican cause. Unlike several national publications such as *The Guardian* and *The Times* which sought to play down the significance of the hunger strikers’ electoral successes, both Bristol newspapers recognised that PIRA had ‘won[...] worldwide publicity’ in these campaigns.

As we have seen, the majority of Bristol media coverage was in line with the historically moderate *Guardian* and, at times, was even more measured or in line with reality such as in the aftermath of Bobby Sands’ election to the House of Commons. The lack of anti-Irish agitation is also emphasised by the participants for this study, several of whom have noted the lack of anti-Irish racism or other forms of backlash against the Irish during the

Troubles. In this way, the Irish experience in twentieth century Bristol can be said to have been reflected in the city's media coverage throughout this difficult and often tense period in Anglo-Irish relations.

## Chapter 4 – “Haven’t we a great country here?”<sup>737</sup>:

### Social and cultural developments

*It is a hard responsibility to be a stranger;  
to hear your speech sounding at odds with your  
neighbours’;  
holding your tongue from quick comparisons;  
remembering that you are a guest in the house.<sup>738</sup>*

This chapter analyses the extent to which the Bristol Irish have been assimilated or integrated into the city’s existing social and cultural structures. To this end, it breaks new ground in identifying an Irish infrastructure within Bristol, as well as through an examination of the social and cultural development of an Irish community through an analysis of some of the institutions that exist or have existed in Bristol. The principal complicating factor in this is the heterogeneous nature of the Irish experience in Britain. Indeed, Delaney has warned that ‘diversity rather than uniformity was the hallmark of the Irish migrant experience in Britain after 1945’.<sup>739</sup> Coogan has also emphasised this: ‘for every view there is a counter-view[...]. All are authentic. Individually, all of them can be misleading.’<sup>740</sup> A further complication is the lack of documentary material, which necessitates a focus on oral history testimony. One benefit arising from this lack of source material is the obligation to place a greater emphasis on original material arising from the new participant interviews conducted for this thesis.

To begin to address the question of assimilation, O’Connor has argued that ‘small conurbations’ of Irish people in ‘provincial towns’ integrated into the native framework more easily:

Small conurbations tend naturally to have a smaller number of problem cases and in many cases the Irish immigrants in provincial towns seem, even proportionately, to present fewer problems. One reason is that chronic housing shortage and urban stress upon the personality are metropolitan phenomena. The other reason may be that the majority of rural-originating émigrés find themselves more at home in a provincial town than in a large city. In Bristol, Gloucester and Portsmouth for instance, the Irish appear to blend more easily into the native fabric, to be more accepted as individuals and to form more valid relationships with the native population.<sup>741</sup>

Aside from the highly dubious categorisation of Bristol as a ‘provincial town’, O’Connor’s hypothesis is not supported by the evidence presented in this chapter. In spite of the lack of an Irish hub or significant community cohesion in Bristol, the proliferation of Irish spaces throughout the city indicates that wholesale assimilation into the host society has not taken

<sup>737</sup> Interview with Trevor, b.1928, Clare.

<sup>738</sup> From John Hewitt, “The Search” in *John Hewitt: Selected Poems*, pp.83-4.

<sup>739</sup> Delaney, *The Irish in Post-War Britain*, pp.5-6.

<sup>740</sup> Coogan, *Wherever Green is Worn*, p.135.

<sup>741</sup> O’Connor, *The Irish*, p.142.

place. There is also a greater compulsion to investigate what Wills has described as ‘majority’ experiences. These include ‘leaving rural or small-town communities for large urban industrial centres, working in factories or hospitals, or as construction workers, and being Catholic in a non-Catholic country’.<sup>742</sup>

This chapter will first analyse the development of an Irish community through the Irish infrastructure that exists in Bristol. The most significant institution has been the Catholic church in Britain. I have discussed the dangers of automatically equating Irishness with Catholicism; however, several studies of the Irish in post-war Britain have emphasised the importance of the church in the cultural and spiritual lives of the emigrants.<sup>743</sup> Various other types of ‘Irish spaces’ in the city will then be investigated, principally Irish clubs and pubs which were recognised as being of particular importance in several participant interviews. It will also assess the extent to which the participants for this study have maintained contact with Ireland. This will include an examination of the significance of newspapers and radio, as well as the ‘myth of return’ – which has been repeatedly referenced in the literature as a common theme in accounts of twentieth century migration from Ireland to Britain - the desire to return to Ireland permanently in the future.<sup>744</sup> This chapter will also examine in-depth case studies of the experiences of three second-generation Irish individuals in the city. It will then determine the extent to which one can argue that assimilation of Bristol’s Irish population into the host society has occurred.

#### **4.1 - A substitute for home’<sup>745</sup>: Irish Spaces**

There are other Irish dance-halls and there are countless Irish clubs. Most are frequented by honest, God-fearing people but if you have any sense you’ll avoid the lot till you know mutton from goat.’<sup>746</sup>

Paul, who was born in Belfast to Protestant parents from the Republic, recalled that his friendship with an Irish Catholic man from Longford totally changed his perception of the Irish abroad. He acknowledged that having not been ‘brought up with that tradition’ he had ‘no idea at all about the infrastructure for Irish people in Bristol or in other places.’<sup>747</sup> Paul recalled one fascinating anecdote from a trip to New York with his friend, who succeeded in finding a relative by simply asking around in Irish pubs. This illustrates the extent of the networks and spaces which exist in the Irish diaspora:

<sup>742</sup> Wills, *The Best Are Leaving*, p.10.

<sup>743</sup> McGowan, *Taking the Boat*, p.13; Moran, *Irish Birmingham*, p.17; Rossiter, *Ireland’s Hidden Diaspora*, p.64; Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.41; Walter, *Outsiders*, p.86.

<sup>744</sup> Muhammad Anwar, *The Myth of Return. Pakistanis in Britain*. (London: Heinemann, 1979).

<sup>745</sup> Ryan, *Irish Emigration to Britain Since World War II*, p.56.

<sup>746</sup> John B. Keane, *The Contractors*. (Cork: Mercier Press, 1993), p.10.

<sup>747</sup> Interview with Paul, b.1950, Belfast.

He found her, absolutely extraordinary! Went into an Irish pub, had a few drinks, he started talking to people[...] ‘What county are you from? Oh we know people from Longford! There’s so and so down there from Longford.’ We got talking to these people from Longford and he said ‘do you know where a woman called so and so and so and so?’ ‘Where does she live?’ ‘Queens’ ‘Oh I think I might know her, I’ll ask.’ And then we go in the next day and they said ‘oh, we’ve been asking about her, yeah people know who she is[...] and we went over at midnight one night after getting a train over to Queens from Manhattan [...] went into this pub at midnight and he said: ‘There she is.’ And that was in New York! Because Irish people have networks that I didn’t know anything at all about, and it is based on county and a solidarity which Catholic Irish people, because they’re the huge majority, have. Whereas Protestants, unless you stay in Northern Ireland where it’s a big community, the tiny minority in England fade [Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

This remarkable account is a perfect illustration of the possibilities and range of Irish networks and spaces abroad. Paul’s lack of prior knowledge about these networks also identifies some of the social differences between individuals from Northern Ireland and those from the Republic, as well as between Irish Catholics and Protestants. The importance of Irish spaces such as the pubs that Paul alluded to has been compellingly emphasised by several commentators. Tom Connor has noted that they were doubly important; as places in which ‘the resentment and prejudice of the indigenous population’ could be escaped and as ‘regular meeting places’, integral in the development of a community ‘which in many ways transcended the hostilities that the Irish were subjected to.’<sup>748</sup> This thesis has found little evidence of anti-Irish hostility or discrimination in twentieth century Bristol and this is one possible explanation for the relative lack of visible community cohesion in the city.

However, several studies have identified that Irish spaces have been important in other ways. Mac an Ghail and Haywood have stressed the importance of ‘local pubs, Catholic Church clubs, Irish sporting venues, cultural centres and Irish associations’ particularly in terms of their associations ‘with specific memories and attendant structures of meaning.’<sup>749</sup> Indeed, one significant organisation is the GAA, an important institution to many Irish people in Britain and further afield and its influence has now begun to be recognised in contemporary literature on the Irish in Britain, not least in Frances Harkin’s excellent doctoral thesis of 2015.<sup>750</sup> Greenslade has also argued that ‘Irish people sustain themselves through their communities, in formal and informal gatherings, through the ‘craic’

<sup>748</sup> Tom Connor, *The London Irish*. (London: London Strategic Policy Unit, 1987), pp.18-9.

<sup>749</sup> Mairtin Mac an Ghail and Chris Haywood, “‘Nothing to write home about’: Troubling concepts of Home, Racialization and Self in Theories of Irish Male (E)migration” in *Cultural Sociology*, vol 5, issue 3 (2010) 385-402, p.390.

<sup>750</sup> Frances Harkin ‘A Sporting Diaspora: Gaelic games and London’s Irish community’, unpublished PhD Thesis, Queen’s University, Belfast (2015).



in pubs, through the gatherings of ‘lads’ after work and at weekends.’<sup>751</sup> O’Connor has convincingly concluded that ‘Irish spaces’, practices and institutional symbols such as Sunday Mass, Irish newspapers and ‘the unfailing trip home every year’ did not represent evidence of a failure to integrate or ‘unsettlement in Britain’ but rather ‘the compensatory needs of those who have, in fact, settled’.<sup>752</sup> However, the new oral evidence collected for this thesis does not suggest that Irish people in Bristol felt under siege at any point throughout the period. One might reason that this lack of hostility has been one of the major factors in the relative lack of widespread Irish community mobilisation in Bristol compared to other British cities, as we will see.

#### **4.2 – Missing the bus?<sup>753</sup>: The importance of Irish Centres**

The aforementioned lack of association of Bristol with Irishness can perhaps be partly explained by a lack of organised community cohesion in Bristol. Several commentators have described other British cities as having a far greater level of Irish community organisation. Tommy Walsh recalled that the Liverpool Irish Centre was opened in 1965 after several years of planning whilst Moan has identified that the Birmingham Irish Centre opened in 1968 ‘and survives to the present day’.<sup>754</sup> Sorohan has noted the importance of the Irish Centre in London, established in the mid-1950s, as well as two further Irish Centres – South London and Haringey – established in the 1970s and 1980s respectively. In addition to this, Sorohan has argued that London dance halls ‘frequently referred to by interviewees as ‘ballrooms of romance’ such as ‘The Galtymore in Cricklewood, the National in Kilburn and the Gresham in Holloway’ ‘were important in the creation and maintenance of an ethnic community.’ Indeed, one of Sorohan’s participants met her husband in The Galtymore and described it as ‘the most significant place in my life in London.’<sup>755</sup> McGowan has described the Leeds Irish Centre, built in 1970, as a continuing ‘important cultural and social focal point for the Irish community’ in spite of declining membership numbers.<sup>756</sup> McGowan also found that Leeds

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<sup>751</sup> Liam Greenslade, “White skin, white masks: psychological distress among the Irish in Britain” in *The Irish World Wide, History, Heritage, Identity. Volume 2, The Irish in the New Communities*, ed. Patrick O’Sullivan (London: Leicester University Press, 1992), 201-225, p.219.

<sup>752</sup> O’Connor, *The Irish*, p.162.

<sup>753</sup> Interview with Emily, b.1948, Tipperary.

<sup>754</sup> Tommy Walsh, *Being Irish in Liverpool*. (Liverpool: St. Michael’s Irish Centre, Liverpool, 2011), pp.94-8; Moran, *Irish Birmingham*, pp.182-3.

<sup>755</sup> Sorohan, *Irish London*, pp.22-3.

<sup>756</sup> McGowan, *Taking the Boat*, pp.44, 54.

was ‘a Mecca for Irish emigrants, with St Francis’s Social Club, Holbeck and The Shamrock Dancehall, Kirkgate, to which Irish revellers came from all over Yorkshire.’<sup>757</sup>

Several participants in Bristol argued that the lack of a similar hub for the Irish in the city hindered the development of social cohesion. In spite of this, the Bristol Irish were very visible in the city, albeit on a smaller and less organised scale. Connor argued that ‘major factions’ had existed between Irish people living in different areas of Bristol, and that Bristol was ‘probably the poorest promoter of Irishness in Great Britain’:

I don’t think I ever understood what Irishness meant in Bristol[...] I don’t think we had anywhere that promoted the Irish culture as a unified approach [...] I’ve travelled all over Britain and been into lots of Irish communities, different Irish pubs around, and can honestly say that the Bristol approach to promoting Irishness is non-existent compared to most of them [...] As individuals, I mean it was a great community to grow up in, the craic was great and the things that happened were monstrous, crazy stuff. But as an Irish community, very fractured I think, fractured is a good word for the Irish in Bristol. No cohesion, and the only cohesion would be achieved by probably the priest trying to set up clubs, but they’d be Catholic clubs that were dominated by Irish people.  
[Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth].

In addition to this, Margaret contended that the Bristol Irish ‘are not as sociable as [in] other places’, whilst Dave recalled that he had not been aware of many Irish spaces or events to attend with his Bristol-born children. He felt that this was mainly due to the city’s lack of a hub like an Irish Centre and somewhat regretted that he had not been able to help his children explore their Irish heritage in this way:

I see television programmes on the Irish in Manchester and what they do and there’s nothing like that in Bristol as there are in other parts of, like we got the St Patrick’s Day parade every year and you don’t get a good turnout for it, not from the Irish in Bristol you don’t, they don’t[...] you go to Birmingham, the Irish Birmingham centre and it’ll be full. You get an Irish dance in Bristol and you’ll be lucky if it’s half full, and it’s always been like that you know so  
[Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary].

I think a lot of us felt that what was lacking in Bristol was an Irish Centre, some kind of place you could go you know a sense of belonging and they’d have the games and the dances and all that sort of thing[...]But I do remember like especially one lad who moved from Birmingham to Bristol at about that time[...] he just said it was just a different world in Birmingham you know, the Irish scene. And I did often feel quite jealous about that because I think that would have been[...] a good community thing and I suppose when you’re bringing up children as well and you’re thinking you’d like to bring them into or let them experience a bit of Irish culture and that kind of thing that’d be more likely to happen. But I dunno, I never felt very...as if it was in reach within Bristol[...] I suppose what would have made it easier is if there had been something that you could have just sort of taken them along to on a Saturday afternoon whereas I think when I thought about it a bit in the past, you’d almost have to seek it out  
[Dave, b.1954, Cork].

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<sup>757</sup> McGowan, *Taking the Boat*, p.50.

One of the women featured in *Here, Across the Water* recalled that the first time she had been aware that there was an Irish community in Bristol was when she saw people playing Gaelic football and hurling on the Downs.<sup>758</sup> Prior to this she ‘wasn’t aware that there was an Irish community.’<sup>759</sup> Indeed, the Bristol Irish Society [BIS] was not established until 1989, four years after the period with which this thesis is concerned ends. Emily, who has been involved with BIS since its foundation, argued that the Bristol Irish had ‘missed the bus’ somewhat:

I suppose when we were set up 25 years ago it was really hard to try and find a property or premises. And where would we get the money to buy one or build one or take over something and renovate it? It just, it was a bad time and Bristol missed the bus years ago, it should have had an Irish Society before. There were a lot of people with a lot of money and they didn’t, they didn’t do anything about it and then it got too late.  
[Emily, b.1948, Tipperary].

In spite of this, there was clearly a significant level of Irish community organisation in Bristol, as we will see in the following section.

