

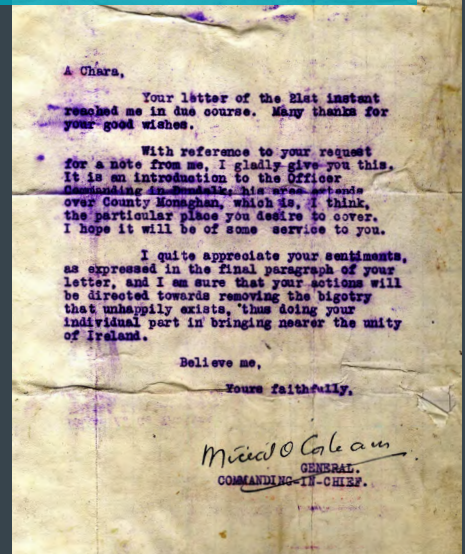
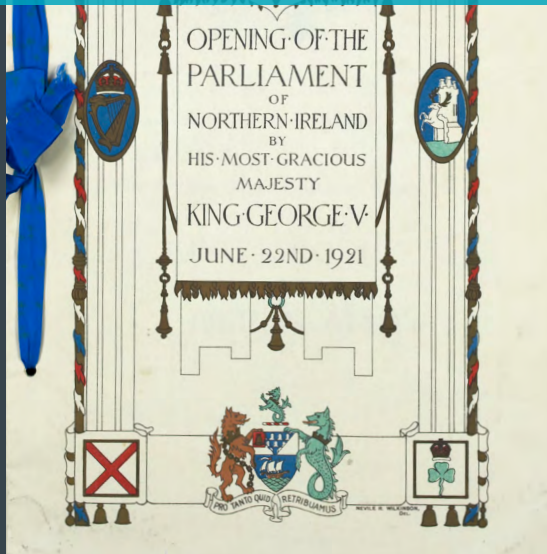
[English Translation]

Public Record Office of Northern Ireland

**Ireland 1900-1925:**

**Crisis, War and Revolution**

A Resource for 'A' Level Students



**PRONI**  
Public Record Office  
of Northern Ireland



Department for  
**Communities**  
[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

An Roinn  
**Pobal**

Department for  
**Commonities**

University of  
**Kent**



**Front cover images, from top left clockwise:**

Constitution of the Free State of Ireland, 1922 (CAB/9/Z/2/1), Programme for the Ulster Demonstration against Home Rule, 1912 (D1496/2), Countess Markievicz, c. 1915 (D4131/K/4/1/40), Letter from Michael Collins to Major Anketell Moutray, 1922 (D2023/17/2/1/1), Souvenir programme for the Opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament, 1921 (D1415/E/23), Group of UVF members, c. 1914 (D2203/6A).

**Co-authored by:**

Timothy Bowman (University of Kent), Jim McBride (History Teachers' Association NI) and Ian Montgomery (Public Record Office of Northern Ireland).



© Crown Copyright 2021

This publication is licensed under the terms of the Open Government Licence v3.0 except where otherwise stated. To view this licence visit:

[www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/version/3/)  
or email: [psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk)

Where we have identified any third-party copyright information you will need to obtain permission from the copyright-holders concerned.

Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at:

Public Services  
Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)  
2 Titanic Boulevard, Belfast, BT3 9HQ  
Phone: 028 9053 4800  
Email: [proni@communities-ni.gov.uk](mailto:proni@communities-ni.gov.uk)

This publication is also available to download from our website at [www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk/proni)

# Preface

The years 1900-1925 encompass some of the most significant events in Ireland's modern history, from the introduction of the Third Home Rule Bill to the First World War, Easter Rising, partition of Ireland and creation of two new states. To mark this series of centenaries, the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) partnered with the University of Kent and the History Teachers' Association NI to produce this educational resource, centred on contemporary documents predominantly sourced from the PRONI archive. Whilst this resource is tailored to support 'A' Level study, it will be of interest to anyone exploring this period in our history.

The starting point for this partnership was to revise and update the long out of print **Steps to Partition** document pack, originally produced by PRONI in 1976. The objective was to produce an educational resource reflective of material held at PRONI which represents differing perspectives, and to take account of more contemporary historiography of the period. With its emphasis on using archive material to explore historical themes and events, **Ireland 1900-1925: Crisis, War and Revolution** supports an inclusive approach to the study of our history, where differing voices have a place. The use of primary source material offers a unique opportunity to explore accounts and perspectives at a personal and local level, supporting better understanding of wider narratives expressed within the community, by historians, and in standard textbooks.

**Ireland 1900-1925: Crisis, War and Revolution** comprises accounts from a range of sources and perspectives and reflects the A2 curriculum topic **Partition of Ireland 1900-1925**, supporting study for the **Historical Investigations and Interpretations paper**.

This resource includes: historical introductions by Dr Timothy Bowman; transcriptions of original documents, predominantly from the PRONI archive, with contextual captions; and two illustrative 'A' Level question exercises, along with sample answers. The resource is divided into three parts (Part I: The Third Home Rule Crisis, 1910-1914; Part II: The First World War, 1914-1918; and Part III: Partition and Revolution, 1918-1925), and further sub-divided to reflect particular topics and events.

# Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>1900-1910</b>	<b>11</b>
Image 1 - Loyalist map of Ireland, 1907. (PRONI Reference: D260/E/1)	12
<b>Part I: The Third Home Rule Crisis, 1910-1914</b>	<b>13</b>
Image 2 - Signing the Covenant, Limavady, 1912. (PRONI Reference: D1357/1)	15
<b>The Third Home Rule Bill</b>	<b>16</b>
Source 1 - Extract from a printed pamphlet entitled, <b>What is meant by Home Rule?</b> 1908	16
<b>The Unionist Position</b>	<b>18</b>
Source 2 - Extract from a printed pamphlet entitled, <b>The Ulster Question</b> 1912	18
<b>Unionists Organise</b>	<b>20</b>
Source 3 - Extract from the Minute Book of Fortwilliam Unionist Club, 22 April 1912	20
Source 4 - Form showing the range of activities undertaken by Unionist Clubs	21
<b>Ulster Liberal Meeting in Belfast</b>	<b>22</b>
Source 5 - Account by Lady Antrim of the Ulster Liberal Association meeting at Celtic Park, Belfast, 8 February 1912	22
<b>The Covenant</b>	<b>24</b>
Image 3 - Sir Edward Carson and other Unionist leaders signing the Ulster Covenant at Belfast City Hall, 28 September 1912	24
Source 6 - Text of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant, 1912, signed on 28 September 1912	25
Source 7 - Text of the Women's Declaration in support of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant, signed on 28 September 1912	26
Source 8 - Text of a proposed new covenant, written by the Nationalist Captain Jack White and read at a meeting of Protestant Home Rulers in Ballymoney, 24 October 1913	27
<b>The Ulster Volunteers</b>	<b>28</b>
Image 4 - Group of Ulster Volunteer Force men from County Donegal, c 1914	28



Source 9 - Letter from William Copeland Trimble appealing for funds for the Enniskillen Horse, a unit affiliated to the Ulster Volunteer Force, 9 March 1914	9
Source 10 - An Ulster Volunteer Force Order, issued by the UVF Headquarters in May 1914	31
Source 11 - Letter from Robert Nesbitt, adjutant to the 2nd Battalion, South Down Regiment, Ulster Volunteer Force, describing an incident in Bessbrook, October 1913	32
<b>The Irish Volunteers</b>	<b>33</b>
Source 12 - Manifesto of the Irish Volunteers issued in November 1913 and reissued in June 1914	33
Source 13 - Irish Volunteers enrolment form	35
<b>The Curragh Incident</b>	<b>36</b>
Source 14 - Extracts from an account of events at the Curragh Camp, 20 to 21 March 1914 by Lieutenant Colonel R W Breeks	36
Source 15 - Letter from Miss Mary Stoney, Raphoe, Co. Donegal, to Sir Edward Carson, 17 April 1914	38
Source 16 - Pamphlet containing an account, reprinted from the <b>Belfast News Letter</b> of 18 April 1914	39
<b>Gun-running</b>	<b>40</b>
Source 17 - Extracts from a memorandum by Captain Frank Hall, military secretary to the Ulster Volunteer Force, describing the gun-running of April 1914. Written 1 May 1914	40
Image 5 - Souvenir booklet entitled, <b>With the Gun-runners of Ulster</b> , issued c.1914	42
Source 18 - Memorandum by Sir John Ross, Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, on the landing of guns by the Irish Volunteers at Howth, Co. Dublin and subsequent events from 26 to 28 July 1914	43
<b>The Provisional Government</b>	<b>46</b>
Source 19 - Poster proclaiming the establishment of the Provisional Government of Ulster prepared in September 1913	46
Source 20 - Extract from a contingency plan drawn up by Wilfrid Spender, a member of the Headquarters staff of the Ulster Volunteer Force, to be used on the establishment of a Provisional Government by Ulster Unionists, c. 1914	48
<b>Part II: The First World War, 1914-1918</b>	<b>49</b>
Image 6 - Field ambulance personnel wearing a winter uniform, c. 1915	53
<b>Volunteers in 1914</b>	<b>54</b>
Source 21 - Extract from the <b>Carrickfergus Advertiser</b> , Friday 18 September 1914	54
Source 22 - Extract from the <b>Freemans Journal</b> , 17 September 1914	56
Source 23 - Extract from the <b>Daily Express</b> , 20 November 1914	57

---

<b>Recruitment Before 1916</b>	<b>58</b>
Image 7 - Recruiting poster, 1915	58
Source 24 - Text of an anti-recruitment leaflet allegedly circulated in Dublin, October 1914	59
Source 25 - Circular recruiting letter from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1915	60
Source 26 - Extract from a letter by the Secretary of the Central Council for the Organization of Recruiting in Ireland, 11 August 1915	62
<b>Selection of Officers for the New Divisions</b>	<b>63</b>
Source 27 - Letter from William Copeland Trimble, Enniskillen to Sir Edward Carson, 20 January 1915	63
<b>The Easter Rising, 1916</b>	<b>65</b>
Source 28 - Text of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, April 1916	65
<b>The Battle of the Somme, 1916</b>	<b>67</b>
Source 29 - Letter from Captain Wilfrid Spender, a Staff Officer with the 36th (Ulster) Division to his family describing the attack of 1 July 1916	67
Source 30 - Letter from Major General Oliver Nugent, General Officer Commanding the 36th (Ulster) Division to his wife, 2 July 1916	69
<b>Reaction to the Rising</b>	<b>70</b>
Source 31 - Letter from Captain Tom Kettle, academic, journalist and Irish Parliamentary Party politician, to Henry McLaughlin, Secretary of the Central Council for the Organization of Recruitment in Ireland, 7 August 1916	70
<b>Munition Workers</b>	<b>71</b>
Source 32 - Extract from <b>The Mackie's Magazine</b> or the <b>Turret-Lathers Friend</b> , a magazine produced by female munition workers, 1915-1917. (PRONI Reference: D3964/T/38).	71
<b>Battle of Messines / Mesen, 1917</b>	<b>72</b>
Source 33 - Letter from Lieutenant Jack Carrothers, serving with the 8th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, part of the 16th (Irish) Division, to his mother, 8 June 1917	72
Source 34 - Extract from a letter by Major General Oliver Nugent, General Officer Commanding 36th (Ulster) Division to his wife, 7 June 1917	73
<b>The Irish Convention, 1917-18</b>	<b>74</b>
Source 35 - Letter from Sir Edward Carson, leader of the Ulster Unionists, to Hugh de Fellenberg Montgomery, a Tyrone landowner and politician, 28 May 1917	74
Source 36 - Statement by William Broderick, Earl of Midleton, the Chairman of the Irish Unionist Alliance, to the Irish Convention, 26 November 1917	75

---

<b>Conscription</b>	<b>76</b>
Source 37 - Letter from Harry Franks, a land owner in Queen's County (Laois) and in Cork, to J Mackay Wilson, 5 March 1917	76
Source 38 - Extract from a letter by Major General Oliver Nugent, General Officer Commanding of the 36th (Ulster) Division to his wife, 8 October 1916	77
Image 8 - Recruiting poster, 1915	77
Source 39 - Propaganda card including the text of a statement on conscription by the Roman Catholic hierarchy	78
<b>Part III: Partition and Revolution, 1918-1925</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>General Election of 1918</b>	<b>85</b>
Source 40 - Letter from Rev. J B Armour, Ballymoney, to his son W S Armour, 17 December 1918	85
Source 41 - Speech made in the House of Commons by Captain Charles Craig, Ulster Unionist MP for South Antrim, 29 March 1920	87
Source 42 - Extracts from a memorandum by Lord Desart, an influential Southern Unionist, 22 November 1919	89
<b>Establishment of Northern Ireland</b>	<b>90</b>
Source 43 - Extract from a memorandum setting out proposals for the new administration of Northern Ireland, 25 February 1921	90
Source 44 - Extract from the first <b>Belfast Gazette</b> , 7 June 1921	91
<b>Opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament</b>	<b>92</b>
Image 9 - Opening of Northern Ireland Parliament, 1921	92
Source 45 - The King's Message on the opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament, 22 June 1921	93
<b>Violence</b>	<b>95</b>
Source 46 - Report by the Police Commissioner, Royal Irish Constabulary, on incidents in Belfast, 3 January 1922	95
Source 47 - Report by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Wickham, Divisional Commissioner, Royal Irish Constabulary, on incidents in the six counties of Northern Ireland, 15 March 1922	97
<b>Cushendall Incident</b>	<b>101</b>
Source 48 - Letter from Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, 12 October 1922	101
Source 49 - Letter from Wilfrid Spender, Secretary to the Northern Ireland Cabinet, to Mr Toppin, Ministry of Home Affairs, Belfast 1922	103

---

Source 50 - Report by the Attorney General to the Minister of Home Affairs on the Cushendall incident, 24 January 1923	104
<b>Allegations of Discrimination</b>	<b>105</b>
Source 51 - Letter from Thomas George Bailie, Belfast, to the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, alleging religious discrimination in the Belfast shipyards, 14 September 1922	105
Source 52 - Letter from R S Thornley, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, to Lieutenant Colonel W B Spender, Cabinet Secretary, Belfast, concerning the government's policy on recruiting civil servants, 18 January 1924	107
<b>Gerrymandering</b>	<b>109</b>
Source 53 - Leaflet issued by the North Eastern Boundary Bureau of the Irish Free State Government alleging gerrymandering of local government boundaries, January 1923	109
<b>Craig-Collins Pact</b>	<b>111</b>
Source 54 - Agreement between Sir James Craig and Michael Collins, 30 March 1922	111
Source 55 - Letter from Michael Collins to Sir James Craig, 11 April 1922	114
Source 56 - Letter from Sir James Craig to Michael Collins, 12 April	115
<b>Boundary Commission and Tripartite Agreement of 1925</b>	<b>117</b>
Source 57 - Tripartite Agreement of 1925	117
<b>Sample Questions and Answers</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Sample Exercise 1</b>	<b>119</b>
<b>Sample Exercise 2</b>	<b>121</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>	<b>124</b>
<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>128</b>



# Introduction

The documents which have been selected from the vast collection in the Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI) do not pretend to be a comprehensive collection, covering all aspects of the history of the period 1900-1925. When PRONI was established in 1923 its remit was to be the guardian of records produced by the Northern Ireland Government. Over the years it has received donations and purchased other important collections of private papers and those of political organisations. As a result the collection has an over-representation of documents relating to Unionism. In 1961 when the minds of the members of the Northern Ireland Government were turned to the forthcoming fiftieth anniversary of both the Easter Rising and the Battle of the Somme, Lord Brookeborough, the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, wrote to a number of 'old-established Ulster families prominently identified with the anti-Home Rule movement' asking for material relating to the 1911-14 period to be deposited in PRONI.<sup>1</sup> The result is that there are many files relating to the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) of this period. Similarly, the Ulster Unionist Council decided to deposit its records in PRONI as did the families of Lord Craigavon, Northern Ireland's first Prime Minister and Lord Carson, the leader of the Irish Unionists for many years. By contrast leading Irish Nationalist politicians of the old Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) rarely left any papers to be deposited anywhere, much less in PRONI. Indeed, one of the leading figures in the IPP nationally, Joseph Devlin, MP for West Belfast, left instructions that, upon his death, his private papers should be destroyed.<sup>2</sup>

Thankfully, rich archival material concerning the IPP survives in the National Library of Ireland (NLI), notably in the papers of the party leader from 1900-1918, John Redmond. Those seeking information on the Irish National Volunteers (INV) can find valuable material, much of it concerning Ulster, in the papers of Colonel Maurice Moore, the Inspector General of the INV, also held in the NLI. The Bureau of Military History, based in Dublin, gathered 1,773 witness statements, 334 sets of contemporary documents, 42 sets of photographs and 13 voice recordings between 1947 and 1957, from those who served in the Irish Volunteers, Irish National Volunteers and Irish Republican Army (IRA) between 1913 and 1921. These have now been made available in their entirety online.<sup>3</sup> Similarly, the archives concerning the pensions awarded to those who had served in the Irish Volunteers, Irish Citizen Army or IRA, 1916-21 are now available online.<sup>4</sup> Official records of the Irish Free State Government are housed in the National Archives of Ireland, Dublin and important collections relating to the Dublin Castle Administration, British military in Ireland and Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) are held in The National Archives, London. Ireland was, of course, a highly literate society in this period and local newspapers were produced in large numbers to satisfy the demand of readers. Most Irish counties had at least two local newspapers, some as many as five. These newspapers carried extensive reports of local political, paramilitary and military activity throughout the period. An extensive, but by no means complete, collection can be found in Belfast Central Newspaper Library. Almost complete collections are to be found in the National Library of Ireland and British Library. A large number are currently available online,

---

1 PRONI, **Report of the Deputy Keeper of the Records for the years 1960-1965** (Belfast: HMSO, 1968), p. 20.

2 A. C. Hepburn, **Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland in the era of Joe Devlin, 1871-1934** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 4.

3 <http://militaryarchives.ie/collections/online-collections/bureau-of-military-history-1913-1921/> last accessed 26th January 2020.

4 <http://www.militaryarchives.ie/en/collections/online-collections/military-service-pensions-collection-1916-1923>, last accessed 26th January 2020.

notably through <https://www.irishnewsarchive.com/>. This does not pretend to be a comprehensive collection, though in time it will, hopefully, become one.

The PRONI archive can claim to be only part of a much larger collection of historical records and printed primary sources covering the years 1900-1925 in Ireland. However, taken together, these resources make the period one of the best documented in both Irish and world history.

# 1900-1910

The collection of documents presented below effectively begins with the Third Home Rule Crisis in 1910. By this stage the political divisions within Ireland were fairly well-drawn. The Home Rule Party had been formed in 1870 and had held the majority of parliamentary seats within Ireland since 1886. Home Rulers wanted a form of devolved government which would see Ireland remain within the United Kingdom. Irish Unionism had emerged as an independent political force from 1885-86. Irish Unionists were largely to be found in the historic nine county province of Ulster, though it should be remembered that even there, Unionists were still the minority in terms of population, holding a bare majority of Ulster's parliamentary seats in the December 1910 General Election.

