

INTERNATIONAL FAMINE CONFERENCE

JOHN MITCHEL: THE LEGACY OF THE GREAT FAMINE



Wednesday 23 – Friday 25 September 2015
Canal Court Hotel, Newry

 /GREATFAMINECOMMEMORATION



Comhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin
Newry, Mourne and Down
District Council



2015 ANNUAL FAMINE
NEWRY COMMEMORATION

A WELCOME FROM THE CONFERENCE DIRECTORS



Anthony Russell

As the directors of the Annual Famine Commemoration Conference, 'John Mitchel: The Legacy of the Great Famine' it gives us great pleasure to welcome speakers and delegates to Newry. We especially welcome those who have travelled from Australia, the U.S.A., Canada and distant Irish counties. We look forward to lively sessions, both academic and social and hope that we have created a space in which international scholars and local members of the public can energetically engage with each other.

at the battles of Antrim and Ballynahinch; that we will realise the suffering caused by the Great Famine is part of our shared history. The Great Famine may have recognised geography, it certainly recognised social class but it did not recognise ethnicity.

It is also our hope that as we study emigration from Ireland, and across seas, in the late 1840s we will be aware of those migrating across seas into Europe today.

What might John Mitchel have thought of our efforts? The conference will speculate...

Anthony Russell and Paddy Fitzgerald
Conference Directors



Paddy Fitzgerald

It is also our hope that the conference will recognise that the Great Famine happened in east Ulster; that in common with the rest of Ireland it was the underclass of labourers, cottiers and small tenant farmers who suffered most; that as the Great Famine progressed its impact moved up the social scale; that here in Ulster Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter all suffered.

It is our hope that the Famine Commemoration crossing the border, and this conference, will have a similar outcome to the 200th Anniversary of the 1798 Rebellion when both main communities in Ulster began to more fully appreciate the complexity of loyalties evident



John Mitchel

RÉAMHRÁ AN CHATHAOIRLIGH

CHAIRPERSON'S FOREWARD



An Comhairleoir Naomi Bháille
Cathaoirleach Chomhairle Ceantair
an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin

Councillor Naomi Bailie
Chairperson of Newry, Mourne
and Down District Council

Mar Chathaoirleach Chomhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin tá lúcháir orm fáilte a chur roimh Chomhdháil Idirnáisiúnta an Ghorta Mhóir sna bólaí seo. Is mór an ónóir don Chomhairle urraíocht a thabhairt don Chomhdháil agus oibriú i gcomhpháirt le Stiúrthóirí na Comhdhála chun meitheal saineolaithe agus léachtóirí a mhealladh anseo ar an Iúir. Is é an Drochshaoil ar cheann de na tréimhsí tubaisteacha ar fhág a rian i stair an oileáin agus a imríonn tionchar ar an domhan go fóill.

Roimhe sin, bhí tuairim choiteann go fóill ann gur tháinig tuaisceart na tíre measartha slán ó iarmhairtí na tubaiste. Mar sin féin tugann taighde léargas ar éifeacht uafásach an drochshaoil sa cheantar seo.

Thar tréimhse thrí lá, féadfaidh na toscairí tionchar an Ghorta Mhóir a chíoradh agus a phlé go háirithe i gcomhthéacs an cheantair seo. Gan amhras dá laghad ba léir ag clabhsúr na Comhdhála go mbeadh tuiscint ní b'fhearr againn faoin tréimhse seo. Beidh deiseanna ann tionchar an Ghorta Mhóir a mhacnamh le haird ar leith a dhíriú ar shaoil, ré agus tionchar Sheáin Mhistéil.

Thar ceann Chomhairle Ceantair an Iúir, Mhúrn agus an Dúin, tréaslaím le Stiúrthóirí na Comhdhála as a sáróbair agus a díograis chun Comhdháil Idirnáisiúnta an Ghorta Mhóir a chur i gcrích.