#### 4.3 – ‘An alternative community’<sup>760</sup>: The Catholic church and Irish clubs

The contribution of the Catholic church has been persuasively recognised as one of the most important factors in the growth of Irish communities in twentieth century Britain. Sorohan has argued that the church ‘perhaps unwittingly, did much to encourage the development of a sense of ‘Irish parishes’’ through the placing of Irish-born priests or chaplains in such parishes.<sup>761</sup> I have discussed the dangers of automatically equating Irishness with Catholicism; however, given that the majority of participants for this study were Roman Catholics born in the Republic of Ireland, as the majority of the Irish-born population of Britain have been, the church represents a logical place in which to begin this analysis. Indeed, several historians have noted that the church essentially took over responsibility for the welfare of Irish citizens in Britain. This included the funding of Irish centres in Britain, including a ‘once only’ collection at church doors in Ireland for this purpose in 1970.<sup>762</sup>

In her account of the Irish Emigrant Chaplaincy [IEC] in Britain, Kennedy has described the response of the church to the troubles of Irish emigrants in twentieth century Britain as ‘humane and remarkable’.<sup>763</sup> Delaney has also cited the importance of the IEC,

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<sup>758</sup> A large open public green area in Durdham and Clifton. The Downs is famous for hosting its own standalone association football league pyramid, with more than 50 teams competing in four different leagues.

<sup>759</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. *Here, Across the Water*, White and Frear.

<sup>760</sup> Wills, *The Best*, p.158.

<sup>761</sup> Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.25.

<sup>762</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, pp.68-9, 258-9; Lennon et al, *Across the Water*, p.17; O’Connor, *The Irish*, pp.141-2; Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.25.

<sup>763</sup> Kennedy, *Welcoming The Stranger*, p.42.

which placed Irish priests in areas of heavy Irish concentration in Britain ‘such as hostels, hotels and road-building sites’.<sup>764</sup> The IEC also built on the work of the Catholic Social Welfare Bureau, established in 1942 to ‘care for the spiritual and moral welfare of emigrants ‘principally women and girls’.<sup>765</sup> Delaney has noted that the ‘permanent commitment to welfare work with migrants’ from the church ‘contrasted sharply’ with the lack of acknowledgement for the plight of Irish emigrants in Britain from the Irish state.<sup>766</sup> Wills has also recognised the importance of the church and argued that their Catholicism was the main signifier that the Irish in Britain belonged to an ‘alternative community’.<sup>767</sup> Sorohan has acknowledged the role of the church in London, where ‘family-friendly Irish clubs’ were established ‘to provide a social scene outside of the pubs.’<sup>768</sup> His research found that ‘The frequent interaction that such spaces engendered in itself was important to a sense of being Irish’.<sup>769</sup>

O’Connor has acknowledged that the nineteenth century influx of Irish Catholics was ‘the single most influential factor’ in the restoration of Catholicism to Britain in 1850.<sup>770</sup> The diocese of Clifton, which incorporates the Greater Bristol area, as well as the counties of Gloucestershire, Somerset and Wiltshire, was one of thirteen established when Pope Pius IX re-established the Catholic hierarchy in England and Wales.<sup>771</sup> One 1977 article from *The Clare Champion*, a local Irish newspaper in county Clare, indicated that the Clifton Diocese was heavily served by Irish priests, although there were not enough to tend to the Diocesan flock:

Fr. Gabriel Leyden (native of Ennistymon) Vocations Director in the Diocese of Clifton is appealing for young men and late vocations wishing to be Diocesan priests in his diocese[...] The majority of the Diocesan Priests in the Diocese are Irish born and these include a number from Clare! [...] The larger populated areas, such as Bristol, Gloucester, Salisbury, Swindon have big Irish-born populations. Hence, the need for more priests.<sup>772</sup>

Several participants confirmed that they were regular churchgoers and Joseph, who is from county Antrim in Northern Ireland, believed that his Catholicism was important in different ways to the participants from the Republic:

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<sup>764</sup> Enda Delaney, “The Churches and Irish Emigration to Britain, 1921-60”, *Archivium Hibernicum*, Vol. 52, (1998). 98-114, p.109.

<sup>765</sup> Delaney, “The Churches and Irish Emigration to Britain”, p.105.

<sup>766</sup> Delaney, “The Churches and Irish Emigration to Britain”, p.106.

<sup>767</sup> Wills, *The Best*, pp.157-8.

<sup>768</sup> Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.25.

<sup>769</sup> Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.125.

<sup>770</sup> O’Connor, *The Irish*, p.29.

<sup>771</sup> J. A. Harding, *The Diocese of Clifton 1850-2000*. (Bristol: Clifton Catholic Diocesan Trustees, 1999), p. xi.

<sup>772</sup> “Clare Priest Seeks Vocations” *The Clare Champion*, June 24, 1976. Clifton Diocesan Archive press cuttings 1949-81, p.190.

coming from Northern Ireland, from a society where to be Catholic was to be discriminated against, meant that I saw my Catholicism as being important and therefore I did tend to go to church. In going to church a lot of the priests at the time were Irish and a lot of the congregation were Irish.  
[Joseph, b. 1951, Antrim].

One church-established institution that featured regularly in participants' interviews was the Irish Club established by Trevor in the early 1960s. The Club was based at the Pro-Cathedral in Clifton and effectively functioned as a hub for interaction between Irish Catholics in Bristol. Whilst the Club hosted social events such as dances, it also assisted parishioners with housing matters. However, the Club's most significant function was as a reception point and meeting place for the Irish in Bristol. Indeed, Trevor viewed it as a focal point which helped individuals to locate themselves and gain a foothold within the Irish community:

generally helping people associate and find their feet or find wives and husbands and friends and all this kind of thing[...] they'd come off the train down Temple Meads, and - this is a fact - three brothers came, and they went to a policeman 'where do the Irish congregate here?'[...] and he said 'if you've any sense, there's a priest up there in Clifton, he runs a club, an Irish Club, go up and see him'. I had a kind of, a reputation for that!  
[Trevor, b.1928, Clare].

Several historians have noted the importance of church clubs in other areas of Britain. Sorohan has argued that such clubs 'provide[d] a social scene outside of the pubs' and often became family-friendly Irish clubs.<sup>773</sup> One of McGowan's participants recalled that the Irish club based at St Francis' church in Leeds was well-known throughout Yorkshire as early as the 1930s.<sup>774</sup> Writing in 1964, Keane urged new arrivals in Britain to: 'Contact the secretary, or priest, in charge of the local Irish club and you won't go far wrong.' Conversely, he advised against associating with Irishmen and frequenting 'Irish pubs and notorious Irish dance-halls as you would a plague.'<sup>775</sup>

Joseph recalled arriving in Bristol with nowhere to stay and no friends or relatives to meet him. He found accommodation in Clifton after 'asking around' at the Irish Club.<sup>776</sup> Several other participants regularly frequented the Club and described the activities which were principally music, dancing and singing. It was described as 'the place to go' by Margaret, Michael, Caitriona and Jack. The latter even contended that 'most Irish people used to go up there every Saturday.'<sup>777</sup> The housing advice also proved invaluable to many, as the housing situation for many Irish people in Britain had, by the early 1960s, become

<sup>773</sup> Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.25.

<sup>774</sup> McGowan, *Taking the Boat*, p.40.

<sup>775</sup> Keane, *Self-portrait*, p.46.

<sup>776</sup> Interview with Joseph, b.1951, Antrim.

<sup>777</sup> Interview with Jack, b.1941, Wexford.

‘critical’.<sup>778</sup> Trevor outlined the financial difficulties faced by prospective buyers, many of whom, he asserted, could fruitlessly spend a week’s wages on a deposit:

you’d leave a deposit, I think about 25 quid, which was a bit of money in those days, and then you’d bring the surveyor in and he finds dry rot in the roof, in the floor and you had to move, but you lost your 25 quid and maybe more. So all your aspirations were at rock bottom[...] the wages in those days for the average worker on a site was 23 pounds or less  
[Trevor, b.1928, Clare].

This service was part of the Catholic church’s Catholic Housing Aid Society [CHAS] the establishment of which by Fr Eamonn Casey of Slough in the early 1960s has been documented by Kennedy. After the initial success of CHAS, Casey purchased a large house which was converted into eight flats to accommodate married couples who were expecting children: ‘The couples paid a weekly rent, part of which was lodged in an account in their name with a bank, so that they could raise enough to qualify for assistance in acquiring a deposit to buy their own home.’<sup>779</sup> CHAS also later provided free housing advice ‘to educate people as to what they were capable of’ and, by the early 1960s, Fr Casey had become the director of CHAS, charged with developing ‘as many branches as possible in England, Scotland and Wales.’<sup>780</sup> Kennedy has argued that the housing assistance provided by CHAS was an vindication of the IEC’s ‘compassionate mission to provide support to Irish migrants in Britain’ as well as its ‘most impressive achievement’<sup>781</sup> The Clifton Irish Club’s housing assistance was along similar lines. Trevor recalled that the church secured properties in Bristol for the purpose of providing assistance to parishioners who could not obtain a mortgage. This was achieved through the encouragement of saving:

you paid an honest rent and then[...] when you’d built up then enough to put a deposit on a house and the expenses, we would then give you back maybe 50 per cent of the rates, so you’d get £100 going out to buy furniture and all this kind of thing, as a reward for saving and doing well for yourself. So we had quite a few properties.  
[Trevor, b.1928, Clare].

The Club also provided support for those who did have the necessary capital to purchase property but had other problems, including a couple who did not trust the house buying process enough to reveal the extent of their savings. Trevor was able to help them and recalled that they were eventually able to buy a house:

It’s a nice story, but several they came to me, and they used to come to me and they came because they knew that the facility was there for guidance. And these guys

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<sup>778</sup> Kennedy, *Welcoming the Stranger*, p.112.

<sup>779</sup> *Ibid.*, p.115.

<sup>780</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.116-8.

<sup>781</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123.

there was no charge[...] Irish priests doing good, helping people and no charge, they give rather than take.  
[Trevor, b.1928, Clare].

Several commentators have described similar arrangements in other cities. Sorohan has noted that ‘The London Irish Centre in Camden had been providing welfare and temporary accommodation for newly arrived immigrants since it was founded by the Catholic Oblate order in the mid-1950s in order to provide a hostel for young men and advice ‘to introduce the Irish working boy and girl to all that is best in the Irish, or Catholic, life in London’.<sup>782</sup> Walsh has recalled that the Liverpool Irish Centre began a ‘Welfare’ service to help new arrivals from Ireland find accommodation and employment.<sup>783</sup> Moran also found that, prior to the opening of the Birmingham Irish Centre, ‘many of those who arrived in Birmingham had made their way to the Irish Immigrants’ Association at St Anne’s Church in Digbeth’. Consequently, an Irish Welfare Centre, which also helped newcomers to source accommodation and employment, was opened with the support of the church in 1957 and provided a ‘first port of call for many newcomers to the city’ for ‘a number of years’.<sup>784</sup> The Clifton Irish Club closed in the 1970s, and Trevor cited the decline in emigration from Ireland to Britain as one of the principal reasons:

there were less coming and so it kind of folded up then, as they did around the country as well. Some survived like in London and places, and Manchester and Liverpool and Birmingham, Leeds, they survived. I think that it did its job, it put people on their feet and found their associates, lived happily ever afterwards!  
[Trevor, b.1928, Clare].

The importance of the Club was emphasised by Margaret, who believed that the Irish community in Bristol have never wholly recovered from the fractures caused by its closure:

It broke, divided, when that club closed down years ago it divided the Irish a bit. Because there’d been sort of clubs and everything else had happened, there’s never been a proper Irish club after that one closed down.  
[Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary].

Holy Cross church in Bedminster also had a social club which was popular amongst the Bristol Irish. Dave recalled that Bedminster had been a hotbed of Irish activity as late as the 1980s:

And there was a number of pubs around Bedminster, like Holy Cross Club, I used to come over there fairly regularly to the pubs in East St and there was...it seemed as if there was plenty of Irish around the pubs, there seemed to be no problem in bumping into somebody to have a chat about the games or something like that. But sadly they seem to be fewer now.  
[Dave, b.1954, Cork].

<sup>782</sup> Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.22.

<sup>783</sup> Walsh, *Being Irish*, p.143.

<sup>784</sup> Moran, *Irish Birmingham*, pp.178-9.

It is therefore unsurprising that a short-lived Irish club, the Four Provinces, was opened in Bedminster in 1970. Connor, a second-generation Irishman, worked in the Four Provinces at the age of 16. He recalled that ‘everyone thought the Four Provinces was gonna be the Irish club’ which would ultimately relocate to larger premises and provide a hub for the Bristol Irish as Birmingham’s Shamrock Club and The Galtymore in London had done for their respective communities. However, it later became apparent to Connor after the club’s abrupt closure in 1972 or 1973 that it had been established to raise ‘money for the [militant republican] cause’ rather than to aid community cohesion. He also speculated that the Four Provinces might have been partially responsible for that fact that ‘Irish clubs never took off in Bristol’ as ‘no-one trusted what was going to happen with them’:

there was probably another purpose for its existence, which had a lot to do with money for different causes[...] it might have only been [open] two years. So you can see a correlation there, in time structure, with events. One presumes that when these things were investigated someone put correlation to these facts, but at the time...was everyone oblivious to it? Obviously not, but it was a shock to a lot of people, that it was actually a front to make money.  
[Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth].

It is clear that the Irish Club and church housing aid was a key element in the Bristol Irish support network, both as a meeting point and social club and also in terms of provision for new arrivals and aspiring house buyers. Its importance was particularly emphasised by Margaret who believed that the Irish community had become somewhat splintered after the club’s closure.

#### **4.4 – ‘You’re not educated if you didn’t know the Croft’<sup>785</sup>: Irish pubs**

Public houses and clubs were also valuable ‘Irish spaces’ in Britain. Participants identified several pubs and areas which were heavily frequented by Irish people from the 1950s until the 1980s, although some of the pubs mentioned continued to have Irish connections until much later. The main areas identified in this study were Stokes Croft and Bedminster, although this of course reflected the distributional patterns of the participants. When discussing pubs in Stokes Croft, Jim recalled that ‘it was all Irish then. Somebody said like “you’re not a proper Paddy, you’re not educated if you didn’t know the Croft”’<sup>786</sup> Richmond emphasised the importance of pubs for the Irish respondents in his 1965 study of St Pauls and Montpellier. He found that Irish males were the most likely of all nationalities surveyed to say that they belonged to a group connected with a public house. Only 7 per cent of all

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<sup>785</sup> Interview with Jim, b.1926, Cork.

<sup>786</sup> Interview with Jim, b.1926, Cork.



surveyed adults belonged to a public house group compared with a quarter of Irish males.<sup>787</sup> Trevor noted that the pub was an integral element in many Irish men's lives: 'life was work and pub and sleep.'<sup>788</sup> Paul recalled that he had encountered many Irishmen in Bristol who had turned to pubs as places in which the tolls of 'loneliness and exhaustion' could be escaped for a time:

it's that familiar story about people coming over, having very very hard working-class jobs, builders usually or often on the roads, and they'd get injured, they'd be lonely, they'd turn to drink as an escape from loneliness and exhaustion, and then their lives began to revolve around pubs.  
[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

This has also been emphasised by Mac an Ghail and Haywood who found that, to several of their respondents in Birmingham, Irish pubs were 'culturally safe from the political legacy of an anti-Irish backlash that circulated for decades across the city':

The Birmingham bombing changed everything ... Then the pubs and clubs became targets but they were also a great relief from all the bad feeling in the city ... People forget the real thing about these places ... after working hard on the site or factory ... it was just great to relax away from the really rough work ... We saw a lot of young men get serious injuries ... some died long before their time.<sup>789</sup>

Several Irish pubs in Bristol featured prominently in participants' interviews, particularly in Stokes Croft which was an area of heavy Irish concentration. Trevor described the common process for new arrivals from Ireland who found their way into an Irish pub in Stokes Croft:

that's where the hive was. And then into a pub, there'd be somebody: 'well come on in, we'll bring you to a landlady and we'll get you fixed up for tonight, we'll get you a job for tomorrow'. It was easy, there was loads of jobs.  
[Trevor, b.1928, Clare].