Irish Nationalism had fractured badly in the 1890s following the divorce scandal which concerned the IPP leader, Charles Stewart Parnell. Between 1898 and 1902 the party reunified, with John Redmond emerging as leader. The land question, centenary of the 1798 Rebellion and opposition to the role of British forces in the South African War of 1899-1902 all played their part in bringing Nationalists together. Between 1900 and 1908 the IPP reorganised its grassroots support structures through the development of the Ancient Order of Hibernians and United Irish League. Crucially though, looking forward to the events of 1916-18, it should be noted that while the IPP developed as an effective party political machine in terms of raising funds, mobilising support and maintaining party discipline, it fought relatively few electoral contests. Even within Ulster many seats, notably those in County Donegal, were uncontested.<sup>5</sup>

More radical Nationalists were, of course, to be found in early twentieth century Ireland, albeit in small numbers. The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), which maintained the 'Fenian tradition' established in 1858, was revitalised in the period between 1904 and 1910, largely due to the leadership of Tom Clarke. In 1906 a group of young radicals from the Belfast IRB formed the Dungannon Clubs, which sought to establish an Irish Republic.<sup>6</sup> Arthur Griffith pushed his idea of a 'dual monarchy' based on the Austro-Hungarian model of 1867 in his radical newspaper, **United Irishman**, from November 1902.<sup>7</sup> Sinn Féin, which followed Griffith's ideas at a national level, had no MPs before 1917 but by 1906 had consolidated itself as the main opposition party on Dublin Corporation, where they demanded lower rates, greater efficiency and the award of contracts to local firms.<sup>8</sup> Young, male, Nationalist activists found an outlet for their activities in Na Fianna Éireann, the Irish National Boy Scouts, formed in 1909 by Countess Constance Markievicz and Bulmer Hobson.<sup>9</sup> The women's Nationalist movements, Inghinidhe and Cumann na mBan developed within advanced Nationalism, partly as the IPP seemed to have no place for women members. Though Cumann na mBan was, in turn, to find itself rather subservient to the all-male Irish Volunteers when they were formed in 1913.<sup>10</sup>

---

5 Recent years have seen a resurgence of academic interest in the IPP with the publication of a number of important works, including: James McConnel, **The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis** (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), Patrick Maume, **The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918** (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1999), Conor Mulvagh, **The Irish Parliamentary Party at Westminster, 1900-18** (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016), Eamon Phoenix, **Northern Nationalism: Nationalist politics, partition and the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland 1890-1940** (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1994) and Michael Wheatley, **Nationalism and the Irish Party: Provincial Ireland 1910-1916** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

6 Maume, **Long Gestation**, pp. 85-86.

7 M. J. Kelly, **The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916** (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006), pp. 130-178.

8 Maume, **Long Gestation**, pp. 58-59.

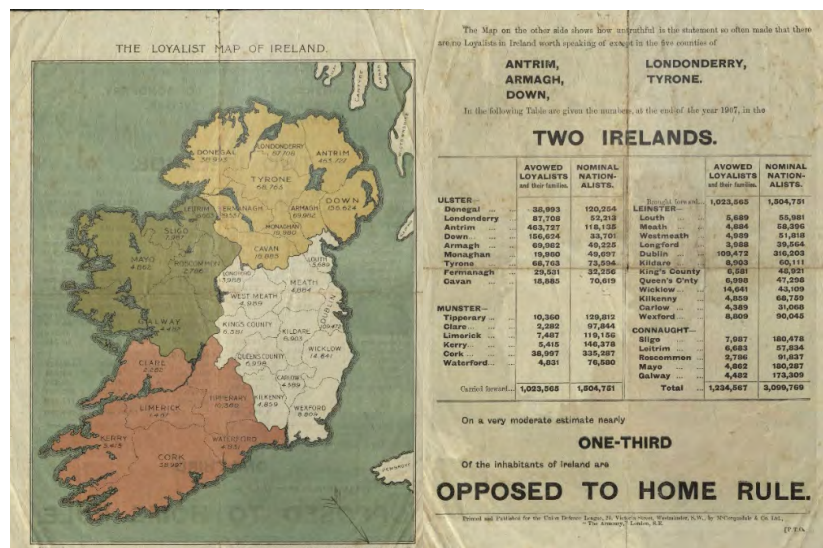
9 Marnie Hay, **Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Revolution, 1909-23** (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

10 Senia Pašeta, **Irish Nationalist women 1900-1918** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013)

Unionism had been a divided force in the period between 1902 and 1910. Within Ulster the so-called "Russellites", followers of TW Russell, successfully challenged official Unionist candidates in a number of seats. They focused on the land question and the right of farmers to purchase their land. Similarly in South Belfast, TH Sloan won the parliamentary seat in 1902, partly on the basis of being a working-class candidate and partly as an extreme Protestant candidate. By 1910 Irish Unionism had reunified in Ulster, largely due to the efforts of a new group of Ulster Unionist MPs, including Charles Curtis Craig and James Craig. Most notably, the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC) was formed in 1905. This can be seen as a split between Southern Unionists, often portrayed as 'big house' Unionists, and Ulster Unionists who drew support from all classes. The UUC can also be seen as important in mobilising various elements within Ulster Unionism to oppose internal threats.<sup>11</sup>

British government policy towards Ireland changed little, despite the change of government in 1906. Up to 1905 the Conservative government is often characterised as carrying out a policy of 'killing home rule with kindness'. However, measures such as the Land Act of 1903 which allowed Irish tenant farmers to buy out their farms with generous support from the British taxpayer, or local government reforms of 1898, can appear to be ad hoc rather than part of a coherent political strategy.<sup>12</sup>

The Liberals were returned to power with a large majority in 1906 but, despite having introduced Home Rule Bills in 1886 and 1893, they made no moves to do so in 1906-10. Some have interpreted this as an indication that for most of the Liberal Party the Irish issue was one of limited importance and the 'new Liberalism' was focused on welfare reform. However, Gary Peatling has noted that some of those most involved in welfare reforms, David Lloyd George and Winston Churchill to take just two prominent examples, were also committed Home Rulers. Rather, it can be argued that senior Liberal politicians in 1906-10 simply realised that the House of Lords, then with a massive Conservative majority, would block a third Home Rule Bill, as they had blocked the second in 1893.



**Image 1** - Loyalist map of Ireland, 1907. (PRONI Reference: D260/E/1).

11 An excellent short overview of Irish Unionism in this period is given in, Alvin Jackson, 'Loyalists and Unionists' in Alvin Jackson (ed.), **The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), pp. 51-55.

12 Andrew Gaily, **Ireland and the Death of Kindness: The Experience of Constructive Unionism, 1890-1905** (Cork: Cork University Press, 1987).

# Part I: The Third Home Rule Crisis, 1910-1914

The December 1910 General Election returned a Liberal government, but one that was reliant on the support in parliament of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) and the Labour Party. An early action by the new government was to reform the powers of the House of Lords. The Parliament Act of 1911, passed initially to prevent the Conservative dominated Lords blocking the 'People's Budget' which increased taxes to pay for social welfare reforms, meant that in future the House of Lords could only delay legislation passed by the House of Commons. This meant that the Third Home Rule Bill was introduced into the House of Commons in 1911 with the firm expectation that it would pass into law, with or without opposition in the Lords, in late 1914.

The Liberals were accused by the Unionist Party of entering into a corrupt parliamentary bargain with the IPP, as a pledge to introduce Home Rule had not been part of the Liberal election manifesto. However, as Patricia Jalland has noted, the Liberals could have governed with Labour support alone and at worst from a Liberal point of view, the IPP could only abstain in a vote of no confidence.<sup>13</sup>

Irish Unionists firmly opposed the Home Rule Bill in parliament, in popular protests and with paramilitary activity. Ronald McNeill, an Ulster Unionist who sat as MP for Canterbury, wrote a book, **Ulster's Stand for Union**, which suggested that Ulster Unionist opposition was logical and measured. However, it is clear that these parliamentary, populist and paramilitary strands co-existed within Ulster Unionism. In 1911, even before the Home Rule Bill was introduced, there was evidence of some military drilling and despite their frustrations with the Liberal government, Ulster Unionist MPs never abstained from Westminster.<sup>14</sup> Ultimately the numbers mobilised by Ulster Unionists in their campaign against Home Rule were impressive; 218,206 men signed the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant opposing Home Rule in September 1912 and 228,999 women signed the corresponding Women's Declaration at the same time, while ultimately 100,000 Unionists were to join the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF).<sup>15</sup> However, levels of commitment were variable with poor turnouts for training. There were also 'hawks' and 'doves' within the UVF. Sir Edward Carson, the Unionist leader saw the movement as a way to present disciplined Ulster Unionism to the British public (as opposed to ugly sectarian rioting in 1893). It is clear that he was a reluctant Generalissimo and was conscious that the Ulster Volunteers could easily pull him in a more radical direction. The gun-running of April 1914, which brought in 20,000 rifles to the ports of Larne, Bangor and Donaghadee, should therefore be seen as a measure to sustain morale and discipline within the UVF rather than an attempt to transform it into a well-equipped army. Indeed, the

---

13 Patricia Jalland, **The Liberals and Ireland: The Ulster question in British politics to 1914** (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980), pp. 28-29.

14 Timothy Bowman, **Carson's Army: The Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910-22** (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), pp. 15-44, Alvin Jackson, **The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp. 285-321 and Ronald McNeill, **Ulster's Stand for Union** (London: John Murray, 1922).

15 The numbers given here are from the **Belfast News-Letter**, 23 November 1912 and are normally regarded as definitive for those signing the Covenant in September 1912. The higher figures of 237,368 men and 234,046 women, given at <https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/about-ulster-covenant> reflect later signatories to the Covenant, especially those men who were required to sign it before enlisting in the UVF in 1913 and 1914.



fact that many of the rifles landed in the gun-running coup were long obsolete Italian firearms, bought from the bargain basement of the international arms market, says much about the propaganda nature of the exercise.<sup>16</sup>

The Irish Volunteers were founded in November 1913 and emerged as something of a counterpart to the UVF, though they also drew on the Fenian tradition. The IPP was initially very wary of encouraging Nationalists to join the Irish Volunteers, formed, as they were, by advanced Nationalists. Only in June 1914 was the force fully endorsed by the IPP and only after John Redmond had been able to pack the Volunteer Committee with his own supporters. The force which emerged by the late summer of 1914 was undoubtedly large, probably 180,000 strong, but with few trained officers and, even after the Howth gun-running of July 1914, pitifully few rifles.<sup>17</sup>

The Liberal government discounted Ulster Unionist opposition over most of 1911-14. The Chief Secretary for Ireland, Augustine Birrell, seems to have ignored police warnings about the determination of Ulster Unionist resistance in favour of the overly optimistic views of some IPP MPs, who believed that once the Home Rule legislation passed, Unionist resistance would evaporate. More imaginative members of the government, Winston Churchill and David Lloyd George, entertained some ideas of partition to resolve the 'Ulster question' as, to some degree, did Edward Carson. However, before and long into the First World War, there was no unanimity over what area of Ulster would remain under the control of the Imperial Parliament and for how long this arrangement would last. In June 1912 Thomas Agar Robartes, a Liberal MP, suggested the exclusion of the four counties where Protestants were in a majority of the population; in January 1913, Carson was suggesting the permanent exclusion of all nine counties of the historic province of Ulster, while in March 1914 Churchill and Lloyd George were advocating individual plebiscites, county by county.

By the spring of 1914 events were clearly spiralling out of the control of the Liberal government. Ultimately it appeared as if the Liberals would have to rely on some coercive force to enforce Home Rule on truculent Ulster Unionists. However, in March 1914, 60 officers of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade made it clear that they would rather resign their commissions than serve against the Ulster Volunteers. This can be seen as the first time that the British Army had played a major role in British domestic politics since 1688 and many senior officers were concerned at this politicisation of the army. Careful work by Ian Beckett has shown that a very large number of officers were prepared to resign in sympathy with officers of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade.<sup>18</sup> Clearly the idea of using the British Army against the UVF was no longer in the realms of practical politics. Indeed, the constitutional crisis had reached a state in the summer of 1914 by which King George V felt he had to intervene, calling the party leaders to a conference at Buckingham Palace. Unfortunately, no minutes were kept of this meeting but it appears that, even at this late stage, John Redmond was absolutely opposed to any settlement which involved partition.

---

16 Bowman, **Carson's Army**, pp. 76-115

17 Matthew Kelly, 'The Irish Volunteers: A Machiavellian Movement?' in D. G. Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds.), **The Ulster Crisis, 1885-1921** (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), pp. 64-85; James McConnel, **The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis** (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), pp. 269-96; F. X. Martin (ed.), **The Irish Volunteers 1913-1915: Recollections and documents** (Dublin: James Duffy & Co., 1963); Colin Reid, 'The Irish Party and the Volunteers: Politics and the Home Rule Army, 1913-16' in Caoimh  n D           and Colin Reid (eds.), **From Parnell to Paisley: Constitutional and revolutionary politics in modern Ireland** (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010), pp. 33-55 and Michael Wheatley, **Nationalism and the Irish Party: Provincial Ireland 1910-1916** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 176-198.

18 I. F. W. Beckett (ed.), **The Army and the Curragh Incident, 1914** (London: The Bodley Head for the Army Records Society, 1986).

---

As discussed in more detail in section two, it was the outbreak of the First World War and the ensuing parliamentary truce which served to defuse the Home Rule Crisis but the Irish question was to return as an urgent issue in British politics in 1916.



**Image 2** - Signing the Covenant, Limavady, 1912. (PRONI Reference: D1357/1).

# The Third Home Rule Bill

In April 1912, the British Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith, introduced what is generally referred to as the Third Home Rule Bill. This measure was supported by both the ruling Liberal Party and the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), which held the balance of power in the House of Commons. The Bill was designed to create a parliament in Dublin which would administer Irish affairs, with some powers retained by the United Kingdom Parliament at Westminster.

**Source 1 - Extract from a printed pamphlet entitled, What is meant by Home Rule?, possibly by Stephen Gwynn, a journalist and IPP MP. It is taken from a collection of pamphlets issued by the Irish Press Agency, London c. 1908. The pamphlet, which was meant for an audience in Great Britain, stresses that 'Home Rule' would be a form of devolution within the United Kingdom. It also emphasises that the IPP was not advocating the separation of Ireland from the rest of the United Kingdom. (PRONI Reference: LIB/2630).**

Again and again Mr Redmond has said:

**'We stand where Parnell stood.'**

But his own utterances are most explicitly brought to a head in the motion introduced by him, as Leader of the Irish Party, on March 30, 1908. The sentence which contained its purport, ran thus:

That the reform of Irish Government is a matter vital to the interests of Ireland, and calculated greatly to promote the well-being of the people of Great Britain; and, in the opinion of this House, the solution of this problem can only be obtained by giving the Irish people the legislative and executive control of all purely Irish affairs.

To this it was proposed to add:

Subject to the supreme authority of the Imperial Parliament.

Of this addition Mr Redmond said:

**'I regard these words as unnecessary. We have always recognised the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, and we have always held the view that it would be impossible to alienate that supremacy in creating a statutory legislature for Ireland. The Bill of 1886 was based upon the maintenance of the supremacy of this Parliament.'**

The preamble – the very first words – of the second Home Rule Bill of 1893, were these:

**'Without impairing or restricting the supremacy of the Imperial Parliament, a Legislature shall be created.' ...**

Again, on the question, 'What are Irish affairs?' he said:

'There, again, the position taken up by Parnell (which is the position we still hold) was most reasonable. He was willing that the Home Rule Bill should either specify directly the affairs which should be left to an Irish parliament, or, upon the other hand, to confer complete powers of legislation on the Irish Parliament, subject to the exclusion of certain subjects. The Bill of 1886 is forgotten, and I do not mention it now with a view of suggesting that it should be revived. But to state what it proposed to do will give an idea generally of what we want. I take the summary from the Life of Parnell.

'He (Mr Gladstone) proposed to establish an Irish Parliament and an Irish Executive for the management and control of Irish affairs, reserving to the Imperial Parliament the following subjects:- The Crown, peace or war, the army, navy, militia, volunteers, defence, etc., foreign and colonial relations, dignities, titles of honour, treason, trade, Post Office, coinage. Besides these, exceptions the Irish Parliament was forbidden to make any laws respecting (inter alia) the endowment of religion, or in restraint of educational freedom, or relating to the Customs or Excise.

'The Dublin Metropolitan Police were to remain under Imperial Control for two years, and the Royal Irish Constabulary for an indefinite period; but, eventually all the Irish police were to be handed over to the Irish Parliament. Ireland's contribution to the Imperial Revenue was to be in proportion of one-fifteenth to the whole. All constitutional questions relating to the power of the Irish Parliament were to be submitted to the Judicial Committee of the English Privy Council. The Irish members were to be excluded from the Imperial Parliament.'...

Briefly, then, the demand has been always and authoritatively limited to the grant of a subordinate parliament for purely Irish affairs. Military control or the regulation of foreign policy has never been claimed. Difficulties of detail are raised by Englishmen, not by Irishmen. We have no desire to injure England's prestige or Imperial power. We claim simply that 'local autonomy' which is conceded to all other separate communities of white men within the Empire.

# The Unionist Position

**Unionist opposition to Home Rule was strongest in Ulster where the majority of the population was Protestant. In 1905 the Ulster Unionist Council was formed to bring together various Unionist groups such as the Orange Order and the Unionist Clubs. From 1906 they played a leading role in mobilizing Unionists against Home Rule.**

**Source 2 - Extract from a printed pamphlet entitled, The Ulster Question, by Lord Londonderry. It is taken from a volume entitled, Against Home Rule: The Case for the Union (London: Frederick Warne, 1912). The 6th Marquis of Londonderry was an Irish landowner and politician who served as Lord Lieutenant of Ireland 1886-9. He was a leading member of the Ulster Unionist Council until his death in 1915. (PRONI Reference: LIB/2800).**

## AGAINST HOME RULE

That our views receive so much attention is indeed the proof of the falsity of these hard names. Opposition to Home Rule in Ulster proceeds not from 'bigots' or 'deadheads,' not from 'Tories,' or 'aristocrats,' or 'landlords' exclusively. It is neither party question, nor class question. It has destroyed all differences between parties and classes. I doubt if there are any more democratic organizations than those of the Ulster Unionist Council, the Unionist Clubs, and the Orangemen. Nor are the religious bodies less popularly organized – the Church of England, the Presbyterians, and other Protestant denominations have no class restrictions in their government. And as for party distinctions, those of us who took part in the old political contests before Home Rule became an urgent danger are now side by side in this greater fight for our very existence.

What stronger evidence that opposition to Home Rule in Ulster is no party question is to be found than in the disappearance of the Liberal Party? I can remember when it was powerful; but it has vanished before the threat of Home Rule. All attempts to resuscitate the corpse have failed, and a Liberal Party, independent of the Nationalists, representing Ulster constituencies in the House of Commons, in spite of repeated efforts, does not exist.

