

**A Short History
of the
Esperanto Movement
in
Ireland**

Liam Ó Cuirc

Esperanto Association of Ireland

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Chapter 1 Richard Henry Geoghegan Pioneer of Esperanto

Richard Henry Geoghegan was the first Esperantist in the English-speaking world, a friend of Dr Zamenhof, a member of the *Lingva Komitato* (Language Committee), and a remarkable linguist.

The family of Richard Geoghegan lived for many years at 41 Upper Rathmines Road, in Dublin, Ireland. His father was a doctor who emigrated from Dublin to Birkenhead, England, in 1863, where Richard was born on 8th January 1866.

Many Irish Esperantists believe that Richard was born in Dublin, but this is not true. That rumour came about because Richard often said, half-jokingly, that he was “an Irishman”. He was very Irish in character, often visited Ireland, and fluently spoke and wrote in the Irish language. Until he died in 1943 he corresponded, in Esperanto and in Irish, with Lorcán Ó hUiginn, sometime Chairman of the Irish Esperanto Association.

At the age of three Richard unfortunately suffered a staircase accident in the home, resulting from which he remained crippled for the whole of his life, walking with difficulty, often with the help of a stick. But the good Lord, by way of compensation, gave him extraordinary intellectual powers, particularly in the learning of languages. He spoke Irish, English, German, French and some other European languages and became an expert in Chinese, Japanese, Hindi and other oriental languages.

On the 26th July 1887 Dr Ludovik Lazarus Zamenhof of Poland published the *Unua Libro* (“First Book”) of his proposed International Language, Esperanto. This was in the Russian language and afterwards he himself translated it into Polish and German. One of his early followers translated it into French under the title “*La Langue Internationale*”, but there was still no English translation. Zamenhof knew some English but considered himself insufficiently qualified to translate his book into English. A German friend of his produced an English translation, which Zamenhof published. But it was a terrible, botched translation, and no-one could understand it.

In the autumn of 1887 Richard Geoghegan, who had for a long time been interested in the possibility of an international language, read an article about the newly-appeared language, *Esperanto*, and wrote in Latin to Zamenhof, who sent him the German edition of the “*Unua Libro*”. He immediately learnt the language from it. Afterwards Zamenhof sent him the English translation. Geoghegan wrote back, alerting Zamenhof to the fact that the translation was a blunder that would only expose Esperanto to ridicule among English-speakers. Zamenhof asked Geoghegan himself to do a better translation, which he did. The bad translation was withdrawn and in 1889 Zamenhof published Geoghegan’s one. So began the movement in Britain, the US and Ireland.

The *Enciklopedio de Esperanto* calls Geoghegan “the second on the list of Esperanto writers”. The first, of course, was Zamenhof himself. It lists his main works thus:

- “Dr Esperanto’s International Language – Introduction and Complete Grammar”.
- “The Universal Language Esperanto – Complete Instruction Book”
- “Grammar and Exercises”.
- “La Alvoko al la Gazetaro de la Mondo” [The call to the newspapers of the world].
- “Kelkaj Vortoj pri la Internacia Lingvo” [some words about the international language].

In 1893 Geoghegan emigrated to the United States and in 1905 he was elected first President of the newly founded *American Esperanto Association*. He helped to found the *Esperantist Society of Seattle*. He attended the discussions about the establishment of the *Internacia Ligo* (International League), an early form of the present *Akademio de Esperanto*, and in 1905 he

was elected to the *Lingva Komitato* [*language committee*]. He helped also with establishing the Green Star as our emblem. Dr Zamenhof wrote in 1911:

“About the origin of our green star I no longer remember very well. It seems to me that Mr Geoghegan drew my attention to the colour green, and from that time I began publishing my works with a green cover. About one brochure, which I quite by chance published with a green cover, he remarked to me that this was the colour of his homeland, Ireland. Then it came into my head that we could well regard this colour as a symbol of Hope. As for the five-pointed star, it seems to me that Mr de Beaufront first printed it on his grammar-book. I liked this and I took it as an emblem. Afterwards by association of ideas the star appeared with the colour green.”

Geoghegan died in the United States in 1943. He always stayed loyal to Esperanto. He opposed all proposals for reform and fought against the Idoists [*proponents of Ido, a “reformed” version of Esperanto, who nearly wrecked the Esperanto movement in its early years – KKJ*]. He was the greatest linguist and philologist of his time, and the fact that such a language expert accepted and used Esperanto, even in its early days, proves that Esperanto is indeed worth supporting and will win through.

Chapter 2 Other Early Pioneers

Besides Geoghegan there were other early Irish pioneers of Esperanto. Here is a brief account of some of them: -

Dr James C. O'Connor M.A., Ph.D. was born in Cork. He spent a lot of time in England. The textbook that he wrote was for years the only one for English speakers. He edited a monthly paper "*The Esperanto Teacher*". Around 1902 he established the first Esperanto group in London, when five students of Esperanto used to meet in his house for lessons. He co-wrote, with C. F. Hayes, the first English-Esperanto Dictionary in 1904 and became a member of the *Lingva Komitato*. In 1905 he was elected President of the "*Grupo Esperantista Dublina*".