Margaret identified that many Irish people were more inclined to drink in a pub which had an Irish landlord and indeed the Black Horse and The Berkeley were two popular Stokes Croft pubs given that both had Irish landlords.<sup>790</sup> Connor described a strange arrangement in The Black Swan, another Stokes Croft pub which was popular amongst sections of Bristol's Irish and Jamaican community resulting in some interesting but rather limited instances of integration:

there was like a fictitious line halfway down the bar, where the Irish were at one end and the Jamaicans were down the other. They'd talk across this line, but they wouldn't actually socialise in the same area of the pub, bonkers! But that shows some of the similarities between the Irish and Jamaicans, bonkers basically. It was quite strange to be in there really.  
[Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth].

<sup>787</sup> Richmond, *Migration and Race Relations in an English City*, p.173.

<sup>788</sup> Interview with Trevor, b.1928, Clare.

<sup>789</sup> Mac an Ghail and Haywood, 'Nothing to write home about', p.390.

<sup>790</sup> Interview with Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary.

The Old England pub in Montpelier was also popular amongst the Bristol Irish, Michael recalled that ‘on a Friday and Saturday night the counter’d be about five or six deep.’<sup>791</sup> Brendan and Caitriona also used to frequent The Old England and Brendan recalled that it was particularly useful for networking purposes:

if you was looking for work I think that was the place to go. You wouldn’t want to be going down to a labour exchange looking for a job anyway, go to The Old England, come out in the morning sort of thing [laughs].  
[Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon].

This phenomenon was far from an uncommon feature of Irish pubs in Britain, as one of McGowan’s participants in Leeds outlined:

these pubs were also collection points and drop off points for labouring men; wagons picked up men in the morning around Sheepscar Corner, at the Sheepscar library and outside the many Irish pubs in this area, depending on which firm they were working for.<sup>792</sup>

Bedminster was also an area in which there were several popular Irish pubs. Connor and Vivian, another second-generation Irishman, recalled that there were several pubs which were popular with Irish people in Bedminster and Connor noted that ‘there was at least probably four pubs where predominantly Irish people would go.’<sup>793</sup> Margaret and Vivian’s favoured pub was the Full Moon in Bedminster, which Margaret described as ‘one of the main sort of places to go.’<sup>794</sup> The Full Moon was also popular with other participants for this study, some of whom noted that the pub had been famous for its lock-ins.<sup>795</sup>

my father’s favourite pub was The Moon[...] And lots of Irish people would congregate in that pub, and a few English people but mostly Irish people.  
[Vivian, b.1954, Bristol].

I drank in the Full Moon. And the reason why I used to go into the Full Moon was Sunday afternoon because we used to get overtime. The pubs used to close that time at three o’clock but he’d leave us in there whenever we got drunk, and we drank in the Holy Cross, drank in there as well.  
[Michael, b.1951, Mayo].

There was loads of Irish in Bedminster, spent loads of time in the Full Moon, and that was after hour drinking  
[Jim, b.1926, Cork].

However, both Connor and Vivian recalled that cliques existed between Irish people in the Bedminster area, with the result that certain groups were associated with certain pubs and would not necessarily mix when out drinking. Connor attributed much of this to inter-county identity and rivalry:

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<sup>791</sup> Interview with Michael, b.1951, Mayo.

<sup>792</sup> McGowan, *Taking the Boat*, p.54.

<sup>793</sup> Interview with Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth.

<sup>794</sup> Interview with Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary.

<sup>795</sup> A “lock-in” is when the proprietor of a pub allows drinkers – usually regulars – to remain in the pub and drink alcohol outside of license hours.

But then you'd have your factions then because your Mayo boys would stick together, they might tolerate a few Galway boys[...] Yeah, I mean Kerry were never great lovers of Mayo and Galway. And if a Galway and Mayo man went into the [Full] Moon he'd invariably be drinking on his own. But the Kerryman would be around with the Corkie, the Kerry and Corkie got on alright obviously, but yeah you know, it was quite clear.

[Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth].

This county rivalry has been referenced in the literature, although it seems to have been much more of a problem in the nineteenth century than in the twentieth. Both Davis and O'Connor have identified that differences and conflicts over county allegiance were not uncommon and the latter has described this rivalry as the cause of 'Most fighting':

The identity which the sense of belonging gave an otherwise anonymous labourer was so powerful, that certain ale-houses were exclusively this county or that. The new-arrived Irishman, on entering, would shortly be asked: 'What countyman are you?' and on the geographical location of his answer balanced his future well-being for the evening.<sup>796</sup>

Jackson, Moran and Sorohan have all found that county allegiance has been utilised in a more productive manner since the twentieth century, with County Associations supporting Irish people in Britain, socially, emotionally and financially.<sup>797</sup> Conversely, Vivian believed that the Bedminster cliques had nothing to do with county rivalry and were simply a result of groups and individuals avoiding those whom they did not like:

the Irish had these little cliques of...well drinking cliques, friends. And they didn't seem to get on with each other. And it wasn't anything to do with where they came from, cause in the Moon there'd be lots of people from Kerry, there'd be people from Cork, there'd be people from Mayo, there'd be people from Dublin, there'd be people from Belfast, there'd be people from all over. So the cliques didn't work on the fact that you came from a different part of Ireland, the cliques seemed to work on the fact that they all knew each other and they decided who they liked and who they didn't like. And there was a fair amount of animosity between some of them, they obviously didn't get on, maybe that related back to the days when they first came over.

[Vivian, b.1954, Bristol].

Whatever the cause, which remains somewhat unclear, the rigidity of these 'factions' was perhaps best illustrated by the fact that, despite being close friends since their schooldays, Vivian and Connor were in different 'factions':

the Irish group I mixed with was different to the Irish group that he mixed with, and that was down to different parentage, even though my father was Kerry, same as his father. But our social circle was different, albeit the social circle we both mixed in privately as young lads was the same, but when it got to mixing with the Irish we were in different factions.

[Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth].

It is also important to note the cultural differences between Northern Ireland and the Republic. Whilst the latter continues to have strong traditions and associations with pubs, the

<sup>796</sup> Davis, "Little Irelands", p. 114; O'Connor, *The Irish*, p.26.

<sup>797</sup> Jackson, *The Irish*, p.129; Moran, *Irish Birmingham*, p.182; Sorohan, *Irish London*, pp.20, 26-7.

same could not be said for Northern Ireland, and all of the Northern Irish participants for this study alluded to this difference. We have seen that Paul's friendship with a Catholic Irishman inexorably changed his perceptions from his Protestant upbringing in Belfast. That these differences transcended Protestant/Catholic differences is illustrated by Joseph, who, even as a Northern Irish Catholic, felt that he 'didn't sit in that kind of remit' and that his 'Irishness was much more about my religion than the cultural things'.<sup>798</sup> In addition to this, neither John nor May, who are also Northern Irish Catholics, had the same experiences with pubs as many of the participants born in the Republic:

I didn't stand in a pub until I was 19. You just didn't, we didn't have that, it was all cups of tea and things. But that whole culture of music and pubs and having a laugh really, my mother had it to a degree but it wasn't a big, there's a very big cultural difference between the two communities.  
[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

I had friends who were Irish and I would be more likely to end up in somebody's house, I didn't go in for clubs[...] I love Irish music, I've got history with it, you know as you do, in the family[...]but not...no I was never into the clubs thing.  
[Joseph, b.1951, Antrim].

You would get them [Irish building workers] going into pubs, but growing up we weren't allowed to go into pubs. Even if we went to a dance, you would call it a disco or whatever. If we went to a dance, a Ceili dance...there'd be no alcohol, you could have a cup of tea.  
[May, b.1939, Derry].

After meeting his friend, Paul used to frequent The Bell in Bedminster, which he described as 'a completely Irish pub':

It was an institution when, I mean it had always been an Irish pub but when we went it was run by a couple, he was from Cavan and she was[...] Irish speaking from Galway and so a lot of Irish people were in there, there were a lot of Galway people in Bristol and quite a few of them are from the Irish speaking areas originally. And so that was on in there, and that was an amazing pub, it was extraordinary. It used to stay open until 3 o'clock in the morning, they used to have these amazing lock-ins.  
[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

Paul also recalled that his fellow Irish regulars in The Bell were shocked when they found out that he was a Protestant and subsequently glossed over this by simply referring to him as a 'gentleman':

I always remember the first time I told them in that pub that I was Protestant. God you'd have thought I'd... I mean afterward they always referred to me: 'He's a real gentleman, he's a gentleman' that kind of thing.  
[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

The importance of the differences between Northern Ireland and the Republic, as well as Protestantism and Catholicism are clearly illustrated in these examples. However, it would be overly simplistic to conclude that the only determinants in pub-going experiences were

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<sup>798</sup> Interview with Joseph, b.1951, Antrim.

gender, nationality or religion as individual preferences also played a role. For example, Maureen - from Roscommon - recalled that she and her Kerry-born husband 'didn't go out like, like Irish people go out.'<sup>799</sup> Many of these pubs have either disappeared or are no longer seen as Irish pubs. Brendan, Margaret and Dave commented on this decline and Brendan bemoaned pub closures in the city as a whole:

the Full Moon on a Sunday they'd be packed in the doors. That's where the Irish got together didn't they you know, and nowadays there isn't like, except for if you went down to Murphy's<sup>800</sup>, down to the Bear<sup>801</sup>, there isn't actually an Irish place in Bristol to go.

[Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary].

And all of a sudden today we've got nothing. Even Irish pubs today are very few and far apart. We've still got one or two that's made up of the local boys and the Irish community[...]But the pub scene in Bristol now has really gone down hasn't it? I mean they're closing up every week now aren't they?

[Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon].

In spite of this some still frequent Irish pubs, typically to watch Irish bands or sporting events. One pub which featured prominently in this discussion was The Coach and Horses in Old Market. This was a particular favourite for Brendan, Caitriona, Margaret and Dave, who enjoyed watching GAA matches.

If we were following any of the hurling or anything like that and there was a big match on we'd go over there, we'd go to the Coach and Horses 'cos we would know a lot of people over there, that sort of stuff.

[Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary].

Another surviving Irish pub is The Foresters Arms in Horfield. As well as being a focal point for Irish people and GAA fans, The Foresters Arms is also the meeting place for Bristol's Glasgow Celtic supporters club. Celtic are deeply rooted in Glasgow's Catholic Irish community and consequently boast a huge fan base worldwide. Brendan and Caitriona typically visited the Foresters Arms for concerts, whilst Michael still occasionally frequented the pub and recalled spending time there in the 1970s and 1980s:

Oh back in them days we had a great time, putting on the jukebox and everyone dancing and singing. All the Irish tunes were on it. And if you still go into the Ashley... the Foresters in Ashley Down today, all the songs are on there still today, still the same songs probably, all the old 70s songs and 80s songs[...] Yeah, if there's a big game we'll be down the Foresters[...] that's where all the atmosphere is in the pub yeah.

[Michael, b.1951, Mayo].

It is clear that Irish pubs were of considerable importance to many of the participants for this thesis. Whilst there has been a decline in the number of Irish pubs in Bristol, the fact that some still exist illustrates that there is a continuing need for such Irish spaces in the city. It is

<sup>799</sup> Interview with Maureen, b.1928, Longford.

<sup>800</sup> The Coach and Horses pub in Old Market.

<sup>801</sup> The Bear pub in Hotwells.

also clear that, in terms of pub and club-going, there were several influential institutions in Bristol, such as the Clifton Irish club, as well as Stokes Croft and Bedminster pubs.

#### 4.5 – ‘Flying the Irish flag a bit’<sup>802</sup>: Retaining ties with Ireland

Maintaining a connection with Ireland is one of the recurring themes in accounts of emigration from Ireland. This is manifested in continuing contact with and a perceived desire to, one day, return to Ireland permanently. Many participants tempered their ‘exile’<sup>803</sup> through continued contact with Ireland by reading Irish newspapers, listening to Irish radio stations and, more recently, watching Irish television channels and logging on to Irish Internet sites. Indeed, Hickman has noted that ‘Most research about Irish identities in Britain shows that the continuing relevance of an Irish identity has been strongly associated with involvement in Irish social, cultural and political practices.’<sup>804</sup>

Several participants in this study read *The Irish Post [IP]* newspaper which has been published weekly as ‘The Voice Of The Irish In Britain’ since 1970.<sup>805</sup> The *IP* predominantly covers Irish news in Britain and Ireland, and carries detailed listings for Irish events in Britain. Hickman has emphasised the newspaper’s importance and appeal in Britain and noted that Irish people in Britain ‘can identify with its interests, concerns, images and specific mix of politics and culture.’ She has also argued that the success of the *IP* can be partially attributed to its chronicling of the contribution made to British society by the Irish.<sup>806</sup> Brendan Mac Lua, one of the newspaper’s founders, has claimed that its main success was in ‘creating a sense of community which involved all the Irish in Britain’, principally through informing ‘our people every week about what was happening among our own in Britain.’<sup>807</sup> O’Connor has also identified the ‘profound’ impact of the *IP*, whilst Sorohan recognised it as ‘By far the most significant among documentary sources’ in his study of the London Irish.<sup>808</sup> Sorohan has also described the establishment of the *IP* as a turning point for the Irish in Britain:

The realization that life in London was not temporary forced the Irish to develop their own sense of identity as an Irish person permanently abroad, ‘imagine’ an

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<sup>802</sup> Interview with Dave, b.1954, Cork.

<sup>803</sup> Kerby Millar, *Emigrants and Exiles. Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America*. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988).

<sup>804</sup> Mary Hickman, “Changing times” in *A History of The Irish Post. The voice of the Irish in Britain*, ed. Martin Doyle, (London: Smurfit Media UK, 2000), 49-55, p.50.

<sup>805</sup> Excluding a brief period between August and October 2011 after which the newspaper was taken over and continued.

<sup>806</sup> Hickman, “Changing Times”, p.51.

<sup>807</sup> Martin Doyle, “The History” in *A History of The Irish Post. The voice of the Irish in Britain*, ed. Martin Doyle, (London: Smurfit Media UK, 2000), 12-20, pp. 17, 19.

<sup>808</sup> O’Connor, *The Irish*, p.126; Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.5.

identity for their community and establish organs to maintain it, something that they had been reluctant to do beforehand. The foundation of *The Irish Post* can perhaps be seen as the symbolic beginning of this process, although it may have been expressed earlier.<sup>809</sup>

Brendan and Caitriona bought the paper every week, as did Maureen, Margaret and Emily, whilst Michael bought both the *IP* and *The Irish World*.<sup>810</sup> Connor recalled that ‘Letters were exchanged frequently...And then invariably what you would find is people would send newspapers from Ireland rolled up in a bundle and then sent over through to read at your leisure, and that was the way the communication mainly was.’<sup>811</sup> Trevor could no longer read newspapers due to his eyesight, but he used to buy the *Irish Independent* on a daily basis. Irish radio and television stations have also been popular. Maureen was particularly enthusiastic about maintaining her connection with Ireland in this way, and listened to Raidió Teilifís Éireann [RTÉ]<sup>812</sup> every day. She also enjoyed local radio stations such as Radio Shannon, which kept her in touch with events in Longford:

you can listen to mass from Ireland[...] I listen to it every morning and sometimes I get all the Irish news, especially weekends you know, there’ll be Irish music on so I can get that. It keeps you in contact like, you know.  
[Maureen, b.1928, Longford].

