

The Great Famine

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The Famine

- The Famine lasted from 1845 to 1849.
- Even before 1845, this era in Ireland was already a time of great poverty among large sections of the Irish population.
- A disease called 'Blight' infected all the potato crops, causing people to starve as the potato was the main source of food particularly for the poorer people of Ireland.
- Irish people were forced to emigrate to different parts of the world in order to survive and live a better life. Unfortunately many people did not survive their journey and died on the ship, these ships became known as 'coffin ships'

Population of Ireland pre and post Famine

- The population of Ireland before the Famine was c. 8.5m people
- Over 1 million people died in Ireland during The Great Famine.
- Around 1 million People emigrated, of which roughly 100 thousand were thought to have died before arriving in other countries, these ship were called ‘coffin ships’
- The population of Ireland today is c. 4.9 million people.



What Happened ?

In the summer of 1845 a potato blight appeared in the fields of England. This very quickly spread to Ireland, it was later proven that the disease was airborne and that was the main cause for the rapid spread.

The blight turned the potato flower and it's stalk black, causing the potato to putrefy and die.

This disease was found throughout the whole of Europe. However, the damage it caused seem to be more disastrous in Ireland and this time in history became known as The Great Famine.

British Rule

The British Prime Minister at this time was Sir Robert Peel. He did not believe the stories from Ireland saying “There is such a tendency for exaggeration and inaccuracy in Irish reports.”

When the Royal Irish Constabulary reported to the British administration that potatoes everywhere in Ireland were indeed rotten, he then appointed a Scientific Committee to investigate and find a solution.

Dr Lindley who was responsible for Kildare and the surrounding areas reported back that the problem in Ireland was understated rather than exaggerated. He said that over half the potatoes were unfit for human consumption.

Interesting facts about Kildare

- County Kildare was considered to be a prosperous area before the famine.
- Many of the historic buildings we know now were built in the eighteenth century, such as Castletown House and Carton House.
- The grand canal built 1756 - 1789 allowed transport of goods from Dublin to other parts of the country.
- Even though Kildare had wealth and prosperity it did not escape 'The Great Famine'.
- In the 1849 census Kildare had a population of c.115 thousand people.
- Only 8.8% of the land in Kildare was arable (suitable for growing crops).

Workhouses in Ireland

- 163 workhouses were built during The Famine to occupy about 1,000 people but were overcrowded and held up to 2,000 people.
- Workhouses were very bad places but people had no choice but to go to them because they supplied food and a bed in return for work.



Workhouse in Celbridge

- The Celbridge workhouse was opened in 1841 and was supposed to house 520 people but held up to 1,000 people. If you got into the workhouse you were considered to be lucky. Lots of people did not get into the workhouse.



Picture Page



Conclusion

Thank you for listening to my project !!!