K. Pollen, a judge, was born on 3rd June 1848 in Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire) and died on 18th June 1923 from falling into the sea at the Isle of Man. He lived in India from 1871 to 1903. Everywhere in India and during travels in the orient he campaigned for Esperanto. He also wrote a "key" for Indians. [A key is a tiny booklet that sets out the essentials of Esperanto for speakers of a particular language - KK] He was President of the British Esperanto Association 1904 – 1912. It was said that during the 3rd World Esperanto Congress at Cambridge [England] in 1907 he gave the whole congress "good-humoured gaiety".

Rev. G. R. Wynne (1847 – 1912) was a pioneer of Esperanto in Ireland and a fervent propagandist. He was priest of the parish of St Michael in Limerick.

George Jameson Johnston was a pioneer of the movement in Ireland, and was a UEA Delegate from 1909 to 1914. [This is an official local representative of the World Esperanto Association (UEA), who can be called upon to provide information to other members about his/her locality or subject - KK]. He was Vice-President of the *Irlanda Esperanto-Asocio* and in 1913 he became Chairman of *TEKA [Tutmonda Esperanta Kuracista Asocio – Worldwide Esperanto Doctors' Association – KK]*. He was a professor of surgery in Dublin and died in 1926.

Prof. Fournier d'Albe was a professor in Dublin University. With the help of **Robert Boyd White SCH TCD** he translated into Esperanto "*Eachtra Laoghaire Mhic Criomhtain go Maigh Meall*" (The Visit of Laoghaire, son of Criomhtain, to the Field of Joy), an ancient Irish story from *The Book of Lismore*. M H Gill & Son Ltd, Dublin, published it around 1907. This was the first translation into Esperanto from the Irish language. Professor Fournier d'Albe spoke at the Second Summer University, which was held in Edinburgh as part of the 18th World Congress of Esperanto in 1926. His theme was "Wireless Telegraphy and Television" – a subject which was then not merely modern but ahead of its time.

Emma L Osmond was an Englishwoman who was born in London on 7th October 1868. She was very interested in Ireland. It was through Esperanto that she first heard of the Irish language. She joined the Gaelic League in London, attended classes and learnt the Irish language. For 20 years she wrote about Ireland and also spoke and lectured about Ireland at Esperanto Congresses in various cities. With the permission of **Dr Douglas Hyde** she translated the Irish Folk Tales into Esperanto. They appeared in *International Language 1924 – 1931*, and in that way they reached the small nations of the world. She sent the bound volume to Dr Hyde and it now lies in the archives of the *Folklore Commission* in University College, Dublin. She also translated Swift's *Gulliver's Travels* into Esperanto. She died in 1944. Kalocsay, the famous Esperantist poet, wrote about her: "Pri la Irlanda kanto trila, plezuras vi kun kora varmo". [About the trilling Irish song, you take pleasure with a heart's warmth – KK]

Rev. Graham Bailey was born on 8th September 1872. He was a missionary from 1895 to 1920, and afterwards a professor at London University. He wrote nine books and many articles about languages of India. He was Honorary President of the London Esperanto Group

and member of the *Lingva Komitato*. He preached in Esperanto in 1926 at the 18th World Congress during the Protestant service, and preached also at the 22nd World Congress in Oxford in 1930. It is interesting to see that another Irishman also preached in Esperanto at the same Congress, the Catholic **Father Gaffney**, in the Catholic service.

So it seems that the Movement in Ireland was ecumenical. The Rev. Bailey died on 5th April 1942.

Prof. William Brown (1871 – 1950) was another Irish professor who fervently supported the Esperanto movement for 40 years. He was co-translator of *Concerning the Origin of Man* by A Keith.

C P Blackham was one of the earliest Esperantists in Ireland. He became an Esperantist in 1904 and attended the First Congress at Boulonge-sur-Mer.

George Gordon, a banker, was born in Gorey on 22nd February 1857. He emigrated to New Zealand and lived at Christchurch from 1906. He wrote “*Kara Panjo*” [*dear mummy – KK*] in 1911, “*La Kamena Angulo*” [*the fireplace corner – KK*] in 1915, “*Alegorioj el la naturo*” [*allegories from nature- KK*] in 1913 and 1922, “*Lia Lasta Ŝanco*” [*his last chance – KK*] in 1915, and the “*Indekso al Esp-Angla Vortaro de Millidge*” [*index to Millidge’s Esperanto-English dictionary – KK*] in 1924. He was the founder of the Esperanto Association of Melbourne in Australia. He died in 1946.

Chapter 3 Groups Associations and Leagues

The first Esperanto group in Ireland was the *Dublin Esperanto Group*, which was founded in 1905. Its President was J C O'Connor MA, PhD, whom we already mentioned. The Honorary Secretary was H J MacDermot, who lived in North Circular Road, Dublin.

La Irlanda Esperanto-Asocio (The Irish Esperanto Association) was founded in 1907 under the chairmanship of E E Fournier d'Albe. Among the initial leadership was a well-known man – Joseph M Plunkett, one of the seven signatories of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic in 1916. His father was Count Plunkett, and his wife was the well-known Grace Gifford, whom he married in prison in 1916. He had a good knowledge of Irish, Greek, French and Esperanto, as well as English. [also some Arabic – KK].

During the First World War of 1914 -18 the Esperanto movement was dormant. Fred Douglas, then Secretary of the Dublin Group, took steps to revive the movement in Dublin after the war, and in 1925 it was reorganised by Frank McCormack and Mr Mortished with the help of Hugh McNiell and Mr Macaulay.