Caitriona and Brendan also frequently listened to local radio stations, though their listening habits revolved around particular programmes as well as geography. Brendan also enjoyed the online ‘catch-up’ facility that many stations and channels now offer:

we listen to Midwest radio, Kerry Radio, Tipp Radio, Donegal Radio, we listen to all of them different times! Yeah, Brendan likes Midwest because it’s Roscommon radio.  
[Caitriona, b.1948, Kilkenny].

I got a laptop there and I can get all the Irish radio stations and Radio Éireann on there as well[...] there’s chat programmes or any sport you’ve missed out you can watch it like, even if it’s a week late.  
[Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon].

Trevor was more interested in listening to sport, principally hurling, soccer and rugby:

Yeah, well you keep in touch all the time.[...] I can’t read you know, so there I can listen to that. I do oh yes, yeah we all do[...] Whatever a football match, a hurling match, I’ll be listening to that on the weekend.  
[Trevor, b.1928, Clare].

Dave was also an avid radio listener, particularly to coverage of Gaelic football, hurling and Munster Rugby fixtures, and he was particularly enthusiastic about recent improvements in

<sup>809</sup> Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.50.

<sup>810</sup> A similar newspaper to the *IP*, established in 1987.

<sup>811</sup> Interview with Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth.

<sup>812</sup> Radio and Television of Ireland. The national public service broadcaster in the Republic of Ireland.

communication technology which made coverage more widely available. He also believed that this contact with home had helped in maintaining his Irish identity:

I'd certainly tune into all the big games[...] So yes yes I did, I did keep in touch in that way[...] in recent years I've started using an iPhone and start listening to the internet radio, that's tremendous really, it's been a great change[...] Yeah I think I'm glad that I kind of kept in touch, even just on the sport side of things you know. I think it does help to kind of form your identity doesn't it. And if you then start mixing with different people and you know it's kind of nice to be able to kind of fly the Irish flag a bit.  
[Dave, b.1954, Cork].

Liam and Diane also listened to Irish radio stations and watched Irish television, particularly sporting events:

It is more the sociable thing to like the sport and I mean we'll follow the Irish music, so we can get that on the television you know, we have a box that you can get RTÉ one and two and you know and the Irish TG4<sup>813</sup>, that is all in Irish but it's ok for watching a game.  
[Diane, b.1948, London].

Joseph had maintained an interest in political events in Northern Ireland which he followed through newspapers and television as well as, in recent years, through online media, such as Twitter<sup>814</sup>:

I don't buy newspapers any more, we're well past that stage aren't we? I am very interested in Northern Ireland politics. I keep abreast of Northern Ireland politics on a daily or a weekly basis on twitter[...] So I follow Northern Ireland politics pretty closely[...] I know as much as somebody who probably lives there I would have thought. Because of the fact that we've got this instant communication that we wouldn't have had forty years ago  
[Joseph, b.1951, Antrim].

John and May also kept in touch with Ireland through the *IP*, though in recent years, they have watched BBC Northern Ireland and RTÉ television programmes online. Jack had enjoyed watching RTÉ until their channels were removed from his digital television box. Maureen was also able to keep in touch with relatives in Ireland through more modern technology such as Internet video communication:

And of course this Skype thing is a good thing as well isn't it, you can keep in contact with people you know what I mean[...] I like to know what's going on and what the weather's like and what they're doing over there.  
[Maureen, b.1928, Longford].

The importance of these media and communication channels is illustrated by the fact that all of the participants utilised at least one of these to retain ties with Ireland except for Mary,

<sup>813</sup> The national public service broadcaster for Irish language speakers, formerly Teilifís na Gailge or TnaG.

<sup>814</sup> A social media platform, founded in 2006.



who expressed no interest in reading Irish newspapers or listening to the radio: ‘No. One of my brothers still listens to RTÉ but why would I want to?’<sup>815</sup>

#### 4.6 – ‘The imprint of the Blarney stone upon their lips’<sup>816</sup>: Holidays and ‘the myth of return’<sup>817</sup>

*He limped back from England, about 1960. England was finished for him. He could not face it again.*<sup>818</sup>

One of the abiding themes of twentieth century Irish migration to Britain is the so-called ‘myth of return’. One of Trew’s participants was of the opinion that ‘everybody who leaves Ireland – maybe it’s the same with every emigrant – has a yearning or maybe a desire, dream of some kind of going back at some point.’<sup>819</sup> Delaney has argued that post-war emigration from Ireland to Britain was often ‘viewed as a temporary expedient’, the reality of which ‘was determined by economic conditions at home, marriage and possible future opportunities in Britain.’<sup>820</sup> Paul had found that many Irish emigrants idealised some aspects of life in Ireland, which occasionally caused irritation with other Irish people:

I think one of the things I would be critical of the expatriate community[...] people who live in Ireland are more realistic about Ireland, but the people who’ve left tend to sentimentalise it a bit. And so there’s that whole thing about you know listening to that ghastly music, The Dubliners and all that shit you know. I just think ‘for fuck’s sake’[...] And people think it’s really good, it’s terrible, in Ireland they don’t like this music [laughs]. So that’s kind of, there’s a bit of sentimentality about it. As my friend would often say[...] ‘Well if it’s so great why don’t you go back and live in the bloody place?’ You know because people made the decision to leave and they sometimes forget.  
[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

My own grandfather came to Bristol at the age of 16 from County Kerry and - excluding one short trip home for my Great-Grandmother’s funeral - never returned to Ireland out of fear that, given his continuing love for Ireland, he would never return to my Bristolian grandmother and their children. Be that as it may, his experience was clearly anomalous given the importance placed on the regularity of return to Ireland by the participants for this study, as well as in several other studies. Indeed, McGowan has noted that most Irish emigrants in Britain could return home on a yearly basis, but their situations changed as they became more established into their new surroundings and financial and familial commitments affected regular trips home to Ireland.<sup>821</sup> The aforementioned changes in communication

<sup>815</sup> Interview with Mary, b.1952, Cork.

<sup>816</sup> Wills, *The Best*, p.9.

<sup>817</sup> Anwar, *The Myth of Return*.

<sup>818</sup> Tom Murphy, *Druid Murphy. Plays by Tom Murphy*. (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), p.53.

<sup>819</sup> Trew, *Leaving the North*, p.195.

<sup>820</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.212.

<sup>821</sup> McGowan, *Taking the Boat*, p.127.

technology and the rise of budget airlines, as well as relative proximity have undoubtedly aided the Irish in Britain in retaining strong ties with Ireland. Brendan commented on the short flight times as well as the availability of cheap air fares: ‘it’s only an hour across. You’ll spend more in the pub one night or a week than you’ll get for a flight into Ireland and back.’<sup>822</sup> He also recalled the lengths to which he had to go to speak to his family on the telephone in previous years:

I remember years ago at Christmas time or during the week you’d be ringing up your parents or somebody at home, you’d have to go through the exchange in Liverpool, and there might be 300 people ahead of you like, you might be waiting for an hour and a half or two hours to get through.  
[Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon].

This was also referenced by Connor, who recalled that the primary mode of communication was by letter rather than by telephone.<sup>823</sup> He also recalled that annual holidays in Ireland were common amongst Irish-born and second-generation Irish people that he knew. He also acknowledged that this practice continues today:

they invariably went back home to Ireland for their holidays[...] some kids in my position would have gone home every six weeks of the holiday ever year. Even my cousin, my cousin’s grandchildren now still go back to Ireland for at least 4 weeks in the summer.  
[Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth].

Lambert identified that Ireland was usually the only ‘holiday destination of the women interviewed and most respondents spoke of ‘going home’ as often as they could afford to.’<sup>824</sup> She also found that many of her participants could not return to Ireland as often as they might have liked due to financial constraints after having children.<sup>825</sup> This was reflected in the film *Here, Across the Water*, where two of the participants referred to returning to Ireland regularly. The first quotation is from a woman who was part of the second wave of migration from Ireland, whilst the latter was a third wave emigrant:

In the latter years I’ve gone home to Ireland average 4, 5, 6 times a year. When the children were little I couldn’t get home very often obviously. In that time when I got married and had the children it was a case of go down Temple Meads, change at Cardiff, change at Swansea, go down to Fishguard, the boat was always full, I had the kids with me.

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<sup>822</sup> Interview with Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon.

<sup>823</sup> Interview with Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth.

<sup>824</sup> Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire*, p.41.

<sup>825</sup> Sharon Lambert, “Irish Women’s Emigration to England, 1922-60: The Lengthening of Family Ties” in Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart (Eds.), *Irish Women’s History*, 152-167, (Dublin, Irish Academic Press, 2004), p.163.

I used to go home probably every three months and look forward to going home as if I was going on a holiday, well I was going on a holiday I suppose. But any money I made went towards going home.<sup>826</sup>

McGowan's research yielded similar results: 'Without exception Ireland was the usual holiday destination of those interviewed.'<sup>827</sup> Both Lambert and McGowan identified that holiday patterns were typically subject to 'life-cycle stages. One of the most significant was the death of parents, which McGowan has described as 'the end of an era', arguing that that 'their homeplace held little attraction' to many of his participants after the death of friends and family members.<sup>828</sup> Lambert also found that this 'affected women's patterns of visiting Ireland' whilst, for others, 'it marked the end of 'going home'' altogether.<sup>829</sup> Keane also referenced this 'fixed pattern', and bluntly observed that 'The young will keep coming back each year until the parents die.'<sup>830</sup> Keane also recalled that the 'contempt of elusive stewards and channel officers' for 'the departing Paddy' was in stark contrast to his experiences of returning to Ireland on holiday:

it is written over their faces: contempt, scorn and disinterestedness. The tourist is fawned over and spoiled, but they can't wait to deposit the departing Paddy on the other side. How different it is all coming back for the annual holiday: the melodeons and fiddles and the sing-songs, the exuberant boys and the friendly girls, the attentiveness of the grasping stewards and the cheerful quips flung at the generous Paddies who cannot spread it quickly enough.<sup>831</sup>

Wills has somewhat cynically – although hardly unfairly - identified these holidays as being a 'new form of commercial exploitation of the Irish in Britain':

The emigrant Irish were encouraged to spend their money on nostalgic returns to the unspoilt landscapes which had failed to offer them a livelihood, returning to Britain at the end of the summer with a lump of Connemara marble in their pockets, and the imprint of the Blarney stone upon their lips.<sup>832</sup>

It was clear that many of the participants for this study enjoyed returning to Ireland. Most did so regularly and had done so for the majority of their time in Bristol, principally to visit family members:

I got a sister in Ireland and I got a brother in Ireland[...] so we'll be over and back quite regularly to Ireland, yeah.  
[Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary].

Oh God we're going over there in a few months[...] we're going over there for four or five days I think it is.  
[Jack, b.1941, Wexford].

<sup>826</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. *Here, Across the Water*, White and Frear.

<sup>827</sup> McGowan, *Taking the Boat*, pp.115, 116.

<sup>828</sup> McGowan, *Taking the Boat*, p.124.

<sup>829</sup> Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire*, p.44.

<sup>830</sup> Keane, *Self-Portrait*, p.36.

<sup>831</sup> Keane, *Self-Portrait*, p.35.

<sup>832</sup> Wills, *The Best*, p.9.

Caitriona and Brendan went back to Ireland on a regular basis and planned to continue returning ‘as often as we can’ despite the recent passing of Brendan’s mother:

Yeah we do and we go back, we’re going back regular as I said cause Brendan’s Mum was alive till last August [...] It is yeah [important] oh yeah I love going back[...] Yeah we go back as often as we can.  
[Caitriona, b.1948, Kilkenny].

Brendan added that cheap air fares were helpful when it came to holidaying in Ireland, though the more expensive rates before budget airlines like Ryanair were established had not stopped them from returning to Ireland:

we go back twice maybe three times a year as well sort of thing like, which is nice to do. But, well it’s much easier nowadays with cheap travel and flights and all that so thank God for Ryanair [laughs]. But like when we come over here, the likes of Aer Lingus and British Airways, they had it between them like you know. You get on one of their flights, it’d cost you a hundred pound return.  
[Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon].

Joseph had taken his children to Belfast every year when they were young, and he continued to visit on a less regular basis to visit family members. Aside from his brother, an aunt and cousins, he no longer knew many people in Belfast and consequently tended ‘to go back less’. In spite of this, he retained a strong connection to Belfast and a compulsion to return:

when the children were very young I probably went home once a year for a fortnight and take the kids[...] So I still go back to Ireland, I will probably continue to go back to Ireland as long as I live because I’ve got close relatives, my brother, who lives there.  
[Joseph, b.1951, Antrim].

Maureen had taken her son on holiday to Ireland on a few occasions, but the death of her husband meant that she had to ‘watch the pennies’:

I probably took Connor over when he was about three, and then I took him over again when he was about 12 you know. And of course his father died then so you know, I had to sort of watch the pennies.  
[Maureen, b.1928, Roscommon].

However, in recent years she had been visiting Ireland around once a year, particularly since she and her son had come into contact with family members in county Kerry:

Oh yes, yeah I’ve been back quite a bit, I go back quite a bit you know. And now that we’ve found Connor’s cousin over in Kerry now[...] we’re going over to him in June you know. And we were over last year like you know. So I go over about maybe once a year you know.  
[Maureen, b. 1928, Roscommon].

Paul also continued to visit Belfast, albeit less regularly since his parents passed away. Like Joseph, he described not knowing many people in Belfast having been away so long. In spite of this, he still felt compelled to return to Belfast from time to time:

Yes. My parents both died in the past decade so that was kind of a break but my sister’s still there. I go back for funerals[...] so I do go back but I don’t know a single person in Belfast now. Well I probably do know them but I wouldn’t recognise

them, people I was at school with, I'm not in touch with them. The only friend I kept in contact with he died 15 years ago so I don't know anybody[...] It's still where I come from though, I feel Belfast is my hometown. You never lose the place from you, no matter what you think about it it's still in your soul, where you were brought up.  
[Paul, b.1950, Belfast].

John and May purchased a cottage in Donegal in 1999 and have since spent six months of the year 'Every year' there without fail.<sup>833</sup> Michael had returned to Mayo every summer with his children when they were younger, and even built a house on part of his mother's land, though he had only visited Ireland once since his mother passed away: 'Since my mother died last year I've been only back once for her anniversary but my house is still there and nobody in it.'<sup>834</sup> Liam and Diane did not often return to Ireland when their children were young. They ran an independent shop, which made taking holidays somewhat problematic. Consequently they preferred to holiday in places like Spain, where their children could enjoy 'a fortnight on the beach'. They also recalled that much of the time they spent in Ireland was preoccupied with visiting family rather than exploring new places:

We did take them to Ireland once but our problem, particularly our generation, it's changing now, you spent all your time in relations' houses.  
[Liam, b.1945, Limerick]

my mother didn't see much of Ireland at all, she would just go home to see her family. So I think, just generations now, you want to travel more, you want to see, you want to see your family, you still want to keep in contact but it's not just family, you do want to explore a bit more.  
[Diane, b.1948, London].