As Chairperson of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, I am delighted to welcome the International Famine Conference to the District. The Council is privileged to sponsor the Conference and to have worked with the Conference Directors to assist in bringing an impressive and talented team of experts and speakers to Newry City. The Great Famine was undoubtedly one of the most tragic and influential periods in the history of this island and one which bears considerable resonance in the world today.

Previously, the widely accepted perception was that the north had escaped relatively lightly from the worst affects of the Great Famine. However, research has cast fresh light on the devastating impact of the famine in this area

Over the 3 days of the Conference, delegates will be afforded a unique opportunity to consider and debate the impacts of the Great Famine, particularly throughout this local area. I have no doubt that, by the conclusion of the Conference, we will be much better informed about the period and will have had many opportunities to reflect on the legacy left by the Great Famine, with a particular focus on the life, times and influences of John Mitchel.

On behalf of Newry, Mourne and Down District Council, I congratulate the Conference Directors for their hard work and dedication in realising the International Famine Conference; John Mitchel: The Legacy of the Great Famine.

SPEAKERS



Aodhán Ó Ríordáin was first elected a TD in February 2011 having previously served as a member of Dublin City Council from 2004. He served as Deputy Lord Mayor of Dublin in 2006. He currently serves as Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality, Department of Health and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht - with special responsibility for New Communities, Culture and Equality & Drugs Strategy.



Professor Mary Daly is the first female to be elected as President of the Royal Irish Academy. She is one of Ireland's most prominent senior historians and is a member of the government's Expert Advisory Group on Commemorations. She is professor of history at UCD and served for seven years as Principal of UCD College of Arts. Professor Daly was involved in the commemoration of the sesquicentenary of the Great Famine 1995-97. Over the course of her distinguished career, Professor Daly has researched widely and published prolifically, notably: *Dublin, the Deposed Capital: A Social and Economic History, 1860-1914* (1984); *Women and Work in Ireland* (1997); *The Slow Failure: Population Decline and Independent Ireland, 1920-1973* (2006); and, with Theo Hoppen, *Gladstone: Ireland and Beyond* (2011).



Professor Christine Kinealy is Professor of History and Director of Ireland's Great Hunger Institute at Quinnipiac University, Connecticut. In 1984, she earned her Ph.D. from Trinity College, Dublin, writing on the introduction of the Poor Law in Ireland. Christine has written extensively about the Great Hunger and its impact, most notably in her book *This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine 1845-52*, and has spoken to both the US Congress and British Parliament on the Famine. Based in the United States since 2007, she was named one of the most influential Irish Americans in 2011 by *Irish America Magazine*. In 2013, she received the Holyoke, Mass. St. Patrick's Day Parade's Ambassador Award. In March 2014, Christine was inducted into the Irish America Hall of Fame.



Tommy Grahame is the editor of *History Ireland* magazine which has been in production for nearly 20 years. Since 2004 it has been going from strength to strength, with a changeover to a full-colour format, a layout revamp and a move to bi-monthly publication in 2005. He has conducted 'Hedge Schools' throughout Ireland.



Peter Gray is Head of the School of History and Anthropology at Queens University Belfast. He was a research fellow at the Institute of Irish Studies at Queen's, and at Downing College, Cambridge. He taught Irish and British history at the University of Southampton 1996-2005, before returning to Belfast to take up the position of Professor of Modern Irish History. In 2004 Professor Gray was the Burns Library Visiting Professor in Irish Studies at Boston College, Massachusetts, and he will be Fredrik and Catherine Eaton Visiting Fellow at the University of New Brunswick, in 2015. He was elected as a member of the Royal Irish Academy (RIA) in 2013. Among many other publications he is the author of *Famine, land and politics: British government and Irish society 1843-1850* (Irish Academic Press, 1999) and *The Irish Famine* (Thames & Hudson, 1995) which has French, Korean and Chinese editions.



