

Irish conflict was most 'fertile period'

June 10 2014, by Mike Addelman

Though Ireland appeared to be on the brink of civil war at the start of the 20th century, new research shows how the period was one the most fertile in the country's history.

Drs Patrick Doyle and Katherine Fennelly from The University of Manchester say contrary to popular opinion, Ireland was a pioneering place full of new ideas whose people were not preoccupied with the fight for independence.

James Joyce published *Dubliners*, Irish people received the old age pension for the first time and the country was home to a lively newspaper culture.

It was they say, one of the first countries to establish a farming cooperative, which highly influenced the thought and policies of the US President at the time, Teddy Roosevelt.

The country where the oldest continuously operating maternity hospital in the world still exists in Dublin, was also at the forefront of public medicine.

The researchers will discuss their work at a conference they have organised on 13 June, supported by artsmethods@manchester, Economic History Society and the Irish World Heritage Centre which focuses on what Ireland was like in the years preceding the war.

Dr Doyle said: "In the years preceding the First World War, Ireland

appeared on the precipice of [civil war](#) as a political crisis around Home Rule provoked passionate responses from nationalists and unionists.

"It was a dangerous time, when conflict with landowners, the struggle of the suffragettes and trade unionism were just as prominent - if not more - than the Home Rule conflict.

"While this was going on, James Joyce published *Dubliners*, Irish people received the old age pension for the first time and the country was home to a diverse and lively range of print journalism."

Dr Fennelly said: "Our research emphasizes the importance of everyday life in Ireland 100 years ago and gets at the substance of the way the majority of ordinary people lived

"We're moving away from an historical portrait centered on political violence – a subject which dominates much of the historical literature on Ireland.

"And what becomes apparent is that a lot of the concerns for Irish people in 1914 actually bear a striking resemblance to those of today.

"Emigration, the search for employment, what was the role played by the state in the lives of Irish people, and worries related to poverty and welfare provision, were the issues that preoccupied the minds of many people – not just political independence.

"We argue that the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Ireland are as important as the 1960s, to understand how people coped at times when their lives were placed under increased pressure – something with which Irish people can identify today."

Provided by University of Manchester

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