Delaney has argued that many viewed emigration to Britain as temporary 'exile': 'A sense of displacement, a desire to return home and the sometimes painful adaptation to the norms of the new society feature prominently in the oral testimony of all migrants.'<sup>835</sup> Many individuals left with the short-term intentions of earning money or taking advantage of free training in Britain and returning home once these objectives had been achieved.<sup>836</sup> This was also reflected in Richmond's study, in which he found that 49 per cent of the Irish participants did not initially intend to settle permanently in Bristol, as shown in Figure 4.1, below. This figure was considerably higher than the corresponding European group, though lower than the India and Pakistan grouping and considerably lower than the West Indian group. However, by the time the survey was conducted in 1965, around two-thirds of the Irish participants planned to settle permanently in Bristol. This was certainly the case for the two second wave emigrants featured in *Here, Across the Water*. Both claimed that they had not

<sup>833</sup> Interviews with John, b.1940, Donegal, and May, b.1939, Derry.

<sup>834</sup> Interview with Michael, b.1951, Mayo.

<sup>835</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.160.

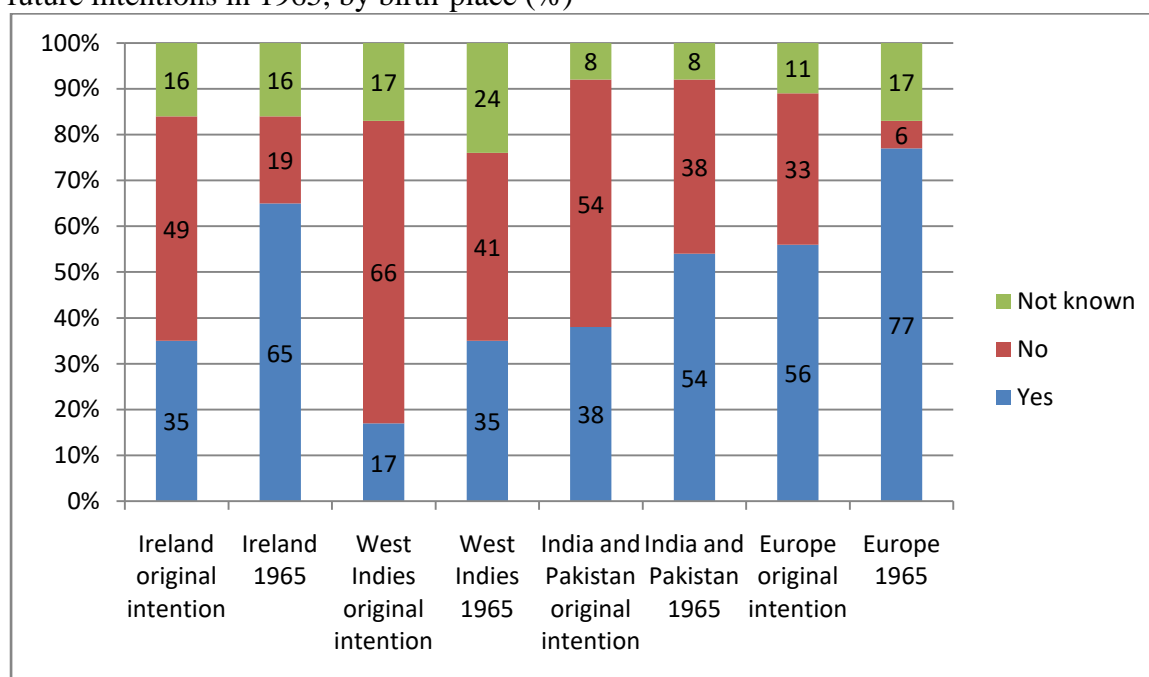
<sup>836</sup> Delaney, *Post-War*, pp.64-5.

initially considered remaining in Bristol permanently but stayed due to the firm roots that they had established in the city:

When you come to England you think in terms of ‘Oh, come for a few years’, but in actual fact you don’t very often go back. For one reason or another you think about it and then you marry, then you put down roots.

I went home after three months and I was definitely going to stay home, and then I didn’t stay home, I came back and until the time I met my husband I was adamant that I’d eventually end up back in Ireland even though I’d originally come here for more money, but my heart was at home[...] My generation of Irish and the people I know, sort of all come over for the same reason, but met up with somebody, fell in love, got married, settled down, had children and we’re still here today.<sup>837</sup>

Figure 4.1 – Adult sample (immigrants only): Original intention to settle permanently and future intentions in 1965, by birth-place (%)<sup>838</sup>



Source: adapted from Richmond, Anthony H. assisted by M. Lyon, S. Hale and R. King, *Migration and Race Relations in an English City A Study in Bristol*. London: Oxford University Press, 1973, pp.244-5.

Sorohan found in his interviews that ‘The myth of return was something held more deeply by those who felt that they had to leave Ireland out of economic necessity’. Conversely, ‘those who left Ireland for adventure or who abandoned a society that they disliked were less likely to express any great sense of desire to return’.<sup>839</sup> The argument that those who were

<sup>837</sup> BBC Bristol Archive. *Here, Across the Water*, White and Frear.

<sup>838</sup> Sample sizes: Ireland -110; West Indies 160; India and Pakistan 26; Europe 36.

<sup>839</sup> Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.44.

compelled to leave Ireland maintained a stronger connection and desire to return than those who left more voluntarily is a convincing one. Jackson has argued that ‘Many may suffer in the process [of adaptation in Britain] and some may fail and fall back into desperation, hopelessness and despair and lack the courage to admit defeat and return home.’<sup>840</sup> This was reflected in the account of one of Trew’s participants who was motivated to return home by meetings with older Irish emigrants in English pubs:

One of the reasons I could never stay away was because I met old emigrants who lived in England in the pubs and they were so sad and they would say, ‘I can’t go back home, all my family’s dead. They wouldn’t know me if I went back’[...] And I found that so sad that I remember saying consciously to myself, ‘I’m never going to be like that person there. I’m never going to wind up in that situation if I can manage it’.<sup>841</sup>

Whilst, in some cases, this could have been influenced by a reluctance to admit that life in England was enjoyable – given the turbulent nature of Anglo-Irish history - the narrative of exile has been a recurring theme in accounts of emigration from Ireland.<sup>842</sup> However, the hope held by many that their ‘exile’ was temporary and that they would ultimately return to Ireland was, in most cases, never realised. Several commentators have convincingly ascribed this lack of return migration to economical and familial factors. O’Connor has cited economic factors as well as reluctance ‘to uproot their children from what they regarded as better educational opportunities and future career prospects in Britain.’<sup>843</sup> Trew has also offered ‘family issues’ as important factors against return migration. She also identified that many of her participants ‘felt that there was a time limit to being abroad after which point – ‘now or never’ – a definite decision had to be made.’<sup>844</sup> She identified ‘the political situation and the conservative nature of the society’ in Northern Ireland as ‘the two principal reasons mitigating against return.’<sup>845</sup> McGowan also found that family issues provided ‘the primary pull to stay in Leeds’ whilst ‘economic conditions in Ireland, as well as ‘negative experiences[...] which have tarnished the emigrant’s memory of Ireland’, provided little incentive for permanent return.’<sup>846</sup>

None of the participants indicated that they would wish to return to Ireland permanently. Margaret was certain that she had been in Bristol for too long to return to Tipperary: ‘Wouldn’t even think about going back, no, no. Fifty years is too long, no,

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<sup>840</sup> Jackson, *The Irish*, p.161.

<sup>841</sup> Trew, *Leaving the North*, p.196.

<sup>842</sup> More on the theme of Irish emigration as exile can be found in Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles*.

<sup>843</sup> O’Connor, *The Irish*, pp.162-3.

<sup>844</sup> Trew, *Leaving the North*, p.196.

<sup>845</sup> Trew, *Leaving the North*, p.205.

<sup>846</sup> McGowan, *Taking the Boat*, pp.137,140.

definitely not.’ Much of her reluctance could be attributed to changes in Ireland whilst she had been in Bristol: ‘I can go home to my home place now which I do every year and go over to my local pub and I might know one or two people in there because I’ve been gone too long.’<sup>847</sup> This was reinforced by Paul, who argued that there has been so little return migration to Ireland because Ireland has become ‘so remote from their lives, plus they have all the family ties, children, friends. The people that they knew in Ireland are gone.’<sup>848</sup> This was also cited as a factor by McGowan, who found that his participants had ‘become stranger[s]’ in their birthplaces.<sup>849</sup> Margaret also emphasised the importance of parents in return visits to Ireland, as well as her family ties to children and grandchildren in Bristol:

All the people I’ve known are dead and gone, my mother and father are gone now so it’s not the same. I think when your parents go, when your parents go it changes stuff I think. You know ‘cos when my mother and father was alive you just go home you know. You would just go to Tipperary and just stay with your mum and dad you know, or my mum would come over here and that sort of stuff. If I’d go back now? No, no[...] But a lot of the Irish people that you talk to now would say that they wouldn’t want to go back. ‘Cos as I’ve said some people wanna go back and live but I never have so. No I couldn’t go back and live there, no. Like I got two grandchildren, I’d miss them you know so yeah, no no. Stay here [laughs].  
[Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary].

In addition to this, Margaret cited her sister’s unsuccessful return to Ireland. She had returned to find that Ireland had changed beyond recognition, and despite the fact that she had ‘always wanted to go back’ she ‘hated it’ and ultimately returned to Bristol two years later.<sup>850</sup> This ‘failed return’ has been referenced by Trew, who found that several of her participants had returned to Northern Ireland but, partly motivated by the Troubles, later re-emigrated to Britain.<sup>851</sup>

However, this was not the case with the participants for this study. All participants were happily – or at least contentedly – settled in Bristol. Most enjoyed regular return trips to Ireland, and had done so since emigrating. Even after the death of parents - previously identified as a potential turning point in return visit patterns - most of the participants have continued to visit Ireland regularly. Only Michael, whose mother had passed away in the last year, had not been back often since she had died. There was also no indication from any of the participants that they would like to return to Ireland permanently; indeed many did not even mention the possibility of leaving Bristol. Most had firm roots in the city, and all but two had children and grandchildren in close proximity.

<sup>847</sup> Interview with Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary.

<sup>848</sup> Interview with Paul, b.1950, Belfast.

<sup>849</sup> McGowan, *Taking the Boat*, p.141.

<sup>850</sup> Interview with Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary.

<sup>851</sup> Trew, *Leaving the North*, pp.197-202.



#### 4.7 – ‘The collision of identity’<sup>852</sup>: The Second Generation

The importance of the second-and-subsequent-generations in the Irish diaspora has been emphasised throughout the literature and particularly by Scully, who has argued that, outside of the south-east of England ‘Irishness is now becoming largely a second-generation phenomenon, given the age profile and dwindling numbers of the original 1950s migrants.’<sup>853</sup> We have seen that Hickman and Walter have estimated that Britain’s Irish-born population should be multiplied by three to include subsequent-generation individuals and Campbell estimated that, by 1999, there were around two million second-generation Irish people in Britain.<sup>854</sup> Lambert found that ‘A desire to acquaint their children with their relations in Ireland and their Irish cultural identities was often expressed by mothers’. One of her participants emphasised the importance of holidays in Ireland allowing her children to make ‘their own informed decisions as to which culture they identified with.’ Consequently, her three children ‘adopted Irish identities’ and two went on to live in Ireland.<sup>855</sup> Sorohan has noted that there was a clear ‘desire to assert their Irishness in a context of some permanency in London and ensure that their British-born children would remember their roots’.<sup>856</sup>

Several of the participants for this study had children in Bristol, and many were of the view that it was essential to raise their children with an appreciation of their Irish heritage. Bringing her children up in this way was ‘very important’ to Margaret, who hoped that this would ‘continue on’ through her grandchildren, one of whom was particularly interested in Irishness.<sup>857</sup> Michael also believed that this was ‘very important’ and was ‘delighted’ that his sons played Gaelic football for Western Gaels, one of the two Bristol-based GAA clubs. In spite of this, he was content to let his sons make their own decisions and formulate their own identities: ‘if I teach them what I was taught they can do what they like after.’<sup>858</sup> Similarly, Joseph wanted his children ‘to have an awareness that they are Irish, from an Irish background’ without wanting ‘to force it down their throat’. He believed that ‘by them going to a Catholic school, I think that by having friends whose parents were also Irish, that there’s

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<sup>852</sup> From Horgan, “Swift” in *Slipping Letters Beneath the Sea*, p.26.

<sup>853</sup> Marc Scully, “The tyranny of transnational discourse: ‘authenticity’ and Irish diasporic identity in Ireland and England” in *Nations and Nationalism* Volume 18, issue 2, 191-209 (2012), p.197.

<sup>854</sup> Hickman and Walter, *Discrimination And The Irish Community In Britain*, pp.19-20; Sean Campbell, “Beyond ‘Plastic Paddy’: A Re-examination of the Second Generation Irish in England” in *Immigrants and minorities* vol 18, 1999, pp.266-288, p.266.

<sup>855</sup> Lambert, “Irish Women’s Emigration to England”, p.164.

<sup>856</sup> Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.51.

<sup>857</sup> Interview with Margaret, b.1948, Tipperary.

<sup>858</sup> Interview with Michael, b.1951, Mayo.

a certain amount of Irishness that's in them.'<sup>859</sup> Dave acknowledged that 'I probably could have done a lot more like to steer them towards Irish dancing or whatever it might have been' but his relaxed attitude meant that he 'just let it take its course':

I think they'll always have that sense of Irishness without maybe thinking too deeply about it and I'd never want to press them about it. Like if one of them said "well I think I feel English first and then Irish" I'd kind of "oh fair enough" you know "that's ok, that's the way you feel" like so it's no big issue for us really.  
[Dave, b.1954, Cork].

In spite of this, he considered that his children, whilst identifying more with England, 'feel Irish': 'I'd hate to think who they'd be supporting if Ireland were playing England!' He also considered yearly visits to Ireland with his wife and children to be valuable:

keeping in contact with family in Ireland has been important and you know we've always gone back at least once a year and my children have gone back and sort of mixed with their cousins, my brothers' and sisters' children and they'd be similar ages[...] I'm glad that we kind of, that my wife and I that we did make the effort to go back to Ireland every year because I think that, our children now appreciate that because although they're in their twenties, you know they go to Ireland on holidays themselves and that's quite nice to see that following through.  
[Dave, b.1954, Cork].

Similarly, Emily argued that taking children on holiday to Ireland was 'the responsibility of the parents' to teach their children 'about their culture and their background and where they're coming from.' She remarked that she knew Irish families whose Bristol-born children would support Ireland over England in sporting events:

And I know families, on Saturday when Ireland play England, I know some of them will actually be shouting for Ireland, even though they're Bristolians! [...] mine I have to say, they do like to see Ireland do well, that's the least I would expect from them [laughs].  
[Emily, b.1948, Tipperary].

Brendan and Caitriona were pleased that their children and grandchildren were very enthusiastic about visiting Ireland, although Brendan noted that, after a certain age, they were less interested in visiting rural areas. Whilst 'they still keep going back' he claimed that they were more interested in going to one of the bigger provincial towns or cities rather than 'the countryside'.<sup>860</sup> Liam and Diane's children had contrasting views on Irishness:

Yes our daughter still has retained and will always, as far as I know, an Irish passport. Our son hasn't, he's got an ordinary British one, he hasn't got strong feelings one way or the other about it, but certainly our daughter is very very Irish.  
[Liam, b.1945, Limerick].

One of Jack's sons frequently wore Ireland rugby jerseys and another was very interested in hurling. Jack and his wife had taken their children to visit family members in Wexford

<sup>859</sup> Interview with Joseph, b.1951, Antrim.

