

## More about us

### The Beginnings of the Deutsch-Irische Gesellschaft e.V. in Bonn

The Deutsch-Irische Gesellschaft Bonn e. V. was founded at December, 7<sup>th</sup>, 1953 in Bonn by the scholar for Celtic Studies, Professor Dr. Rudolf Hertz. It took appropriate action from the difficulties, the strongly politically shaped Berliner Deutsch-Irische Gesellschaft got in. Among others it took the consequence in the constitution of 7.12.2013, where it committed itself „to promote the personal and cultural relations“ exclusively. After the death of Professor Hertz the society obtained a new push by the Bonner Colloquium Humanum and its founder, Ministerialrat Dr. Oskar Katzenberger, who brought new life and a new constitution to the society. This constitution put a mark on the work of the last 50 years and is valid in its essentially substance up to today. The DIG Bonn serves

- to widen and deepen of connections between the members of the german and the irish people
- the interchange of culture and
- scientific and human goals.

These are noble goals, consciously formulated comprehensive and generally, to be able to react on the needs of the actual time. But what is the „Constitution's Reality“? What does the Deutsch-Irische Gesellschaft Bonn e.V. do in concreto? Hereinafter in some points it will be made clear which goals we track for and how we turn it into practical work.

### What want the Deutsch-Irische Gesellschaft to achieve - and what not?

The Deutsch-irische Gesellschaft Bonn e.V. registered nonprofit society with currently 45 members. Beside these members to every events we invite additional guests, who are close ti Ireland or who are important for our society because of other reasons (e.g. journalists, diplomats, multipler from schools and universities). Every year we arrange sich up to nine events. To this events we invite with personal invitations (by letter and E-Mail) and by the event calendar of the local newspapers.

The events take place in in loose sequence. There is not fixed a framework development planning, but a program, that could be changed if there is a need, to react flexible at possibilities of events. Normally there are 10 up to 20 people, who participate in our events.

The yearly fee of our society amounts to 40,00 €; pupils, apprentices and student may pay 20,00 €, families 80,00 €. Because many of our members donate beyond the fixed fee, we are able to finance our activities suitable. The entrance to our events is principally free of costs and free for all.

## **What do we want to effect with our events?**

We want to show Ireland as a modern land of Europe, as a partner inside the EU, who has a difficult history, a rich cultural heritage, a fascinating landscape and adorable inhabitants. But we do not have any fear, that the „celtic tiger“ will bite us, who is for us exemplary in many things. We are sceptical against interpretations of Ireland as a „Land for dropouts“, because we think poorly of dropouts, who are a burden to the irish social help, but we think highly of „Beginners“, who bring e.g. ideas to Ireland, it may be in scope of economy or may be in ecological farming - by short: who are in use for Ireland.

For us Ireland is not a counter-image to our Federal Republic of Germany, like in Bölls „Irish Diary“, but a partnerland, to which we have very much in common, in the past and in the present. We don't want an „Excessive engagement with Ireland (Irlandtümelei)“ - according to the motto „in Ireland everything is better, in Germany all is bad“ - but we also not want to give advices like a senior teacher - according the popular game „here something should be done“ or „if myself would have to say“.

As important and good the industry of tourism for Ireland may be - the german regions too do not advertise with their machine engineering and chemical industry for visitors - for us Ireland is more than Connemara, Guinness and folklore.

Many aspects of irish life are well aware in conscienceness of the public sphere. What concerns to sympathy for a land, Ireland ist of course a fast-selling item. But the sober reporting is has become considerable better in the last ten years, partial excellent, even it is normally done by the London office. So, for example, I only mention the reports of the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung.

Many irish products, because of the good marketing, are selling very sucessfully. Aer Lingus, Ryan Air, Kerrygold, Jameson, Die Dubliners, U2, The Irish Folk Festival and Sinéad O'Connor - to name but a few - don't need German-Irish Societies, to be brought on the market.

We are glad, that the irish „Pub-Culture“ in Germany ist suchg sucessful, but we try to point out, that irish culture is even a bigger frame than the pub and the drinking.

We try to pierce through the surface of the generally accepted, but quite positive picture of Ireland and to show again and again new or less known aspects of irish living, which are little or hardly ever known, respectively known only by insiders.

With our program of the illustration of Ireland we try to find too nishes, that don't appear in the great common picture of Ireland, that are deformed there or there is a need to add something.

Therefore the offers of lectures, done mostly by famous scholars or experts, are manifold. In varied sequence it covers themes of pre- and early historical development, the old irish sagas, the mutual culture exchange in the middle ages, the research in celtic studies, the making of arts, the literature, the folklore, the changeful history up to the themes of events of the day and the economic development.

Special interests are focused on the scope of the over and across.

As examples can be told: Palatinate in Ireland, Prince Pückler in Ireland, William Thomas Mulvany, pioneer of the Ruhrgebiet, the case of Roger Casement, the tragic story of Captain Goertz in Wolrd War I, Ireland and Europe in the middle ages; lectures to the role

of Ireland in the EEC, EC and EU; german scholars in celtic studies as Kuno Meyer, and many other themes.