From 1925 till 1930 the Irish Esperanto Association made progress, arranging classes, meetings and talks. It campaigned in all circles and published a periodical *Irlanda Esperantisto*, which lasted from July 1926 to 1928.

Also established in those years was an Esperanto section of the *Society for Modern Languages* in Dublin. This did a lot of campaigning within the framework of the Society.

In 1927 a young civil servant, Lorcán Ó hUiginn, joined the Irish Esperanto Association and soon became its President. He became Chief Irish Delegate [local representative] of the World Esperanto Association (UEA) and published two periodicals, *La Kolombo [the dove – KK]* for the internal movement and *Irlando vokas vin [Ireland is calling you – KK]* for Esperantists outside Ireland.

Around the same time the *Irlanda Ligo de Katolikaj Esperantistoj - ILKE [Irish League of Catholic Esperantists – KK]* was revitalised. The new leadership was: Honorary President: Rev. M H Gaffney OP; Secretary: H McNiell; other members of the leadership: Messrs H Macaulay, Rev Br Lawrence, Lorcán Ó hUiginn. The neutral *Irlanda Esperanto-Asocio* and the specialist *ILKE* worked together amicably and did a lot of campaigning.

From 1930 to 1932 the movement was quiescent. In 1932 there were no official classes but many Esperantists in various circles met from time to time.

Also in the North of Ireland there appeared some enthusiastic Esperantists, the chief of whom was Dr E A A Stonely. He was Vice-President of the *Belfast Esperanto Group*, which he founded after the Second World War. He became an Esperantist in 1938, taught courses and did much campaigning.

Bazil Patras Megahy was born in 1854 in Co. Antrim. He became an Esperantist in 1908 and was a life-long member of the World Esperanto Association. He was a well-known Quaker and a very hospitable man. He died in 1942.

A R Campbell, another one from Northern Ireland, was a member of the leadership of the *Universala Ligo [universal league – KK]*.

Let us mention also an outstanding pioneer of the Catholic movement – **Father P Parker**, who was a Catholic priest in Wexford. He was born in 1870 and became an Esperantist in 1906. In 1910 he attended the first Congress of Catholic Esperantists, which was held in Paris during the Easter holiday. That was the first specialist Esperanto congress and therefore was

an experiment. It was a great success and thus became a model for such specialist congresses. Father Parker preached to the Esperantists in the cathedral of Notre Dame. He was elected a committee member of IKUE [*Internacia Katolika Unuiĝo Esperantista – International Catholic Esperantist Union – KK*].

In 1911 at the 7th World Esperanto Congress in Antwerp he attended the Esperanto Catholic Service in the cathedral and again preached in Esperanto. In 1913 he attended the 4th Catholic Esperantist Congress in Rome and was elected President of IKUE. He did a service in the crypt of St Peter's Cathedral. He was also President of the Irish League of Catholic Esperantists. He died aged 78, on 19th August 1948.

Chapter 4 Lorcán Ó hUiginn and the Movement from 1930 to 1933

Lorcán Ó hUiginn was born in 1910 and began studying Esperanto when he was 16 years old. In 1927 he became a member of the *Irlanda Esperanto-Asocio*, whose President at that time was F R A McCormack. When he himself became President of the Association he did a lot of lecturing and campaigning for Esperanto.

For a long time Lorcán was a stenographer in the Dáil [*Irish parliament*]. He taught Esperanto to other stenographers. At that time there was an Esperanto group in Leinster House, seat of the Dáil.

In the period 1937 –1939 he broadcast a series of talks from Radio Eireann in Esperanto, about the life, customs and well-known people of Ireland. Many letters were received from various European countries praising the programmes. Often the programmes were enlivened with music and songs and they improved as time passed.

Unfortunately he emigrated to Canada, where he continued his work for Esperanto and published some books. He was named as one of the best Esperantists in Canada and awarded a bouquet of roses and a prize.

Before he died (6th December 1985) Lorcán gave the following advice to Irish Esperantists:

1. Don't change the Zamenhofian language, i.e. don't introduce new root-words or grammatical innovations without the agreement of the *Lingva Komitato* [*Language Committee of the World Esperanto Association - KK*].
2. Set up a fund, even if only a small one, for special purposes.
3. Arrange the sale of Esperanto books in a city-centre bookshop.
4. Continually inform official authorities about Esperanto.

In July 1932, because of a request from the *Irish League of Catholic Esperantists*, the weekly paper *The Irish Catholic* began to publish a column about Esperanto and Esperanto affairs. It continued uninterrupted until the end of 1937.

In 1931 the first Esperanto club for Scouts was set up. It was called *La Sankta Patrika Klubo* [*the St Patrick Club*]. In September 1932 the paper *The Catholic Scout* began publishing a series of Esperanto lessons. In the same month many Girl Guides began to study Esperanto and set up the Girl Guides' Esperanto Section. In October 1932 the Scouts started an Esperanto course.

In November 1932 the second club for Scouts, *La Sankta Aŭgustina Klubo* [*the St Augustine Club*], was started. In 1933 *the Catholic Scout* carried articles in Esperanto, and in the same year the Scout administration announced that Esperanto was now acknowledged as one of the languages for the Scouts' interpreter badge. During that period an enthusiastic young Esperantist, Mr Sean Mullarney, was made official reporter on Esperanto affairs and greatly helped the scouting Esperanto movement.