<sup>860</sup> Interview with Brendan, b.1942, Roscommon.

regularly whilst they were growing up, and they continued to holiday there with their grandchildren.<sup>861</sup> Others like John, May and Mary did not make a conscious effort to introduce their children to Irish culture. John and May did send their children to Catholic schools, but ‘never encouraged them to participate in anything Irish.’<sup>862</sup> Mary did express some regret that she had not taught her children some of the Irish language, though her reasons for not doing so were mostly based around fears of racial abuse or discrimination based on her observations of Polish families speaking Polish in her area:

Now I’m older I wish I’d taught my children some Irish but I realised recently why I couldn’t have done that, I sang them Irish songs and they know a few Irish words but I suddenly had this vision of what it’d be like if I was walking around Kingswood with my children speaking Irish. I mean you hear what happens to people speaking Polish[...] So I suppose I have that little bit of resentment that I pushed it away and now it’s too late  
[Mary, B.1952, Cork].

Mary also recalled that a lot of the ‘Irish things’ which existed in Bristol when her children were young were affiliated with the Catholic church, which she had rejected and did not want to be a part of:

I didn’t want to be a Catholic, if you got rid of that bit...and if you got involved in any Irish things with the children it seemed to be a kind of pressure to take on those beliefs and those cultures.  
[Mary, B.1952, Cork].

Diane was one of the second-generation participants for this thesis. She was born in London and was brought up by her Irish mother:

Back in the day my mother, bless her, was now they would now call a single parent, in those days an unmarried mother and she was a very strong lady as it turned out, she lived till three months short of 100 and she gave me loads and loads of love and very Irish. We were obviously very poor, so we lived in one room in a bedsit.  
[Diane, b.1948, London].

Diane attended Catholic schools and was very active in the London Irish community through Irish dancing and music:

I started to learn Irish dancing when I was nine with some friends locally and then at 11[...] I started to play with them [the London Irish Girl Pipers band] and we travelled all around the country doing many many shows[...] when I was 16 we did a tour of America for three months in a show called Ireland On Parade where there was the pipe band, we were an Irish band then so I had to have an Irish passport which wasn’t a problem because Mum was Irish, and I moved very much in an Irish circle[...] When I came back I used to say I was very Irish although a plastic Paddy.  
[Diane, b.1948, London].

The term ‘plastic Paddy’ has been frequently used to describe second-and subsequent-generation Irish people in Britain since the 1980s. Hickman has argued that applying this

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<sup>861</sup> Interview with Jack, b.1941, Wexford.

<sup>862</sup> Interviews with John, b.1940, Donegal, and May, b.1939, Derry.

term to oneself ‘reveal[s] carefully deliberated decisions about when to declare an Irish background. They also demonstrate concerns about the authenticity of claiming to be Irish when this is not accepted by ‘everybody else who is Irish’ and clearly locate the second-generation differently to the Irish-born.’<sup>863</sup> Mac an Ghail and Haywood have identified that the label ‘plastic Paddy’ describes individuals’ Irishness as ‘inauthentic’.<sup>864</sup> In parallel to this, Hickman, Morgan, Walter and Bradley have described this as a way of English people ‘attempting to re-assert control’ and ‘regain the secure landscape of homogenous white Englishness’:

Ironically, both English hostility when faced with the spectre of Irish identities, and Irish denials of the authenticity of those same identities, utilize the pejorative term ‘plastic Paddy’ to stereotype and undermine processes ‘of becoming’ of Irish identities of second-generation Irish people. The message from each is that the second-generation Irish are ‘really English’ and many of the second-generation resist this.<sup>865</sup>

Connor, another second-generation participant, was born in Bournemouth to two Irish parents and moved to Bristol when he was four years of age. He recalled that he was ‘brought up in an English mode because of my father’s influence.’ His father, who passed away when Connor was 12, ‘probably hid his Irish accent in many respects’ and Connor suspected that he had downplayed his own Irishness because he ‘probably didn’t get a good run’ when he had been in the British navy. Connor’s father may have experienced anti-Irish hostility whilst serving in the royal navy, but Steven O’Connor has convincingly argued that the British armed forces, ‘far from being a hostile alien environment[...] were places where an Irish person could ‘get on’ without reference to their religion or nationality.’<sup>866</sup> His father’s reluctance to emphasise his Irishness could have also been related to Irish hostility towards Irish people serving in the British armed forces. In addition to this, his mother and father’s friends were predominantly English. Connor recalled that ‘the Irishness started to come home’ later in life. He mainly attributed this to working in The Four Provinces Club at the age of 15 or 16, where he became friends with several Irish people and even introduced his mother to her future partner:

And then through the Irish club I introduced my mother to her long-term partner and you’ve gone from someone like my father who was...not anti-Irish but didn’t promote Irishness to someone like him who strongly promoted Irishness, and not necessarily anti-English but probably anti-everything other than Irish, so yeah. So

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<sup>863</sup> Mary J. Hickman, Sarah Morgan, Bronwen Walter and Joseph Bradley, “The limitations of whiteness and the boundaries of Englishness. Second-generation identifications and positions in multiethnic Britain” in *Ethnicities*, vol 5, issue 2 (2005) 160-182, p.166.

<sup>864</sup> Mairtin Mac an Ghail and Chris Haywood, “Young (male) Irelanders. Postcolonial ethnicities – expanding the nation and Irishness” in *Cultural Studies*, vol 6, issue 3 (2003) 386-403, p.389.

<sup>865</sup> Hickman et al, ‘The limitations of whiteness’, pp.174-5.

<sup>866</sup> O’Connor, ‘Irish identity and integration’, p.438.

the Irishness became a very strong factor around 15, 16 years of age, mainly because I became immersed in an Irish culture, through the Four Provinces club, through the people I met and spent most of my life immersed in Irish people as friends, as colleagues, peers, elders.  
[Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth].

Vivian was born in Bristol to an Irish father and an English mother and also identifies as Irish. Unlike Connor, his Irishness was heavily influenced by his father, who had raised Vivian ‘to be proud of his heritage and to be proud of my grandfather who fought in the English army, whose name I carry’. Vivian had also been influenced by his father’s many Irish friends in Bristol, who he found ‘much more entertaining[...] interesting and more funny’ than his English friends. Vivian’s sense of Irishness was also reinforced by his Catholic upbringing, ‘surrounded by Irish people’, friendships with other individuals of Irish descent that he had developed in Bristol, as well as a holiday in Ireland at the age of ten. Consequently, he considers himself to be ‘as much Irish as I am English, which leads to quite a dichotomy in some instances.’<sup>867</sup> Both Connor and Vivian attended St Brendan’s Catholic school in Bristol where many of their peers were also of Irish descent, and Connor described the register as being ‘like an Irish history lesson of names in Ireland’. He also recalled that there was – somewhat typically of the Irish experience in Britain – a significant divergence in approaches from the other second-generation Irish boys at his school. Connor believed, like Emily and many of the first-generation participants for this thesis, that holidays in Ireland were very important in the construction of second-generation Irish identities:

lots of second-generation Irish kids weren’t interested in being Irish and some of us were very strong about where we came from. A lot of that was reinforced by going home during the summer to Ireland to see family and relatives staying there, working there during the summer. So it was a complete mixed bag really, those who embraced Irishness and those who didn’t embrace Irishness, and it was never a major topic of discussion. Obviously around rugby and football and things like that, then it became an issue, but a lot of the kids who were second-generation would support England[...] rather than Ireland.  
[Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth].

Both Connor and Vivian were raised as Catholics by their parents, and both regularly attended Mass, which Connor described as ‘enforced’ until their parents allowed them to decide for themselves:

I was still going to Mass as long as my father was alive, I think the pressure on me changed because the pressure on my mother changed, ‘cause my mother had to work full time. I don’t think it was the biggest thing in the world that she thought I had to go to church. I used to go[...] I had a lot of contestation with the way it was enforced upon us as young children and forced upon us by the school[...] But Catholicism, it was expected, I think up until a certain age, then you know, people voted with their feet. Some people continued, all the way through until they left senior school and beyond. Some people decided to stop when they were 14 or 15. But there was very

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<sup>867</sup> Vivian, b.1954, Bristol.

much pressure from the parents that you had to go to church. But I was lucky that with my mother I...it was not sort of “you’re doomed if you don’t go to church” you know.

[Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth].

I was ok with Catholicism, I had no problem with it. I quite enjoyed Mass. Of course in those days Mass was in Latin, not in English, and it lost a lot of its charm when it went to English as far as I was concerned but that’s a different story. But as I left primary school and went to secondary school at the age of 11 or 12, I was probably less and less enamoured with Catholic faith and then the Christian Brothers just really hit the nail on the head. And then at the age of it was either 13 or 14, my Dad said to me “right” cause every Sunday we had to go to Mass, he just said to me “right, if you wanna go you can go, if you don’t you don’t” and from the day he said that I’ve never been to Mass since.

[Vivian, b.1954, Bristol].

Vivian’s disenchantment with Catholicism was, in part, due to some of his earliest experiences of the church, particularly on his first day of school at St Mary-on-the-Quay where he was physically disciplined for being left-handed and was forced to learn to write with his right hand. He described this as his ‘first real experience of how intransigent and cruel the Catholic church could be.’<sup>868</sup> Vivian also recalled that their parish priest undertook an unsuccessful campaign to convince his Bristolian Protestant mother to convert to Catholicism:

The priest would come round on a regular basis, once a week, once a fortnight and that seemed to be mostly, looking back on it, to do with the fact that my Mum was not a Catholic[...] my mother and father had agreed to bring us all up as Catholics, and we were all baptised as Catholics and we all went to Catholic junior school. But the priest was still a bit insistent that my mother change religion but she never ever did.

[Vivian, b.1954, Bristol]

As we have seen, holidays in Ireland have been cited as important factors in the formulation of second-generation Irish identities. Connor enjoyed the simplicity of rural life in Ireland and even ‘refused to come home’ one summer:

I suppose from the age of 13[...] every year. Sometimes with Mum, sometimes on my own[...] I just loved Ireland, it was good, I mean we worked, I mean we didn’t work hard, we’d work to help run the farm. Haymaking could be a bit rough but no, it was good fun. Because things were pure then, fun was pure, life was pure, entertainment was pure. Yeah, life was simple, very simple, and very little mention of money, it was all about doing for people, helping people.

[Connor, b.1954, Bournemouth].

Vivian spent less time in Ireland as a child, principally due to his grandmother passing away when he was 13. However, he also referenced the freedom and openness of rural Kerry, even when compared to Witherwood, itself a somewhat rural area as a result of being situated on Bristol’s southern border with Somerset:

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<sup>868</sup> Interview with Vivian, b.1954, Bristol.

I spent a month in county Kerry at the age of ten which was one of the happiest times of my life. I said we had a lot of freedom in Witherwood and a lot of open spaces, but nothing like it was in Ireland[...] You could just wander forever. There were no cars[...] and everyone knew everyone else and everyone knew everyone's business so after a few days you could walk to the farthest end of the village and everybody would know who you were and where you came from and what your name was and I loved it, it was great.  
[Vivian, b.1954, Bristol].

Both have continued to holiday in Ireland, particularly Connor who still visits family members in Kerry. Vivian has 'regularly' visited different parts of Ireland throughout his adult life, seeing 'a hell of a lot more than my father ever saw of it' as well as the many changes in the last 50 years: 'it's a completely different country now to what it was when I first went over.'<sup>869</sup>

#### 4.8 – 'A people in 'limbo' '<sup>870</sup>: Integration and assimilation

Given the aforementioned heterogeneous nature of the Irish experience in Britain, it is unsurprising that accounts of Irish integration are multi-dimensional. Both Delaney and Wills have convincingly located the Irish within British society. The former has argued that the Irish were 'an element of British society' which existed 'on the margins.'<sup>871</sup> Whilst the latter went further and contended that 'The Irish were not simply *on* the margins of English working-class culture, they *were* the margin.'<sup>872</sup> Several historians, such as Hornsby-Smith, have, somewhat less compellingly, identified Irish Catholics as 'an important example of assimilation to British society over many generations'<sup>873</sup> He has argued that 'second-generation Irish immigrants without any qualifications were more likely to be upwardly mobile' than Irish-born or English individuals with no qualifications which suggests that there has been 'a substantial measure of structural assimilation of the Irish in England by the second generation.'<sup>874</sup> Jackson has argued that the 'ambiguity' of dual Irish and English identities, or the strain of inhabiting 'two worlds at the same time', affects second-generation Irish individuals in Britain more than their Irish-born parents. Their 'more direct confrontation with the reality of the new society' means that 'the assimilative forces' of British society 'are exerted primarily upon the child so that he'<sup>875</sup> rather than the parent,

<sup>869</sup> Interview with Vivian, b.1954, Bristol.

<sup>870</sup> Wills, *The Best*, p.4.

<sup>871</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.84.

<sup>872</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.84; Wills, *The Best*, p.143.

<sup>873</sup> Michael P. Hornsby-Smith, *Roman Catholics in England. Studies in Social Structure Since the Second World War*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), p.4.

<sup>874</sup> Hornsby-Smith, *Roman Catholics in England*, p.123.

<sup>875</sup> This is a further indication of Jackson's lack of interest in female emigrants.

becomes the transmitting agent of social change.<sup>876</sup> Liam Ryan has contended that ‘Irish assimilation into British society is among the fastest that occurs among immigrant groups anywhere in the world’:

Assimilation is practically complete in a single generation. The children of Irish immigrants, sometimes to the distress of their parents, grew up seeing themselves as English or Scottish; they may acknowledge their Irish ancestry and exhibit a few inherited traits, but for all practical purposes they are indistinguishable from their British peers whether in speech or dress or in social, cultural or religious behaviour.<sup>877</sup>

Given that many of the participants for this thesis have discussed their children’s positive attitudes towards adopting Irish identities, this argument does not seem particularly convincing. Ryan is on surer ground when contending that gravitation towards ‘cultural ghettos’ such as pubs, clubs, dance halls and associations has not hindered integration but rather served as ‘stepping-stones to the larger society’:

In the initial years of migration, in their efforts to survive the storm of transition from one society to another, the Irish temporarily anchored themselves to what was known and familiar, but the majority were well able to weigh anchor once the storm had passed.<sup>878</sup>

Walter has argued, far more persuasively, that assumptions about the assimilation of second-generation Irish people overlook the impact of bonds forged in the home, ‘where different aspects of diasporic identities are brought together’:

Migrant women have a different relationship to home in Ireland from their daughters, but their own ties are handed down to their children in a directly personal way. Because these are family linkages which take place within domestic context, they are hidden from the view of the dominant society which fails to acknowledge the strength of the bonds which are forged. Assumptions about the ‘assimilation’ of second-generation Irish children draw only on stereotypical public indicators such as accent, and not on the content of fundamental formative experiences.<sup>879</sup>

In addition to this, several commentators have compellingly contended that the predominant whiteness of the Irish has given further credence to assumptions of assimilation, as ‘visible difference has become the ‘salient marker of ethnic difference.’<sup>880</sup> Some have also cited the colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland, as well as discourses of the superiority of

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<sup>876</sup> Jackson, *The Irish*, p.160.

<sup>877</sup> Ryan, *Irish emigration to Britain since WW2*, pp.59-60.

<sup>878</sup> *Ibid*, p.60.

<sup>879</sup> Walter, *Outsiders*, p.207.

<sup>880</sup> Campbell, “Beyond ‘Plastic Paddy’”, pp.207-1; Liam Greenslade, “White skin, white masks”, p.215; Mary J. Hickman, “Census Ethnic Categories and Second-Generation Identities: A Study of the Irish in England and Wales”, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, Vol. 37, No. 1, 79-97, (2011), p.81; Hickman et al, “The limitations of whiteness and the boundaries of Englishness”, p.161; Kevin Howard, “Constructing the Irish of Britain: Ethnic recognition and the 2001 UK Censuses” in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Volume 29, issue 1, 104-123, (2007), pp.110-1, 112.



