

Off Western Europe

Dent's Historical and Economic Geographies

Horace Piggott, M.A, Ph.D.

&

Robert J. Finch, F.R.G.S.

Great Britain and Ireland

1922

•

GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND is the third volume of Dent's "Historical and Economic Geographies." The events of the past eight years have not only delayed the publication of new books in this series, but have changed many of the geographical facts with which they are concerned.

Every effort has been made in the preparation of this volume to take account of these changes, which are necessarily largely economic in character, and have become historical; and thus must take their place in a treatment which expressly stresses these two important aspects of geography.

The economic condition of GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND is the result of a long process of development. To understand the present and to grasp something of the trend of future movement the past must be surveyed. This has been attempted, not as historical fragments imported into geography, but as an integral part of the geographical development of Great Britain and Ireland. Such a study of geography should make for a more enlightened and intelligent understanding of national affairs and their development than has hitherto been possible.

This book should prove especially valuable in those schools where individual work is a feature of the system of education.

1922.

H. P.
R. J. F.

•

Great Britain and Ireland

THE British Isles stand, as it were, knee-deep in the shallow water off the coast of Western Europe. They form an archipelago of some 5000 islands which are the elevated portions of the continental shelf of Western Europe, and are thus essentially a part of the European Continent.

North Atlantic, are intercepted transversely by the mountainous western regions of the British Isles. They are deflected upwards, and the consequent rapid expansion and cooling results in heavy condensation. It suggests that in past ages part of Western Europe underwent a gradual

subsidence which allowed the ocean to encroach upon the old land-surface that now forms the bed of the British seas.

•

IRELAND

IRELAND — GENERAL SURVEY

IRELAND is a little larger than Scotland, but its population is a little less than that of Scotland, and is much more evenly distributed. Ireland is mainly an agricultural country. She has no great coalfields, and no great industries except in the north-east. So there is no concentration of population within rich industrial areas as is the case both in England and Wales and Scotland.

Between Ireland and Britain is a channel which is very much deeper on the average than the North Sea—especially in the North Channel. The shortest ferry-crossing is by way of this channel (Stranraer-Larne, thirty-six miles) ; but the most popular crossings are Holyhead-Kingstown, fifty-seven miles (L.N.W.R. route); and Fishguard-Rosslare, fifty-four miles (G.W.R. route).

Surface Relief and Drainage.—Ireland is mainly a great limestone plain, partly surrounded by detached mountain masses, which lie chiefly to the north and the south. So that except for a wide gap between the Wicklow Mountains and the Mourne Mountains, the traveller approaching Ireland from any direction sees it as a hilly or mountainous land.

The geological map clearly reveals the former connection of Ireland with Britain. The mountains of Donegal are continuations of the highlands of Scotland ; so are those of Mayo and Connemara. The volcanic Antrim plateau is part of the same area as the volcanic islands of the Inner Hebrides ; and the basalt columns of the Giant's Causeway resemble those of Fingal's Cave in the Island of Staffa. The Mourne Mountains are prolongations of the southern uplands of Scotland ; the mountains of Leinster resemble those of Wales ; and the Old Red Sandstone ridges of the south-west are part of the same ancient system as the mountains of the south-western Peninsula and Brittany. The Midland Plain of England, which is a continuation of the Great Plain of Europe, is farther continued by way of the Dublin Gate into the Central Plain of Ireland.

The glacial epoch has left many traces in the Ireland of to-day. Over broad areas are thick layers of boulder clay, especially on the limestone of the Central Plain. Round-backed elongated hills of glacial debris, known as *drumlins*, occur in large numbers ; they are usually well cultivated. Ridges of gravel, known as *eskers*, are other evidences left by the retreating ice. " They are covered with grass and run like walls across the country roads, often being carried along their crests on account of the dry routes thus obtained."—*Professor Grenville Cole*.

