

Perceiving Identity

The decades before 1916 had seen an exploration of identity in Ireland that led to rich cultural and historical achievements. Despite the growing gap between political viewpoints, there were those whose interests extended beyond traditional boundaries. To those looking at Ireland from the outside, the subtleties of boundaries and the beliefs within them often were lost. Stereotypical views of the Irish, such as those in *Punch*, portrayed people in different ways, ranging from the innocent young girl to the drunk and ignorant 'Paddy'.



Cartoon reproduced from *Punch* May 22, 1897.



Cartoon reproduced from *Punch* April 3, 1897.



Illustration of 'Harvest in the Room' by Hugh Thomson, for *Punch* and *Penny* in *Orange* and *Green*, by Stephen Courtenay (1898).



Illustration of 'A Guide to Slave Labour' by Hugh Thomson, for *Punch* and *Penny* in *Orange* and *Green*, by Stephen Courtenay (1898).



Photograph showing the Irish Village at the 1893 Chicago World Fair.

Tourists visiting Ireland saw the country through guidebooks that often focussed on history, legends, scenery and amusing local characters.

The Irish Village at 1904 Worlds Fair in Chicago provided a romanticised perspective on daily life in Ireland.

Today, we look through the lens of time at the lives of people a century or so ago. It is fascinating to compare their perceptions of identity to ours and to discover if their beliefs and discoveries still have a resonance in the early twenty-first century.

Perceptions and ideas of Irish, British, Gaelic and Orange identities evolved, fused and separated over this period in the nineteenth century. Sometimes referred to as the 'Celtic Revival', this period has helped to shape the ways in which identity is expressed by many groups and individuals in Ireland today.