Let me impress upon the people of Great Britain that Ulster opposition to Home Rule is no party matter. It is an uprising of a people against tyranny and coercion; against condemnation to servitude; against deprivation of the right of citizens to an effective voice in the government of the country... For our opposition to Home Rule we are condemned by the Irish Nationalists as the enemies of our country. We believe ourselves to be its best friends. We believe Home Rule to be the greatest obstacle to Irish progress and prosperity. Irish Nationalists have made Home Rule their only idol and denounce everyone who will not worship at its shrine. Every reform, unless they thought that it tended to advance Home Rule or magnify their powers, has received their hostility, sometimes open and avowed, at other times secret and working through devious ways...Ulster's opposition to Home Rule is no unreasoning hate. It proceeds not from the few; it is not the outcome of political prejudice;



it is the hostility of a progressive and advancing people who have made their portion of their country prosperous and decline to hand it over to the control of representatives from the most backward and unprogressive counties.

They are actuated by love of their country. They yield to no one in their patriotism and their desire for Ireland's welfare. They have always given their support to movements which have had for their objects the improvement of Irish conditions and the increase of Irish well-being.

# Unionists Organise

**The Unionist Clubs, which had originally operated between 1893 and 1896, were recreated in 1910 to act as a focus for Unionist opposition to Home Rule. By August 1912 there were 312 clubs across Ireland, most of them in Ulster. As well as social events the clubs also organised military activities such as drilling and route marches.**

**Source 3 - Extract from the Minute Book of Fortwilliam Unionist Club, 22 April 1912. (PRONI Reference: D1327/1/9).**

22nd April 1912

Fortwilliam District Unionist Club

A General Committee of above Club was held in the Club Rooms Shore Road on Monday the 22nd April 1912. Mr G.S. Clark DL in the Chair.

Mr McCune proposed and Mr Pringe seconded that we summon Executive Committee to meet with General Committee on Monday next the 29th inst. at 8 o'clock and find out how many are willing to act with General Committee. Mr Malone suggested that the district be divided up into Divisions. After discussion this matter was left over until the larger Committee would meet on Monday night.

Mr McMillan suggested that every member should show some kind of pass coming into meetings. Mr Malone agreeing to get samples same was left over for further consideration.

A discussion took place re games etc. suitable for Club Room when it was decided on Mr Clark's suggestion to form a House Committee (out of General Committee) to look after this same to be appointed on Monday night...

It having been decided to engage a woman to wash and clean up Club Room Mrs McCrea was appointed on the motion of Mr Pringe seconded by Mr Williamson at the remuneration of 3/- per week. After some discussion it was decided to put a Notice in the Evening Telegraph for members to meet at Club Rooms on Thursday the 25th April to Drill. It was also decided to open Rooms at 7 o'clock every evening and to close same at 10. Mr McCune proposed and Mr Williamson seconded that Club have Route March on Saturday the 11th May subject to the approval of members. Members to be charged for whatever Refreshments were necessary.

Mr McCune urged that Club Rooms be opened formally and it was decided to bring this matter up at next Committee meeting. The Committee appointed two of its members to act on the evenings when Club Rooms were open viz – Tuesday: - Mr Williamson & Mr Caughey, Wednesday: - Mr McMillan & Mr Waring, Friday: - Mr Leslie & Mr Lowry. It was decided that Club Rooms should not be opened on Saturday Evenings for the present.

G.S. Clark

**Source 4 - Form showing the range of activities undertaken by Unionist Clubs. (PRONI Reference: D1518/3/3).**

Duties undertaken

I hereby undertake to assist the Club in their work to the best of my ability, by volunteering my services under the headings which I have marked with an X

Military: Drilling

Despatch Riders Corps

Signalling

Red Cross Ambulance Corps

Political and Club Canvas, Distribution of Papers, Literature and etc.

Collecting Funds from Non-Members throughout Great Britain & elsewhere

Entertainments in aid of Club Funds

Debating Society and Canvassers Class

# Ulster Liberal Meeting in Belfast

Early in 1912 the Ulster Liberal Association asked Winston Churchill, First Lord of the Admiralty, to speak at a public meeting in Belfast in favour of Home Rule along with John Redmond, the leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP). Unionists succeeded in preventing the meeting from being held in the Ulster Hall and it was moved to the Celtic Park football ground in west Belfast. Due to the prospect of violence large numbers of extra troops and police were moved into Belfast. However, although a crowd threatened to overturn Churchill's car, there was no serious trouble. Churchill was disliked by Unionists because of his vigorous support for Home Rule and because he had previously been a Conservative. William Pirrie, the Chairman of Harland and Wolff, had also changed party and was one of the few business leaders in Belfast to support Home Rule. Louisa, Countess of Antrim, had been a Lady in Waiting to Queen Victoria and Queen Alexandra.

**Source 5 - Account by Lady Antrim of the Ulster Liberal Association meeting at Celtic Park, Belfast, 8 February 1912. (PRONI Reference: D4091/B/6/3).**

Inner History of the Churchill Meeting in Belfast, 8 February 1912. Gathered mostly from Mr Jack, an old Scotchman and ship owner, who has lived in Ireland for 40 years. He is a benevolent, hard headed business man and knows all the inner workings of Belfast. He lives at Larne where he has great weight and influence. He gave me a full account of everything yesterday, having seen and talked to all the principal Belfast people. I also heard a good deal from the Leaders of the Unionist party, so I can claim to have the story pretty correct.

Lord Pirrie, who unfortunately is Lord Lieutenant of Belfast, is at the bottom of most of this ill-judged proceeding. He was anxious to arrange a big Liberal meeting in Belfast and prove that Home Rule was not as unpopular in Ulster as the Unionists declared. Pirrie has often before brought Cabinet Ministers over and they have had peaceful meetings in the Ulster Hall so I suppose he thought he could carry a Home Rule meeting through. He asked Winston Churchill to come and engaged the Ulster Hall. It is not fair of the Government to say they would naturally trust Pirrie to know the feeling in Belfast as he is a native and the largest employer of labour there. As they have taken him as guide counsellor and friend they would look to him for guidance in this matter. Pirrie must have known he was playing with edged tools, but probably thought he could bully it through.

When it was known that the Ulster Hall was taken and for what purpose, the first growlings of the stone were heard. The head Orangeman wrote to the Unionist Council to say his men were out of hand. The head of each Unionist Club gave the same warning. Then the Council heard the 'Island' men (the 8000 or so who work in Harland and Wolff's yards and who are the nucleus of most riots) had determined to take holiday on 8th of February. This was not likely to be done peacefully. Pirrie gave an order that no one was to leave work that day on pain of dismissal but his orders were treated as beneath contempt. The men knew their labour was too valuable to be dispensed with and they all loathe Pirrie, so his word was useless. Feeling had flared up to such an extent that had Carson and Londonderry not promised to do all their possible to prevent the Ulster Hall meeting it is thought

rioting would have begun then... At this point the Unionists engaged the Ulster Hall on the 7th with the avowed intention of holding it by force the next day. It was only when things had reached this impasse that Winston wrote to give up the Ulster Hall. His letter of course is public property. It was clever and impressive enough in England but in Belfast it was quite understood as yielding only the impossible here. The Ulster Hall having been given up the leaders were only too willing to calm the public indignation if possible and from then on it was wonderful how the situation was eased. Still the dangerous element was still there and required careful handling. The search for a hall was the next part of the programme and it is well known how the football field was at last chosen ...When arrangements were completed for the Celtic Park field the Lord Mayor still felt the situation was explosive and applied for troops to Dublin. This was treated with scorn and indignation. McMordie (the Lord Mayor) thereupon said if this was the case he must take on himself as first magistrate and proclaim the meeting in the interest of public peace, which I believe is a measure within his rights. This forced Dublin's hand and troops were grudgingly promised.

With all these precautions I don't think trouble was anticipated except for the unknown quantity of the Island men. Every precaution was taken but everyone was guessing. The reception at Larne was spontaneous and most unfriendly, though there was no attempt at any violence and of course Belfast was equally demonstrative. The Churchills were got to the hotel with some difficulty but safely and I don't think they anticipated the difficulty of moving him again. Mr Jack's informant was in the crowd at the time of the progress and says it was composed of quite the respectable shop keeper and clerk class not much of any rowdy element but all were bitterly hostile and there seems no doubt the car would have been wrecked if Mrs. Churchill had not been there. The police were absolutely of no account in the surging crowd and the car was balanced on two wheels when some man called out 'For God's sake Boys, mind the lady – do no harm' and this gave the touch in the right direction and they got the car straight again. The police believed it was touch and go, so the Lord Mayor sent Winston a message in his marquee that he had better move earlier than was expected as he could not guarantee a safe return after work when the mill hands would be out. Winston pencilled back an order to have the military out and line the streets. McMordie replied that this would be the last straw and if this was done there must be blood and so Winston reluctantly agreed to a special and mercifully got away safely before Belfast realized he was gone.



# The Covenant

The Ulster Solemn League and Covenant was designed to bind Unionists in Ulster together in opposition to the Home Rule Bill. On 'Ulster Day', the 28 September 1912, the Covenant was signed in over 500 locations across Ulster. The largest turnout was at the City Hall in Belfast where Sir Edward Carson and the other Unionist leaders signed. A total of 237,368 men signed the Covenant and 234,046 women signed the corresponding Women's Declaration.



**Image 3** - Sir Edward Carson and other Unionist leaders signing the Ulster Covenant at Belfast City Hall, 28 September 1912. (PRONI Reference: INF/7/A/2/47).

**Source 6 - Text of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant, 1912, signed on 28 September 1912. (PRONI Reference: D1327/20/3/1).**

Ulster's Solemn League and Covenant.

Being convinced in our consciences that Home Rule would be disastrous to the material well-being of Ulster as well as of the whole of Ireland, subversive of our civil and religious freedom, destructive of our citizenship and perilous to the unity of the Empire, we, whose names are under written, men of Ulster, loyal subjects of Gracious Majesty King George V., humbly relying on the God whom our fathers in days of stress and trial confidently trusted, do hereby pledge ourselves in solemn covenant throughout this our time of threatened calamity to stand by one another in defending for ourselves and our children our cherished position of equal citizenship in the United Kingdom and in using all means which may be found necessary to defeat the present conspiracy to set up a Home Rule Parliament in Ireland.

And in the event of such a Parliament being forced upon us we further solemnly and mutually pledge ourselves to refuse to recognise its authority.

In sure confidence that God will defend the right we hereto subscribe our names.

And further, we individually declare that we have not already signed this covenant.

**Source 7 - Text of the Women's Declaration in support of the Ulster Solemn League and Covenant, signed on 28 September 1912. (PRONI Reference: D1327/3).**

We, whose names are underwritten, women of Ulster, and loyal subjects of our gracious King, being firmly persuaded that Home Rule would be disastrous to our country, desire to associate ourselves with the men of Ulster in their uncompromising opposition to the Home Rule Bill now before Parliament, whereby it is proposed to drive Ulster out of her cherished place in the Constitution of the United Kingdom and to place her under the domination and control of a Parliament in Ireland.

Praying that from this calamity God will save Ireland, we hereto subscribe our names.

**Source 8 - Text of a proposed new covenant, written by the Nationalist Captain Jack White and read at a meeting of Protestant Home Rulers in Ballymoney, 24 October 1913. Taken from a printed pamphlet, A Protestant Protest. Jack White, was born in Broughshane in County Antrim, the son of Field Marshal Sir George White. He served in the British Army during the South African War (1899-1902) but later supported Irish Nationalism. In 1913-14 he commanded the Irish Citizen Army and Irish Volunteer units. (PRONI Reference: T2362/2).**

Captain White then read the following new 'Covenant', which was received with loud applause:

'Being convinced in our conscience that Home Rule would not be disastrous to the national well-being of Ulster, and that, moreover, the responsibility of self-government would strengthen the popular forces in other provinces, would pave the way to a civil and religious freedom which we do not now possess, and give scope for a spirit of citizenship, we, whose names are underwritten, Irish citizens, Protestants, and loyal supporters of Irish nationality, relying under God on the proved good feeling and democratic instincts of our fellow-countrymen of other creeds, hereby pledge ourselves to stand by one another and our country in the troublous days that are before us, and more especially to help one another when our liberties are threatened by any non-statutory body that may be set up in Ulster or elsewhere. We intend to abide by the just laws of the lawful Parliament of Ireland until such time as it may prove itself hostile to democracy. In sure confidence that God will stand by those who stand by the people, irrespective of class or creed, we hereunto subscribe our names.'

# The Ulster Volunteers

The Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) was formed in January 1913 to bring together various Unionist organisations which had been drilling and training with firearms. It was organised on military lines and at its height in early 1914 claimed a membership of 100,000 men across the province of Ulster. It was commanded by a retired British Army officer, Lieutenant General Sir George Richardson, and a Headquarters was established in the Old Town Hall, Belfast, staffed by a number of former army officers.



**Image 4** - Group of UVF men from County Donegal, c 1914. (PRONI Reference: D1422/B/14/86).



**Source 9 - Letter from William Copeland Trimble, appealing for funds for the Enniskillen Horse, a unit affiliated to the Ulster Volunteer Force, 9 March 1914. The letter includes an endorsement from Sir Edward Carson, the Ulster Unionist leader. (PRONI Reference: D2023/17).**

The Ulster Volunteer Force,  
The Enniskillen Horse,

HEAD QUARTERS, ENNISKILLEN,

March 9th, 1914.

SIR,

I am driven to appeal to you to assist to provide our Troopers with a waterproof cape, for which purpose we need from £500 to £550 plus other equipment.

We live on the border of the rain zone of North-West Ireland. On recent occasions when the men have paraded for English Political Deputations, so that as our visitors, coming from Munster and Connaught and setting their foot for the first time on Ulster soil, they should see a sample of the Ulster Volunteers, and a salute given to our King and flag, the men had been in the saddle from early morning till evening, and were soaked through with pelting rain and cold snow.

They have themselves subscribed magnificently - not only in providing uniform dress and good horses and equipment, but a drum-horse and band, lances and pennons, lance buckets, bandoliers and rifles, and all the necessary equipment for their needs. But an additional tax of 20s or 25s per man, to provide them with a much-needed garment to shelter them from inclement weather, is more than I can ask of them, seeing that each day they muster here costs them 5s each. They have made many and great sacrifices. Their overcoats are unsuitable.

May I solicit your kind assistance to this deserving object? I know that there are, unhappily, only too many claims upon all our pockets. But it is a time of national crisis: and the health and comfort of the men who have made and are making great sacrifices in a great cause deserve assistance.

With some confidence then, I appeal to the public to help us.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

W. COPELAND TRIMBLE,

Commander Enniskillen Horse.

5, EATON Place, S.W.,

February 24, 1914.

Dear Mr Trimble,—I heartily congratulate you on the success of the Enniskillen Horse and all they have done and are doing to maintain our position in the United Kingdom. I am sure as their Commander you are proud of their devotion to yourself personally and to the cause which we are fighting for. I will feel greatly obliged to you, if you will let them know how closely I follow all they are doing, and how much I appreciate the sacrifices they make.

As their leader I have no doubt every man of them will be ready at any moment to obey the call of duty, and I feel very proud to have such followers.

Please convey to them my personal thanks and warm affection.

Yours sincerely,

EDWARD CARSON.

W. Copeland Trimble, Esq.,

Commander Enniskillen Horse,

Headquarters, Enniskillen.

**Source 10 - An Ulster Volunteer Force Order, issued by the UVF Headquarters in May 1914.  
(PRONI Reference: D1238/15).**

ULSTER VOLUNTEER FORCE ORDERS.

U.V.F. O. 56 1914

INSPECTION PARADE AND PRESENTATION OF COLOURS, 1st and 2nd BATTALIONS WEST DOWN REGIMENT. The General Officer Commanding has much pleasure in publishing his remarks on the Inspection of the above Battalions, taken at LENADERG, on Saturday, 23rd May, 1914, on the occasion of the Presentation of Colours by Mrs Holt Waring, and the women of West Down. The two Battalions formed an impressive Parade, presenting a fine serviceable appearance, well equipped and well turned out. The general drill and discipline was excellent, the Parade movements were executed with steadiness and precision. In the march past dressing and distances were carefully maintained. Great credit is due to Captain Holt Waring and the Officers and men under his command for the general efficiency of the Corps.

The Detachment of the Ulster Volunteer Medical and Nursing Corps is a smart and capable unit, reflecting great credit on all concerned.

The Despatch Riders were a strong, intelligent lot of men, with good serviceable machines.

U.V.F. O. 57. 1914.

DISCIPLINE. The Third Reading of the Home Rule Bill in the House of Commons on Monday, 25th May, 1914, called for special measures in Ulster. The Ulster Volunteer Force were warned should the necessity arise, to hold themselves in readiness for any emergency. The General Officer Commanding is pleased to place on record his high appreciation of the discipline, common sense, and discipline displayed by the Force on this occasion, and desires to thank Officers and men for their co-operation in successfully carrying out his orders.

Derry was a centre requiring special tact and discretion; the General Officer Commanding wishes to convey to all concerned in Derry City his appreciation of their splendid discipline.

**Source 11 - Letter from Robert Nesbitt, adjutant to the 2nd Battalion, South Down Regiment, UVF, describing an incident in Bessbrook, October 1913, during a route march by Volunteers from Newry. (PRONI Reference: D1540/3/14).**

1, Mountain View Terrace

Newry

8th Oct. 1913

Sir,

An unfortunate incident occurred last Friday night during a route march of the Newry Volunteers to Bessbrook.

The Local Band came with us and I instructed them as to the road to take and I was surprised when I found that they passed by the turning arranged. When I went up to the leader of the band he informed me they would go on to the 'Pump' a little further on and as we were entering the Village of Bessbrook I consented. A policeman (Bessbrook) appeared on the scene shortly afterwards and informed me he had been requested by the principal Unionist leaders in the Village viz: - Mr Smith, Secretary, Unionist Club and Mr McKnight, District Grand Master, Orangemen and others to ask me not to march the Volunteers to this 'Pump' as it was 'out of bounds' neither parties Unionist or Nationalist being allowed there. So I went up to the Band Leader and asked him to halt the band but they would not do so and said they would go to the 'Pump' and very threatening language was used to me and I was told I had no control over the Band (which I admit) and consigned to 'Hades' etc. etc.

I immediately wheeled the Volunteers to the left down a side road and halted them, the Band going straight ahead. There was some grumbling in the ranks about the Band and I got the opinion of three Committee Members viz. Messrs Agnew, Ferris and Mullan as to the course to be taken. They unanimously decided not to wait for the band coming back but to march back without it (I might mention that a few men of the front section went on with the Band). I turned the Battalion about, right wheel and marched back accordingly.

Instructor Morrow called on the men to fall out and follow the Band inciting them to disobey orders (really mutiny) but I am proud to say when I called the Volunteers to stand steady and obey my orders not a single Volunteer fell out showing splendid discipline of which any Line Regiment might feel proud. It appears to have been a pre-arranged affair by the Band and we would be well rid of them and also any others refusing to obey orders.

I am very sorry to have to bring this to your notice and for troubling you with such a long letter but I think it is necessary so that you may decide the matter.

The Volunteers are marching to Carnmeen tonight on the kind invitation of Mr Moorhead.

We will have three Armagh Pipers with us.