The mountain masses of the north are the Donegal Mountains, the Sperrin Mountains, the volcanic Antrim Plateau and the Mourne Mountains. Between the Donegal and Sperrin masses is the valley of the Foyle, terminating in a wide, almost landlocked estuary with *Londonderry* at its head, and *Moville*, the port of call for Canadian liners, near its entrance. Lough Swilly is another fine harbour used as a shelter by the British navy. Between the

Sperrin Mountains and the Antrim Plateau lies the Bann Valley, and the faulted basin of Lough Neagh, the largest lake in the British Isles, whose surface is only about forty-eight feet above sea-level. Between the Antrim Plateau and the Mourne Mountains is the Lagan Basin with its wide drowned estuary of Belfast Lough ; *Belfast* stands at the head of the estuary and *Carrickfergus* nearer its entrance.

The mountains of the south differ considerably in structure and appearance from those of the north. The southern mountains consist mainly of parallel ridges of Old Red Sandstone with intervening valleys of shale and limestone. North-east of the highest ridge, Macgillycuddy's Reeks, are the famous Lakes of Killarney, above which rises Carrantuohill (3414 feet), the highest peak in Ireland. Other ridges worthy of note are the Galtee Mountains and the Knockmealdown Mountains farther east.

The Leinster Range (Wicklow Mountains) in the south-east is a granite mass which offers violent contrasts to the parallel sandstone ridges of the south-west. From it the *Liffey* flows westward, and curves eastward round the northern base of the mountains to Dublin Bay, with *Dublin* at its head, and *Kingstown* as an outpost. The *Slaney* runs southward into Wexford Harbour, with *Wexford* as port and *Rosslare* as outpost. The *Barrow* rises in the east-central plain and runs due south, joined by the *Nore* from the Slieve Bloom and by the *Suir* from the west.

The parallelism of ridges in the south-west results in a remarkable parallelism of rivers—*Bandon*, *Lee*, *Blackwater* and *Suir*, whose courses provide many instances of river-capture *Cork* stands at the head of the estuary of the Lee ; and *Queenstown*, its outpost, has been built on Great Island lower down the harbour. In the far south-west the river valleys have been invaded by the sea as a result of subsidence, and the great *rias* of Dingle Bay, Kenmare River, Bantry Bay, and Dunmanus Bay has been formed, together with many islands, of which Valencia Island, the cable terminus, and Cape Clear Island, with a famous lighthouse, are best known.

The western mountains consist chiefly of the *Mountains of Mayo* (Nepin Beg) and the Connemara Mountains—two masses separated by the gap of Clew Bay and *Westport*. At the foot of them, to the east, lies the great lake-chain of *Conn*, *Cara*, *Mask* and *Corrib*, whose outlet is at the port of *Galway* on Galway Bay. The cliffs of Achill Head, on Achill Island, rise to 2000 feet.

Between the mountains of the west and those of the north-west is the great breach of Sligo and Donegal Bays, with the River Erne and its lake-chain draining to the latter through the county of Fermanagh.

The Central Plain is largely the basin of the Shannon. It consists mainly of limestone, from above which the millstone grit and the coal measures have been removed by denudation. Here and there detached blocks of millstone grit still rise above the plain. In the hollows of the limestone bogs have accumulated. The limestone basin is floored with boulder clay which holds up the water. Marsh plants, especially sphagnum moss, gradually filled up these shallow lakes with decaying vegetable matter until a bog of soft slimy mud was formed—green and treacherous. Later the bog became firmer, and finally dry peat land, where peat can be dug. The Central Plain contains bogs in all stages of development. The biggest bog is the Bog of Allen; other extensive bogs occur in Western Ireland, especially in Mayo.

Upland bogs occur in hollows on hillsides where water is naturally retained. In some cases such upland bogs overflow and a slow avalanche of mud descends into the valley, burying

beneath it farms and villages. Bog-slides occur chiefly after periods of exceptionally heavy rainfall.

The peat from old boglands provides fuel—an important consideration in a country that is almost without coal. Bog-oak ornaments, pipes and trinkets are made from the ancient tree-trunks found in the bogs, and are sold to tourists in the shops of the towns and villages.

Climate and Productions.—The climate of Ireland is wetter and milder than that of England in the same latitude. It lies to windward of Britain, and its broken mountainous rim on the west is the first highland athwart the track of the wet Atlantic westerlies. The heaviest rainfall occurs in the mountains of Kerry. *Valencia's* rainfall exceeds forty-five inches annually ; that of *Dublin* is less than twenty-nine inches, for Dublin is on the lee side of the island.