The Esperanto movement also made progress outside the Scouts in 1932-33. A club was started in Mallow, and in August 1932 The National Club, in Ely Place, Dublin, was started, only for "fluent Esperanto speakers". There were Delegates [local representatives of the UEA] in Ballyshannon, Mallow and Belfast, and it was announced that Esperanto books, and "keys" in 25 languages, were available in Browne & Nolan's bookshop. The Linguaphone Institute (Ireland) Ltd had a good course available from 3 Grafton Street, Dublin.

It was in those years that Lorcán Ó hUiginn also used Esperanto for commercial affairs and translated correspondence for businesses. He founded *Komerca Klubo* [*Commercial Club*] for this work.

In 1933 the National Club met regularly in Berni's Cafe, O'Connell Street. On the 9th January 1933 Sean Mullarney addressed the club and received a diploma for Esperanto speaking.

Around that time the Irish League of Catholic Esperantists divided into three clubs – those for younger people, for older people, and for Scouts & Guides. Its President, Father Gaffney, had to move to Sligo but the work continued. An interesting experiment was started, the *Cirkulantaj Gazetoj* [circulating periodicals]. The Head Office sent out periodicals free to an Esperantist, who in turn sent them to another member, and that one to another, and so on. Competitions were arranged as well. For one essay competition the prize was an aeroplane flight over Dublin.

In April 1933 an eminent Esperantist, Dr Solzbacher from Cologne, visited Dublin and met the Lord Mayor and Eamon De Valera, the Taoiseach (prime minister). In December 1933 Lorcán Ó hUiginn began teaching an Esperanto course in the School of Commerce, Parnell Square. The same December, on the 12th, was the Annual General Meeting of the *Irlanda Esperanto-Asocio* with a large attendance.

Chapter 5 1934/35 – The Golden Years

Early in 1934 ILKE started awarding Diplomas to students of Esperanto. There were three Diplomas – the First, the Second and the Full. It was announced that six shops were selling Esperanto books. Browne & Nolan, Nassau Street, opened a special Esperanto Section in its shop. The Dublin College, Merrion Row, decided to add Esperanto to its list of courses. Meanwhile, the regular *Notes* in *The Irish Catholic* advised readers who corresponded with Esperantists in European countries that the number 7 should be written with a little dash across it.

ILKE then had an office at 1 Wellington Quay, Dublin. It printed articles by Sean Mullarney about the Slovakian Catholic Scouts.

In 1934 new Esperantists joined from Killarney, Cork, Drogheda, Dublin and Ballyhaunis. Mr M J Waldron from Ballyhaunis published regular notes about Esperanto in *The Connaught Telegraph*. In Dublin the Annual General Meeting for 1934 was held on 12th December in Wynn's Hotel, Lower Abbey Street. On 15th December the birthday of Dr Zamenhof was celebrated and it was announced that 14 shops were now selling Esperanto books. A beautiful *Irish Esperanto Annual* was published in that year.

In 1935 ILKE was very active. Its office remained at Wellington Quay, but it often met at 3 Ely Place. Its new committee for 1935 was: President - Fr. P Parker; Treasurer – Mr Dawson; Secretary – J M Rae; other committee members – H McNeill, H Macaulay, Lorcán Ó hUiginn.

The Irish Catholic already had a whole column every week, with lessons and news. A long-lasting Easy Course of Esperanto began in this column on 26th January 1935.

In February 1935 the Esperanto classes started again in the School of Commerce, Parnell Square, Dublin, and there were exams for the First and Second Diplomas in Dublin and Waterford. The Irish Esperanto Association announced an Esperanto/English, English/Esperanto translation service for commercial firms.

On 2nd February 1935 a Grand Dance and Whist Drive for Esperantists was held in The Country Shop, 23 St Stephen's Green, Dublin.

On 9th March 1935 a new meeting place was found at 39 Westmoreland Street. It stayed open for information all day. In March the examinations of the Royal Society of Arts were held in all the principal towns of Ireland. They included Esperanto exams, which many people took.

In April a lecture was held at the Catholic University School, 89 Lower Leeson Street, Dublin, entirely in Esperanto. The committees of ILKE and EAI met on the first Wednesday of every month. On 18th May it was announced that the EAI had "hundreds of members". The membership subscription was two shillings and sixpence (£0.16) per year.

A Grand Excursion by train to Bettystown was held on 7th July 1935. The weather was beautiful, the sun shone. Six days later we heard that Hitler had completely banned Esperanto in Germany.

It was announced that meetings were to be held every Monday in Westmoreland St, but it was also announced that there was "lack of money".

In *The Irish Catholic* the Easy Esperanto Course finished at lesson 33, and was replaced by "Easy Reading". A course was started in the Technical School, Parnell Square, Dublin, preparing people for the RSA diploma examination.

On 5th October 1935 Mr D Ó hEachaidh was made Administrator of the Irish-language department of ILKE, and on the 19th of the same month another Whist Drive and Dance was

held, with a large attendance. Another lecture was held in Dublin on 22nd October. Sean Ó hEideain, from Naas, spoke.

In Belfast, on 2nd November 1935, an Esperanto class was started at the CYMS Hall, St Paul's Parish, with 17 pupils. Mr Hugh Campbell taught it. In Dublin a "Turkey Tournament" was held in The Country Shop on 23rd November. There were 21 prizes.