Englishness over Irishness.<sup>881</sup> Howard has reasoned that ‘the traditional denigration’ of Irishness in Britain has facilitated assimilation into British society.<sup>882</sup> Campbell has argued that the Irish have only been described as an ‘other’ in British society when negatives, such as the comparatively high mortality rate of second-generation Irish people are being discussed. In contrast, when the Irish second-generation exceed the achievements of the English, assimilation is assumed to have occurred. This practice continues in the present day with the British media occasionally attempting to claim successful Irish men and women as British:

So, it seems that when the second-generation exceed the educational achievements of the English group, they become invisible and are conceived of in terms of their assimilation. Yet, when they exceed the mortality rates of the English group, they become visible and are conceived of in terms of their Irishness[...] In addition, migrant ‘success’ has generally been understood in terms of assimilation, while disadvantage is understood in terms of structural difference. However, this paradigm of assimilation can, I think, be crude and reductive. For it has inadvertently implied that the experience of being Irish in England is restricted to a narrow range of problem-centred issues (for example, poor health but not educational success).<sup>883</sup>

Given that the predominant public indicator of Irishness is an Irish accent, it is unsurprising that second-and subsequent-generation Irish people are assumed to have been rapidly integrated into the host population. Indeed, Wills has compellingly cautioned against making assumptions of assimilation, given that ‘assimilated Irish[...] are only visible as Irish when some aspect of their experience of behaviour resonates with the stereotype.’<sup>884</sup> Hobsbawm has also contended that it is ‘misleading’ to conclude that the Irish in Britain had been assimilated rather than simply accepted by the mid-twentieth century. He has argued that their visibility rather than their distinctiveness decreased markedly after ‘The political separation of Ireland from Britain in 1921’ with the result that ‘the tensions between the communities have become less’.<sup>885</sup> In spite of this, Lambert found that ‘the colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland[...] was a major barrier to assimilation for many respondents.’<sup>886</sup> Daly also argued that the spectre of Anglo-Irish history often hung over emigration debates in twentieth century Ireland. She has cited colonial history and England being, in the eyes of ‘many nationalists’, ‘the source of all undesirable cultural and moral influences’.<sup>887</sup>

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<sup>881</sup> Marc Scully, “The tyranny of transnational discourse”, p.197.

<sup>882</sup> Howard, “Constructing the Irish of Britain”, p.112.

<sup>883</sup> Sean Campbell, “Beyond ‘Plastic Paddy’”, pp.271-2.

<sup>884</sup> Wills, *The Best*, p.141.

<sup>885</sup> Eric Hobsbawm, *Industry and Empire. From 1750 to the Present Day*. (London, Penguin Books, 1999), p.296.

<sup>886</sup> Lambert, *Irish Women in Lancashire*, p.94.

<sup>887</sup> Daly, *Slow Failure*, p.143.

Strachan has contended that ‘The Irish have traditionally chosen to live in relatively tight-knit communities and these continue to be a feature of the social geography of those British cities which emerged as important destinations for Irish migrants.’<sup>888</sup> In addition to this, Sorohan has argued that the post-war occupational clustering of Irish people in areas such as nursing and navvying hindered integration. One of his participants, a building labourer, noted that ‘The work didn’t bring me in touch [with English people]’ and another, a nurse, recalled that she was only homesick in London for a week after realising that ‘there were so many Irish girls there and they were all in the same boat.’<sup>889</sup> MacAmhlaigh has recounted similar experiences on English building sites in the 1950s and recalled that ‘the Irish stick together and don’t have much social contact with the English’.<sup>890</sup> Sorohan also found that several of the participants for his study ‘talked of having an exclusively, or largely, Irish social network and sometimes expressed an unabashed preference for the company of Irish people.’ Indeed, of Sorohan’s twenty-one married first-generation participants, sixteen were married to first-generation Irish people. Of these, at least eleven had met in London and a further two first-generation participants were married to second-generation Irish people.<sup>891</sup> Lambert’s study of Lancashire from 1922 to 1960 identified a similar trend and many of her participants ‘commented that their closest and longest relationships were with Irish women.’ Many of these friendships had begun between Irish mothers who met at the school gates or in Irish dancing and music classes. Lambert concluded that the consensus of her participants was that ‘they had tried hard to maintain an Irish identity in England’.<sup>892</sup> Wills has contended that the Irish in post-war Britain ‘tended to cling to their national and religious identity’, although she has also argued that women ‘integrate more easily into British society, not least because they came into contact with it more often, at the school gate, for example.’<sup>893</sup>

Linguists have also noted the tendency for women in Britain to ‘use forms associated with the prestige standard more frequently than men.’ Trudgill has argued that this reflects the subordinate status of females in British society: ‘It may be, therefore, that it is more necessary for women to secure and signal their social status linguistically and in other ways, and they may for this reason be more aware of the importance of this type of signal.’<sup>894</sup> Wills

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<sup>888</sup> Strachan, *Post-War Irish Migration*, pp.26-7.

<sup>889</sup> Sorohan, *Irish London*, p.19.

<sup>890</sup> MacAmhlaigh, *An Irish Navvy*, p.114.

<sup>891</sup> Sorohan, *Irish London*, pp.27.30.

<sup>892</sup> Lancaster, *Irish Women in Lancaster*, pp.92, 98.

<sup>893</sup> Wills, *The Best*, pp.4, 5.

<sup>894</sup> Peter Trudgill, “Sex, covert prestige and linguistic change in the urban British English of Norwich”, *Language in Society*, Volume 1, Issue 2, 179-195, (1972), pp.182-3.

and Delaney have also acknowledged the impact of the myth of return, which worked against integration, as many were reluctant to establish firm roots in what they considered to be a temporary home.<sup>895</sup>

Maureen did not particularly ‘mix’ with Irish or British people in Bristol. This was mostly due to balancing her job as a nurse with raising her son. Even before her husband passed away she recalled that they were not particularly outgoing and did not have many close friends in Bristol:

we didn’t have a lot of uh, didn’t mix with other Irish people you know. I had a couple of good English friends you know around here.  
[Maureen, b.1928, Longford].

Liam and Diane had a different experience. After moving to Hallen from London they made a concerted effort to integrate into the Bristol Irish community as well as the local community. This included Liam playing for the local football team and membership of Henbury social club:

As a village, we joke about you know you’ve got to be here so many years before you’re accepted. In fact we threw ourselves in a bit at the deep end, we did want to be involved. So there was like a local youth club, we got involved in that, and I suppose our children born here gave us the opportunity, we got involved with the local schools.  
[Liam, b.1945, Limerick].

Diane also referenced the attitude of Bristolians who she generally found to be ‘self-sufficient in their own ways’ as a result of existing family and friend networks:

Bristolians often don’t... I maybe shouldn’t generalise in this way, often don’t move away and the Bristolians that are here do have their own family and friends around them so I must admit a lot of our social friends are maybe Irish community or whatever, they’re not...or who’ve moved to Bristol. Because Bristolians can be self-sufficient in their own ways but friendly, we get on very well with them don’t we?  
[Diane, b. 1948, London].

Paul emphasised the cultural differences between the two Irelands and argued that Northern Irish people integrated into British society more easily:

Irish people from Northern Ireland tend to very often fade into English society, particularly the Protestants, they just fade into it. There are no Irish Protestant pubs, there’s no Irish pubs and festivals.  
[Paul b.1950, Belfast].

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<sup>895</sup> Delaney, *Demography, State and Society*, p.145; Wills, *The Best*, p.5.

#### 4.9 - Conclusion

It is clear that there has not been a central focal point such as an Irish Centre, or any degree of mass community cooperation or mobilisation amongst the Bristol Irish, particularly when compared with the Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and London Irish. Even Gloucester, a comparatively small city and district in Gloucestershire, has had an Irish Club Committee since 1964 and an Irish Centre in the city since 1969.<sup>896</sup> In spite of this, the evidence from the participants strongly supports the conclusion that there have been many examples of Irish community mobilisation and popular Irish spaces in Bristol throughout the period. The evidence presented here strongly indicates that the reputation of the Catholic church for assisting with the integration of Irish emigrants into Britain was justified in Bristol. Trevor's contribution to aspiring first-time buyers through the CHAS system shows that the church provided financial assistance to help Irish people onto the property ladder, as well as free advice to those with little knowledge of the housing market. It is also clear that there have been several popular Irish pubs and clubs, some of which continue to be popular Irish venues.

All but one of the participants for this study emphasised the importance of retaining ties with Ireland through Irish newspapers, radio, television and even social media. The importance of the role played by social media and other new technological developments will doubtless be of great value to future historians of the Irish diaspora. The vast majority also frequently holidayed in Ireland, often to visit friends and relatives, although none expressed any interest in returning to Ireland permanently. Several were also pleased that their children and grandchildren retained an interest in visiting Ireland. In terms of second-generation individuals, the participants for this thesis all strongly identified as Irish and socialised with Irish people in Irish spaces as much as they had done with British people in Bristol.

Overall, this thesis does not support O'Connor's theory that the Irish 'blend more easily into the native fabric' of provincial cities such as Bristol. Whilst the city cannot be said to have had the same level of mass Irish community organisation as other British cities such as Birmingham, Liverpool and London, it is clear that there have been – and continue to be – several establishments and spaces that cater almost exclusively to the city's Irish population. The fact that the vast majority of participants for this study were happily settled in the city, as well as the relative absence of anti-Irish antagonism in Bristol throughout the period, indicate that a significant amount of integration has occurred. Nonetheless, the Irish spaces identified in this chapter clearly establish that total assimilation of Bristol's Irish population into the

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<sup>896</sup> <https://www.irishpost.com/gallery/photos-gloucester-irish-club-celebrates-50-years-30997> (accessed 3/5/18).

city's host population has not occurred. This is also supported by the views of the Irish-born participants on the second and subsequent generations, as well as those of the three second-generation individuals themselves. Another quotation from O'Connor seems to fit the twentieth century Bristol Irish experience better than any. The Bristol Irish can be said to have integrated into the city, but not without the usual trappings of Irish settlement abroad such as the Irish and Catholic spaces investigated here. Whatever the pitfalls of his views on 'provincial towns', what O'Connor has insightfully described as 'the compensatory needs of those who have, in fact, settled' certainly seems to apply to the majority of the participants here.

## Conclusion

This thesis was borne out of the significant gap in the literature where the Irish in twentieth century Bristol should be. The primary aim of this thesis has been to provide an overview of the Irish experience in Bristol between 1938 and 1985. This period was chosen because 1938 marked the Anglo-Irish Agreement which returned control of the Treaty Ports to Ireland and enabled the state's neutrality in the forthcoming Second World War. The end date has been chosen because the Hillsborough Agreement, which did so much to heal Anglo-Irish relations following the Troubles in Northern Ireland, was signed in this year. Bristol has never had an account of its Irish population in this period and this has resulted in many important questions going unanswered until now. There has been no significant analysis of the numbers in which Irish people came to Bristol in this century, nor any into residential patterns, occupational clustering, anti-Irish antagonism, Irish social and cultural institutions or the question of integration and assimilation into the native populace. In addition to this, there has been no investigation into the lived experience through the individual accounts of the migrants themselves.

Through these investigations, this thesis makes an original contribution to existing literature on the Irish diaspora. This has been achieved by adopting a quantitative approach and analysing previously ignored or under-utilised archival sources. These included local and national records which have allowed an analysis of measurable elements such as population size, occupational clustering and economic reality. In addition to this, qualitative methods, through the 20 original interviews conducted for this thesis, have uncovered some of the more unquantifiable aspects such as the lived experience and minutiae of everyday life in Bristol from the perspective of a range of individuals. Through this approach, the history of Irish people in twentieth century Bristol has begun to be uncovered and another candle has been lit in the still 'large and unlighted cavern' of the Irish in Britain.<sup>897</sup>

## Main findings

Whilst the aforementioned primary aim of this research is somewhat broad, several key questions were identified at the outset of the thesis. However, answers to these questions cannot be provided without first examining the findings of the other research questions and the thesis as a whole.

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<sup>897</sup> Akenson, *The Irish Diaspora*, p.190.

Chapter One briefly addressed the situation in Ireland during the period with which this thesis is concerned. It then provided an examination of the census data for Bristol, which revealed that, excluding the fact that Irish-born men were more numerous in the city than Irish-born women over the period, the Bristol Irish corresponded closely to national trends identified throughout the literature. This chapter also found that economic factors were chief amongst participants' motivations for leaving Ireland, although more personal reasons such as a desire to enter a more tolerant society or simply to seek adventure were also cited. The impact of chain migration in the Irish Diaspora was also illustrated. An analysis of residential patterns found that there was no Irish 'ghetto' and that the expected post-war out-movement from the city centre towards new housing estates did materialise.

Chapter Two explored the Irish in Bristol's labour market through a focus on Irish workers in the city during the Second World War, the staffing records of a Bristol hospital, and Bristol City Council records concerning post-war building labourers. It was found that there was significant demand in Bristol for Irish workers, as well as important logistical problems in workers reaching their destination on time. The Glenside hospital case study found that Irish student nurses were significantly over-represented at the hospital over the period. The council records revealed that Irish labourers travelled to post-war Bristol in such numbers that the city's Housing Committee were compelled to establish new hostels for incoming workers to avoid exacerbating already critical housing shortages.

Chapter Three analysed attitudes towards the Irish in Bristol over the period. This was achieved through a comprehensive study of the city's two main newspapers and the reactions to key events in Anglo-Irish relations. This exercise established the moderate views that were generally adopted by the two newspapers, even when reporting on emotive or controversial issues such as Irish neutrality in the Second World War, the Troubles in Northern Ireland and Irish Republican paramilitary bombings in Britain, including Bristol. It was also found that none of the participants for this study had been subjected to anti-Irish hostility or discrimination in the city, not even at the height of PIRA's bombing campaign in Britain.

Chapter Four examined the social and cultural aspects of Irishness in Bristol. This included an examination of the city's Irish infrastructure, and, as well as the role of the Catholic church, participants' experiences of Irish clubs, pubs and other institutions was acknowledged. It was found that, in spite of the lack of a central hub such as an Irish Centre, the Clifton Irish Club, as well as the CHAS branch, run by Trevor, both represented influential unifying institutions for the Bristol Irish in the 1960s and early 1970s. In addition to this, areas such as Stokes Croft and Bedminster were cited by several participants as

having significant numbers of important Irish pubs. It was also clear that continuing contact with Ireland, as well as regular visits home were almost universally regarded as an essential part of life for the participants. The value of the preservation of Irishness into second and subsequent generations was also reflected in many of these interviews, including those of all three second-generation individuals. In spite of this, there was no desire to return to Ireland permanently.

### **Research Aims and Conclusions**

The main research questions, cited in the Introduction to this thesis were: was the migration experience of the Bristol Irish homogenous, and if so, to what degree? To what extent have the Bristol Irish been assimilated into the native populace? Were the Irish concentrated in stereotypical Irish occupations such as ‘navvying’ and nursing in Bristol? To what extent were the Irish accepted by their Bristolian neighbours and colleagues, as well as the regional press? What impact have Irish associations, clubs, pubs and events had in shaping and maintaining Irish identities in Bristol? To what extent have ties with Ireland and Irish identities been maintained and passed on to subsequent generations? Given that the first two questions are particularly multi-faceted and are informed by many of the answers to the other questions, these will be addressed last here.

