



Achill Island Tattie-hokers in Scotland and the Kirkintilloch Tragedy, 1937 (Maynooth Studies in Local History)

Brian Coghlan

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In the aftermath of the Great Famine (1845-51), many of Achill's clachan settlements evolved into migrant-based communities. During the annual potato-picking harvest season (June to October), each migrant household's young single male or female, whose ages ranged from thirteen to twenty-three, travelled to Scotland in a group or squad system under the supervision of a foreman or gaffer. Tattie-hoker was the phrase the local Scottish population gave to the seasonal Achill migrant worker. On 16 September 1937, ten male members of an Achill tattie-hoking squad who were based in Kirkintilloch, died after their sleeping premises became engulfed with toxic fumes. This horrific tragedy brought the plight of the island's young migratory workers onto the national public and political arena. This study examines the official response to the tragedy by the Scottish authorities and Irish government as well as analyzing the causes for the decline of the Achill custom of tattie-hooking in the post-Second World War.

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