In December Zamenhof's Birthday was celebrated on the 14th, and on the 18th the fourth AGM was held in Wynn's Hotel. Father Parker presided, and afterwards a good dinner was enjoyed.

So, the years 1934-35 ended with lots of activity and lots of members – the golden years.

Chapter 6 1936-39 and the Second World War

In 1936 the work continued. In that year the leadership of ILKE was: - President – Father P Parker; Vice-President – Fr. M H Gaffney; Treasurer – J M Rae; Secretary – E W Ruddell; Secretary of the Irish-language section – D Ó hEachaidh; other committee members – Fr. John Dawson (President of the *Catholic University School*), Lorcán Ó hUiginn. The classes at the Technical School, Parnell Square, and the “Easy Reading” column in *The Irish Catholic* continued.

On 21st January 1936 it was announced that there was “great progress” in Northern Ireland, especially in Belfast, where a thriving club had been formed.

On 14th February a Grand Dance for Esperantists was held at 31 Parnell Square, Dublin, organised by the Social Committee under the chairmanship of Mr Byrne. It lasted from 8pm to 11.30pm; music was provided by the orchestra *Atlantic Beach*. The entry fee was two shillings.

In March 1936 the Examinations Committee arranged exams. In April William Mullan, secretary of the Esperanto Group of St Paul’s, Belfast, was elected to the National Leadership. At the same time a postal Esperanto book service for members outside Dublin was organised. The subscription was one shilling per year and members had to pay their own postal costs.

In that year the Catholic Missionary Organisation of the Legion of Mary made much use of Esperanto for promoting its message worldwide, and for contacting indigenous priests in China. It published a beautiful little multi-coloured prayerbook in Esperanto.

In October the excellent information column in *The Irish Catholic* came to an end, but instead, easy lessons for beginners were started in the youth section of the paper. These continued until August 1938 when regrettably they were replaced by French lessons. In all 44 lessons were published and they induced many young people to learn Esperanto. I myself first learned the language from those lessons.

In the years 1937, 1938 and 1939 the Movement continued to thrive. There were constant meetings, dances, examinations and celebrations. In those years many Irish Esperantists attended World Esperanto Congresses in Vienna, Warsaw, London and Berne, where they greeted the participants in the name of the Irish Esperanto Association. They also attended the Catholic Congresses and meetings of the Esperanto associations of other countries.

But the war clouds began to gather over Europe. Already it was not possible to contact Esperantists in Germany because of Hitler’s ban, likewise in Spain because of the civil war. Then, on that sad day the first of September 1939, the Second World War exploded and almost destroyed the Esperanto movement in Europe. The *Historio de Esperanto* by L. Courtinat says:

“The declaration of the world war in September 1939 halted for six years the progress of the movement and put off for 60 years the definitive success, that is, compulsory introduction into schools.”

In Ireland, also, the movement stagnated.

Chapter 7 The Post-war Movement

The war in Europe finished on 11th May 1945. Not everything stopped during the war years. Although contacts with people outside the country were few, there were many contacts between Irish Esperantists. They often met and often wrote to one another. They made plans for after the war.

In Ballina, Co. Mayo, lived a new young Esperantist, Liam Ó Cuirc, who set up a local club and did a lot of campaigning. This club was certainly the most western in Europe, facing the great Atlantic Ocean.

Liam was made a Delegate [local representative] of the *Internacia Esperanto-Ligo* (which later became the UEA) and after some years he was Secretary of the Irish Esperanto Association. It wasn't altogether a convenient arrangement, for the Secretary to be in Ballina while the other leaders were in Dublin. Despite this, much campaigning was done and contacts were maintained with the many Esperantists on the island.

The first post-war World Esperanto Congress was held in Berne, Switzerland, in 1947. Among the 1370 participants were 5 Irish people, including Lorcán Ó hUiginn and Liam Ó Cuirc. The congress was very successful. In attendance were the leaders of the Swiss Federation and of the Canton of Berne, and official representatives of five national governments. The movement was advancing again.

Irish people also attended the subsequent World Esperanto Congresses – 1948 in Malmö, Sweden; 1949 in Bournemouth, Britain; 1950 in Paris, France.

At home, a group of enthusiastic Esperantists re-established the Dublin Esperanto Club at 31 North Frederick Street. They met every week and had a lively secretary, P J O'Reilly. In 1952 Liam Ó Cuirc returned to Dublin from Ballina, joined the club and was elected Deputy Secretary. The President was Mr Neary.

In September 1952 the leadership of the club visited the editor of the *Evening Mail* (which was then the biggest-selling Dublin evening paper) and arranged for it to publish a regular column on the Club and on Esperanto affairs. This was called *Dublin Esperanto Club Notes* and appeared monthly until the end of October 1953. Because of the *Notes* many new members joined the club. The notes were in English, but often used Esperanto expressions too. Here are some items from the *Notes*:

11/9/52: The first *Notes* appeared. They were mainly about the speech made by the Secretary P J O'Reilly, in which he described his journey and experiences at the World Esperanto Congress in Oslo. "At the international dance", he said, "All drinks were free". How we envied him! They were also about the forthcoming Esperanto classes and about the club's growing library that was free of charge.

12/10/52: The subject was the speech given by Liam Ó Cuirc about his journey to Cannes, Nice and Marseilles, where he met lots of Esperantists.

