Ireland in 1800

• Act of Union meant Irish MPs went to London parliament in Westminster and the Dublin Parliament was shut down.

• Many rich and powerful people moved away from Dublin and the city became more run down.

• Ireland didn't have much coal or iron or so not many factories were built (except in North-East and some cities).

• Ireland remained a very agricultural economy and society with most people working in farming.
Farming and the Landlord System

- Most farmers didn't own the land but rented it from a landlord to whom they paid rent.
- In some areas many landlords were protestants and most farmers were catholics.
Some farmers rented big farms, others rented smaller amounts of land.

- 50,000 wealthy farmers owned: about 80 acres
- 100,000 strong farmers: about 50 acres
- 200,000 family farmers: about 20 acres
- 250,000 poor farmers: about 5 acres
- 1,000,000 cottiers or labourers: about 1 acre or nothing
Population growth in Ireland

1781: 4 million
1841: 8 million

Why?
- Better food supply
- Better farming methods
- Better health care
- Cleaner cotton clothing
- People marrying young
Population of Ireland 1700 to 2000

Unlike the rest of this site, this chart is declared to be in the public domain.
Subdivision

- If a farmer was renting 400 acres and had 4 sons they would often get to rent 100 acres each after he died or retired \((400 ÷ 4 = 100)\)
- If one of them had 4 sons they would often get to rent 25 acres each after he died or retired \((100 ÷ 4 = 25)\)
- If one of them had 5 sons they would often get to rent 5 acres each after he died or retired \((100 ÷ 4 = 25)\)
- This meant that after a couple of generations the farms couldn't really support a family easily
Conacre (a corruption of corn-acre), in Ireland, is a system of letting land, formerly in small patches or strips, and usually for tillage (growth of corn or potatoes)
Why did so many farmers grow potatoes?

Why did so many people rely on potatoes as their main food?

- They grew well in the Irish climate
- They could be grown in not very good land
- You could produce a lot of potatoes and feed a family with a small piece of land
- Potatoes were cheaper than meat or wheat etc...
- You could survive on consisting mainly of potatoes
Quantity of food consumed by the labouring poor in Limerick in 1840

- **BREAKFAST:** 5 pounds of potatoes, 1 pint skimmed milk
- **DINNER:** The same and in winter herrings (fish) and water instead of milk.
- **SUPPER:** not usually eaten in Limerick city but in other areas was the same as dinner and breakfast
1845 Potato Blight hits Ireland in September

- Blight (a plant disease) destroys 1/3 of the potato crop in Ireland
- Many people go hungry but survived by selling some of their possessions and using 'Indian meal' (Maize) to make porridge
1846 Blight returns for a second year in a row

- 3 million farmers face famine
- People die from 'famine fever' and other diseases
1847: "Black '47"
Blight returns for 3rd year in a row
The worst year of the famine
People flock to workhouses
Soup kitchens are set up
Evictions: many farmers and their families are evicted from their houses and farms for not paying rent
THE EJECTMENT.
Emigration: many are forced to emigrate to Britain or USA (the 'coffin ships')
Government action or inaction: What did they do to help people?
• British attitudes to the Irish: some British people saw the Irish as a wild, savage, uncivilised people

• Laisser-Faire approach: *don't interfere, let people deal with their own problems*
• Peel's Brimstone: indian maize being sold in Ireland
The corn meal itself also caused problems. Normally, the Irish ate enormous meals of boiled potatoes three times a day. A working man might eat up to fourteen pounds each day. They found Indian corn to be an unsatisfying substitute. Peasants nicknamed the bright yellow substance 'Peel's brimstone.' It was difficult to cook, hard to digest and caused diarrhea. Most of all, it lacked the belly-filling bulk of the potato. It also lacked Vitamin C and resulted in scurvy, a condition previously unknown in Ireland due to the normal consumption of potatoes rich in Vitamin C.
Impact or consequences of the famine

- Death of hundreds of thousands of people from starvation or disease
- Emigration of millions of people to GB/USA
- Decline in population- 8m to 4m (due to death, emigration, later marriage)
- Decline of Irish language
Public works: Green roads
Some public works were set up—people were paid to build roads etc...('green roads')
Ireland in the 1800s and the Famine 1845-47: Key Words

- Landlord
- Tenant
- Absentee landlords
- Rackreents
- Middlemen
- Conacre
- Cottier
- Spalpeens
- Subdivision
- Blight
- Lazy beds
- Evictions
- Crowbar brigades
- Migration
- Emigration
- Workhouses
- Soup Kitchens
- Public works: e.g. Famine roads or green roads or breaking stones
- Peel's Brimstone
- Coffin ships
People in history essay