Ruan O'Donnell is a senior lecturer in history at the University of Limerick. He previously worked at the Australian National University, University College Dublin, National University of Ireland Galway and St. Patrick's College, Drumcondra. He is a Director of the Irish Manuscripts Commission and a member of the Universities Ireland Decade of Commemorations Committee. His involvement in academic publishing includes ongoing roles as co-series and commissioning editor of the '16 Lives' project for O'Brien Press, as well as series editor of the 'Irish Abroad' series for Irish Academic Press. In 2010-2011 he was on sabbatical at the University of Notre Dame, Indiana, where he held the position of O'Donnell Visiting Chair of Irish Studies in the Keugh/Naughton Institute.



Anthony Russell, recently retired from Anglia Ruskin University, has worked with Tesco, the National Colleges of School Leadership in England and Slovenia, Ulltralab, Anadolu University, Turkey, and World Education. An historical geographer he was academic consultant to Dundalk Institute of Technology and the University of Ulster's Borderlands degree and World Education's Global Border Studies, which offers higher education programmes in refugee camps on the Thai Myanmar border. Working with the Canadian Museum of History he is the creator and director of the permanent exhibition 'D'Arcy McGee Irish Rebel Canadian Patriot' and is the author of Merrion Press's recently published 'Between Two Flags: John Miitchel and Jenny Verner.' He was the prime mover in seeking the National Famine Commemoration coming to Newry.



Nigel Agnew is a minister in the Reformed Presbyterian Church of Ireland. Originally from Mountnorris, in County Armagh, he has lived in Coleraine as well as Ballybay, County Monaghan. Having graduated from QUB with a degree in Law and Accounting Nigel spent a short timeworking as a solicitor before entering Theological college. He is married to Sandra and they have three children, Benjamin, Reuben and Tabitha, who are better known as local band Cup O'Joy. Nigel was installed as a minister in Riverside Church, Newry in May 2015. He lists his interests as Christian Apologetics, and playing "old-time banjo".



Professor William Smyth was a writer and editor of the Atlas of the Great Irish Famine. This atlas comprising over fifty individual chapters and case studies offers a broad range of perspectives and relevant insights into this tragic event. Professor of Geography at University College Cork Professor Smyth was editor of Irish Geography and is an elected member of the Royal Irish Academy. He has taught in Syracuse University, San Fernando State College and Maynooth College.



Dr Éamon Phoenix is Principal Lecturer in History and Head of Lifelong Learning at Stranmillis University College, Queen's University, Belfast. A political historian, his books include Northern Nationalism: Nationalist Politics, Partition and the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland 1890-1940 and he is co-editor of Conflicts in the North of Ireland 1900-2000 (Four Courts Press, 2010)). He is a daily columnist for the Irish News and a regular broadcaster and commentator on Irish history. He is member of the Irish Government's Advisory Committee on Centenaries.



James Quinn is Managing Editor of the Royal Irish Academy's Dictionary of Irish Biography. He has contributed over two hundred biographical articles to the Dictionary. He has published Soul on Fire: A Life of Thomas Russell (Irish Academic Press 2002), a biography of John Mitchel (UCD Press 2008) and most recently Young Ireland and the Writing of Irish History (UCD Press 2015).



Hugh McShane, a graduate of Queen's University Belfast and the University of Ulster at Jordanstown, is a former Vice Principal and Head of History & Politics in Sacred Heart Grammar School, Newry. Throughout his teaching career, Hugh has been at the forefront of educational initiatives, including the establishment of the European Studies Project, which brought together students from Northern Ireland and other European countries annually in Belgium to meet and discuss issues that affect young Europeans. Hugh has produced books on World War One and researched the Newry Poor Law Union during the Great Famine.



Patrick Fitzgerald is Lecturer & Development Officer with the Mellon Centre for Migration Studies at the Ulster-American Folk Park, Omagh, N. Ireland. He has co-authored with Dr. Brian Lambkin Migration in Irish History, 1607-2007 (Palgrave Macmillan, Basingstoke, 2008). Paddy is the co-director of this conference.

SPEAKERS



Michael Blanch is the Chairman of the Committee for the Commemoration of Irish Famine Victims. He describes himself as an agitator for their memory. It was Michael who first sought a National Famine Commemoration Day and, having succeeded, he was on the original National Famine Commemoration Committee. Michael's next target is that the National Famine Commemoration Day be as inviolate in the calendar as St. Patrick's Day. He has suggested the second Sunday in May.