23/10/52: The *Notes* were about the beginners' classes, and about the visit to the club's premises by Mr Frank Burns of the Belfast Esperanto Club; also about the club excursion to Killarney.

In November 1952 the Treasurer, Frank Riley, spoke on "Recent Successes of Esperanto" and in December the club members celebrated Dr Zamenhof's birthday with a get-together at the *Singing Kettle*, 13 Lower Leeson Street.

The club gave great help to the Irish Esperanto Association in collecting signatures for the International Petition to UNESCO requesting the introduction of Esperanto. The Petition was

signed by 492 organisations in all, with 15, 454,780 members, and 895,432 individuals, including several hundred from Ireland.

As a result of the Petition UNESCO passed a Resolution favourable to Esperanto, and this was celebrated at the Dublin club. This was a historic milestone in the progress of the International Language.

In January and February 1953 the weekly meetings continued, with card games, musical evenings and a "Twenty Questions" quiz.

At the beginning of 1953 the club helped *An Tostal*. The Irish word "tostal" means "meeting", "gathering", "assembly" or "spectacle" and was a spring festival introduced by the Government to attract tourists to Ireland. An article written by the club committee appeared in the periodical *Esperanto* and *Tostal* postcards were sent to clubs and associations in 25 countries.

In the year 1953 many beginners attended Esperanto classes in the club premises.

Chapter 8 1953 – 1968

On 12th June 1953 two of the club members, S Ó Raghallaigh and L Ó Cuirc, spoke at the club about their journey and experiences in Spain. In Madrid, Valencia and Barcelona they met many Esperantists who helped them a great deal. In Valencia they visited the local Esperanto Group, which met daily, and a local Esperantist hosted them. In Barcelona their hotelier was an Esperantist, and in the window of a big shop near the hotel was the announcement “Oni parolas Esperanton” [*Esperanto spoken*].

The May and June numbers of the children’s periodical *Junior Digest* in 1953 printed excellent long articles about Esperanto, and as a result the club received 100 requests for information and learning-books. On 18th August an Esperantist from Trieste visited the club.

In October 1953 Mr Frank Riley presented an International Song Evening with songs and gramophone records, and Miss Doris Norton sang sweetly. Arrangements were begun for an Irish contingent to the 39th World Esperanto Congress at Haarlem, the Netherlands, in 1954.

From the end of 1953 to 1968 we don’t have much information about the movement in Ireland because the *Notes* in the *Evening Mail* ceased to appear. We know that the Club in North Frederick Street lasted for many years. Unfortunately, Lorcán Ó hUiginn, President of the Irish Esperanto Association, emigrated to Toronto, Canada, where until his death he took part in the Canadian Esperanto movement and published Esperanto learning books in English and French.

After the departure of Lorcán the Irish Esperanto Association reorganised. Jeremy Addis became President and P J O’Reilly was Secretary. The Treasurer was Ken McKnight. They did a great deal of campaigning for Esperanto and arranged publication, in large number, of two excellent multicoloured leaflets – one for *Bord Fáilte* (the Tourist Board) and the other for *Aer Lingus* (the national airline). They also printed a leaflet about Dublin.

In this period many articles about Esperanto appeared in the Irish-language newspaper *Inniu*. Earnan De Blaghd (Ernest Blythe), Minister in the Irish government and head of the Abbey Theatre, often wrote in *Inniu* about the problem of international communication and was very much in favour of Esperanto.

Dr Micheál Mac Liammoir, world famous actor and intellectual, several times proposed that four languages be taught in all Irish schools – Irish, English, French and Esperanto.

In 1968 a long article by Liam Ó Cuirc about Esperanto appeared in the *Sunday Independent*. In the same year the Irish Esperanto Association announced that, by its invitation, the 53rd British Esperanto Congress would be held at Trinity College, Dublin, at Easter (4th – 7th April) 1969.

Chapter 9 The Great Congress of 1969



The Congress of that year was actually a joint congress of the British and Irish Esperanto Associations, and was the brainchild of two people, Jeremy Addis and Pat O'Reilly. The congress was a brilliant success. Two hundred Esperantists participated, from the following 13 countries:

England	136	Rep. of Ireland	18	Northern Ireland	14
Isle of Man	1	Wales	4	Scotland	17
Czechoslovakia	4	France	1	Switzerland	1
Hungary	1	Netherlands	1	Yugoslavia	1
Italy	1				

Everything was well organised. It was publicised at the World Esperanto Congress in Madrid the previous August, and also at the 52nd British Esperanto Congress in Manchester the previous Easter. Every congress member in Manchester received an envelope with a printed invitation and three multicoloured folders.

At Dublin Airport there was a notice in Esperanto and a special information point for Esperantists. Every congress member received a map of Dublin, a beautiful 32-page congress book and "latest information".

The Inauguration and Welcome Evening was held on Wednesday, 4th April. On Saturday, the 5th, were the specialist meetings, films in Esperanto, buffet and dance. On the Sunday (6th) there were the Annual General Meeting of the British Esperanto Association, Ecumenical Service, lectures, art and entertainment evening, etc. On Monday, 7th April, there were excursions.

At the Inauguration a proposal was accepted, that requested the official adoption of Esperanto as an international language. Afterwards this proposal was sent to the Irish government. Messrs Addis and O'Reilly welcomed the participants on behalf of the Irish Esperanto Association, and Liam Ó Cuirc welcomed them on behalf of the island's Irish speakers.

