History

Junior Certificate

Revision Notes

Higher & Ordinary Level

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About the Author

These revision notes are brought to you by Mr Barry Finn is an experienced history teacher, teaching both the Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate levels.

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1.0 EARLY CHRISTIAN IRELAND

1.1 Overview:

- Celtic Ireland had never been conquered by the Romans, but Britain had and when Christianity came to Britain it soon spread to Ireland also

- Early Christians in Ireland were either captured slaves or recent settlers – **missionaries** (come to Ireland to convert pagan Celts to Christianity) included **Palladius** and most famously, St. Patrick

- St. Patrick was captured from Wales in Roman Britain by Niall of the Nine Hostages and brought to Ireland as a slave in 431 AD – he escaped but returned after having a dream in which the people of Ireland begged him to return, he wrote an account of his life called the **Confession**, he did most work in **Armagh** and converted kings and nobles to Christianity because the common people would follow their leaders

- The change to Christianity was gradual – pagan kings are recorded in Ireland 100 years after St. Patrick and new Celtic religious festivals were often blended into earlier ones (Imbolg became St. Brigid's day, Samhain became Hallowe'en etc)

- The most important members of the Christian community at this time were **bishops**, each with his own area or **diocese** similar to already existing tuaths – they baptised new Christians, ordained new priests and took confessions and forgave sins

1.2 Early Monasteries:

- Some serious early Christians wanted to live lives of solitude, away from ordinary people, so that they could devote their lives to and pray to God – groups of these people formed communities which became Ireland's first monasteries

- From 500 AD onwards monasteries developed at places like **Clonmacnoise**, **Glendalough**, **Sceilg Michael** and **Clonfert**

- Early monasteries were rough and ready – **monks** slept in stone **beehive huts** with corbelled roofs and prayed in small **oratories**, monasteries were often walled and had ditches for defence

- As time went by and Christianity became established monasteries grew in number and in size and became less defensive in appearance

1.3 Monasteries:

- The head of the monastery was the **Abbot**

- Monasteries were often divided into sacred and non-sacred sections

- Sacred – main church, graveyard, high stone crosses, cell of the Abbot etc

- Non-sacred – **guesthouse** (for visiting **pilgrims**), **refectory** (dining hall), **scriptorium** (copying or writing holy books), workshops, stables, orchards, vegetable gardens etc

- Some monasteries had **water mills** for grinding corn for bread, some employed or had monks trained as **blacksmiths** to mend and make metal tools, **carpenters** to make ploughs, carts, wheels etc and **masons** to shape stone for buildings and high stone crosses

- Many monasteries had **round towers** – they served as **lookout towers**, **bell towers** to call monks in from the fields to pray, as **places of refuge** where monks could climb to a doorway several metres above the ground and then pull the ladder up after them or as places of **storage**

- Monks could read and write – in **Latin** – and often set up schools to educated local children

- Monks tried to atone for their sins through lives of hardship (**ascetism**), they wore rough **habits** and shaved bald patches into the tops of their heads (**tonsures**)

- Monks would rise at 3am for **Matins** and would also have **Lauds**, **Mass** and **Vespers** during the day

1.4   Artistic Achievement:

- Stonework – **high stone Celtic crosses** were often carved with scenes from the bible to teach Christianity to illiterate people, a famous example is St. Muireadach's cross at Monasterboice

- Metalwork – monks crafted beautiful **chalices** in silver, decorated with jewels, enamel or coloured glass and inlaid with **filigree** in gold or bronze, often in the La Téne style, a famous example being the **Ardagh Chalice**

- Reliquaries – these were storage vessels for holy relics (objects connected with saints) and were beautifully decorated with glass patterns called **millefiori**, a famous example would be **St. Patrick's Bell Shrine**

- Manuscripts – all books had to be copied by hand and many were beautifully written and decorated in colour in the La Téne style on expensive paper from calfskin called **Vellum**, the subject matter was usually the bible or the four gospels, the text would always be in Latin but sometimes the monks doodled in the margins in early Irish (including a poem about the cat **Pangur Bán**), a famous example would be the **Book of Kells**

1.5   Irish Monks Abroad:

- After the fall of the Roman Empire large parts of Europe descended into chaos – a time known as the **Dark Ages** – and Christianity nearly disappeared

- Because Christianity, learning and artistic achievement thrived in Ireland at this time, Ireland was often called the **Island of Saints and Scholars**

- Some Irish monks tried to preserve Christianity in Europe by travelling abroad and founding monasteries in France (Luxeuil, St. Columbanus), Italy (**Bobbio**, St. Columbanus), England (**Lindisfarne**, St. Aidan), Germany (Wurzburg, St. Killian) and Scotland (**Iona**, St. Colmcille)