Dr Laurence Geary, a senior lecturer at University College Cork has had research and teaching appointments at the Australian National University, Canberra; University of Edinburgh, Scotland; University of Melbourne, Australia; Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland, Dublin; University College Cork. His publications include *Medicine and Charity in Ireland, 1718 -1851 (CUP)* and *Medical Relief and the Great Famine in Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*.



Lyn McLeavy Born in Port Melbourne, where her family has lived and worked since the 1860s, Lyn is an oral historian, writer and photographer. She lives in Hobart, Tasmania. In *Mna Dibeartha (Banished Women)*, aired on TG4 in 2014, she told her grandmother's story from *Convict Lives, Women at Cascades Female Factory*, (2009). She has worked with Aboriginal organizations since 1976 including teaching political activism for land rights and justice. She was involved in the establishment of Rock Against Racism, and oral histories of the stolen generations for *Bringing Them Home: After the Apology (2010)* and *Bringing Them Home (2002)* for National Library of Australia. Lyn has contributed to a range of books including, *Under the Hook, Melbourne Waterside Workers Remember: 1900-1998*.



Cathal Póirtéir is a writer and broadcaster and has published widely on the Great Irish Famine. His books on the folklore of the famine are the *Compendia Glórtha ón Ghorta (Coiscéim)* and *Famine Echoes (Gill and Macmillain)*. His other work includes the best selling *The Great Irish Famine - Thomas Davis Lectures (Mercier Press)*. His radio work on the famine for RTE won a Gold award at the annual PPI Media Awards. Cathal has lectured on the folklore of the famine throughout Ireland, in mainland Europe and in North America.



John O Driscoll is the General Manager of Strokestown Park. He joined the team in Strokestown Park in 1998 when he began the restoration of the Walled Gardens. John has played a key part in further restoration projects including the *Gentlemen's Study/Darkroom*, the *Family Mausoleum*, the *Courtyard* and *Woodlands* Projects. Over the last five years he has worked with Dr Ciaran Reilly in organising the *International Famine Conference* in Strokestown Park. He is now working with *The Irish Heritage Trust* to continue to safe guard the future of Strokestown Park and *The Irish National Famine Museum*.



Jason King is an Irish Research Council Postdoctoral Researcher in the Moore Institute at the National University of Ireland, Galway. He previously was a lecturer at the University of Limerick, NUI Maynooth, and an Assistant Professor of Canadian Irish Studies at Concordia University. His research specializes in Irish Canadian famine memory and migration. He is the curator of the *Digital Irish Famine Archive*: <http://faminearchive.nuigalway.ie>



The Rev John Dunlop, born in Newry in 1939, has served as a Presbyterian Minister in Jamaica. From 1978 to 2005, he was minister of Rosemary Presbyterian Church where with the support and encouragement of his congregation he exercised a wider ministry in efforts to further better relations between the two main communities in Northern Ireland. He was Moderator of the General Assembly of the Presbyterian Church in Ireland in 1992-93. From 1996 to 1997 he was a member of the Independent Review of Parades. A writer, he holds several honorary degrees and in 2003 received a CBE for services to the community.



Dr Ciarán Reilly, BA, HDIH, MA, PhD was an IRCHSS Government of Ireland Postgraduate Scholar 2008- 2010 and completed his PhD thesis, 'Land agents and estate management in King's County during the Great Famine 1838-53' under the supervision of Professor Terence Dooley. He is currently a Research Fellow at the Centre for the Study of Historic Irish Houses & Estates where he is carrying out research on the impact of the Great Famine on the landed estate and the country house. In 2014 Dr Reilly published two monographs, *The Irish Land Agent, 1830-1860: the case of King's County and Strokestown* and *The Great Irish Famine*.