Yours obediently,

Robert Nesbitt

---

# The Irish Volunteers

**The Irish Volunteers were founded in November 1913 by Nationalists as a response to the Ulster Volunteers. The Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) was initially reluctant to endorse the movement but in June 1914 the IPP leader John Redmond gave his support. Membership reached around 180,000 by the Summer of 1914. In September 1914 the movement split with the majority joining the National Volunteers, who supported Redmond's call to enlist in the British Army during the War.**

**Source 12 - Manifesto of the Irish Volunteers issued in November 1913 and reissued in June 1914. (PRONI Reference: D1507/A/4/18).**

At a time when legislative proposals universally confessed to be of vital concern for the future of Ireland have been put forward, and, are awaiting decision, a plan has been deliberately adopted by one of the great English political parties, advocated by the leaders of that party and by its numerous organs in the Press, and brought systematically to bear on English public opinion, to make the display of military force and the menace of armed violence the determining factor in the future relations between this country and Great Britain.

The party which has thus substituted open force for the semblance of civil government is seeking by this means not merely to decide an immediate political issue of grave concern to this Nation, but also to obtain for itself the future control of all our national affairs. It is plain to every man that the people of Ireland, if they acquiesce in this new policy by their inaction, will consent to the surrender, not only of their rights as a nation, but of their civic rights as men.

The Act of Union deprived the Irish nation of the power to direct its own course and to develop and use its own resources for its own benefit. It gave us, instead, the meagre and seldom effective right of throwing our votes into the vast and complicated movement of British politics. Since the Act of Union a long series of repressive statutes has endeavoured to deal with the incessant discontent of the Irish people by depriving them of various rights common to all who live under the British Constitution. The new policy goes further than the Act of Union, and further than all subsequent Coercion Acts taken together. It proposes to lease us the political franchise in name, and to annihilate it in fact. If we fail to take such measures as will effectually defeat this policy, we become politically the most degraded population in Europe, and no longer worthy of the name of Nation.

Are we to rest inactive, in the hope that the course of politics in Great Britain may save us from the degradation openly threatened against us? British politics are controlled by British interests, and are complicated by problems of great importance to the people of Great Britain. In a crisis of this kind, the duty of safeguarding our own rights is our duty first and foremost. They have rights who dare maintain them. If we remain quiescent, by what title can we expect the people of Great Britain to turn aside from their own pressing concerns to defend us? Will not such an attitude of itself mark us out as a people unworthy of defence?

Such is the occasion, not altogether unfortunate, which has brought about the inception of the Irish Volunteer movement. But the Volunteers, once they have been enrolled, will form a prominent element in the national life under a National Government. The Nation will maintain its Volunteer organisation as a guarantee of the liberties which the Irish people shall have secured.

If ever in history a people could say that an opportunity was given them by God's will to make an honest and manly stand for their rights, that opportunity is given us to-day. The stress of industrial effort, the relative peace and prosperity of recent years, may have dulled the sense of the full demands of civic duty. We may forget that the powers of the platform, the Press, and the polling booth are derived from the conscious resolve of the people to maintain their rights and liberties. From time immemorial, it has been held by every race of mankind to be the right and duty of a freeman to defend his freedom with all his resources and with his life itself. The exercise of that right distinguishes the freeman from the serf, the discharge of that duty distinguishes him from the coward.

To drill, to learn the use of arms, to acquire the habit of concerted and disciplined action, to form a citizen army from a population now at the mercy of almost any organised aggression — this, beyond all doubt, is a program that appeals to all Ireland, but especially to young Ireland. We begin at once in Dublin, and we are confident that the movement will be taken up without delay all over the country. Public opinion has already and quite spontaneously formed itself into an eager desire for the establishment of the Irish Volunteers.

The object proposed for the Irish Volunteers is to secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland. Their duties will be defensive and protective, and they will not contemplate either aggression or domination. Their ranks are open to all able-bodied Irishmen without distinction of creed, politics or social grade. Means will be found whereby Irishmen unable to serve as ordinary Volunteers will be enabled to aid the Volunteer forces in various capacities. There will also be work for women to do, and there are signs that the women of Ireland, true to their record, are especially enthusiastic for the success of the Irish Volunteers.

We propose for the Volunteers' organisation the widest possible basis. Without any other association or classification, the Volunteers will be enrolled according to the district in which they live. As soon as it is found feasible, the district sections will be called upon to join in making provision for the general administration and discipline, and for united co-operation. The provisional Committee which has acted up to the present will continue to offer its services until an elective body is formed to replace it.

A proportion of time spared, not from work, but from pleasure and recreation, a voluntary adoption of discipline, a purpose firmly and steadily carried through, will renew the vitality of the Nation. Even that degree of self-discipline will bring back to every town, village, and countryside a consciousness that has long been forbidden them — the sense of freemen who have fitted themselves to defend the cause of freedom.

In the name of National Unity, of National Dignity, of National and Individual Liberty, a Manly Citizenship, we appeal to our countrymen to recognise and accept without hesitation the opportunity that has been granted them to join the ranks of the Irish Volunteers, and to make the movement now begun not unworthy of the historic title which it has adopted.

---



**Source 13 - Irish Volunteers enrolment form. (PRONI Reference: D1507/A/4/19).**

Óglaigh na hÉireann - Irish Volunteers.

OBJECTS.

1. To secure and maintain the rights and liberties common to all the people of Ireland.
2. To train, discipline, and equip for this purpose an Irish Volunteer Force.
3. To unite in the service of Ireland, Irishmen of every creed and of every party and class.

ENROLMENT FORM TO BE SIGNED BY ALL IRISH VOLUNTEERS.

I, the undersigned, desire to be enrolled for service in Ireland as a member of the Irish Volunteer Force. I subscribe to the constitution of the Irish Volunteers and pledge my willing obedience to every article of it. I declare that in joining the Irish Volunteer Force I set before myself the stated objects of the Irish Volunteers, and no others.

# The Curragh Incident

In March 1914, amidst rumours that the British Government intended to use the army to enforce its authority in Ulster, 60 officers from the 3rd Cavalry Brigade based at the Curragh Camp in Co. Kildare announced that they would resign rather than act against Unionists in Ulster. While sometimes referred to as a 'mutiny' this was not technically the case as no orders were ever disobeyed. The brigade commander, Brigadier-General Hubert Gough, subsequently travelled to the War Office, where he was assured that no military operations in Ulster were planned. This assurance had been given without the authority of the government and the Secretary for War, Colonel John Seely, and the Chief of the Imperial General Staff, Field Marshal Sir John French, subsequently resigned.

Unionists in Britain and Ulster saw the incident as evidence of a plot by the British Government to disarm or attack the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in order to force acceptance of the Home Rule Bill. Liberals and Irish Nationalists regarded it as an unprecedented intervention by the army and the mainly Conservative officer corps in a political dispute.

**Source 14 - Extracts from an account of events at the Curragh Camp, 20 to 21 March 1914 by Lieutenant Colonel R W Breeks. Breeks commanded III Brigade, Royal Horse Artillery, which formed part of the 3rd Cavalry Brigade commanded by Brigadier General Hubert Gough. (PRONI Reference: D1507/A/5/18).**

Newbridge.

27th March 1914.

Friday March 20th 1914

Order received from General Officer Commanding, 3rd Cavalry Brigade 'All Officers to attend at 16th Lancers Mess at 3.30 pm'.

Brigadier General Gough then made us a perfectly calm brief statement to the effect that the General Officer Commanding in Chief, Ireland, had called him and other Generals to a Conference and had informed them:

That immediate active operations against Ulster were imminent.

That he, General Gough, had been ordered to decide at once, himself, and to obtain a decision that night in time to forward to Head Quarters, from each officer in his command on the following ultimatum:

- i) Officers whose actual home was in Ulster were to be permitted to be absent from duty during the operations in Ulster and could disappear.

- ii) All other officers had to decide if they would carry out their duties and obey all orders even if operations were to be carried out to the extreme limits of war against Ulster. But if their consciences did not allow them to do the above, they were to send in their resignations and would be dismissed from the service.

General Gough then told us that, being an Irishman, his mind was made up and he had resigned his commission. He told us that in this crisis he declined to give advice to anyone. We must each and all decide ourselves as our consciences dictated. He then dismissed us to our own quarters to decide. We, the Royal Horse Artillery, were to telephone numbers up to the Cavalry Brigade Office, under the two headings, to catch the 5.30 post, if possible. I told my Officers to meet me in the Mess in an hour's time and stayed behind with General Gough to see if there was any further information to be obtained. We learnt that the same ultimatum had been presented by General Fergusson to the 5th Division. I met my officers in the Mess and told them that my views were as follows:

- a) That the Army was being used as a pawn in a party game.
- b) That therefore, in my opinion, the Irish Officers' duty was clear, viz., that no option was left them except to take advantage of the Ulster clause or resign.
- c) That the case of other officers was different—the call on their feelings, conscience and religion were not so definite and that they must weigh very carefully their duty to their King, their men, and their oath, against their very strong feelings on the subject of the projected operations, which as far as I could see, were a party move and totally unwarranted by the circumstances at that time in Ulster on the plea of law and order. That I could not honestly in the exceptional circumstances of the case put any pressure on them, except that they were to weigh very carefully and honestly both sides; As far as I was concerned I was of opinion that my feelings toward the political situation were not of so deep a nature, as to override my feelings towards my duty to the Army. That also two wrongs did not make a right and that I did not think that I ought to break with the long tradition of non-political action which the Army held because the other side had chosen to use the Army as a party weapon. But that I was certainly of opinion that a contrary decision on their part was fully justified.

The decision came to, telephoned to Head Quarters, Cavalry Brigade, was as follows:

Officers domiciled in Ulster 2

Officers resigning commissions 6

Officers staying on in the Army 5

This information with numbers from each Cavalry Regiment was forwarded to Head Quarters, Irish Command, with covering letter as appears in the published reports of correspondence in white paper C.D. 7318, signed by General Gough March 20th.

**Source 15 - Letter from Miss Mary Stoney, Raphoe, Co. Donegal, to Sir Edward Carson, 17 April 1914. (PRONI Reference: D1507/A/5/22).**

April 17 1914

OAKFIELD PARK, RAPHOE

Dear Sir Edward,

I see by the papers that the 'plot against Ulster' is not to be allowed to drop, so perhaps the following particulars may be of some use to you.

I was living inside Kildare Royal Field Artillery barracks at the time and 3 guns from each battery were mobilized, that is 9 howitzers and 9 18-pounder guns. Live shell was packed with them, the ammunition being taken from sealed cases, as is usually done for the annual practice camp alone. Identification discs were served out to each man, as in active service (I saw one.)

The order came suddenly, just after we had heard of the sudden resignation of the Cavalry officers. The men were up half the night loading and packing. They were ordered to 'stand fast' in full service dress all Sunday (22nd) expecting orders to leave each moment. The men fully believed they were being sent against Ulster.

On Saturday (21st) the General Sir C[harles]. Ferguson came to Kildare and assembling both Brigades made an impassioned plea to them to do their duty. From Friday 20th, for a fortnight, 62 sentries mounted guard every night with ball ammunition and rifles. (This is now over.)

So great was the tension that on the Saturday a small prayer-meeting was held to avert civil war. I mention this to show how real was the belief that war was imminent.

I do not think the guns though ordered North would have been used against Ulster, though I have no doubt they were intended to be used.

Very sincerely yours,

(Miss) Mary Stoney

**Source 16 - Pamphlet containing an account, reprinted from the Belfast News Letter of 18 April 1914, of the 'Plot Against Ulster'. (PRONI Reference: D989/D/13/A).**

THE PLOT EXPOSED.

Important Statement by Unionist Council

THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS DISCLOSED.

Startling Revelations.

INVADING FORCE OF 25,000 MEN

Blockade by Land and Sea.

POLICE TO PROVOKE HOSTILITIES.

Unionist Headquarters to be seized.

SEARCH FOR CONCEALED ARMS.

A meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ulster Unionist Council was held at the offices, Old Town Hall, Belfast, on 17th inst., for the purpose of conferring with Sir Edward Carson, who had returned to the city in the morning after his visit to County Derry. The Marquis of Londonderry, K.G. (president), occupied the chair. The proceedings were, of course, conducted in private, but the business transacted was of a most important character, and subsequently a statement was handed to the representatives of the Press concerning the recent attempted military operations against Ulster, which have been the theme of so much discussion in Parliament and elsewhere. This statement, which had been adopted by the Standing Committee, on the motion of Lord Londonderry, seconded by Sir Edward Carson, will be read with deep interest, not only throughout the Imperial Province, but also in every part of the United Kingdom, for it sets forth clearly and succinctly the startling facts which have come to the knowledge of the Council in regard to the Government's motives and methods, and amply justifies all that has been said by the Unionist leaders as to the dastardly nature of the plot to coerce Ulster loyalists — a plot that failed owing to the courageous stand taken by those Army officers who decided to hand in their resignations rather than allow themselves to be made the tools of unscrupulous Ministers.

# Gun-running

**From its inception the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) had been acquiring small numbers of firearms mainly through legitimate channels, firearms legislation then being much laxer than it is today. In April 1914 some 20,000 rifles and 2,000,000 rounds of ammunition were purchased in Germany by Colonel Fred Crawford, the UVF Director of Ordnance. These rifles were landed at Larne, Bangor and Donaghadee and distributed around Ulster in defiance of the Police and Customs Service. The gun-running was a major propaganda coup for Unionists and inspired Nationalists to mount a similar operation. Rifles intended for the Irish Volunteers were landed at Howth, near Dublin, in August 1914. This led to a confrontation at Bachelors Walk, Dublin between the army and a hostile crowd in which three people were killed when troops opened fire.**

**Source 17 - Extracts from a memorandum by Captain Frank Hall, military secretary to the UVF, describing the gun-running of April 1914. Written 1 May 1914. (PRONI Reference: D1496/8).**

Prior to the passing of the second reading (for the third time) of the Home Rule Bill it was decided that it would be necessary to fully arm the U.V.F. ...

Accordingly (1) (F. H. Crawford) was sent over to the Continent to buy a full cargo of arms and ammunition and to arrange shipment. This he did; the full detail of his movements are known only to a few, but his plans were watched by the German authorities. ... The whole matter was kept absolutely in the hands of a small committee consisting principally of (3) (Craig), (4) (Richardson), (5) (Spender), (6) (Lord Leitrim), (7) (Kelly) and no details were given out.

The actual details for the work which was carried out on the night of the 24th/25th were not taken in hand until midday on the 23rd. A fairly accurate account has now got into the papers.

Headquarters U.V.F. moved from the Old Town Hall to 'Maryville'. The Old Town Hall being considered (rightly) untenable if a row started or if police interfered.

Orders were issued to mobilize Belfast, Down, Antrim, Derry and Armagh and such roads as were to be used in Tyrone to be picketed by local battalions.

All motor sections were mobilized and placed under orders of local commanders. Cars for Larne assembled at Antrim. Those for Bangor at various places.

Arrangements were made to 'short circuit' (not to cut or damage) all telegraph and 'phone wires to Larne at Magheramorne, at 9.15 p.m. after last train had gone down. All lines on Bangor Road and rail to be 'shorted' at midnight except the Glasgow trunk lines.

The private telephone connecting Holywood Barracks to exchange was tapped and a man sat at it from 10 p.m. till 3 a.m.



General Post Office exchange was watched carefully - all operators being special men - also night telegraph staff!

The staff were distributed: McCammon at Bangor, Spender at Larne, G.O.C., C.S.O., Davis and self at headquarters; also Lloyd Campbell. Craig at Donaghadee. 10 motor cyclists at Larne, 10 at Bangor, 12 at headquarters, 5 at Donaghadee.

I dined with the Ropers, having arranged a code message with headquarters in case R. was called up to go to barracks.

At 10 p.m. I went round all districts in the city. Battalions were mobilizing everywhere; no excitement, no disturbance anywhere. I visited the guard at O.T.H. and walked down to Musgrave Channel. Found about 1000 men, E. Belfast Regiment, U.V.F., fallen in on roadway about 20 yards from wharf. Steam up on two cranes ordered for the S.S. Balmerino. ...

At 11 p.m. a vessel came dead slow up the channel and took about 25 minutes to get alongside. By this time 15 customs officers under Mr Jones, Chief Customs Surveyor, Belfast, had collected. As the vessel came alongside the customs hailed her, 'What's your cargo?' Skipper replied, 'I am instructed to tell you it's coal.'...

At 3.30 p.m. I received orders from G.O.C. to allow the customs to inspect the Balmerino and went down again to Musgrave Channel. I wouldn't have missed that job for £1000. 4 a.m., just daylight, I got down to her, found 1500 U.V.F. fallen in, 15 customs men, 2 harbour police, Commissioner Smith, District Inspector Dunlop (detection staff), probably 6 detectives and a few Royal Irish Constabulary men, not more than 4. ...

I went up to the ship - with Smith on one side of me, Dunlop on the other and ordered the mate to remove hatches for the customs. The 15 customs men stood round like mutes round a grave. Their faces when those hatches were taken off, I shall never forget. After hold empty; forward hold, 40 tons of bunker coal!!

I returned to headquarters, 4.30 a.m., found reports all correct from Larne. At Larne the Mountjoy berthed at 10.10 p.m. and immediately commenced unloading on to the quay. At the same time two small vessels were brought alongside her. Roma took 30 tons and was to steam straight round to Workman & Clark's yard. Innismurray took 20 tons to Donaghadee. The Mountjoy herself took 80 tons to Bangor.

The only hitch in the whole proceedings was with the Roma. She had been chartered in a hurry that morning (Friday). Her crew were 'wrong' and we had to put men on her to bring her round. ...

At Bangor all worked well, ditto at Donaghadee, although they did not start to unload there till 6 a.m. and finished at 8 a.m.! ...

All the stuff as it was landed was immediately carted away. Larne stuff was sent straight away up country - some as far as Omagh. Bangor and Donaghadee stuff was dumped in depots. They shot some 1300 rifles on to Bob Maxwell at Finnebrogue, much to his annoyance, but of course he played up. All this was practically distributed by Thursday 30th.



**Image 5** - Souvenir booklet entitled, **With the Gun-runners of Ulster**, issued c.1914. (PRONI Reference: D3366/1/5).

**Source 18 - Memorandum by Sir John Ross, Commissioner of the Dublin Metropolitan Police, on the landing of guns by the Irish Volunteers at Howth, Co. Dublin and subsequent events from 26 to 28 July 1914. (PRONI Reference: D2004/4/75).**

At about 3 p.m. on Sunday 26th July 1914 when about to leave my house for the afternoon I received a report from the Sup[erintendan]t. Headquarters to the effect that some 2,000 rifles were landed at Howth on that day, in open daylight and about 1,200 National Volunteers were now marching towards Dublin with them; that the R.I.C. and Military had been informed and that three tram-car loads of Police were going to intercept them, also that communications were being made to the Military; that the Assistant Commissioner [W. V. Harrel] had informed the Under Secretary [James Dougherty].

I went to my office arriving there shortly before 3.30 p.m. On arrival I learnt that the Assistant Commissioner had already left by motorcar, and I immediately made up my mind to follow him. I heard however before I could carry out my intention that the yacht engaged in the gun running was reported to be crossing Dublin Bay and appeared to be heading for Bullock Harbour. I thought it possible that another and perhaps a more important gun running operation might be contemplated south of Kingstown and I conceived it to be my duty to make arrangements to meet such a contingency should it arise. I learnt at the same time that the Under Secretary had, about the time the Assistant Commissioner was leaving or had left, been asking for him. I cannot remember the exact details, but I had it in my mind that the Under Secretary was cognisant of the Assistant Commissioner's arrangements.