Range of temperature is less than in Britain. The least range (16° F.) is experienced in the south-west ; the greatest in the east of the Central Plain around the Dublin Gate. Ireland has, on the whole, less sunshine than England. The sunniest part of Ireland, the south-east, has from 1500 to 1600 hours annually ; the south-east of England, however, has from 1600 to 1800 hours of sunshine annually.

The widely-distributed rainfall gives Ireland a freshness of greenery that has earned for it the name of “ The Emerald Isle.”

Ireland is poor in coal. She has few mineral ores. Hence she can never become a great manufacturing country. Her future prosperity must depend on her agriculture and stock-rearing.

The rearing of cattle, horses and pigs is of far greater importance than agriculture in a country that has so much land unfit for the plough, and so heavy a rainfall. Animals can live outdoors all the year round owing to the mildness of the climate, and there is always an abundance of natural food for them. But in spite of Ireland's advantages as a stock-breeding country, they have not as yet been fully utilised.

The most important cattle-rearing regions are in Kildare, Armagh, Dublin, Londonderry, Limerick, Kilkenny and Meath, which supply Britain with numbers of store cattle. Irish horses are famous—especially hunters and race-horses.

Dairy-farming is a very important industry. The great cooperative movement of recent years has done much to restore the industry to prosperity after its serious decline under competition from Denmark. In 1916 there were over 400 dairy societies representing some 50,000 dairy farmers, owning their creameries for the scientific production of cheese and butter on a big scale.

Pigs thrive on the waste of dairy farms. Pig-breeding in Ireland is important, and Irish bacon and ham command good prices in the world's markets. *Londonderry, Belfast* and *Ballymena* in the north; and *Limerick, Cork, Waterford* and *Tralee* in the south, are famous for bacon and hams. Over 25 per cent, of Ireland's total export trade is in cattle and dairy produce ; and the bulk of it is carried on with Britain.

Oats and barley are the chief grains : the rainfall is generally too heavy for wheat except in the eastern regions. Root crops thrive amazingly and potatoes are raised on a large scale.

Ulster is the richest agricultural region especially around Lough Neagh. In Ulster, too, are the chief flax fields. Expert opinion states that under proper cultivation Ireland is capable of producing all the flax required by the linen industry of Great Britain and Ireland.

Irish Coalfields, Peat and other Minerals.—Ireland consumes 4,500,000 tons of coal and from 5,000,000 to 6,000,000 tons of peat every year. Of the coal she can produce only 92,000 tons annually ; the rest she must import. A great deal comes from the Ayrshire coalfield, or from the English and Welsh coalfields. Yet recent investigations prove that Ireland has a probable total coal reserve of 228,436,000 metric tons; and that under proper direction the annual output should easily reach 500,000 tons annually.

The chief coalfield is the *Leinster* or *Kilkenny* coalfield which extends into Queen's County and Carlow also. It produces fine anthracite equal to any in Britain. Other coalfields are : (1) *Bally castle coalfield* in Antrim ; (2) *Coal Island* in Tyrone ; (3) *Arigna coalfield* on both sides of Lough Allen ; and (4) *Slievardach* or *Tipperary coalfield*. The first two of these lie in the same great trough as the coalfields of the Scottish Rift Valley.

There are many other deposits, especially in the south-west ; but the seams are too thin and the coal too poor to render working profitable.

Peat compensates for lack of coal; about a seventh of the whole of Ireland (over 3,000,000 acres) is productive of good peat; and peat-cutting and peat-drying are important rural occupations.

Copper is mined in the Wicklow Hills and in County Cork. *Lead* is obtained at Glendalough, in Wicklow, and at Ballysadare, in Sligo. *Zinc* is mined in Tipperary. Building-stones serpentines, marbles and granite occur in many mountain masses. Black marble from Galway and Kilkenny; green marble from Connemara and Galway ; and red marble from Fermoy are famous.

Some *iron* ore is mined in Tyrone, Leitrim and Kilkenny, and at various places in the Antrim Plateau, whence *bauxite*, used for extracting aluminium, is also obtained.