2.0 IRELAND IN THE 19th CENTURY

2.1   Town and Country:

- **Belfast** (linen and ship-building) and **Dublin** (woollen manufacture and brewing) were industrialised cities in Ireland with the attendant problems of slums, disease, alcoholism and crime just as in cities in Britain

- Otherwise Ireland did not have an industrial revolution – **no seams of coal or iron** to be exploited, no factories built etc, indeed, goods from Britain were produced so cheaply that the low price drove many Irish industries out of business

- There was some progress in **transport** – **two canals** linked Dublin with Limerick via the Shannon, **William Dargan** built Ireland's first railway which was soon followed by many more linking all major towns and cities,

- Ireland's population shot up to **9 million** by 1841 – but most still lived on the land as either (1) **prosperous farmers** who had a good standard of living, (2) **small tenant farmers** who barely made enough to survive or (3) landless labourers or **cottiers** who rented tiny plots of land and worked for bigger farmers or landlords

- Even the smallest farmers followed the tradition of **subdivision** – a father dividing his farm between all his sons in his will, this led to **many poor farming families living on farms of less than half an acre** – 4.5 million people!

- Often all that would grow on these tiny farms was potatoes, particularly in Connacht where good agricultural land was scarce but potatoes would still grow in enough numbers to feed a family of six – if anything happened to the potato crop millions of people faced serious problems

2.2   The Great Famine:

- **Potato Blight** was first discovered in Ireland in 1845 – a **fungus** that attacked potato stalks above ground and then spread to the **tubers** below

- One third of the crop was lost in 1845 – similar events had occurred in the past when bad weather had damaged the potato harvest, some people starved to death but it was not yet the disaster it would become

- Two thirds of the crop was lost in 1846 – now hundreds of thousands of cottiers faced starvation, the Great Famine had begun

- Britain's government did little – it did not believe in getting involved in people's lives and felt financial aid would upset the market (a policy called **Laissez Faire**), it did not fully realise the extent of the dependency on the potato and it expected the blight to be gone by 1846

- Conditions in Victorian **workhouses** were deliberately harsh – the government believed that they should be the last possible resort for poor people or else they would become 'spongers' – yet Ireland's soon filled to overflowing as poor and starving people sought refuge

- Weak, hungry people are more prone to disease and, crammed into workhouses, **disease spread quickly** so that many died in places where they hoped to be saved – other more realistic people simply hoped for a proper burial if they made it to a workhouse rather than rotting in the fields if they stayed at home

- Charities like the **Quakers** set up **Soup Kitchens** to try to help the starving poor; some Protestant groups gave food on the condition that the received would change religions; government aid finally arrived under **Sir Robert Peel** who imported **Indian Corn** or **Maize** to be sold at cost price to the poor

- Poor and hungry people rarely had money to spend or were even strong enough to earn it – but simply giving free grain away did not fit with Victorian thinking so **public work schemes** were set up (building roads, bridges etc – often leading nowhere) to give work to the poor so that they could earn money to buy the grain

- **Black '47** – 1847 was the worst year of the famine, the blight was not as bad but there few potato seeds left to grow any kind of crop; disease was now spreading rapidly and also in towns and cities where starving poor had gone for refuge; over 250,000 people died in that year – the overall death toll would be much higher

2.3   Results of the Great Famine:

- **One million people died** of starvation and **one million people had left Ireland** – mass emigration continues for another 100 years

- **Emigration** to Britain, the USA, Australia, Canada etc was on a huge scale (200,000 per year) and still involved great suffering on **coffin ships** where thousands died of hunger or disease in terrible, cramped conditions on board

- **Subdivision of farms stopped** – the **eldest son inherited the land** and younger siblings had to move to the towns and cities for work or else leave Ireland completely

- **People married much later** as their prospects were much riskier with no inherited land through subdivision – later marriages meant less children

- The **Irish language went into steep decline** – most native speakers were in the West which was the area hardest hit by the famine

- Landlords who had lost money during the famine due to tenants not paying their rent began to **evict** remaining tenants and switch from crop-growing (**tillage**) to cattle-rearing (**pasture**)

- There was great **legacy of hatred and bitterness towards Britain and the landlord class**

3.0 THE AGE OF EXPLORATION

3.1 Overview:

- In 1400 travel was very limited – little was known beyond coastlines, roads were poor, ships could not sail into the wind or navigate accurately and many people were afraid of the unknown, thinking the earth was flat or the seas were full of monsters

- All this starts to change during the 15th Century – for the following reasons:

- (1) Stories of great wealth to the east by the 14th Century explorer **Marco Polo** inspired many people to travel and make their fortune

- (2) The spirit of the **Renaissance** – questioning, a desire to learn and discover new things – encouraged explorers in the same way as it encouraged painters, sculptors, architects etc

- (3) **Trade in silks and spices** (spices needed to preserve and flavour food) from the east was very lucrative, especially as Europe had a **growing population** and demand was rising, and the chance of becoming rich also encouraged explorers