Dr. Ruth Dudley Edwards is a journalist, broadcaster, novelist and prize-winning historian whose non-fiction includes biographies of Patrick Pearse, James Connolly, the left-wing publisher Victor Gollancz, as well as two titans of Fleet Street, Hugh Cudlipp and Cecil King. Her work on the loyal orders *The Faithful Tribe*: an intimate portrait of the loyal institutions was shortlisted for the Channel Four book prize. She is a winner of the Crime Writers' Association Gold Dagger for nonfiction. Her twelve crime novels include *The Anglo-Irish Murders*, a satire on the peace process.



The Rev. John Nelson is minister of the Old Presbyterian Church Ballycarry and of Raloo Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church, and has served these congregations since Ordination in 1983. He is a graduate of both Queen's University Belfast and the Victoria University of Manchester. He holds the degrees of B.A., B.D. and Ph.D. in history and theology. Over the years he has served the Non-Subscribing Presbyterian Church of Ireland in various capacities including Clerk of the General Synod 1988-2000 and Clerk of the Presbytery of Antrim from 1986 until present.



Dr Liam Kennedy, originally from County Tipperary, is professor emeritus of economic history at Queens University Belfast, Belfast. He was a founder member of the Northern Ireland Human Rights Association, which campaigned against 'punishment' beatings; shootings and expulsions carried out by republican and loyalist paramilitary organizations. In 2005 he held a visiting professorship at the University of Toronto. His most recent book is *Ulster since 1600: Politics, Economy and Society* (Oxford, 2013), co-edited with Philip Ollerenshaw. He is currently researching the Great Irish Famine and the history of the recent 'Troubles' in Northern Ireland. Liam Kennedy remains an active member of the Queen's History community.



Cormac O'Grada is Professor emeritus UCD. His main research interests are the economic histories of Ireland and England, and the history of famine. His most recent books include *Jewish Ireland in the Age of Joyce* (Princeton, 2006); *Famine: A Short History* (Princeton, 2009); and *Eating People is Wrong: Essays on the History and Future of Famine* (Princeton, 2015). Over the years he has also produced nearly two hundred papers for professional journals or as book chapters.

Brian Patterson is a member of one of Newry's oldest families. He describes himself as 'unreconstructed, secular, Irish and an internationalist socialist with strong anarchist and pacifist tendencies.' He is interested in all languages but has a special affinity with Irish. His favourite historical figure is the United Irishman, Jimmy Hope.



Tennant Farm at Kilboney Valley

PROGRAMME

WEDNESDAY 23 SEPTEMBER

- 6.30PM** Registration.
- 7.00PM** Welcome by Cllr Naomi Bailie, Chairperson, Newry, Mourne and Down District Council
- 7.05PM** Official Opening of the Conference: Aodhán Ó Ríordáin T.D. Minister of State at the Department of Justice and Equality and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht – with special responsibility for New Communities, Culture and Equality.
- 7.10PM** **A Hedge School Event**
Ulster and the Legacy of the Great Famine.
- CHAIR:** Tommy Grahame
(History Ireland)
- PANELLISTS:** Professor Mary Daly
Professor Christine Kinealy
Professor Peter Gray
Dr Ruan O'Donnell

THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER – AM

- CHAIR:** Professor Christine Kinealy
- 10.00AM** Anthony Russell – Mitchel's Town and the Famine in Two Ulsters.
- 10.45AM** Professor William Smyth – Reflecting on the Atlas of the Great Irish Famine.
- 11.15AM** Dr James Quinn – John Mitchel, the Irish Peasant and the American Slave.

THURSDAY 24 SEPTEMBER – PM

- CHAIR:** Dr James Quinn
- 2.00PM** **Pechakuchas – 7 Presenters, 7 Slides, 7 Topics in 7 Minutes.**
- 1** Nigel Agnew – Slavery, A Biblical Perspective
 - 2** Dr Paddy Fitzgerald – Seven Famines
 - 3** Dr Eamon Phoenix –Belfast Famine
 - 4** Hugh McShane – Newry Workhouse
 - 5** Michael Blanche – Famine Commemoration
 - 6** Lynn McLeavy – An Australian Famine Family
 - 7** Dr John O'Driscoll – Strokestown

4.00PM **A Discursive Walk to John Mitchel's Grave.**
A reflection on his life and legacy led by Anthony Russell.