Population.—The population of Ireland is barely half what it was in 1841. Emigration has played an important part in its decline. Between 1851 and 1916, the total number of emigrants from Ireland was 4,317,781. Since 1853 the average yearly emigration is estimated at 66,000. Many Irish have emigrated to America, especially to the United States, whose 1910 census record that of the 2,500,000 persons of British birth resident there, more than half were Irish. In many parts of Ireland, especially in the west, the land is so poor that it cannot adequately support its population. Peasants live in great poverty, and seek salvation in emigration rather than eke out a miserable existence at home. But in other regions the land can be made to support more than its present population if full advantage is taken of its possibilities and scientific farming becomes the rule.

The only great centres of dense population are Dublin and Belfast. Elsewhere the population is fairly evenly distributed.

Railways.—Dublin, the metropolitan city of Ireland, is the natural focus of routes, because it is the natural gateway of traffic from Britain and Western Europe.

There are three main trunk lines :

- (1) *Great Northern*, from Dublin to Belfast, *via* Drogheda, Dundalk, Newry, Portadown, Lurgan and Lisburn ; with branches to Londonderry, Enniskillen, Newry, Clones and Armagh.
- (2) *Midland and Great Western*, from Dublin to Galway, *via* Maynooth, Mullingar and Athlone, and on to Clifden, the great wireless station on the Atlantic. An important branch runs from Mullingar, *via* Longford, to Sligo. From Athlone another branch serves the little ports on Clew Bay.
- (3) *Great Southern and Western*, the biggest Irish railway, from Dublin to Cork and Queenstown, *via* Kildare, Maryborough and Mallow ; with branches to Tipperary and Limerick, Waterford and Wexford, and to the Lakes of Killarney.

Canals.—Ireland is admirably suited to the construction of canals ; she has several, but like English canals they have partly decayed, and are not as important as they should be in the scheme of inland transport.

The *Shannon Canal System* is the most important. It consists of :

- (a) *The Royal Canal*, from Dublin to Richmond Harbour, on the Shannon. It runs parallel with the Midland and Great Western as far as Mullingar.
- (b) *The Grand Canal*, from Dublin, *via* Tullamore, across the Shannon to Ballinasloe on the Suck. It has a branch from Robertstown, south to Athy.
- (c) The Shannon Navigation, from Shannon Harbour to Limerick, which avoids the rapids in the river.

The *Northern Canal System* includes the following:

- (a) *Ulster Canal*, linking the Lough Erne system with the Blackwater and Lough Neagh, *via* Clones and Monaghan.
- (b) *Lagan Canal*, from Lough Neagh to Lisburn and Belfast.
- (c) *Newry Navigation and Ship Canal* linking the Bann with Carlingford Lough, *via* Newry.

•

Population of Ireland.

1841 • 8,175,124

1861 • 5,798,564

1881 • 5,174,836

1901 • 4,458,775

1911 • 4,390,219

•

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

Explain why Ireland can never become a great manufacturing country. In what natural advantages does the future prosperity lie ?

Draw a map of the Shannon Basin showing its canal connections with other river systems and the coast.

•

Ireland—II. Regions, Towns and Industries

FOR the purpose of more detailed study we will divide Ireland into (1) Northern Ireland ; (2) Eastern Ireland ; (3) the Central Plain ; (4) Southern Ireland ; and (5) the Western Highlands.

[*These are not, strictly speaking, natural regions ; neither are they political divisions.*]

Northern Ireland. Northern Ireland may be divided into (a) the Antrim Plateau of basalt above the chalk ; (b) the old crystalline masses of the north-west ; (c) the continuation of the southern uplands of Scotland in Counties Down, Armagh and Monaghan. It includes the greater part of the old province of Ulster. North-eastern Ireland is the richest, the most densely populated and the most important part of all Ireland. It is the home of the greatest Irish manufacturing industry, and it contains some of the richest agricultural land in the country.

Northern Ireland, especially in the north-east, raises all the flax and half the oats grown in the island. Cattle and horses are reared in the valleys and plains; sheep are reared on the hill-sides, especially in Donegal.