I myself had no doubt that his arrangements were proper to meet the occasion, and that it was his duty to enforce the Proclamation and to prevent any armed invasion of Dublin by an illegal force who in open day had defied the King's Government. Dublin is the seat of the Irish Government and in this important particular it differs from any other town in Ireland; and it was the Assistant Commissioner's duty as it was my duty to preserve good order in Dublin. I had moreover no doubt that this gun running enterprise differed from any other that had been attempted elsewhere in Ireland, and that it was an audacious attempt to intimidate Government as well as to produce terror among His Majesty's peaceable subjects.

I submit that if it had been intended that the Proclamation should be ignored by the Police authorities, or if an invasion of Dublin by a band of armed men was to be permitted that the Police should have been clearly informed beforehand. There were rumours of gun running enterprises and no one could tell when such an event might not suddenly take place near Dublin. As a matter of fact such an event did suddenly take place on Sunday 26th, and it was hardly time then to consider what should be done or what should not be done.

It was not until early 4.30 p.m. that I learnt that the fear I apprehended of a gun running operation near Kingstown was groundless, for I then heard that the yacht had entered Kingstown harbour and was in the hands of the Customs officials.

Among the messages received in my office was one purporting to come from a gentleman somewhere in the Malahide Road to the effect that the Volunteers were shooting at the Police and that a force of military was required. I was naturally anxious as to the result, and represented to the General Officer Commanding troops in Dublin that a stronger body of troops would be required. He concurred and arrangements were made to dispatch a Battalion. I may state at once that the latter as it happened never got up to nor near the point where the Police and Volunteers came into collision.

Shortly before 5 p.m. news reached me that there had been a collision between the party under the Assistant Commissioner and the Volunteers; but as usual the report was accompanied by an exaggerated rumour, in this case it having been said that one of the soldiers had been so badly hit he was dying or was already dead.

At about 5 p.m. I received in my office a closed envelope addressed to the Assistant Commissioner by the Under Secretary. I opened it and read it, and found the minute which is already known. I read it with surprise, but felt it my duty to send it to the Assistant Commissioner and this I did. I then apprised the G.O.C. of its purport, adding that it would now be necessary to protect the small body of Police; for I felt that this small body might be placed in a very embarrassing position.

Shortly after this, the Under Secretary spoke to me on the telephone and asked me if I had any news, and I told him of the collision of which I had just heard. I should mention that he had not asked for me, nor as far as I am aware did he ask where I was. I had nothing precisely to tell him, till the news came of which I have spoken.

Then there came a lull for nearly an hour, and I heard that the Assistant Commissioner's Party and the Volunteers were still near each other. This news was followed by another message that the latter were moving away and that shortly the incident would be at an end. I think it was some time during this period that the Lord Chancellor and the Under Secretary came to my office and asked me if I had any news, and on hearing what I had to say they left. I do not remark that either of them asked me anything of the minute just referred to.

About 6 p.m. the Assistant Commissioner returned to the Castle and told me at once that he had received the Under Secretary's minute on his way back when the whole incident was over. He told me rapidly what had happened and then he and I went to the Under Secretary's office where we found the Under Secretary and the Lord Chancellor.

The Assistant Commissioner then told his story. The minute as far as I remember was not referred to, nor was any allusion made to it. The Assistant Commissioner was not asked if he had received it, nor at what time. During this interview we heard that the military party had been attacked in the streets of Dublin and that they had fired.

Afterwards I asked the Assistant Commissioner to make a report of the whole transaction adding that I wished to forward it with a covering minute of my own.

Next morning (27th July) on arriving at my office, I found that the Assistant had been summoned to go and see the Under Secretary and shortly afterwards I followed him when I saw him returning to his office. He told me that after he had left me the night before (Sunday night) the Under Secretary had spoken to him on the telephone, and had informed him that the Chief Secretary wished him to answer some questions and that he was to bring the answers early on Monday morning; he had said he had been to see the Under Secretary for this purpose and that now he was going to write his detailed report. There was no time then for him to tell me what these questions were which the Chief Secretary had put to him, nor to give his answers. I only saw them a few days later.

# The Provisional Government

**As part of its campaign to resist the implementation of the Home Rule Bill the Ulster Unionist Council (UUC) made plans to take over the administration of Ulster in the event of the Bill being passed. The scheme for a Provisional Government was approved in September 1913. Although the UCC made no attempt to take control of Ulster, meetings of the 'Provisional Government' were held.**

**Source 19 - Poster proclaiming the establishment of the Provisional Government of Ulster prepared in September 1913. (Ulster Museum).**

ULSTER PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

PROCLAMATION

TO ALL WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

WHEREAS ULSTERMEN, Free Citizens of a United Kingdom, born into procession of Full Rights and Privileges under ONE KING and ONE IMPERIAL PARLIAMENT, are threatened with the calamity of being deprived of their Birth right and being Forcibly Subjected to a Nationalist Parliament and Executive regardless of their steadfast allegiance in the past to their King and Empire

BE IT KNOWN

That, for the public Safety and Security of Civil and Religious liberty to ALL Classes and Creeds duly elected Delegates and Covenanters representative of all parts of Ulster, in the City of Belfast this day assembled finally settled the form of

PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT

WITHIN THE PROVINCE OF ULSTER.

THE DATE upon which it shall become effective, together with instructions regarding all other matters necessary for Repudiating and Resisting the Decrees of such Nationalist Parliament or Executive and for taking over the Government of the Province IN TRUST for the British Nation will be made public as and when it shall be deemed expedient

ON BEHALF OF THE CENTRAL AUTHORITY. EDWARD CARSON.

LONDONDERRY.

ABERCORN.



JOHN YOUNG.

THOMAS SINCLAIR.

THOMAS ANDREWS.

OLD TOWN HALL BELFAST. 24th SEPTEMBER 1913.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

**Source 20 - Extract from a contingency plan drawn up by Wilfrid Spender, a member of the Headquarters staff of the Ulster Volunteer Force, to be used on the establishment of a Provisional Government by Ulster Unionists, c. 1914. (PRONI Reference: D1295/2/7).**

If the Home Rule Bill is carried on with, the time may come for the establishment of the Provisional Government. If the Imperial Government has taken steps to draft in Troops or Police prior to the proclamation of the Provisional Government, a Contingency will have arisen which is dealt with under one of the other headings. If not, the first steps which will be necessary will be to procure and maintain recognition of the Provisional Government by those departments of the state which the Provisional Government intends to take over and also by the Companies and Citizens of Ulster.

A very careful list should be prepared, and given to the military authorities, showing which departments the Provisional Government wish to administer themselves, or control :-

The first is the R[oyal] Irish Constabulary. Does the Provisional Government intend that these should be disarmed: a) throughout Ulster, b) in those districts where it can be effected without exercising much violence or, c) Is the R[oyal] I[rish] Constabulary to be permitted to carry on with its duties so long as no active steps are taken against the Provisional Government?

When a decision is being given on this matter, it will doubtless be taken into consideration, that although the disarming of Police in many County districts can be carried on without much opposition, if careful arrangements are made beforehand, the attempt to do so in Belfast and Londonderry may give rise to considerable opposition and delay, it may quite probably call for the active intervention of the Military Forces, especially if any attempt is made to storm the Police Barracks. On the other hand, a plan to deal quickly and suddenly with all City Police in the open, and to cut them off from their Barracks might meet with a considerable measure of success.

A carefully prepared plan or plans should be determined at an early date regarding this matter, and the details considered.

As regards the other government departments, it should be settled if any action is to be taken in regard to Customs Excise, Land Valuation Department, etc. and whether any military guards are required for the UVF at these places.

The Post and Telegraph Office deserves especial attention. If the Imperial Government is left in undisturbed possession of the Telegraph and Telephone Service a very considerable advantage will be given to them, which will greatly handicap us. As this is partly a military question, it is suggested that our policy should establish a censorship in the Telegraph and Telephone Service, by allowing the present Postal employees to continue their work, certain sympathisers being put in authority to settle what messages may pass through and what may not, these censors will require military backing, which must be arranged for, though it should be kept as much out of sight as possible.

## Part II: The First World War, 1914-1918

The First World War must be seen as a key event in modern Irish history serving as the catalyst for the Easter Rising, the decline of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) and rise of Sinn Féin, and the partition of Ireland, with the creation of the two modern Irish states.

The outbreak of the First World War in August 1914 initially appeared to defuse the crisis in Ireland with both Edward Carson, the Irish Unionist leader and John Redmond, leader of the IPP, pledging their support for the British war effort. However, behind the public statements, there was unease within both Nationalism and Unionism about what future direction the Home Rule issue would take.<sup>19</sup> The British Government attempted to park the Home Rule question, passing the Third Home Rule Bill itself in September 1914 but with a clause stating that it would not come into effect until the end of the War, when special provision would be made for Ulster. However, the view of British policy makers that the Irish question could simply wait until the end of the War, was to prove misguided.

While Edward Carson committed himself to what might be termed an 'Empire first' policy, telling Ulster Volunteers at carefully co-ordinated recruiting meetings that, 'if the Empire goes down, we go down' and that 'England's difficulty will not be Ulster's opportunity', his followers were not all convinced by this approach.<sup>20</sup> Some raised concerns that, with Ulster Volunteers serving in the British Army overseas, the British Government would be able to enforce Home Rule on Ireland with little opposition. Ultimately, around 30,000 Ulster Volunteers, out of a force which claimed to have 100,000 members in the summer of 1914, enlisted in the British Army. The bulk of these men were from Belfast, demonstrating the definite differences in socio-economic backgrounds between the city and rural Ulster. Recruitment rates were noticeably low in those rural areas which were to become border counties in 1920.<sup>21</sup>

John Redmond had a harder sell to his followers and was less convincing in delivering it. Nationalists, of all shades, had opposed the South African War of 1899-1902 as an exercise in British imperialism, and advanced Nationalists suggested that the War of 1914-18 was little different. The first real vote of no confidence in Redmond's leadership came when the volunteer movement split. The minority, about 12,000 strong, rejected Redmond's leadership and pro-war policy and were then led by Eoin MacNeill, Professor of Ancient Irish History at University College Dublin. The majority, about 170,000 strong, rebadged themselves as Irish Nationalist Volunteers (INV) and remained under Redmond's leadership.<sup>22</sup> However, through September and October 1914 IPP MPs were addressing rallies and parades of the INV, not to gain recruits for the British Army, but to keep the movement together under Redmond's

---

19 Alvin Jackson, **Judging Redmond & Carson** (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2018), pp. 177-216.

20 Speech by Carson in Coleraine, 5th September 1914, to members of the UVF enlisting in the 36th (Ulster) Division, as reported in **Belfast News-Letter** and **Northern Whig**, 7th September 1914. On this issue more broadly see, Timothy Bowman, William Butler and Michael Wheatley, **The Disparity of Sacrifice: Irish recruitment to the British armed forces 1914-18** (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020), pp. 87-133.

21 David Fitzpatrick, 'Militarism in Ireland, 1900-22', in Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds.), **A Military History of Ireland** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 379-406 and Keith Jeffery, **Ireland and the Great War** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp. 5-36.

22 The Irish Volunteers and Irish National Volunteers of this period still lack a modern study but see F. X. Martin (ed.), **The Irish Volunteers 1913-1915: Recollections and Documents** (Dublin: James Duffy, 1963).

leadership.<sup>23</sup> Only from November 1914 were Irish National Volunteers being encouraged to enlist in the British Army, and while the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) had done this in a series of over 30 rallies held throughout Ulster, organised INV recruiting activity was to be seen only in west Belfast, Derry~Londonderry city and Enniskillen.<sup>24</sup> Nevertheless, it has been estimated that 32,000 Irish National Volunteers ultimately enlisted in the British Army, mainly in the 16th (Irish) Division. Nationalists complained that the War Office did not treat Irish Nationalists very fairly, especially when compared to the Ulster Volunteers who enlisted in the 36th (Ulster) Division, and they certainly had some good cause to complain with few concessions made over officer appointments, regimental titles or divisional badges.<sup>25</sup> Nevertheless, the UVF had a cadre of experienced, retired British Army officers which the INV lacked and, as a force, it was seen to be better trained and better organised, having been formed long before the Irish Volunteers.

Supported by UVF and INV activity, Irish recruitment to the British Army was most impressive during the first six months of the War. After this, i.e. in spring 1915, long before the Easter Rising, it began to falter. Partly this was down to the lack of a proper recruiting organisation and, interestingly, recruitment rates increased markedly in the last six months of the War, when the Irish Recruiting Council was established. At what would otherwise have seemed an inauspicious time to seek Irish recruits, a concerted recruiting campaign - making use of posters, newspaper advertisements and guest speakers - yielded large numbers of recruits, though many were for the Royal Air Force or 'non-combatant' corps, rather than for the historic Irish regiments of the British Army.

Advanced Nationalists and the socialist Irish Citizen Army staged a Rising during the Easter week of 1916. Historians are divided on what the intentions of the leaders of the Rising were and, frustratingly no plans for the Rising survive. Ruth Dudley Edwards argued that Patrick Pearse and others were obsessed by the idea of a 'blood sacrifice' and had no realistic hopes of surviving the Rebellion, but thought that their example would inspire others to oppose British rule.<sup>26</sup> Brian Barton and Michael Foy have argued that the rebels thought that there was a good chance for them to establish an Irish Republic. With British military resources stretched on the Western Front, it was not unrealistic to hope that insufficient forces could be spared to fight a lengthy campaign in Ireland. There were also good prospects of obtaining military support from Germany. Indeed, the **Aud**, carrying a large consignment of arms, principally 10,000 rifles, was intercepted within sight of the coast of Ireland by the Royal Navy, demonstrating just how close German military support came to delivering tangible benefits to the Irish Volunteers. Those planning the rebellion in Dublin also, in Barton's and Foy's view, were not unrealistic in hoping that a wide scale rising in the west of Ireland would see British military forces spread far too thinly throughout the island.<sup>27</sup>

---

23 Bowman, Butler and Wheatley, **The Disparity of Sacrifice**, chapter 2, James McConnel, **The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis** (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013), pp. 297-313 and Michael Wheatley, **Nationalism and the Irish Party: Provincial Ireland 1910-1916** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 199-223.

24 Bowman, Butler and Wheatley, **The Disparity of Sacrifice**, pp. 43-86.

25 Terence Denman, **Ireland's Unknown Soldiers: The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War, 1914-18** (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992), pp. 19-58.

26 Ruth Dudley Edwards, **Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure** (New York: Taplinger Publishing, 1978).

27 Brian Barton and Michael Foy, **The Easter Rising** (Stroud: History Press, 2011), pp. 11-71. For other detailed histories of the Rising see, Fearghal McGarry, **The Rising: Ireland: Easter 1916** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010) and Charles Townshend, **Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion** (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

---

The number of rebels who turned out on Easter Monday, 24 April 1916, after a series of contradictory orders and counter orders, numbered no more than 1,200, though this probably increased to 1,600 during the course of the Rising. They seized a number of important buildings in central Dublin, most famously the General Post Office. Strangely no concerted attempt was made to capture Dublin Castle, the seat of British power in Ireland, and some of the buildings occupied, such as Jacob's Biscuit Factory and the South Dublin Union, were rambling complexes and difficult to defend.

Very quickly, the Rising took on the character of a civil war as the first British Army units to surround rebel positions were reserve battalions of the Irish Regiments; most notably the 3rd Royal Irish Regiment, 3rd Royal Irish Rifles and 10th Royal Dublin Fusiliers. These were under-strength units charged with recruiting men and training them for service overseas, which accounts for their presence in Dublin in 1916. Other Irish Regiments, from the Curragh camp and Belfast, had arrived in Dublin by the afternoon of Tuesday 25 April. On Easter Tuesday, the major British Army reinforcement (men of 59th (2nd North Midland) Division), started to dis-embark at Kingstown (now Dun Laoghaire). On Wednesday 26 April, men of the Sherwood Foresters, serving in the 59th Division, ran into heavy sniper fire at Mount Street Bridge and Northumberland Road, while trying to march into the city (troops going by another route through Donnybrook arrived in central Dublin unscathed). Unsupported by artillery they were sent in a frontal attack around 5 p.m.; it was to take around 2 ½ hours and 234 casualties before the rebels were forced to retreat.

With the men from the 59th Division, the British Army now outnumbered the rebels by approximately 10:1 in terms of troops. The British Army also made use of artillery, reducing large tracts of central Dublin to rubble. There were small, supporting Risings in other parts of Ireland, but these were very small scale and did little to distract British attention from Dublin itself.

Forced to evacuate the burning GPO on Friday, Pearse ordered his followers to surrender the following afternoon and by Sunday all rebel garrisons had surrendered. Overall the best estimate is that 256 civilians were killed, including 40 children, along with 62 rebels and 132 members of the Crown forces. More than 200 buildings were seriously damaged, generating a repair bill of over £2,500,000. British troops clearly carried out some atrocities in the street to street fighting.

Following the Rising, 2,000 suspects were interned by the British authorities. After a series of courts martial, fifteen rebel leaders were executed, as was Sir Roger Casement, an advanced Nationalist who had arrived in Ireland from a German submarine on the eve of the Rising and who was tried in a civil court in London. Those interned were mainly sent to Frongoch Camp in Wales, which had been constructed as a German POW Camp. The experience there radicalized many, including those who had not actually taken part in the Rising and, on the release of most in December 1916, they became stalwarts of the reformed Sinn Féin and Irish Volunteer movements.