7.30PM **'The Trial and Trials of Charles Trevelyan'**
A Courtroom Drama. Followed by an Irish Music Session in Railway Bar.

THESE WERE INCLUDED ON THE FAMINE CONFERENCE LEAFLET. SHOULD THEY BE HERE TOO?

FRIDAY 25 SEPTEMBER – AM

- CHAIR:** William Smyth
- 10.00AM** Professor Christine Kinealy – ‘The wee-men of Belfast. Female Philanthropy and the Great Famine.’
- 10.45AM** Dr Laurence Geary – The Great Famine and the practice of Medicine.
- 11.15AM** Cathal Porteir – What folklore can tell us about the Great Famine that the documents cannot.
- 11.45AM** Dr Jason King – Irish Famine migration to Montréal, Toronto and New Brunswick.

FRIDAY 25 SEPTEMBER – PM

- CHAIR:** Rev John Dunlop
- 2.00PM** Dr Ciaran Reilly – Famine has made sad savages among its poor: the world of the Ulster cottier in the 1840s.
- 2.30PM** Dr John Nelson – Like Father, Unlike Son – The Rev. John Mitchel.
- 3.00PM** Professor Cormac O’Grada – Eating People is wrong – Thoughts on Famine.
- 3.30PM** Reflections on the Conference – Professor Christine Kinealy.

SPECIAL EVENTS

AN EXHIBITION OF THE GREAT FAMINE IN NEWRY AND MOURNE IN NEWRY LIBRARY

TIME: Every day

A DISCURSIVE WALK TO JOHN MITCHEL’S GRAVE A REFLECTION ON HIS LIFE AND LEGACY LED BY ANTHONY RUSSELL.

DATE: Thursday 24 September

TIME: 4.00pm

‘THE TRIAL AND TRIALS OF CHARLES TREVELYAN’ BY PLAYWRIGHT LARRY MCARDLE A COURTROOM DRAMA.

VENUE: Canal Court Hotel

DATE: Thursday 24 September

TIME: 7.30pm

Followed by an Irish Music Session
in Railway Bar

‘NEWRY REMEMBERS THE GREAT FAMINE IN WORDS IMAGES AND MUSIC’ A CHARITY EVENT WITH JOANNE QUIGLEY, TOMMY SANDS, PETE ST. JOHN AND OTHERS.

VENUE: St. Mary’s Church of Ireland

DATE: Friday 25 September

TIME: 7:30pm

‘THE FAMINE PLOT’ WITH RUTH DUDLEY EDWARDS, LIAM KENNEDY, BRIAN PATTERSON ON SATURDAY MORNING.

FAMINE IN ULSTER

‘LIKE SWINE, WITH SWINE’

That the Annual Famine Commemoration 2015 is being held in Northern Ireland is significant; it challenges the view, once embraced by academics and both main communities here, that Industrial Ulster was not affected. That the Famine Commemoration is being held in Newry is also significant because it was Newry man John Mitchel, more than any other politician or writer, who shaped the nationalist perception of the Great Famine. Mitchel thought that the failure of the potato was exploited by the British Government with the intention of ‘shaking small lease-holders from the soil.’ This conference provides us with the opportunity to examine the extent of the Great Famine in Ulster and to, as objectively as possible, study its differential impact and the issue of culpability.

For many Unionists, if it happened in Ulster, it happened in the peripheral counties, especially Monaghan and Donegal. Industrial Ulster, Belfast and its Tenant Right hinterland, were not affected. For many Nationalists, whose perceptions owes much to John Mitchel, perhaps industrial Ulster did survive but the nationalist population across the island, including the rest of Ulster, was the victim of genocidal British policy. Such generalisations ignore evidence from the pre-famine landscape. County Down may have been described as “the best conditioned quarter of Ireland” but from within the county evidence given to the Devon Commission,

evidence from the Harshaw Diaries and descriptions from the newspapers tell of a vulnerable underclass.