We put emphasis to win for our events only lecturers, who are competent in their workspace and in their view of Ireland. Here some names amongst others:

The authors Seán O'Faoláin, John Banville, John McGahern Enno Stephan, Eva Bourke, Moya Cannon, Rita Higgins, Alice Taylor, Phil O'Keefe and A. K. Amherst. The literary scholars Heinz Kosok, Klaus Lubbers, Rüdiger Imhof, Grattan Freyer, Maurice Harmon, Johannes Rathofer, Anton von Euw, Stanley Weintraub; the scholars in celtic studies Julius Pokorny, Patrick Ryan, Heinrich Becker, Garold MacEoin, Seán O'Lúing, Brian O'Keane and Walter Fitzgerald; the historians Peter Harbison, Otto Kleemann, Raymund Kottje, Ludwig Bieler and many others. How easy to show, from time to time we invite irish scholars and artists, too. So we give our members and friends the opportunity to experience Irish by herself. But also we give our irish guests the possibility to speak to and become acquainted with the german audience. But also members of our society conducted greatly their parts to the success of the events of our society.

Espacially we try, to give young artists and scholars a forum for their publications and their art. Here to mention only some names: The pianist Finghin Collins, the singer Robin Tritschler and Julia Canavan, the guitarist Aran Corcoran, but also german scholars like Axel Klein, Gisela Holfter or Dirk Ansorge. Because we normally accomodate the irish guests in our families, we promote interesting encounters and often new friendships.

Beside the events the society tries to promote too the personal encounter between Germans and Irish by study- and experiencetrips to Ireland, which will be arranged for some years with competent guidance. Encounters with Irish on site lead to a nuanced picture of Ireland. Thereby the travel destinations will be in the truest sense of the word „gone through“ under different aspects. Not „Round Ireland in five days“ is the motto, but e.g. „William Butler Yeats and Sligo“ or „On the traces of St. Columcille in Donegal“. Certainly every time on this tours there are too visits in theaters and encounters with local representatives of Ireland part of the program.

Connections between Germans and Irish promote school partnerships, pupils exchange and tours of study to Ireland. From this there are not only touched the direct parties involved, but such encounters have repercussions: Classes, schools, families, friends and communities will be involved in such german-irish encounters.

Thus and on many others ways our members and friends act in their surroundings while they pass what they heard and had seen. Enthusiastic members achieve incessantly sympathy and explanatory work, become to „experts“ and will be asked for advise and finally they have more authority at the people than the media, because they are held more reliable.

In the past the contact to the embassy accrue our work. It is lesser organized institutional but it based more on the amicably relations, which was build up with the irish diplomates for years. Thus it was certainly useful, if you already know the ambassador since he was a young third secretary and you promoted friendly contact with him and his family. If there was something to discuss, one took the bike and drove to the embassy.

This good contact leads not to a - as it is called in Cologne - „Klüngel“, whereby the limits of tasks and responsibilities will be blurred. But we had the impression, that our work would be quite cherished by the Irish side and at least our views would be accepted with interests. This good contact continues to exist as well after the move of the Irish embassy to Berlin. However, because of the great distance between Bonn and Berlin, it is now not as easy as before.

### **Who can participate with us?**

Everybody, who is pleased of our circle, can act with. Important especially for the work in the leading board is the willingness, to spend personal free time, to keep the society on going. One has to invest a lot of time. The personal contact to Ireland is naturally very useful. To have people in Ireland, who are willing in doing something for somebody, who again knows people, who knows people ... Everybody, who is a little bit familiar with Ireland, knows how business here is done and things are organized. Many is going round by personal attachment, what on official ways not or only with difficulties can be done. Thus is clear: The longer one „is in business“, the more relations one has, the more one can work successfully.

Thus things are possible, that otherwise would not be able to be done:

For example: A little ceremonial act with German female pupils on the evening before the German reunion in the Foreign Office in Dublin with Irish diplomats. A reception by the Lord Mayor of Derry in the town hall of the city and a conversation with the bishop in his house. A visit with reception in the National Library in Dublin for a delegation of the Deutsch-Irischen Gesellschaft and many other interesting encounters, that only can be organized on personal level.

### **What are the goals for the nearby future?**

Beside continuing the work as yet, we want to try to include Northern Ireland more closely in our work. Thereby we think not less in a permanent discussion about the Northern Ireland problem, but to make it more conscious in Germany, that Northern Ireland is Ireland, too. Both of these groups, Northern Ireland and Ireland, are Irish. We should go more often to the northern counties, not for tutoring, but to face the common people of all social orientation. On this way maybe we could add a little bit, that the different groups not ever stress the difference but realize more the commonness.

### **Finally some thoughts about that, what German-Irish societies are able to afford:**

You should yourself operate on fields, that will or can not be taken by the governmental or half-governmental institutions, big economic companies or the entertainment industry. We have to search niches, that we can occupy sensibly. German-Irish societies neither have the means nor have they the personal - and also they don't have the task or even the right - to achieve Irish Public Relation. We should exercise tasks to that we in our actual societies attach importance to and that we are able to perform. For the German-Irish societies should not become to a burden for their members, but remain as a beautiful

minor matter, that give us much joy, beside all effort. If we are then again useful for the german-irish relations: all the better!