One of the participants in the Congress was Christopher Fettes, a young teacher at the College of St Columba, Rathfarnham, who later became Treasurer and, later still, President of the Irish Esperanto Association.

Chapter 10 A New Beginning in 1970

After the Congress the movement rested on its oars until 1970, when *La Irlanda Esperanto-Asocio* (the Irish Esperanto Association) was renamed *La Esperanto-Asocio de Irlando* (the Esperanto Association of Ireland). The organisation requested and received membership of the UEA (World Esperanto Association). According to its first *Novajletero* (*Newsletter*) in February 1971 the Secretary was P J O'Reilly, the Treasurer Christopher Fettes, and the Editor of the newsletter Jeremy Addis. Later Christopher Fettes became President of the Association and Joy Davies was Secretary and Treasurer. Joy was and is one of the most competent secretaries that we ever had.

Harry Harrison, world famous science fiction writer and strong supporter of Esperanto, was elected Honorary President.

Later Liam Ó Cuirc was elected Vice-President, Maire Mullarney Publicity Secretary and Garbhan Mac Aoidh was elected committee member and Editor of the *Africa Pages* of the reorganised newsletter edited by Christopher Fettes.

The Dublin Esperanto Club was also re-established, meeting twice a month without interruption, first at Trinity College, then at 87 Merrion Square, later still at 19 Upper Mount Street, and finally at 24 Burlington Road.

Because we are now getting close to the present, I shall briefly list our main achievements in the period 1970 to 1994.

1970: Four Irish people attended the World Esperanto Congress in Vienna.

1971: The Newsletter began to be published quarterly. The "After-Congress" event in Dublin (after the World Esperanto Congress in London) was a great success.

1981: Maire Mullarney attended an ecumenical conference in The Netherlands; Joy Davies visited Chateau Grésillon in France [*a permanent Esperanto residential school – KK*]; Christopher Fettes travelled with 7 boys and girls to a youth gathering in Hungary; Jean Darling attended a Baha'i conference in Finland.

1982: Christopher Fettes went to the TEJO congress in Louvain [*TEJO is the World Esperantist Youth Organisation – KK*]. Joy Davies attended the World Esperanto Congress in Antwerp.

1983: Christopher Fettes travelled with 5 children to the Children's Congress in Budapest and the Family Gathering in Sumeg, Hungary; Maire Mullarney and Joy Davies attended the 68th World Esperanto Congress in Budapest. There was some interesting correspondence about Esperanto in the letters column of the *Irish Times*.

1984: There was a talk about Esperanto at the Wexford Arts Centre and another talk in Cork. A questionnaire about Esperanto was sent to all candidates for the European Parliament. Maire Mullarney attended a congress of the *International Association for Applied Linguistics* in Brussels, and Garbhan Mac Aoidh and his wife Máire visited Grésillon. Articles about Esperanto appeared in *Inniu*, *Anois*, *Tullamore Tribune*, *Westmeath Offaly Independent*, *Evening Press* and *Munster Express*.

1985: Maire Mullarney visited the 70th World Esperanto Congress at Augsburg and Christopher Fettes was a helper at the 22nd Children's Congress. Lorcán Ó hUiginn died in Canada, 6/12/85. There were articles about Esperanto in the *Evening Herald*, *Lá*, *Anois* and the *Irish Times*. Members of the Dublin Club celebrated Zamenhof Day on 15/12/85.

1986: Maire Mullarney attended the World Esperanto Congress in China. Our newsletter changed its name to *Irlandafrika Esperantisto* [*Irish-African Esperantist*] and devoted some

pages to African Esperantists. Christopher Fettes gave a talk about Esperanto at the meeting of the National Scouts, and Maire Mullarney spoke at the North Strand Vocational School. An article and a letter appeared in the *Irish Times*, and a long article by Maire Mullarney appeared in the *Sunday Press*.

1987: The Jubilee Year – the one-hundredth anniversary of Esperanto. Maire Mullarney was the Irish representative at the meeting of the European Esperanto Union at Strasbourg and also at a meeting of “Greens” in Brussels. Several Irish people attended the Jubilee Congress in Warsaw. Nineteen articles about Esperanto appeared in newspapers, more than ever before.

1988: Maire Mullarney, Christopher Fettes and Liam Ó Cuirc attended the 73rd World Esperanto Congress in Rotterdam. Christopher Fettes brilliantly organised the Children’s Congress. Mr & Mrs Mac Aoidh visited Chateau Grésillon and “Kvinpetalo” in France. There were Esperanto exhibitions in Tullamore and at the ILAC Centre, Dublin. Jean Darling took part in the International Youth Congress in Zagreb. The Dublin Cafe Club was set up and met every Thursday in Bewley’s Cafe, Westmoreland Street. Twelve articles about Esperanto appeared in Irish newspapers.

1989: Joy Davies, Maire Mullarney and Christopher Fettes (who organised the Children’s Congress) attended the World Esperanto Congress in Brighton, England. Our after-congress event was a brilliant success. Forty Esperantists from ten countries attended. Besides visiting sights in Dublin itself, they went on excursions to New Ross, Glendalough, Howth and other places. And, amazingly, our Treasurer even reported a profit. The excellent book *Esperanto for Hope* by Maire Mullarney was launched during the after-congress event. Dermot Clancy gave a talk about Esperanto at the Forum Discussion Group.