We have seen that Irish people in Bristol were, to some degree, concentrated in nursing and ‘navvying’, two occupations which are inextricably associated with the Irish. The proportion of Irish student nurses at Glenside throughout the period shows that Irish women were significantly over-represented in nursing at the hospital, and there is no reason to believe that this was not the case for other hospitals in the city, particularly given the extent of the nursing shortage identified in Chapter Two. There is less firm numerical evidence for the over-representation of Irish men in building work. In spite of this, the extent of the provision made for the travel and accommodation of Irish labourers in the city strongly indicates that they were a sizeable presence. This discourse also does not account for the predominance of the ‘friends and family effect’ and the significant amount of Irish men who would have followed a friend or family member to Bristol and initially stayed with them. The research undertaken for Chapter Two also revealed the demand for, and difficulties in, transporting Irish workers to Bristol during the Second World War. These difficulties have been referenced by Cowley and covered in some detail by Delaney but have received little attention in recent local studies of the Irish in Britain.



Another question referred to the extent to which the Bristol Irish were accepted by the native populace and popular press in Bristol. There is nothing in this thesis to suggest that the Irish were not well-accepted in the city. Whilst I accept that 20 interviews and a newspaper survey can only provide an indication to this, a local newspaper must, to some degree, reflect the views of its readership. The comprehensive newspaper survey of seminal Anglo-Irish events over the period revealed that the Bristol newspapers were, in the context of other British publications, very restrained in their criticism of Ireland and the Irish at most of the flashpoints identified here. In some cases, they even argued for the rights of the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland and were prepared to print Irish opinion pieces or letters which were critical of Britain or British policy in Ireland. None of the other newspapers which were consulted during this research yielded such surprisingly moderate coverage. This approach is, to my knowledge, unique in the existing literature on the Irish in Britain and represents a significant addition to our knowledge on the Irish in twentieth century local British newspapers. This survey also allowed the author to uncover previously overlooked information on the little-remembered Park Street bombing, as well as on several important Clann members in Bristol, as well as their unsuccessful appeals against exclusion from Great Britain.

In addition to this, none of the participants for this study claimed to have been abused or discriminated against because of their nationality. Maureen had some problems with her next door neighbour, who was wary of her for a while. In addition, Brendan and his group of plasterers experienced problems with obtaining accommodation in Brislington until they offered to pay two weeks' rent in advance. Mary also found that there was some racism in Kingswood which principally targeted Poles and Asians, but did not experience any anti-Irish racism herself.

The next question concerned the role of 'Irish spaces' such as associations, clubs and pubs in the maintenance and even the construction of Irish identities in Bristol. It is clear that the Catholic church played a significant role in promoting Irishness in Bristol, principally through the Clifton Irish Club founded by Trevor. Several participants emphasised the importance of this club, and the housing support provided through the CHAS branch which was also founded by Trevor. CHAS itself had been the subject of very little attention in the existing literature until the publication of Patricia Kennedy's *Welcoming the Stranger* in 2015. The role of pubs in the Stokes Croft and Bedminster areas was also emphasised by several participants. Perhaps most significant were the experiences of Connor and Vivian, both of whom were second-generation Irish and in part shaped and maintained their Irish

identities by frequenting Irish pubs and clubs. Many of these establishments have now closed, but some have survived to the present day and continue to promote Irishness through screening GAA matches, as well as Irish rugby and football matches. Several of the participants are still customers of these pubs and there is no sign of their influence waning.

The question on the retention of ties with Ireland has been, in part, answered in the previous paragraph. However, one of the most unequivocal conclusions to emerge from the interviews was the importance placed on maintaining contact with Ireland. This was achieved through Irish newspapers, radio stations and latterly through television channels and Internet sites. Arguably most important was the holiday in Ireland. Almost all participants confirmed that they had regularly travelled home to visit their families throughout the majority of their time in Bristol. Given that a similar level of importance has been placed on this by participants of several similar studies in other British cities, it is clear that the Bristol Irish have conformed to the Diasporic trend in this way. Equally clear was the importance placed on the participants' children being brought up with an appreciation for their Irish heritage. Some highlighted the value of regular holidays in Ireland to teach children about their roots and Emily was a particular advocate of this, which she described as the 'responsibility' of the parents. The three second-generation individuals all strongly identified as Irish.

The next question concerns the extent to which the Bristol Irish can be said to have been assimilated into the city's existing structures. This thesis has contested the view of Kevin O'Connor that the Irish 'blend[ed] more easily into the native fabric' of 'provincial' cities like Bristol. Given that there has been comparatively little anti-Irish agitation in twentieth century Bristol, it may be tempting to conclude that the Irish have been effectively assimilated. This argument is supported to a certain extent by the experiences of the participants for this study, the vast majority of whom got on well with their neighbours and the wider population in Bristol. However, the proliferation and experiences of Irish spaces outlined in the interviews, as well as the continuing importance attached to the preservation of Irish identities through the various mediums and regular visits home strongly indicate that the Irish remain a distinct and separate group and that wholesale assimilation has not occurred.

The final question related to the homogeneity of the Irish experience in Bristol. This issue straddled all four main chapters and any analysis is consequently more protracted. With that in mind, it was discovered that there were several recurring themes in the participants' accounts of emigration from Ireland. Almost all were economically motivated to leave Ireland. Most were not as blunt as Jim, who left Cork in 1945 because there was 'no work'

there, but the vast majority left Ireland, at least partly, for economic reasons. Another common feature of Irish emigration has been chain migration. New emigrants would follow the beaten track of friends and relatives and consequently be able to avail of a ready-made support network immediately upon arrival at their destination. Of the participants for this study, five of the 17 Irish-born participants followed a trail blazed by a friend or family member and stayed with them upon their arrival. Given that the predominance of the practice of chain migration has been emphasised in many studies on the Irish Diaspora, that it applied to around 30 per cent of the participants for this thesis is unsurprising.

The significant aberration to the national trend was found in the gender breakdown from the census figures. This revealed that males constituted a small majority in Bristol, whilst the overall British trend has been for Irish females to outnumber their male compatriots for the majority of the twentieth century. To my knowledge, this unusual pattern has not been noted elsewhere in the literature.

One area in which the Bristol Irish have historically been homogenous is in the relative lack of Irish areas in the city. Davis and Large referred to this when analysing the city's Irish population in the nineteenth century. Both concluded that the Irish were fairly well-distributed throughout the city and that there was no 'Irish ghetto'.<sup>898</sup> The same applied to the census information collected for this thesis, as well as the information gleaned from participants. This is most clearly indicated in the Irish-born population by Council ward statistics, presented in Appendix A.

Another area in which the participants were almost unanimous was in the lack of anti-Irish or anti-Catholic agitation in Bristol, even during the height of the Troubles. Maureen initially had problems with neighbours being suspicious of her Irishness after she first moved to Bedminster and Mary was aware of a racist, anti-immigrant undercurrent in 1980s Kingswood. Aside from these examples, none of the remaining participants had experienced problems with their neighbours and several emphasised that, in their experience, Bristol was a tolerant city. This was also largely evident from the newspaper survey in Chapter Three.

### **Recommendations for future research**

This thesis touched on several themes which, whilst presenting promising opportunities for future research, were beyond the scope of this study. The Irish remain a diverse and multi-faceted people. It was not my intention to exclude the Northern Irish population of the city,

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<sup>898</sup> Graham Davis, "Little Irelands", p.120; Large, "The Irish in Bristol", p.39

however, only three of the participants for this study were born in Northern Ireland and a further one had spent the majority of his life there before moving to Bristol. The Northern Irish have been relatively neglected from the flowering literature on the Irish in twentieth century Britain. One notable exception is Sorohan's book on the Irish in London, in which five of his 29 Irish-born participants were born or grew up in Northern Ireland. Publications such as Trew's are necessary to correct this imbalance. The increase in the Northern Irish-born population of Bristol in recent decades presents an interesting opportunity for researchers of third-wave migration from Ireland.

I have referenced the relative absence of Irish women from migration discourses until fairly recently. Whilst much excellent work has been done to bring these stories to light, Irish women in Britain remain a neglected people in the literature. That only seven of the 20 participants for this study were women was not a conscious decision on my part. I hope that elements of this thesis, such as the unique analysis of the Glenside Irish, atone for this imbalance to some degree. Indeed, the quality of the Glenside data is such that it represents an opportunity for future research on Irish women in Britain, as, doubtless, do similar records from other British hospitals in this period.

The almost-total absence of Protestants from this thesis was not intentional. Indeed, the only Protestant participant was Paul from Belfast. This is an unfortunate characteristic of much of the literature on the Irish in Britain. Recent studies from Lambert, MacGowan and Sorohan have yielded similarly disappointing results in this regard. Of Lambert's participants, only one, a Baptist, was not Roman Catholic, whilst MacGowan had just one non-Catholic participant and Sorohan did not specify that any of his participants were not Catholic.

Another relative absence from this study is that of second-and subsequent-generation Irish people. It was deemed necessary to focus primarily on Irish-born people and this was particularly driven by the near-total lack of literature on the Irish in twentieth century Bristol. However, unless the declining Irish-born population in Britain is reversed, the importance of subsequent generations will be amplified. Much of the new literature on the Irish in Britain has focused on the subsequent generations,

One of the most fascinating stories to have been uncovered in this thesis was that of Paul, who referred to the number of men who left both Irelands to enter a more tolerant society given the attitudes towards homosexuality that existed in Ireland. To my knowledge, the experiences of gay men and women have barely been addressed in the wider literature on the Irish Diaspora and this in particular represents an important opportunity to unearth one of

the hidden stories of Irish emigration. More information on Bristol's LGBT population can be found at Outstories, which has, amongst other avenues of research, conducted life history interviews.<sup>899</sup>

Finally, the establishment of BIS in 1989 and the first St Patrick's Day parade in 2000 fall outside the period of this thesis. Given the importance attached by Emily to the enthusiasm of subsequent generations to claim and retain their Irish identities in the future of BIS, as well as the Irish population of Bristol as a whole, this group and this period will doubtless be of considerable importance in further research on the Bristol Irish.

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<sup>899</sup> <http://outstoriesbristol.org.uk/welcome/>

## Appendix A

Irish-born population of Bristol by council ward, 1971-1981 (proportion of total population as percentages in brackets).

| Ward                 | 1971       | Increase/decrease | 1981       | Totals     |
|----------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|------------|
| Cabot                | 293 (3.24) | -113              | 180 (2.17) | 473 (2.72) |
| Bishopston           | 386 (3.12) | -148              | 234 (2.13) | 620 (2.65) |
| District             | 454 (3.22) | -234              | 220 (1.90) | 674 (2.62) |
| St. Paul             | 217 (2.52) | -63               | 154 (1.94) | 371 (2.24) |
| Redland              | 333 (2.57) | -179              | 154 (1.41) | 487 (2.04) |
| Avon                 | 428 (2.33) | -204              | 224 (1.38) | 652 (1.88) |
| Clifton              | 305 (2.53) | -189              | 116 (1.05) | 421 (1.82) |
| Easton               | 190 (1.89) | -68               | 122 (1.35) | 312 (1.63) |
| St. Philip and Jacob | 71 (1.45)  | +8                | 79 (1.70)  | 150 (1.57) |
| Southville           | 171 (1.85) | -66               | 105 (1.22) | 276 (1.55) |
| Southmead            | 304 (1.66) | -87               | 217 (1.23) | 521 (1.45) |
| Windmill Hill        | 167 (1.84) | -75               | 72 (0.91)  | 239 (1.43) |
| Horfield             | 223 (1.53) | -62               | 161 (1.20) | 384 (1.38) |
| Durdham              | 234 (1.75) | -119              | 115 (0.88) | 349 (1.32) |
| Henbury              | 315 (1.53) | -132              | 183 (0.96) | 498 (1.25) |
| Hengrove             | 287 (1.36) | -92               | 195 (0.95) | 482 (1.16) |
| Eastville            | 191 (1.31) | -62               | 129 (0.96) | 320 (1.15) |
| Hillfields           | 169 (1.20) | -29               | 140 (1.05) | 309 (1.13) |
| Knowle               | 185 (1.36) | -96               | 89 (0.73)  | 274 (1.06) |
| Westbury-on-Trym     | 204 (1.24) | -61               | 143 (0.83) | 347 (1.03) |
| Bishopsworth         | 368 (1.20) | -178              | 190 (0.74) | 558 (0.99) |
| Stapleton            | 207 (1.17) | -75               | 132 (0.78) | 339 (0.98) |
| St. George West      | 109 (1.12) | -35               | 74 (0.80)  | 183 (0.96) |
| Brislington          | 171 (1.00) | -79               | 92 (0.57)  | 263 (0.79) |
| Stockwood            | 270 (0.98) | -92               | 178 (0.59) | 448 (0.78) |
| Somerset             | 125 (0.86) | -36               | 89 (0.66)  | 214 (0.76) |
| Bedminster           | 90 (0.78)  | -26               | 64 (0.62)  | 154 (0.70) |
| St. George East      | 103 (0.63) | -43               | 60 (0.38)  | 163 (0.51) |

Source: Census of Population, England and Wales, 1971 and 1981.

## **Appendix B: Research Participant Biographies**

Joseph

Born in county Antrim in 1951. Came to Bristol in 1973.

Paul

Born in Belfast in 1950. First moved to England in 1972 and to Bristol in 1975.

Trevor.

Born in county Clare in 1928. First moved to England in 1952 and to Bristol in 1956.

Dave.

Born in county Cork in 1954. First moved to England in 1974 and to Bristol in 1980.

Jim.

Born in county Cork in 1926. First moved to England in 1945 and to Bristol in 1948.

Mary.

Born in county Cork in 1952. First moved to England in 1969 and to Bristol in 1986.

Seán.

Born in county Cork in 1937. Came to Bristol in 1956.

May.

Born in county Derry in 1939. First moved to England in 1959 and to Bristol in 1973.

John

Born in county Donegal in 1940 but spent most of his childhood in Derry. First moved to England in 1959 and to Bristol in 1973.

Caitriona.

Born in county Kilkenny in 1948. Came to Bristol in 1963.

Liam.

Born in county Limerick in 1945. First moved to England in 1955 and to Hallen, South Gloucestershire, in 1971.

Maureen.

Born in county Longford in 1928. First moved to England in 1943 and to Bristol in 1959.

Michael.

Born in county Mayo in 1951. First moved to Wales in 1968 and to Bristol in 1969.

Brendan.

Born in county Roscommon in 1942. Came to Bristol in 1959.

Emily.

Born in county Tipperary in 1948. First came to England in 1967 and to Bristol in 1970.

Margaret.

Born in county Tipperary in 1948. Came to Bristol in 1964.

Jack.

Born in county Wexford in 1941. First moved to England in 1957 and to Bristol in 1961.

Connor.

Born in Bournemouth to two Irish parents in 1954. Moved with family to Bristol in 1959.

Diane.

Born in London to an Irish mother. Moved with husband to Hallen, South Gloucestershire, in 1971.

Vivian.

Born in Bristol to an Irish father and an English mother in 1954.



## **Appendix C: Sample consent form for participants**

### **Consent form for Interviewees**

**Project:**

**Researcher: Nick Conway PhD student in History at the University of the West of England**

**Director of Studies: Dr. Madge Dresser Associate Professor of History, UWE**

“I have read the separate information sheet provided by the researcher and agree to be interviewed for the project as outlined in that document.

I give permission that my testimony be cited **anonymously** according to the terms stated in the information sheet”

Interviewee: (print and sign name with date)

Researcher: (print and sign name with date)

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