The chief industrial region of Ireland lies east of a line joining Londonderry with Newry. *Linen-weaving* is the chief industry. Home-grown flax, Scottish coal and machinery, pure water for washing and bleaching, and cheap labour are the main factors. The largest factories are in *Belfast* and *Londonderry* ; but the industry gives employment to numbers of other towns and villages in the north-east of Ireland, *e.g. Ballymena, Coleraine, Limavady, Ballymoney, Dundalk, Newtownards, Donagadee* and *Drogheda*.

Londonderry specialises in shirts ; *Lisburn* in damasks ; *Lurgan* and *Portadown* in cambric and lawn ; and *Armagh* and *Monaghan* in brown holland.

BELFAST, at the head of Belfast Lough, is the centre of a great shipbuilding industry, and builds some of the largest liners afloat. Coal from the Ayr coalfield, local iron, supplemented by iron from the Lanark coalfield and from the Furness District, and a fine harbour all contribute to the success of the industry. Belfast also has enormous linen factories, breweries, distilleries, potteries, tobacco manufactures and rope works. Women work in the linen factories ; men in the shipyards.

In Donegal there is a “ domestic industry ” in the manufacture of homespuns (*cf.* Western Hebrides of Scotland), and the products find a ready market in England.

Ballycastle, in the north-east, and *Dungannon*, in Tyrone, have collieries. *Ballymena* and *Glenarm* have ores of iron and aluminium, most of which is sent to Scotland to be treated.

Portadown is a centre for fruit. Most of the county towns are market towns. *Armagh* is the seat of an archbishopric ; linen goods are manufactured. Fishing is carried on from the ports of Belfast, Larne, Moville and Londonderry, and from a number of villages and towns along the coast, e.g. *Kilkeel*, *Ardglass* and *Portrush*.

Eastern Ireland.—This is the region of the Dublin Gate and includes part of the great central plain.

DUBLIN, at the mouth of the Liffey, on a harbour at the centre of the east coast, and opposite Holyhead, where Anglesey narrows the channel, naturally became the chief gateway into Ireland from England and the capital. It has a university and a cathedral. Roads, canals and railways converge upon it from all the regions of Ireland, and facilitate the collection of Irish produce there for distribution abroad, and the collection of foreign produce for home distribution. In these respects Dublin resembles London ; moreover, it is a metropolitan type of city, where business relating to the whole of the country is done, and where all kinds of small manufactures have sprung up in spite of the fact that there are little or no local resources.

Dublin lies opposite the great industrial regions of South Lancashire and the Midlands, hence its convenience as a food-exporting centre. It is in direct communication with Holyhead, Liverpool, Fleetwood and Heysham. Its outport is *Kingstown*.

Supplies of pure water have fostered Dublin's large brewing, distilling and dyeing industries. There are also important woollen manufactures, and Irish poplins are a characteristic product.

Balbriggan, on the coast, north of Dublin, gives its name to a special kind of hosiery. The industry grew up there in 1780, and has since spread to neighbouring towns and the great linen-weaving centres.

Drogheda, on the Boyne, and *Dundalk*, on Dundalk Bay, have linen industries, *Greenore*, at the mouth of Carlingford Lough, is a ferry-town for Holyhead, and the natural port of the local linen industries and the rich agricultural lands behind it.

West of Dublin, near Kildare, is the *Curragh*, once famous as a military camp. Sheep are reared in this neighbourhood.

The Central Plain.—The physical peculiarities of the Central Plain have already been discussed. Towns chiefly occur at confluences of the streams, at bridge points, at meeting-places of rail and canal, or road and river. Pastoral occupations are of most importance in the whole of this region. Less than a tenth of the area is under crops ; oats, barley and potatoes are grown. Great numbers of cattle and pigs are reared, and dairy industries provide butter, cheese, bacon, hams and eggs for the English markets. The chief towns are naturally market towns.

The richest pastures in Ireland are in the famous “ Golden Vale,” between Limerick and the upper Suir.

Limerick, at the head of the Shannon estuary, and at the lowest bridge-point, is a centre for dairy produce. It cures bacon and hams ; it has tanneries and makes leather for harness ; it is a lace-making centre, and also manufactures fish-hooks and fishing gear. It is the outlet for the great pastoral area of the Shannon Basin.