- (4) The Catholic Church wanted to **spread Christianity**

- (5) Kings and rulers wanted to **build empires** by discovering and conquering new lands

- (6) 1452 and the **fall of Constantinople** shut off access to the **Great Silk Road** – an overland road to the east –and thus new routes needed to be found

- (7) Stronger and more manoeuvrable ships were developed – **Caravels** had strong, **clinker-built hulls** and triangular, **lateen sails** to sail against the wind, **Naos** were large and strong and could carry lots of food and supplies

- (8) New instruments of navigation were also discovered – the **quadrant** and the **astrolabe** helped determine a ship's **latitude** by using the stars, the **compass** identified north and the **log** measured a ship's speed in **knots**

- (9) New **maps**, both by recent explorations and from ancient manuscripts brought west from Constantinople reduced the fear of the unknown, and **Portolan Charts** mapped harbours and coastlines accurately

- (10) The Spanish and Portuguese had driven **Muslim Moors** out of Spain and when they pursued them to North Africa it created a desire to push further down the African coast

- Despite these improvements, voyages were still very risky – sailors risked **scurvy** (a disease from lack of fresh fruit and vegetables) or **cholera** (a disease from lack of fresh drinking water), meals had to be cooked in an iron box to avoid fires and food has to be heavily salted to preserve it for as long as possible

- Early explorers came from Spain, Portugal and Italy – Holland, England and France joined later

3.2 Prince Henry the Navigator:

- Born in 1394 as third son of King John I of Portugal

- Made a knight at 21 in reward for driving Moors out of Ceuta in North Africa – wanted to extend Portuguese control in North Africa to cash in on the trade of gold, spices and slaves

- Began to sponsor voyages of exploration down the African coast

- Founded a **school for explorers** at **Sagres** in Portugal – attracted map-makers, instrument-makers and astronomers

- Under his patronage Madeira was secured for Portugal, the Canary Islands were reached, **Cape Bojador** was rounded and Portugal grew very wealthy from the trade in gold and slaves

3.3   Bartholomew Diaz:

- Born in 1450 – in 1487 ordered to sail beyond furthest marker (**padraos**) on the African coast

- Driven out to sea by storms and when he headed back to the coast he found only more open sea

- Thus he was the first man to reach the southern tip of Africa – the **Cape of Good Hope**

- Lost at sea in 1500

3.4   Vasco da Gama:

- Born in 1469 – set sail in 1497 with three ships aiming to round the Cape of Good Hope and reach **India**

- Having rounded Africa he was able to consult with Arab traders from Mozambique in 1498 who had established trade routers with India centuries before

- Da Gama reached **Calicut** and then returned to Portugal with a great cargo of spices – many men died on the voyage from scurvy

- Hundreds of voyages followed in his footsteps, turning Portugal into a wealthy and powerful country

3.5   Christopher Columbus:

- Born in Genoa in 1451 – gained sailing experience on merchant ships sailing around the Mediterranean

- Shipwrecked off the coast of Portugal he spent nine years living with map-makers

- On a voyage to Iceland he stopped at Galway and saw two Asiatic bodies washed up on the shore and wondered how they got there – became convinced that the earth was round and that east could be reached by sailing west, just not sure of the distance of the voyage

- Believed **Cathay** (China) and **Cipangu** (Japan) lay only 4,000 km west of Europe – thanks to a map by **Toscanelli**

- Approached kings of Portugal, England and France for sponsorship but all turned him down – **Ferdinand** and **Isabella** of Spain gave him three ships (the **Nina**, **Pinta** and **Santa Maria**) and permission to recruit a crew from the port of **Palos**

- The **Pinzon** brothers and 80 other crew signed on including children and men on the run from the law – some feared falling over the edge of the world or monsters but most simply feared the journey would be too long to survive, thus the crew were given the last rites before sailing

- The Santa Maria was the flagship – all three stocked with hard bread, wine, salted meat, dried fish, beans and rice

- Left Palos on **August 3rd 1492** – stopped for repairs and re-supply at the **Canary Islands** then headed out across the ocean

- Crew feared length of voyage so Columbus kept **fake logbook** with shorter distances – **mutiny** still a possibility so Pinzon brothers threatened any rebels with death by hanging

- Land sighted at last on 12th October 1492 – Columbus named it **San Salvador** and the natives **Indians**, as he thought he'd reached India, he had in fact discovered the **New World**

- Spent time exploring **Cuba** and **Hispaniola** before Santa Maria ran aground on Christmas Day 1492

- Wrecked wood turned into a fort (**La Navidad**) and 39 men left on guard while Columbus returned home with slaves and gold

- Columbus was welcomed as a hero and given land and titles – but three voyages later was brought home in chains in disgrace on the charge of cruelty to the natives