Chapter 11 Events 1990 – 1994

1990: The Irish Futures Society and our Esperanto Association of Ireland jointly arranged an Esperanto conference on 20th April in Trinity College, Dublin. It was very interesting and very well organised, but the number attending was disappointing. Garbhan Mac Aoidh spoke about Esperanto to *Rotary International* in Tullamore, and our Tullamore club took part in the parade on St Patrick's Day. Christopher Fettes attended the 50th Spanish Esperanto Congress in Catalonia. On Saturday 13th October some of our members held a street demonstration in Molesworth Street in front of the Dublin Office of the European Union. An Esperanto Exhibition was held in the Central Library, Dublin, and classes were held in the Parnell Vocational School, Parnell Square. Twenty-eight articles appeared in periodicals and newspapers.

1991: The Association took part in four sections of the *Festival of Languages* in the City Hall, Dublin, and our members showed their almost professional acting talents. (Incidentally, the organisers were amazed when our group was the only one that prepared its improvised sketch in the language that they were to put on show, whilst all the other groups did their preparations in English!)

Maire Mullarney, Christopher Fettes and Liam Ó Cuirc attended the 76th World Esperanto Congress in Bergin, Norway. Christopher again organised the Children's Congress. The educational journal *Authentik* published long articles about Esperanto provided by Maire Mullarney. There was a meeting between the Committee of EAI and Mr Harkin, of the International Section of the Department of Education about the work of UNESCO, UNESCO-clubs, and their relation to Esperanto. At this time the Cafe Club moved to Galligan's Cafe, 27 Westmoreland Street. In all 20 articles about Esperanto were published.

1992: There was the first planting of a Peace Tree on Christopher Fettes's farm. There was a conference between our Association and the Irish Government about the possible use of Esperanto in the preparatory work for Economic Development of the Shannon Estuary. Maire Mullarney spoke at the Irish Association for Applied Linguistics about "Gender in a Planned Language". In *Gluais* there was a good article about Breandán O Mearáin and his plan to publish "multilingual Irish dictionaries" that would use Esperanto as a bridging language. Also two others of our members worked upon an Esperanto/Irish: Irish/Esperanto dictionary. Dr Seán Ó Riain of the Department of Foreign Affairs published an excellent article about Dr Hyde and Dr Zamenhof.

1993: Maire Mullarney and Máire & Garbhan Mac Aoidh attended the 78th World Esperanto Congress in Valencia, Spain. Christopher Fettes helped to arrange the 28th Children's Congress in the same country. The Esperanto Group in Tullamore donated a box of Irish-language children's books to the new local Irish-language school.

For the first time an Esperantist, Trevor Sargent, was elected to the Irish Parliament. The Green Party supportively mentioned Esperanto in its election manifesto. Somhairle Mac Aoidh now works at *Esperantotur*, Poland, and plans to lead a group from Poland to Ireland in 1994.

During the period 1970 – 1994 we have organised an Annual General Meeting every year; arranged classes; maintained a free correspondence course; published an excellent periodical; helped the Esperanto movement in Africa; met visiting Esperantists from abroad etc. The Dublin Café Club has met every week but in various places. It is led at present by Lorcán Mac Meanmain and Filip Ó Fathaigh.

This is the end of the beginning of our history. About the future I shall say only, in the two-word slogan of Zamenhof – **Obstine antaŭen!** [*Obstinately forward – KK*].

Appendix 1

Books by Irish authors that have been translated into Esperanto

1	She stoops to conquer	a comedy in five acts	by Oliver Goldsmith	translated by Motteau
2	Gulliver in Lilliput		by Jonathan Swift	translated by Maud Inman
3	Salome	a play	by Oscar Wilde	translated by Hindrik Jan Bulhuis
4	Voyage to Faremid	the voyages of Gulliver continued	by Jonathon Swift	translated by Frederiko Karinthy
5	Pygmalion	a play	by George Bernard Shaw	staged in Warsaw in 1959
6	The Hound of Ulster	the life of Cuchullan		translated by Joy Davies
7	The Midnight Court	Cúirt an Mhean Oiche	by Brian Merriman	translated by Albert Goodheir
8	The Playboy of the Western World	a play	by John M Synge	translated by Albert Goodheir
9	The Importance of being Ernest	a play	by Oscar Wilde	translated by W. Auld
10	The Ruba'iyat of Omar Khayyam	a poem		translated from the English translation of Edward Fitzgerald
11	The Gaelic language in Scotland – Today and Yesterday	a study	by Garbhan Mac Aoidh	

Appendix 2 Translator's notes

Throughout his lifetime Liam Ó Cuirc has kept a file of press cuttings and other documents about Esperanto in Ireland, from which he compiled the above history.

Words in square brackets have been added by the translator.

The information that Joseph Plunkett spoke some Arabic is taken from *Grace Gifford Plunkett and Irish Freedom – tragic bride of 1916* by Marie O'Neill. Irish Academic Press, Dublin 2000.

Additional information about Esperanto in Irish history, showing that James Connolly spoke Esperanto and that some other people involved in the 1916 Easter Rising spoke it or took an interest in it, is to be found in my article *Connolly and Esperanto* which is elsewhere on this website. That article was written after the publication, in booklet form, of the above history by Liam Ó Cuirc.

This translation was finished in June 2002.– KK.