‘Many of the dwellings I saw upon the roadside looked to me like abodes of extinguished hope... groveling, despairing, almost idiotic wretchedness. I did not know man and woman, upright and made in the likeness of God could live in styes like swine with swine.’

This perception, from the Belfast Penny Journal, was written in July 1845 before the potato failed. Not surprisingly, when the potato did fail thousands were drawn by the industrial development of Belfast. Their rural to urban migrations helped create and populate the Falls and the Shankill. Many migrants lie as famine victims in the Friar’s Bush and Shankill cemeteries. As the destitute crowded their streets Ulster towns like Newry, Newtownards, Lurgan and Comber set up soup kitchens and relief committees.

Perhaps we could explain the above as the tragedy of the marginalized, the landless cottiers and labourers, who lived in fourth class housing, mud cabins; but this would be to ignore Quaker evidence from the once prosperous rural linen triangle; evidence from the birthplace of the Orange Order, Loughall.

‘I have myself witnessed the living lying on straw, by the side of the unburied dead, who had died three

days before. Many deaths from actual starvation have actually occurred amongst the able bodied, without reckoning the aged and infirm...or the very many children who have died from the same cause. I have been called to see a girl of four years old, a few weeks ago a strong healthy girl, who was so emaciated as to be unable either to stand or move a limb.’

For the rural weavers and tenant right farmers of mid Ulster, suffering from competition from the mechanized linen industry in Belfast, the failure of the potato was an additional cruel blow. Eyewitness accounts from Drumcree tell of emaciation. As the Great Famine moved up the social scale, largely ignoring ethnicity, many emigrated. They funneled out through ports like Derry and Warrenpoint. The Newry Commercial Telegraph commented:

‘Emigration is taking place at an alarming rate. It is the industrious, thrifty class that is being drained. Day after day there are to be seen passing through the leading thoroughfare, on their way to Warrenpoint, carts upon which are seated ...young and hale looking men and women.’

In Dublin, John Mitchel and D’Arcy McGee, who coined the term ‘sailing coffins’, whilst concerned about a famine that was socially beneath them, geographically beyond them enjoyed ‘Nights and suppers of the Gods’; at the same time the ‘Beau Monde’ of

Newry ‘sat down to a sumptuous repast, where all the delicacies that the season could afford were found in the greatest abundance’. The Great Famine was a social famine. It inflicted misery, especially upon cottiers, labourers and small tenants. It was a geographic famine, generally between east and west but also between neighbouring townlands. In Newry and Moure

townlands with a mill, a quarry or a tradition of carting fared better. The Great Famine was probably shorter, statistically less intense in Newry, Mourne and Down than in Munster and Connaught. The rapid industrialization of Belfast may have offered an escape but, regardless of ethnicity, there was a famine in Ulster.

Anthony Russell

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Conference Organising Committee

Anthony Russell
Tommy Fegan
David Hanna
Patsy Quinn
Paddy Fitzgerald
Jamie Callaghan
Jack Murphy

Conference Directors

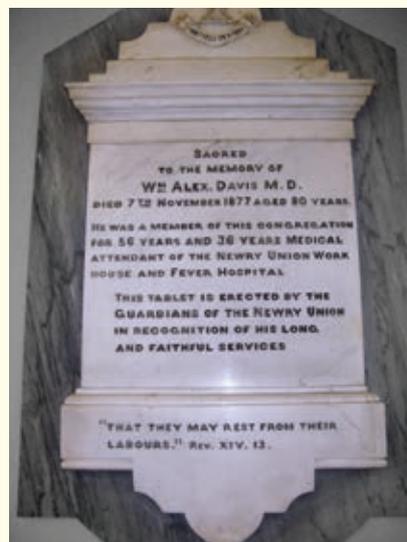
Anthony Russell
Dr Paddy Fitzgerald

Publicity

Tommy Fegan
Jamie Callaghan

Sponsor

Newry, Mourne and Down District Council



Plaque to the heroic Dr. Davis in St. Mary’s Church of Ireland, erected by the Guardians of the Newry Union.