Galway, on Galway Bay, has a splendid position, facing the Americas, and much nearer North American ports than either Liverpool or Glasgow. Yet it has declined in importance if anything. It has not become a great port of trans-Atlantic traffic, because it has no busy industrial hinterland ; a scantily-populated pastoral area lies behind it. It is a small port and a fishing centre. Like *Sligo* it exports cattle and dairy produce.

Athlone, *Mullingar* and *Ballinasloe* are market centres at points where road, river, rail and canal meet. *Tullamore*, *Clonmel*, *Tipperary* and *Cashel* are market towns within the Golden Vale.

The Western Highlands.—In many respects this region resembles the Western Highlands of Scotland—in scenery, scanty population, difficulty of communication and in characteristic occupations. But many of the people live in a condition of poverty without parallel in any other rural area of the British Isles.

Cattle, horses and pigs are reared. Sheep flourish on the highlands. There are rich fisheries, but the ports are so far from big markets that fishing has not been developed to any great extent. Many of the Irish peasants of this region go to Scotland and England to work in the fields during the harvest time ; others have emigrated to America, where a better chance than they could hope for at home awaits them.

The magnificent scenery of Connemara is beginning to attract tourists, who may in time give rise to “tourist industries” there, comparable with those of the Scottish highlands and Killarney.

Westport and *Newport*, on Clew Bay, and *Killala*, on Killala Bay, are small ports serving the region. *Claremorris*, in Mayo, is an important focus of routes ; five railways converge upon it. *Clifden*, in the far west of Galway, is a great trans-Atlantic wireless station.

Southern Ireland.—Here again pastoral industries are more important than agriculture, especially in the western half of the region. In the south-east there is much more agriculture than in the south-west ; and it is in the eastern part of the Golden Vale (the Suir Basin) that wheat is most successfully grown in Ireland. Oats and barley are widely grown. Dairy-farming is everywhere important, especially in the river valleys.

Between *Carlow* and *Kilkenny* coal-mining is carried on.

The remarkable parallelism of ridge and valley lends considerable character to route-direction, the main lines of railway and the roads running east west.

Cork, at the head of the Lee estuary, is the biggest town in Southern Ireland. It cures bacon, makes condensed milk, distils whisky, and exports great quantities of cattle, bacon, ham, cheese, butter and eggs to Britain, chiefly through Bristol. *Queenstown*, on Great Island, is its outpost ; it is a great port of call for mails and passengers for liners to America. Mails from England go *via* Holyhead, Dublin, and the Great Southern and Western line to catch the mail-boats at Queenstown.

Mallow, on the Blackwater, is an important railway junction and market at the cross-roads between east and west and north and south. *Waterford* and *Wexford* export dairy produce and cattle to England. *Rosslare* is the ferry port for Fishguard on the Great Western Railway route to Ireland. *Kinsale*, *Youghal* and *Dungannon* are smaller ports and outlets for the dairy

produce of the southern river valleys. *Valencia Island*, in the west, is the terminus of several Atlantic cables. *Bantry* and *Berehaven* are naval stations.

Bagenalstown, on the Barrow, is a railway centre with trade in granite, slate and sandstone from the Leinster ranges and the Wicklow Hills. Copper and pyrites are mined in the *Vale of Avoca*, which is also famous for its scenery.

•

QUESTIONS AND EXERCISES

1. Compare and contrast the river courses of Southern Ireland with those of the Weald.
2. Explain the geographical importance of Dublin, Belfast, Limerick, Cork and Londonderry. Illustrate by sketch maps.
3. Discuss fully any *one* of the following :
 - (a) Ireland's decline in population.
 - (b) The importance of the Irish dairy industry.
 - (c) The sites of towns in the Central Plain.
4. Draw a sketch map showing the main railways of Ireland and their connections with British railway systems.
5. Explain why the western parts of Ireland are unimportant in spite of their splendid natural advantages.

Great Britain and Ireland (1922)

Author : Piggott, Horace Edwin, 1870-; Finch, Robert James, 1877-

Subject : Great Britain — Economic conditions 1918-1945

Publisher : London, Dent

Language : English

Digitizing sponsor : MSN

Book contributor : University of California Libraries

Collection : cdl ; americana

Source : Internet Archive

<http://archive.org/details/greatbritainirel00piggrich>

Edited and uploaded to www.augty.org

October 4 2013