Immediately following the Rising, the British Government decided to review the Home Rule settlement. David Lloyd George conducted negotiations with the Irish political parties and it appeared that agreement could be reached over six county partition; the area of modern Northern Ireland. Whilst both Ulster Unionist and IPP grassroots organisations committed themselves to such a policy, within the IPP those from the west of Ulster were very unhappy with the settlement, and Ulster Unionists in

Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal protested that the Covenant was being broken by their fellow party members. This settlement would have seen Northern Ireland administered by a Secretary of State, responsible to the Westminster Parliament, while the rest of Ireland would have been governed from a parliament in Dublin made up of the existing MPs sitting for Southern Irish constituencies (those representing seats in Northern Ireland would continue to sit in Westminster), with some Southern Unionist representatives co-opted. This scheme collapsed, after serious discussion, over the time limit on partition. Lloyd George appears to have been ambiguous with his explanations on this matter; if he did not exactly promise Redmond that partition would be temporary and Carson that it would be permanent, Unionists certainly formed the impression that the settlement offered was little better than that dismissed in 1914. Ultimately, it was to be Unionists in the British Cabinet who sank Lloyd George's scheme.<sup>28</sup>

Following the Rising and the failure of the Lloyd George talks there is sometimes the assumption that the IPP was a spent force in Irish politics. However, Paul Bew, Patrick Maume and Alan O'Day have all noted that the IPP retained much of its former support base, especially in rural Ireland. Indeed, in the seven by-elections fought between the Rising and the December 1918 General Election, the IPP won three and South Longford was a very narrow Sinn Féin victory.<sup>29</sup>

The next attempt to settle the 'Irish question' came in July 1917 in the form of the Irish Convention. Partly this was an attempt by David Lloyd George to come to a settlement with the IPP and Irish Unionists in the face of the growing Sinn Féin movement. It was also an attempt to appease Irish-American opinion, following the entry of the USA into the War in April 1917. Ultimately, the Convention, which met until April 1918, was inconclusive. Notably Sinn Féin boycotted it and the Ulster Unionist delegation was sent with no negotiating authority, but simply to insist on Ulster exclusion from any Home Rule settlement. What was notable was the agreement reached by Nationalists and Southern Unionists over self-government, though fiscal arrangements continued to divide them.<sup>30</sup>

Wider events in the First World War caused the next major political crisis in Ireland. The German Spring Offensives of March to May 1918 led to a major retreat by the British, French and American forces with heavy losses. In an attempt to obtain more manpower for the British Army, the British Government sought to increase the age of conscription to 55 in Great Britain and extend it to Ireland. When conscription had been introduced in Great Britain in January 1916, it had not been extended to Ireland, as it was then felt that the enforcement of it would be very problematic. This was an attitude which many in the Dublin Castle administration retained, indeed, some were of the view that the Irishmen unwillingly conscripted could never be turned into effective British soldiers, and that large numbers of British troops would be needed to actually enforce conscription in Ireland. Recent work on the extension of conscription to Ireland has suggested that this was done with no regard to Irish sensitivities but simply to appease public opinion in Great Britain, which otherwise would have reacted strongly to comparatively elderly men being conscripted there, with no extension of the policy to Ireland.

---

28 For a detailed discussion of the Lloyd George talks, see, Alvin Jackson, **Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000** (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), pp. 155-174.

29 Paul Bew, **Ideology and the Irish Question: Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism, 1912-16** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), pp. 144-52, Maume, **The Long Gestation**, p. 171 and Alan O'Day, **Irish Home Rule, 1867-1921** (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 281 and 283.

30 The classic study remains, R. B. McDowell, **The Irish Convention 1917-18** (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

---



Legislation to introduce conscription into Ireland was rushed through the House of Commons in early April 1918, with David Lloyd George attempting to sweeten the pill by promising the immediate introduction of Home Rule. The reaction was swift, with a one day nationwide strike called by the Trade Union movement for the 23 April which was almost totally effective outside the Unionist districts in the north east of Ireland. Ulster Unionists were publicly in favour of conscription though, in private, their view was that Unionists, disproportionately represented in the professions, heavy engineering, shipbuilding and farming, would largely be exempt from military service anyway. Sinn Féin emerged as the leading force in opposition to conscription, with the IPP following Sinn Féin's abstentionist policy by withdrawing from the House of Commons. The Roman Catholic Church was also firmly involved in the campaign against conscription and Irish Volunteer numbers soared as Irishmen enlisted in that paramilitary body to better to resist conscription, if an attempt was made to enforce it. As a result of this, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, Henry Duke, was forced to resign and Lord French, who was appointed Lord Lieutenant as a sort of 'military governor', removed the immediate threat of conscription, although threatened that if 50,000 Irishmen did not come forward as voluntary recruits by the end of October then conscription would be enforced.<sup>31</sup>

The December 1918 General Election, covered in detail in the next section, saw a massive swing against the IPP, with the once dominant Nationalist party then reduced to just six MPs. While a popular view of this period would see the Easter Rising as a turning point in Irish history, historians have taken a more nuanced approach. One could see the volunteer split of September 1914 as the first major challenge to Redmond's leadership of Nationalism but the demise of the party was by no means certain until the conscription crisis.



**Image 6** - Field ambulance personnel wearing a winter uniform, c. 1915. (PRONI Reference: D1988/3/3).

---

31 Adrian Gregory, 'You might as well recruit Germans': British public opinion and the decision to conscript the Irish in 1918' in Adrian Gregory and Senia Paseta (eds.), *Ireland and the Great War: 'A war to unite us all'?* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), pp. 113-132. See also Bowman, Butler and Wheatley, *The Disparity of Sacrifice*, pp. 160-63.

# Volunteers in 1914

**On the outbreak of the First World War a political compromise was agreed. The Home Rule Bill was passed into law but implementation was delayed until after the conflict. Both the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) and the Ulster Unionist leadership encouraged their supporters to join the new army divisions which were formed in 1914. Many members of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) joined the 36th (Ulster) Division while Irish National Volunteers joined the 16th (Irish) Division.**

**Source 21 - Extract from the Carrickfergus Advertiser, Friday 18 September 1914, reporting the enrolment of local members of the Ulster Volunteer Force into the 12th Royal Irish Rifles, 36th (Ulster) Division. (PRONI Reference: D1686/2).**

## DEPARTURE OF CARRICKFERGUS VOLUNTEERS

### ENTHUSIASTIC SEND OFF

About one hundred and twenty members of the Third Battalion Central Antrim Regiment of the Ulster Volunteers presented themselves on Tuesday at the Barn Mills National School, for medical examination preparatory to being enrolled in Lord Kitchener's army. Five doctors conducted the examination, and the small number of rejections was a remarkable feature. On passing the medical test the men were immediately attested by Mr Alexander Miscampbell, JP, and Mr Robert Cambridge, JP, and afterwards informed by Major McCalmont, MP (commanding officer) that they would be required to leave for the camp at Clandeboy, County Down, on Thursday to undergo training.

The first man to be attested was Mr William Evans, of Albert Road, Carrickfergus.

Mr Robert Cambridge, JP, one of the attesting magistrates, had the honour and gratification of administering the oath of allegiance to his own son, Mr Thomas R. Cambridge, a director of the firm of Cambridge & Co, Ltd. We understand that a number of the employees of this firm have also volunteered, and that their situations will be kept open until their return, whatever may be the period of service required from them by the exigencies of warfare.

The recruiting officers and the UVF company officers were highly pleased with the quality of the men who offered themselves, and there is no doubt they are well up to the standard of other battalions in every way, and that the young men of Carrickfergus have come forward nobly in the cause of their country. Enlistment is still going on, and it is greatly to be desired that it will be found possible to have a complete battalion with Major McCalmont, MP, who has been so energetic and enthusiastic in the matter, in command.

## THE DEPARTURE

The departure of the men from Carrickfergus yesterday morning was a noteworthy event in the history of the town.

The men assembled at their various head-quarters at half past eight o'clock and the companies having been united they marched under the company commanders through the town, headed by the Carrickfergus Amateur Flute Band, to the railway station. Along the route there was a lavish display of flags and bunting, and the townspeople turned out in great numbers to bid farewell to the gallant lads who had responded to their country's call. The public works deferred the hour of commencing work till after the hour of departure, and the mill lassies were in great force, and added much to the liveliness of the scene with their choruses and cheers. The men presented a fine, smart soldierly appearance as they marched – a credit in every way to the town. The railway station could scarcely accommodate the throng which invaded it, and even the 'island' platform was called upon to provide room for those who wished to see the boys off. As the train steamed into the platform at a quarter past nine, the Larne Volunteers, who occupied the fore part of it, announced their arrival by a lusty cheer, which was responded to in no less hearty a manner by the occupants of the platform. The Carrick boys entrained and the train moved off to the accompaniment of fog signals and resounding cheers and farewell cries, which did not grow any less when Major McCalmont, who has won so big a place in the Carrickfergus affections, was seen acknowledging the salutations as the carriage in which he was seated passed by. The men have now gone to Clondeboye for training, and while they remain there occasional opportunities will probably be afforded them of visiting their homes.

**Source 22 - Extract from the** Freemans Journal, **17 September 1914**, containing a statement by **John Redmond, leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP)**. Redmond notes that the **Home Rule Bill is about to pass into law, although he does not mention that the implementation of the Act had been suspended until after the War. He urges Irishmen to join the new army divisions being raised in Ireland. (PRONI Reference: D1327/21/11).**

A test to search men's souls has arisen. The Empire is engaged in the most serious war in history. It is a just war, provoked by the intolerable military despotism of Germany. It is a war for the defence of the sacred rights and liberties of small nations, and the respect and enlargement of the great principle of nationality. Involved in it is the fate of France, our kindred country, the chief nation of that powerful Celtic race to which we belong; the fate of Belgium, to whom we are attached by the same great ties of race, and by the common desire of a small nation to assert its freedom; and the fate of Poland, whose sufferings and whose struggle bear so marked a resemblance to our own.

It is a war for high ideals of human government and international relations, and Ireland would be false to her history, and to every consideration of honour, good faith, and self-interest, did she not willingly bear her share in its burdens and its sacrifices.

We have, even when no ties of sympathy bound our country to Great Britain, always given our quota, and, more than our quota, to the firing-line, and we shall do so now.

We have a right however to claim that Irish recruits for the Expeditionary Force should be kept together as units, officered as far as possible by Irishmen, composed if possible, of county battalions, to form, in fact, an 'Irish Brigade,' so that Ireland may gain national credit for their deeds, and feel, like other communities of the Empire, that she too has contributed an army bearing her name in this historic struggle.

Simultaneously with the formation of this Irish Brigade, for service abroad, our Volunteers must be put in a state of efficiency as speedily as practicable, for the defence of the country.

In this way, by the time the war ends, Ireland will possess an army of which she may be proud.

I feel certain that the young men of our country will respond to this appeal with the gallantry of their race.

In conclusion, I would appeal to our countrymen of a different creed, and of opposite political opinions, to accept the friendship we have so consistently offered them to allow this great war, as to which their opinions and ours are the same, and our action will also be the same, to swallow up all the small issues in the domestic government of Ireland which now divide us; that, as our soldiers are going to fight, to shed their blood, and to die at each other's side, in the same army, against the same enemy, and for the same high purpose, their union in the field may lead to a union in their home, and that their blood may be the seal that will bring all Ireland together in one nation, and in liberties equal and common to all.

**Source 23 - Extract from the Daily Express, 20 November 1914. The Nationalist Volunteers from Belfast served with the 6th (Service) Battalion of the Connaught Rangers, part of the 16th (Irish) Division. (PRONI Reference: D1327/21/11).**

#### THE NATIONALIST VOLUNTEERS

##### 700 Recruits Leave Belfast

The first detachment of the Belfast Nationalists to join the Irish Brigade left Belfast yesterday for camp at Fermoy, County Cork, and their departure was the occasion of scenes of much enthusiasm along the route from the Victoria Barracks to the Great Northern Railway Station. The troop train was timed to leave at eleven o'clock, but it was considerably later before the last volunteer was able to force his way through the dense crowd into the station and to the awaiting train, which left Belfast for Fermoy amid ringing cheers and the singing of 'A Nation Once Again.'

About 2.30 o'clock yesterday afternoon the recruits arrived in Dublin at Amiens Street Station, and they were subsequently conveyed to the Great Southern and Western Terminus, Kingsbridge. There the men were served with refreshments previously to being entrained for Fermoy.



## Recruitment Before 1916

After an initial surge of enthusiasm in the early months of the War, the rate of enlistment declined. Recruitment was affected by a number of political, economic and social factors. Although the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) leadership encouraged their supporters to enlist, many Nationalists were reluctant to support the British war effort. The availability of well-paid work in war industries was also a factor. The low levels of recruitment from rural areas was a particular concern.



**Image 7** - Recruiting poster, c. 1915. (PRONI Reference: LA/20/50/GA/5).

**Source 24 - Text of an anti-recruitment leaflet allegedly circulated in Dublin, October 1914.  
(PRONI Reference: D1327/21/11).**

The following is a copy of a paper handed to the troops in Dublin when leaving for the front:

Ireland is not at war with Germany. She has no quarrel with any Continental Power. England is at war with Germany, and Mr Redmond has offered England the services of the National Volunteers 'to defend Ireland.' What has Ireland to defend, and whom has she to defend it against? Has she a native Constitution, or a National Government to defend? All know she has not. All know both were wrested from her by England. There is no European Power, waging war against the people of Ireland. There are two European Powers at war with the people who dominate Ireland from Dublin Castle. The call to the Volunteers 'to defend Ireland' is a call to them to defend the bureaucracy entrenched in that edifice...The spectacle of the National Volunteers with English officers at their head and the Union Jack floating proudly above them, 'defending' Ireland for the British Government may appeal to the gushing eyes of West-Britonism, but its eyes are not likely to be blessed with the sight of that apotheosis of slavery. If England wins this war she will be more powerful than she has been at any time since 1864 and she will treat an Ireland which kissed the hand that smote her, as such an Ireland ought to be treated. If she loses the war and Ireland is foolish enough to identify itself with her, Ireland will deservedly share in her punishment.

Our duty is in no doubt. We are Irish Nationalists and the only duty we can have is to stand for land's interest irrespective of the interests of England or Germany; or any other foreign country. This week the British Government has passed measures through all stages, first reading, second reading, Committee, third reading, and report - in the House of Commons in the space of six hours. Let it withdraw the present abortive Home Rule Bill and pass in the same space of time a full measure of Home Rule, and Irishmen will have some reason to mobilise for the defence of their institutions. At present they have none. In the alternative let a Provisional Government be set up in Dublin by Mr Redmond and Sir Edward Carson, and we shall give it allegiance. But the confidence trick has been too often played upon us to deceive us again.

If the Irish Volunteers are to defend Ireland, they must defend it for Ireland under Ireland's flag and under Irish officers. Otherwise they will only help to perpetuate the enslavement of their country. In this hour the counsels of cowardice and stupidity are being proffered as the currency of patriotism, and base attempt is made by our slavish Press to evoke in Ireland, not a pro-Irish but an anti-German sentiment. Germany is nothing to us in herself, but she is not our enemy. Our blood and our miseries are not on her head. But who can forbear admiration at the spectacle of the Germanic people, whom England has ringed round with enemies, standing alone undaunted and defiant against a world in arms. If they fall, they will fall as nobly as ever a people fell and we the Celts may not forbear to honour a race that knew how to live and how to die as men. We too in Ireland, were once men. Let us be men again and agree to defend our country for ourselves. Let us be slaves and offer to defend it for foreigners, and he will mock God who hereafter prays to Him to save Ireland.



**Source 25 - Circular recruiting letter from the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, 1915. (PRONI Reference: D2768/1).**

Department of Recruiting for Ireland

October 28th, 1915.

Sir,

Lord Kitchener sends me the attached message for YOU.

He wants 50,000 Irishmen at once for the period of the War. You will be equipped and will start your training in Ireland, and complete it in different parts of the world. Wherever you go you will be serving with Irishmen.

The relatives whom you look after will be looked after for you while you are away. Your Wives, your Children, or those dependent on you will receive an allowance every week.

Every great Irishman urges the appeal. The safety of your homes and your possessions depends on your answer.

Sons of Farmers — whose lands are passing into your own possession — You must come out and defend this heritage.

Townsmen, your interests are threatened too. You must equally respond to the call.

It is your privilege as an Irishman to come forward voluntarily. Will you come now? Fill in this form and post it to-day.

Yours faithfully,

Wimbourne

Lord Lieutenant of Ireland and Director-General for Recruiting,

COPY OF MESSAGE FROM LORD KITCHENER.

Please tell all Irishmen from me how deeply interested I am in their present effort to increase the Irish Forces in the Army. Born and brought up in Ireland as I was, I feel certain that my Countrymen will not allow our brave Irish soldiers to feel that they are unsupported by those at home.

We ought not to see our Irish Divisions and Regiments kept up to strength in the field by other than Irishmen.

Such neglect on our part would be a deep disgrace to Ireland. They MUST be Irish to a man.

I appeal for men from Ireland on behalf of those gallant men in the Irish Regiments, our Regiments, who have fought so magnificently.

**Source 26 - Extract from a letter by the Secretary of the Central Council for the Organization of Recruiting in Ireland, 11 August 1915. The Council was established in February 1915 to coordinate the activities of various local recruiting committees and to tailor recruitment propaganda to an Irish audience. (PRONI Reference: D3809/1).**

Steps so far taken have failed to attract considerable numbers of recruits from the farming and commercial classes in Ireland. This failure is, we believe, reacting unfavourably upon recruiting among the labouring classes who naturally resent the abstention of others who should share the burden of the War.

We are satisfied that a much larger number of recruits could be obtained from the classes named were it not for their reluctance to enter upon their training with recruits from the labouring classes. This class prejudice is probably much more pronounced in Ireland than elsewhere in the United Kingdom.

The abstention of the classes named has undoubtedly produced a further and serious obstacle to general recruiting – in so far that anti-war propaganda has made special headway among farmers' sons and commercial assistants. The most certain way to counteract this tendency is to attract recruits from their ranks.

The appeals so far made by the formation of special 'Pals' and other companies have now absorbed those with any definite inclination to join the colours and if we are to attract appreciable numbers without undue delay from these two shy classes a more comprehensive and ambitious scheme will have to be adopted.

In the circumstances we suggest the immediate formation of new units upon the general lines of 'Pals' battalions.

If this proposal is approved we suggest further:

1. That well-known Irish Officers should be selected for the higher ranks of the first unit.
2. That the proposed regiment should have a distinctive designation. Having considered this point very carefully we adopt the suggestion of Colonel Galwey with whom we have discussed the matter, that the title of the regiment should be the 'Irish Light Infantry'.
3. That the appeal for recruits for the proposed units would be materially helped if the 'Kilt' be adopted thus marking in a picturesque way their distinctive character.

# Selection of Officers for the New Divisions

**The selection of officers for the new army divisions raised in Ireland was the cause of some controversy. Men who joined from Ulster or Irish Volunteer units often wanted to serve with their former comrades and under officers that they knew, however the military authorities regarded many of the volunteer 'officers' as unqualified or unfit for military service.**

**Source 27 - Letter from William Copeland Trimble, Enniskillen to Sir Edward Carson, 20 January 1915. Trimble, who owned the Impartial Reporter newspaper, had raised the Enniskillen Horse, a formation associated with the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), in September 1912, but was refused a commission in the army, probably on account of his age (he was 62) and lack of formal military experience. (PRONI Reference: D1507/A/11/5).**

Dear Sir Edward,

It is extremely kind of you to go to so much trouble in a matter that belongs to the Ulster Division and not your own department, as conveyed by your kind letter.

The matter is simple. Major [James] Craig [M.P.] telegraphed to me to call at head-quarters. I went, and then and there I was asked to raise a squadron of Horse for the Ulster Division, and Brigadier General Hickman promised military rank. I said I would do it.

His Grace of Abercorn (whom we all admire) had been here twice or three times to obtain recruits for the North Irish Horse, and had not got one recruit. I raised the full squadron of the Inniskilling Dragoons, (6th Service Squadron) which, with the approval of head-quarters, I so named.

I expected that the military rank would have come to me within a few days to ease my path and facilitate the work, but, as it did not come. I was in a unique position of being while a layman in sole command of the barracks and administrator of and commander of the squadron. And while officers at head-quarters very properly had their rank and pay, I received neither one nor other for my weeks of work and energy.

