

Researcher develops interactive map which shows how the Irish potato famine transformed Ireland

March 19 2018

A researcher from Queen's University Belfast has developed an interactive map of the island of Ireland which shows the impact the Great Irish Famine had on the population during the nineteenth century.

The map is part of a broader research project, which is funded by the Economic and Social Research Council titled "The Causes and Consequences of the Great Irish Famine," led by Dr. Alan Fernihough, Lecturer in Economics from Queen's Management School to examine both the contributing factors and outcomes of the famine.

The Great Irish Famine, or the Irish Potato Famine as it also known, was arguably the single greatest disaster in Irish history, lasting from approximately 1845 – 1851. The main cause of the famine was the failure of the potato crop for successive years, which resulted in mass starvation and death from sickness and malnutrition.

Dr. Fernihough analysed a wide number of contemporary data sources, including the 1841 and 1851 Census of Ireland and the Poor Law Commissioner's reports, in order to compile the repository showing the impact the famine had on the different civil parish areas.

Talking about the findings from the study, Dr. Fernihough said: "As expected, we found from the research that the population dramatically decreased after the famine due to the high number of deaths and high

levels of people emigrating.

"However, we also found that in the larger city areas, the population increased post-famine. Cities such as Belfast, Dublin, and Cork increased in population size as people from the rural areas migrated into the larger cities in search of employment opportunities and relief institutions like the workhouse and fever hospitals."

Ireland's population is believed to have fallen from approximately 8.5 million to just over 6 million during the period of famine, with an estimated one million people dying and over one and a half million emigrating to Britain, the United States, Canada and Australia.

Dr. Fernihough added: "The devastating effect of the Great Famine on the Irish population is well known. However, the uneven spatial distribution of the famine's impact is given less attention. For example, the population of the parishes surrounding Galway city fell by around 40 per cent, whereas the population of the parish containing Galway city actually rose by 15 per cent. In some areas along Ireland's Wild Atlantic Way, for example, the parish of Lackan in County Mayo, the population fell by as much as 60 per cent."

The map is the first interactive tool of its kind to combine these demographic, social, and economic data sets in any easy to use mobile-friendly website.

"The website will be of interest to anyone looking to find out more about the Irish Famine. It's not just about [population](#) loss, the website contains information on the impact of the famine on the proportion of families in poor housing, agriculture, alongside information on literacy. It is a piece of history that you can touch.

"You can use the location services on your mobile phone to find out the

impact of the famine wherever you are located in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, something that would be of particular interest to tourists," comments Dr. Fernihough.

More information: To find out more about the project and the interactive map, please visit: irishfamineproject.com/

The Causes and Consequences of the Great Irish Famine.
gtr.rcuk.ac.uk/projects?ref=ES%2FN017323%2F1

Provided by Queen's University Belfast

Citation: Researcher develops interactive map which shows how the Irish potato famine transformed ireland (2018, March 19) retrieved 2 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2018-03-interactive-irish-potato-famine-ireland.html>

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