I am satisfied that Brigadier-General Hickman would have conferred a Lieutenant-Colonelcy (honorary) on me if the power had remained with him. When General [Powell?] came to inspect the Dragoons he told me that I was well known at head-quarters and at the War Office. I replied to these kind things by saying that I was too small a man for that: and the general replied – 'The War Office know you well, for they spoke to me about you.' He then asked me to assist recruiting for the infantry, which, of course, I promised to do, saying that I had sent many men to the infantry and would continue to do so. I may mention that my newspaper gave me unusual influence in this direction, so that it extended far beyond the bounds of the Dragoon squadron.

Personally, I do not trouble about military rank, although since I wrote the Historical Records of the Inniskillings in 1874 I have been closely identified with military life and movements. But when a Nationalist is made a captain for bringing 52 men to the Irish Brigade at Fermoy, my own men of the Volunteer Enniskillen Horse feel hurt at their commander being ignored, and as one of them said: 'If you were the 33rd cousin of a Lord, sir, you would have been appointed long ago.' And another said: 'If our own people treat you that way, what may we expect?'

I did not ask any compliment: but when it was promised it should have been carried out or let me know the reason why: and because there was a distinct reflection upon me, and that that reacted on my men of the Enniskillen Horse, I thought it well to take the step I mentioned to you in my letter, though not in any degree weakening my attachment to yourself or cause.

# The Easter Rising, 1916

**On Easter Monday 24 April 1916 members of the Irish Volunteers and Irish Citizen Army seized key buildings in Dublin and proclaimed an Irish Republic. During the ensuing fighting more than 450 people were killed and considerable damage was caused to central Dublin.**

**Source 28 - Text of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, April 1916. (PRONI Reference: D989/C/3/71).**

POBLACHT NA H EIREANN.

THE PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT OF THE IRISH REPUBLIC

TO THE PEOPLE OF IRELAND.

IRISHMEN AND IRISHWOMEN In the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood, Ireland, through us summons her children to her flag and strikes for her freedom.

Having organised and trained her manhood through her secret revolutionary organisation the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and through her open military organisations, the Irish Volunteers and the Irish Citizen Army, having patiently perfected her discipline, having resolutely waited for the right moment to reveal itself, she now seizes that moment, and supported by her exiled children in America and by gallant allies in Europe, but relying in the first on her own strength she strikes in full confidence of victory.

We declare the right of the people of Ireland to the ownership of Ireland and to the unfettered control of Irish destinies, to be sovereign and indefeasible. The long usurpation of that right by a foreign people and government has not extinguished the right, nor can it ever be extinguished except by the destruction of the Irish people. In every generation the Irish people have asserted their right to national freedom and sovereignty six times during the past three hundred years they have asserted it in arms. Standing on that fundamental right and again asserting it in arms in the face of the world, we hereby proclaim the Irish Republic as a Sovereign Independent State, and we pledge our lives and the lives of our comrades-in-arms to the cause of its freedom, of its welfare, and of its exaltation among the nations.

The Irish Republic is entitled to and hereby claims, the allegiance of every Irishman and Irishwoman. The Republic guarantees religious and civil liberty: equal rights and equal opportunities to all its citizens; and declares its resolve to pursue the happiness and prosperity of the whole nation and of all its parts, cherishing all the children of the nation equally, and oblivious of the differences carefully fostered by an alien government, which have divided a minority from the majority in the past.

Until our arms have brought the opportune moment for the establishment of a permanent National Government, representative of the whole people of Ireland and elected by the suffrages of all her men and women, the Provisional Government hereby constituted, will administer the civil and military affairs of the Republic in trust for the people.

We place the cause of the Irish Republic under the protection of the Most High God Whose blessing we invoke upon our arms, and we pray that no one who serves that cause will dishonour it by cowardice, inhumanity, or rapine. In this supreme hour the Irish nation must, by its valour and discipline and by the readiness of its children to sacrifice themselves for the common good, prove itself worthy of the august destiny to which it is called.

Signed on Behalf of the Provisional Government,

THOMAS J. CLARKE,

SEAN Mac DIARMADA, THOMAS MacDONAGH,

P. H. PEARSE, EAMONN CEANNT,

JAMES CONNOLLY, JOSEPH PLUNKETT



# The Battle of the Somme, 1916

**The attack of the 36th (Ulster) Division on the first day of the battle of the Somme was to become an iconic event for Ulster Unionists. During the course of the abortive attack the Division suffered over 5,000 casualties, of whom nearly 2,000 were killed. Four Victoria Crosses were awarded for actions during the day. Many Ulster Unionists felt that the sacrifices made at the Somme, by a formation largely drawn from the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF), should secure Ulster's place in the United Kingdom.**

**Source 29 - Letter from Captain Wilfrid Spender, a Staff Officer with the 36th (Ulster) Division to his family describing the attack of 1 July 1916. Spender had been involved with the organisation of the UVF before the War and had taken part in the Larne gun-running. Although the letter is addressed to Spender's family in England, it was obviously intended for publication and was reproduced in a number of newspapers. (PRONI Reference: D1295/4/11).**

2 July 1916

I am not an Ulsterman, but yesterday as I followed their amazing attack I felt that I would rather be an Ulsterman than anything else in the world.

My position enabled me to watch the commencement of their attack from the wood in which they had formed up, but which, long prior to the hour of assault, was being overwhelmed with shell fire so that the trees were stripped and the top half of the wood ceased to be anything but a slope of bare stumps with innumerable shell holes pitted in the chalk. It looked as if nothing could live in the wood, and indeed the losses were heavy before they started, two companies of one battalion being reduced to a fourth in the assembly trenches. When I saw their men emerge out of the smoke and form up as if on parade, I could hardly believe my eyes.

Then I saw them attack, beginning at a slow walk over no-man's-land, and then suddenly let loose as they charged over the two front lines of the enemy's trenches shouting 'No surrender, Boys.' The enemy's gunfire raked them from the left, and machine guns in a village enfiladed them on the right, but battalion after battalion came out of that awful wood as steadily as I have seen them at Ballykinler, Clandeboye or Shane's Castle. The enemy's first, second and third lines were soon taken, and still the waves of men went on, getting thinner and thinner but without hesitation.

The enemy's fourth line fell before these men who would not be stopped. (...) I saw parties of them – now much reduced indeed – enter the fifth line of the enemy's trenches, our final objective. It could not be held as the Division had advanced into a narrow salient. The Corps on our right and left had been unable to advance so that the Ulstermen were the target of the concentrated hostile guns and machine guns behind and on both flanks, though the enemy in front were vanquished and retiring. The order to retire was given, but many parties preferred to die in the ground they had won so hardly. (...)

My pen cannot describe adequately the hundreds of heroic acts that I witnessed nor how yesterday a relieving force was organised of men who had already been fighting for 36 hours to carry ammunition and water to the gallant garrison still holding on. The Ulster Division has lost more than half the men who attacked, and in doing so has sacrificed itself for the Empire which has treated them none too well. The much derided Ulster Volunteer Force has won a name which equals any in History. Their devotion, which no doubt has helped the advance elsewhere, deserves the gratitude of the British Empire. It is due to the memory of these brave heroes that their beloved Province shall be fairly treated.

**Source 30 - Letter from Major General Oliver Nugent, General Officer Commanding the 36th (Ulster) Division to his wife, 2 July 1916. Nugent was a professional soldier from County Cavan who commanded the Division from 1915-18. (PRONI Reference: D3835/E/2/10).**

Just a line to say Arthur and I and my staff are all well. Yesterday was terrible. Our losses I fear very heavy.

My dearest, the Ulster Division has been too superb for words. The whole Army is talking of the incomparable gallantry shown by officers and men. There has been nothing like it since the New Armies came out. They came out of the trenches, formed up as if on the barrack square and went forward with every line dressed as if for the King's inspection, torn from end to end by shell and machine-gun fire.

We are the only Division which succeeded in doing what it was given to do and we did it but at fearful cost. We are fighting today but we have so few men left. I am hanging on till dark when we are to be relieved by a fresh Division for the fresh attack tomorrow.

The Ulster Division no longer exists as a fighting force and we shall probably go back behind the line to refit and be made up again in numbers. I do not know the full tale of losses yet, but think we have lost about 150 officers and about 6000 men, not all killed and in fact I hope that there are a large number of not serious wounds. The Ulster Division has proved itself and it has indeed borne itself like men. I cannot describe to you how I feel about them. I did not believe men were made who could do such gallant work under the conditions of modern war.

The Division took nearly 600 prisoners themselves in the first rush. The Germans were absolutely cowed and flung themselves on their knees asking for mercy. No time for more. I am very proud but very sad when I think of our terrible losses. The two Divisions on our right and left failed badly and left us exposed to attack from both flanks. We could do nothing but just stick it out far in front of everyone else and we are still sticking out.

# Reaction to the Rising

Many Nationalists opposed the Easter Rising and continued to support the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) and the concept of a moderate Home Rule settlement. This was to change in the ensuing months, partly in response to what was seen as a heavy handed reaction to the Rising by the government.

**Source 31 - Letter from Captain Tom Kettle, academic, journalist and IPP politician, to Henry McLaughlin, Secretary of the Central Council for the Organization of Recruitment in Ireland, 7 August 1916. Despite his poor health Kettle had been commissioned into the 9th Royal Dublin Fusiliers, part of the 16th (Irish) Division. He was killed during the Battle of Ginchy in September 1916. (PRONI Reference: D3809/1).**

My dear McLaughlin

What a kind thought of you to write, and what an awfully kind letter, and what super excellent cigars! I am now smoking one of them in a great ease in a reserve line dug-out which is a model of luxury, we actually have a real straw mattress instead of the empty ammunition boxes on which we last rested. We moved out of the front line yesterday, alas! to return too soon. On the whole, however, we had very few losses and an easy time. Except for heat, grime, insects, and rats, that is to say. I have arranged, or am arranging, to write some articles for the Daily Mail (E.A.A. is looking after it for me) and I want you to take the descriptive part of them in lieu in a long personal letter. You cannot imagine two things: first, the extraordinary pleasure of getting a letter from home, redolent of Dublin, and second the awful labour of writing one back. One is really quite disgraceful tired. It is, I fancy, the result of so much night-work.

About things in Ireland I agree [totally] with the whole drift of your letter. You may be entirely happy in the consciousness that you and I did the exactly right thing. The Sinn Féin nightmare upset me a little, but then if you tickle the ear of a short tempered elephant with a pop gun, and he walks on you that is a natural concatenation of events. We took the side of justice, we did the right thing, we helped to bring North and South together. You made your sacrifices and I mine, and our work remains. If I return I count in doing some little work in exactly the direction you have in mind. The superb work of the Ulster Division and the changed attitude of Sir Edward C[arson] fill me with cheerfulness. Does it not seem exactly as if the right thing happened at last, as if English statesmanship had thrown down its cards, and left the two great Irish parties to come to a settlement? Of course I must rebuke your strain of writing about yourself. Your brother's blood is heavy sacrifice enough, and I meet here at every turn men who would not be here but for the labours of you and the organisation you created. I myself am quite extraordinarily happy. If it should come my way to die I shall sleep well in the France I always loved, and shall know that I have done something towards bringing to birth the Ireland one has dreamed of. I must close now with the very sincerest thanks and good wishes.

# Munition Workers

**The need to produce large quantities of arms and munitions for the war effort led to increased employment of women in the engineering industries. While women had worked in factories for many years they had generally not been employed in the better paid 'heavy' industries.**

**Source 32 - Extract from The Mackie's Magazine or the Turret-Lathers Friend, a magazine produced by female munition workers, 1915-1917. (PRONI Reference: D3964/T/38).**

4 December 1916

## THOUGHTS IN A MUNITION FACTORY

Midst the laughter and singing I often wonder why I am with others engaged in this awful occupation. To see the row of shells, so innocent looking, yet made for specific and terrible purpose – that of human destruction – makes one deeply conscious of their work. It is difficult to think of women in the 20th Century engaged in such an occupation, but then again we must think of the havoc wrought by our enemies. If we by any chance grow too conscious of our work the chances are that our own city might be devastated. Do not our hearts bleed for the homeless? Yes that is why we have to carry on until these deeds have to be avenged, our enemies finally broken and peace restored. In this peace may we see the vision of a newer and brighter world? Hand in hand we shall go forward with a song of peace and joy on our lips that shall spread from Pole to Pole, its sweetness as nectar and its echo as 'Bells at eventide'.

# Battle of Messines / Mesen, 1917

**The Battle of Messines / Mesen in June 1917 was the first occasion on which the 16th (Irish) and 36th (Ulster) Divisions fought side by side. However, plans to amalgamate the divisions or to form them into a distinct Irish Corps were resisted by Ulster Unionists.**

**Source 33 - Letter from Lieutenant Jack Carrothers, serving with the 8th Royal Inniskilling Fusiliers, part of the 16th (Irish) Division, to his mother, 8 June 1917. Carrothers, who was from Fermanagh, was killed two months later during the battle of Passchendaele. (PRONI Reference: D1973/10).**

Dear Mother,

Just a line to let you know that I am quite well and have returned from the biggest push of all without a scratch. Yesterday was a great day for Ireland. Considering everything our casualties have been very light but my platoon lost heavily. We captured an enormous number of prisoners. The part we attacked was a famous ridge just south of Ypres. I went over with the first wave and after all it was the safest place. No more.

**Source 34 - Extract from a letter by Major General Oliver Nugent, General Officer Commanding 36th (Ulster) Division to his wife, 7 June 1917. (PRONI Reference: D3835/E/2/13).**

6.45 a.m. We have been deep in the great adventure since 3.10 a.m. this morning. Up to now reports are all good. We are well into the German lines and our casualties are slight.

I went up to my observation post to see the start. It was of course quite dark then. The signal for the attack was the sending up of great mines at various points along the front. These had been dug and charged many months ago. They were a wonderful sight to see in the early dawn when they went up in a lurid gigantic sheet of flame. At the same moment something like 3000 guns opened fire along the 2nd Army front and the whole country beyond the German front line became a sheet of flame and smoke. It might have been literally the end of a world. There was no wind and the dense pall of smoke and dust from the mines and shells hung like a black pall over the ground, lit up continually by the flash of bursting shells and as for the noise no words could describe that. It absolutely cowed one, because the roar prevented one from hearing anyone speak and the continual concussion became painful. We all retired to the trench and we just sit by the telephone for the reports sent back by the people in front.

12.30. Up to now, thank God, all seems to have gone well. We have captured Wytschaete side by side with the 16th Irish Division. The Anzacs on our right have got Messines and the 36th Division have got all the ridge between the two places. For over 2½ years the Germans have looked down from Wytschaete and the ridge and Messines on us at the bottom of the hill. I hope they will never get it back now. The aeroplanes report that the Germans are massing behind and we may be sure that their counter attack will come before long.

So far as we can learn our casualties have been slight in the attack, about 600 which is small nowadays but there is a long day and several tomorrows before then.



# The Irish Convention, 1917-18

**The Irish Convention, which met between July 1917 and April 1918, was an attempt to find an agreed political settlement for Ireland. Although there was some measure of agreement between Southern Unionists and the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), Ulster Unionists continued to demand the exclusion of the northern counties from the jurisdiction of any proposed Irish legislature. Sinn Féin, which was emerging as the main political party in Ireland, boycotted the Convention.**

**Source 35 - Letter from Sir Edward Carson, leader of the Ulster Unionists, to Hugh de Fellenberg Montgomery, a Tyrone landowner and politician, 28 May 1917. Carson sets out the Ulster Unionist position at the Convention, which was to insist on the exclusion of Ulster from the jurisdiction of a Dublin based parliament while arguing for safeguards for the Protestant minority in the rest of Ireland. (PRONI Reference: D627/434/141).**

The terms of reference for the Convention are contained in the Prime Minister's letter to Mr Redmond of the 21st May and I have no power to alter them. I quite appreciate your feelings, but I think your difficulty is more apparent than real. Having regard to the fact that the Home Rule Act is on the Statute Book, and that its repeal is not regarded as possible in present conditions by any responsible body of opinion, the position of the Ulster representatives in the Convention would not be open to the misunderstanding you suggest. It is perfectly understood that Ulster is opposed to Home Rule in principle and I myself, as a member of the Government, made it quite clear in my speech in the House on the 21st May. The functions of the Ulster Representative in the Convention may be stated as follows:

- 1) To secure a position for Ulster which shall be compatible with the principles for which we stand.
- 2) To secure the acceptance by the other side of as ample safeguard as possible for the Unionist minority under the Irish Parliament.
- 3) In view of the fact that the principle of Home Rule for Ireland has now become the law of the land, to endeavour if they think fit to secure that the form of Home Rule which is to be put into operation, shall be the best possible in the interest of Ireland and of Great Britain, and free from the many defects of the Home Rule Act of 1914, apart from the obnoxious principle of that Act which is beyond recall.

The fact that Ulster is resolutely opposed to Home Rule in any form, does not in my opinion preclude them if they so desire from considering what form of Home Rule is the best for Ireland, if it is granted that some form of Home Rule is inevitable though of course the first care of the Ulster representative would be to establish Ulster's own position.

Above all things it must be remembered that under the Home Rule Act, Ulster is 'included' and remains included until some compromise is agreed and carried through Parliament.

**Source 36 - Statement by William Broderick, Earl of Midleton, the Chairman of the Irish Unionist Alliance, to the Irish Convention, 26 November 1917. Midleton's suggestion that Southern Unionists would prefer a modified form of Home Rule to partition lead to a split in the Irish Unionist Alliance. Midleton went on to form the Unionist Anti-Partition League. (PRONI Reference: D989/A/9/10).**

Secret

Lord Midleton's statement on behalf of Unionists of South and West.

Our proposals then are as follows:

We reserved to Great Britain the Sovereign power of the King, full authority for the Navy, Army, and Imperial Services, and for the levying of Customs, and this responsibility involves the continued presence of the Irish representatives at Westminster, although in diminished numbers. We think that the question of excise calls for special treatment. The full amount realized by Customs should be retained by Great Britain as an Imperial contribution.

We are ready, if the Irish Parliament be constituted as proposed with fair representation of the minority and other effective safeguards which are in our view essential, to concede to it control of internal taxes, administration, legislation, judicature and police. On these lines we believe that all legitimate National aspirations will be satisfied. We are not prepared to jeopardise the Imperial connection by conceding more extreme designs.

In thus co-operating to transfer to an Irish Executive responsibility to an Irish Parliament for its internal affairs, we have gone as we believe to the extreme limit of safety from the Imperial standpoint, having regard to the geographical contiguity of Ireland to Great Britain and her social and political conditions. To do this, in response to the appeal of H M Government under the special circumstances of the time, we have made sacrifice of principles very dear to us in the hope that by mutual agreement as Irish men we may heal long standing differences.

We believe the proposals outlined above, which give wide powers of self-government to Ireland, preserve to the British Government those only which are necessary for the unity and security of the United Kingdom, and which would be reserved to the Central Government under any system of Federation which may unite the Empire in the future.

Midleton.

26th November, 1917

# Conscription

**Compulsory military service was introduced in Great Britain in January 1916. Many Unionists wanted the scheme extended to Ireland however this was opposed by Nationalists, while the Dublin administration felt that conscription would be unenforceable. In March 1918 the British Government announced the extension of conscription to Ireland without consulting officials in Dublin. Nationalists of all parties united against the proposal and the Roman Catholic Church also expressed its opposition. The threat of conscription was a factor in increasing support for Sinn Féin which now emerged as the dominant Nationalist movement.**

**Source 37 - Letter from Harry Franks, a land owner in Queen's County (Laois) and in Cork, to J Mackay Wilson, 5 March 1917. Both Franks and Wilson were prominent members of the Irish Unionist Alliance. The letter discusses the rise of support for Sinn Féin in the Cork area at the expense of the Irish Parliamentary Party ('Redmondites') and the Ancient Order of Hibernians ('Mollies' or Molly Maguires). This is linked to the threat of conscription. (PRONI Reference: D989/A/9/7).**

I have chatted with chaps who at one time were Redmondites, but they have now become ardent supporters of Sinn Feiner policy. Hundreds of these have altogether left the 'Mollies' and are now as bitter against Redmond and his party as 'agin' the English Government. They complain Ireland has been sold by Redmond and Co., and all denounce his action which they say favoured recruiting, and his silence in the House of Commons when the Rebels were being shot. The sympathy to Sinn Feiners is growing rapidly, and I believe thousands of 'Mollies' would support a Sinn Fein candidate if an election took place in the morning. Indeed the enmity to the Irish Party is nearly as great as the hatred of England. The change has been created in this way. Among all parties ... there is and has been a terrible fear of being conscripted. For a time they lived in daily dread of it; and to prevent the Act applying to Ireland they would I believe sell body and soul. They believe the best means of preventing it is to give help to the rebels, as they think if conscription is moved to be applied the Sinn Feiners will give trouble, and that that trouble will not be worth the big force of soldiers who will be employed in rounding up the conscripts, whose dream it is to flee to the mountains. Such trouble they say will prevent conscription. If conscription was out of the way, it is doubtful if so many would extend sympathy to Sinn Fein, but hatred of John Redmond for Imperial feelings re: the war sent many of his followers to the extreme side. The danger at present is this: —the active Sinn Feiners are all young and intelligent men, generally teetotallers. Unlike the ordinary political fellows, they do not patronise public houses and talk there over matters. They are silent and know how to keep their mouths closed, but they think and plot the more. Perhaps if they had a little latitude to let off steam at say a public meeting, it would act as a safety-valve. But the fact is they are—a great many of them—'brainy' in well-to-do positions; they speak little in public, and as in all secret political gatherings, suffering as they think under great wrongs, there is a danger of an outburst. Of course you know in Cork we always talk and do not act—that may be the case, but this silence on a matter which is deep in the hearts of thousands of young fellows in the city is to say the least very ugly and portends something more than usual happening unless they are pulled up in time.

**Source 38 - Extract from a letter by Major General Oliver Nugent, General Officer Commanding of the 36th (Ulster) Division to his wife, 8 October 1916. Nugent was a landowner from County Cavan and a moderate Unionist. He was concerned about the shortfall in recruitment to the 36th (Ulster) Division which threatened its identity as an Ulster formation. (PRONI Reference: D3835/E/2/11).**

Notwithstanding the clamour of the rival factions in Ireland I am certain compulsory service can be introduced into Ireland with much less trouble than is anticipated. If the Government only have the pluck. There are lots of Irishmen who must realise the shame and disgrace which will attach to the name of Irishmen after the war if they refuse to bear their share of the burden of Empire now.

Compulsory Service might kill politics for all time in Ireland and what a blessing that would be.

I have written to the Adjutant General to urge that if Compulsory Service is brought in for Ireland that I hope the 'Ulster' Division will be made 'Ulster' in the broadest sense and that Ulstermen of all creeds and politics should be sent to it so that it will no longer be a sectarian Division.



**Image 8** - Recruiting poster, 1915.  
(PRONI Reference: LA/20/50/GA/5).

**Source 39 - Propaganda card including the text of a statement on conscription by the Roman Catholic hierarchy. (PRONI Reference: D1507/A/27/6).**

ACTION OF THE IRISH HIERARCHY.

A National Novena Ordered.

In connection with the special meeting of the Irish Roman Catholic Hierarchy at Maynooth, on Thursday, to consider the application of conscription to Ireland, the following official report has been issued, signed by Cardinal Logue (chairman) and twenty-six Bishops of the Roman Catholic Church:—

Statement on Conscription adopted by the Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland on the 18th of April, 1918, his Eminence Cardinal Logue in the chair—

An attempt is being made to force conscription upon Ireland against the will of the Irish nation and in defiance of the protests of its leaders. In view especially of the historic relations between the two countries from the very beginning up to the present moment, we consider that conscription forced in this way upon Ireland is an oppressive and inhuman law, which the Irish people have a right to resist by all the means that are consonant with the law of God. We wish to remind our people that there is a higher Power which controls the affairs of men. They have in their hands a means of conciliating that Power by strict adherence to the Divine law, by more earnest attention to their religious duties, and by fervent and persevering prayer. In order to secure the aid of the Holy Mother of God, who shielded our people in the days of their greatest trials, we have already sanctioned a National Novena in honour of Our Lady of Lourdes, commencing on the 3rd May, to secure general and domestic peace. We also exhort the heads of families to have the Rosary recited every evening, with the intention of protecting the spiritual and temporal welfare of our beloved country, and bringing us safe through this crisis of unparalleled gravity.

## Part III: Partition and Revolution, 1918-1925

The 1918 General Election is often seen as a landslide victory for Sinn Féin. In total Sinn Féin won 73 seats, to the mere six won by the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP). However, the peculiarities of the British 'first past the post' electoral system meant that, in terms of the popular vote, the IPP still retained considerable support with 237,393 votes to the 485,105 cast for Sinn Féin. Nevertheless, December 1918 marked the death knell for the old IPP, even if a number of its members were able to rebuild political careers in other parties.<sup>32</sup> Unionists also increased their number of seats to 26 but, with few exceptions, these were in north east Ulster and much of the Unionist electoral success had to do with the expanding population of Belfast which meant that the city was allocated more parliamentary seats.<sup>33</sup>

Those who voted for Sinn Féin were not necessarily backing a militant solution to the Irish question. During the election campaign, many Sinn Féin speeches had reflected on US President Wilson's views, expressed in his Fourteen Points, about the rights of small nations and self-determination with the implication that a case for Irish independence could be made, convincingly, at the Versailles Peace Conference. However, 'hawks' within the Irish Volunteers (soon to be renamed as the Irish Republican Army (IRA)) led the wider Republican movement into military action, with an attack on police officers in Soloheadbeg, Co. Tipperary on 21 January 1919, which left two Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) constables dead. The IRA conducted a guerrilla war, fiercest in Dublin and Cork, until the Truce of July 1921, this escalated considerably from January 1920 when IRA 'Flying Columns' made up of full-time volunteers first appeared. As discussed in more detail below a concerted IRA campaign started late in Ulster, in April 1920, but then continued, with little respite, until the summer of 1922.

The British Government returned to the 'Irish question' in 1920, partly as unfinished business from 1914, partly in response to the political campaign organised by Sinn Féin (in which, most notably those elected as MPs in December 1918 refused to take their seats at Westminster and, instead, established the First Dáil Éireann, which first met at the Mansion House, Dublin, on 21 January 1919) and partly as a response to the concerted IRA campaign which developed between 1919 and 1921. The British response was a confused and disparate one, attempting measures that were coercive and conciliatory, often at the same time. The Government of Ireland Act was passed in December 1920 and provided for the establishment of two devolved parliaments in Ireland. The six counties in the north east would form Northern Ireland, governed by a parliament siting in Belfast, while the remaining 26 counties were to be governed by a parliament siting in Dublin. Over time, the British Government hoped that these two governments would vote most of their powers to a Council of Ireland which would then develop as an all-Ireland devolved government, within the United Kingdom. The Government of Ireland Act quickly became a dead letter in Southern Ireland. When candidates were nominated in May 1921, 124 Sinn Féiners and

---

32 On this issue see Martin O'Donoghue, **The Legacy of the Irish Parliamentary Party in Independent Ireland, 1922-1949** (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020).

33 Paul Bew, 'Moderate Nationalism and the Irish Revolution, 1916-1923', **Historical Journal**, 42, 3 (1999). For a good, brief overview of the 1918 General Election see, Marie Coleman, **The Irish Revolution 1916-1923** (London: Routledge, 2014, pp. 40-43).



4 Independents stood and none were opposed. Those elected for Sinn Féin refused to recognise the new parliament and continued to sit as Dáil Éireann, which meant that the planned devolved Dublin-based parliament and government was never formed.<sup>34</sup> The Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921, negotiated between a Sinn Féin delegation and the British Government, superseded the Government of Ireland Act of 1920 in terms of the governance of the 26 Counties. This area was established as the Irish Free State, a self-governing Dominion within the British Empire, which had much more autonomy than the planned devolved government would have possessed. The new Irish Free State was free to raise its own taxes and army, issue its own currency and develop its own foreign policy. Committed Republicans saw this settlement as an unsatisfactory one which left the Irish Free State as part of the British Empire, rather than the Irish Republic as proclaimed in 1916. This led to the Irish Civil War between the newly formed Irish Free State Army and irreconcilable elements of the IRA, which was fought out between April 1922 and May 1923, resulting in victory for the Irish Free State.

The partition issue was therefore not settled in 1920 and was raised again in the discussions between the Sinn Féin delegation and British Government in 1921. The Anglo-Irish Treaty of December 1921 made provision for a Boundary Commission which would revisit the size of the new Northern Ireland state. Michael Collins, and others in the Sinn Féin delegation, seem to have been led to believe that the Boundary Commission would so reduce the size of Northern Ireland, transferring Cos. Fermanagh and Tyrone in their entirety and parts of Co. Londonderry, south Armagh and south Down to the jurisdiction of the Irish Free State that the whole island would soon come under the control of the Dublin government. The Boundary Commission was finally established in June 1924 when Richard Feetham, a Judge of the Supreme Court of South Africa, was appointed chairman. The Commission took evidence from local communities in border areas and was ready to report in November 1925 when its findings were leaked to **The Morning Post**, a conservative London based newspaper. The proposals made were modest, suggesting a minor revision of the border, with part of south Armagh transferred to the jurisdiction of the Irish Free State and part of east Donegal transferred to the jurisdiction of Northern Ireland. In light of the event, the Governments of the Irish Free State, Northern Ireland and the United Kingdom agreed, in December 1925, to revoke the powers of the Boundary Commission and maintain the existing border.<sup>35</sup>

Within Unionism, partition remained a problematic issue. Most Ulster Unionists took a pragmatic view, believing that a six county area would leave them with a secure majority in the new Northern Ireland state. However, Unionists in Southern Ireland, and especially those in the three historic counties of Ulster which were not to be included in Northern Ireland (Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan) felt betrayed by this settlement. This was particularly keenly felt by those in Cavan, Monaghan and Donegal who had signed the Ulster Covenant in 1912. In February 1921, Sir Edward Carson stood down as leader of the Ulster Unionists, handing over the leadership to James Craig. Carson, a Dubliner, who identified strongly with Southern Unionists, recoiled from the idea of becoming Prime Minister of the new Northern Ireland state and preferred to pursue his legal career in England.<sup>36</sup>

---

34 Alvin Jackson, **Home Rule: An Irish History 1800-2000** (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003), pp. 196-201 and Alan O'Day, **Irish Home Rule 1867-1921** (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp. 294-300.

35 Diarmaid Ferriter, **The Border: The Legacy of a Century of Anglo-Irish Politics** (London: Profile Books, 2019), pp. 11-20 and 26-30 and Jackson, **Home Rule: An Irish History**, pp. 208-14. See also J. A. Cousins, **Without a Dog's Chance: The Nationalists of Northern Ireland and the Irish Boundary Commission, 1920-25** (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2020) and Paul Murray, **The Irish Boundary Commission and Its Origins 1886-1925** (Dublin: UCD Press, 2011).

36 Alvin Jackson, **Judging Redmond & Carson** (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2018), pp. 200-203.

---



The date for the establishment of Northern Ireland is not an easy one to define. One might look to 23 December 1920 when the Government of Ireland Act became law, or indeed 3 May 1921 with the commencement of the Act; 24 May 1921, when the Northern Ireland General Election was held, returning 40 Unionists, 6 Nationalists and 6 Sinn Féiners; 7 June 1921 when the preliminary meeting of the Northern Ireland House of Commons occurred and the Cabinet was appointed with James Craig as Prime Minister; or 22 June 1921 when King George V opened the Northern Ireland Parliament, then sitting in Belfast City Hall. It was, indeed, to be February 1922 before the government departments established in Northern Ireland received the full transfer of powers from the old Dublin Castle administration.

The devolved Northern Ireland Parliament was based on the Westminster model with two houses, a House of Commons with 52 MPs and a Senate with 26 Senators. The House of Commons was elected by proportional representation and the Senate was largely elected by the MPs, so simply reflected the party strength in the Commons. A Government, formed by the majority Ulster Unionist Party, was responsible to the parliament. The Government, as established in May 1921 had six ministries - Finance, Home Affairs, Labour, Education, Agriculture and Commerce - with James Craig serving as Prime Minister. The Crown was represented in Northern Ireland by a Governor, initially the Duke of Abercorn. As a devolved region Northern Ireland continued to send MPs to Westminster.

The financial arrangements established between the UK and Northern Ireland Governments were complicated and unsatisfactory. Essentially, they meant that, in theory, most taxes payable in Northern Ireland would be collected by the Treasury in London and then paid over to the Northern Ireland Government when deductions had been made for 'Imperial Services' (defence, foreign policy, etc.). In reality the economic downturn of the 1920s rendered this system unworkable and the Northern Ireland Government relied on support from the British taxpayer, but in a piecemeal and unsystematic manner.

The devolution of powers to the new Northern Ireland Government took a considerable amount of time and key legislation could not be passed until 1922. The Northern Ireland Government brought in some key legislation which was regarded as repressive of the Nationalist minority. The Civil Authorities (Special Powers) Act, normally simply known as the Special Powers Act, came into force in April 1922. This gave sweeping powers to the Minister of Home Affairs, Richard Dawson Bates, which included the ability to intern suspects without trial or exclude them from residence in all or parts of Northern Ireland. Immediately as the Special Powers Act came into force in May 1922, 500 IRA suspects were interned on the prison ship **Argenta**, although whether it was this action or the departure of many Republicans to fight in the Irish Civil War which led to a reduction in violence in Northern Ireland remains unclear. The actions of a number of local authorities, notably those of the County Councils of Fermanagh and Tyrone in pledging allegiance to Dáil Éireann, had proved deeply embarrassing to the Northern Ireland Government. The response was new legislation in September 1922 which abolished proportional representation in local government elections and allowed for the redrawing of electoral boundaries; it was as a result of this legislation that the Unionist Government could be accused of Gerrymandering.<sup>37</sup>

---

37 On the establishment of Northern Ireland see; Patrick Buckland, **The Factory of Grievances: Devolved Government in Northern Ireland 1921-39** (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1979), B. A. Follis, **A State Under Siege: The Establishment of Northern Ireland 1920-1925** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), David Harkness, **Northern Ireland since 1920** (Dublin: Helicon, 1983), pp. 1-42 and Thomas Hennessey, **A History of Northern Ireland 1920-1996** (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1997), pp. 1-55.

Northern Ireland had been designed to be a one-party state and the unimaginative replication of a 'Westminster' model did nothing to develop safeguards for the minority Nationalist population. In theory the Westminster Parliament itself and the Privy Council were to provide safeguards for the minority but in practice they proved ineffectual in this role. Northern Nationalists were themselves divided over how they could best make their views known. Sinn Féin simply refused to recognise the new state and the Sinn Féin MPs elected in 1921 refused to take their seats in the Belfast Parliament. Constitutional Nationalists, effectively led by Joseph Devlin, also endorsed abstentionism between 1921 and 1925. When they did take their seats, after the 1925 General Election, they refused to take on the role of official opposition. In 1929 Devlin appears to have concluded that he would be better able to make the Nationalist case as MP for Fermanagh and South Tyrone in the Westminster Parliament, although he continued to represent the Belfast Central seat in the Northern Ireland House of Commons.<sup>38</sup>

It should be noted, in the defence of James Craig, that he did show some political imagination and certainly political courage in meeting with Michael Collins, then the Finance Minister in the Irish Free State and a leading figure in the IRA, in early 1922. The result of these meetings, two so-called Craig-Collins pacts, aimed to reform the Northern Ireland Government and security system. The first pact, signed in January 1922, provided for an end to the boycott of goods produced in Belfast in the Irish Free State, the return of Roman Catholics violently expelled from the Belfast shipyards to their employment and negotiations over the extent of the border. The second pact was actually an agreement between the British, Northern Ireland and Provisional Governments. It reiterated the previous commitments and also called for an end to IRA activity in Northern Ireland and the reform of the Ulster Special Constabulary to ensure sizeable Roman Catholic membership. Initially the response to the pacts was positive. Collins took the view that he would now be able to deal directly with Craig, without any interference from the British Government, while Craig took the agreement to show that Collins had recognised the new Northern Ireland state. As it turned out neither Collins nor Craig could deliver on their commitments. Collins could do little to end the boycott and the split of the IRA into pro- and anti-Treaty factions meant that he also could not end IRA activity in Northern Ireland. Craig argued that in the face of a renewed IRA campaign he could do nothing and the prospects of returning Roman Catholic workers to jobs in the shipyards as they faced an economic downturn was, in any case, slim.<sup>39</sup>

Within Ulster the Anglo-Irish War developed rather later than in southern Provinces. It also developed with a more markedly sectarian nature in Ulster and with many cases of inter-communal rioting, fuelled by the presence of the IRA and Loyalist paramilitary groups. There were serious outbreaks of political violence in Derry~Londonderry city between April and June 1920. The funeral of Lieutenant Colonel G B F Smyth in Banbridge, Co. Down, who had been Divisional Commander of the RIC in Munster when he was assassinated by the IRA in Cork, saw the expulsion of Roman Catholics from Banbridge and nearby Dromore, and serious disturbances in Belfast which saw many Roman Catholics expelled from their homes and jobs in the shipyards and engineering works in July 1920. The assassination of District Inspector O R Swanzy in Lisburn, Co. Antrim in August 1920, saw the expulsion of Roman Catholics from the town and major rioting in Belfast, which resulted in some 30 deaths. There were to be further

---

38 A. C. Hepburn, **Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland in the Era of Joe Devlin 1871-1934** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), pp. 205-265 and Eamon Phoenix, **Northern Nationalism: Nationalist Politics, Partition and the Catholic Minority in Northern Ireland 1890-1940** (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1994), pp. 106-336

39 Michael Hopkinson, 'The Craig-Collins Pacts of 1922: Two Attempted Reforms of the Northern Ireland Government', **Irish Historical Studies**, 27, 106 (1990).

---

severe disturbances in Belfast, especially in July 1921, February 1922 and May 1922.<sup>40</sup> From April 1920 there was to be a concerted IRA campaign within Ulster. This adopted various tactics from the assassination of policemen, and, in the case of William Twaddell MP for Woodvale shot dead on 22 May 1922, a Unionist politician, to 'low level' activity such as the burning of tax offices and abandoned police barracks, and the enforcement of a boycott against the products of Unionist companies. Other notable incidents included the kidnapping of over 40 Unionists in Fermanagh and Tyrone on 8 February 1922 and a gun battle between the IRA and Ulster Special Constabulary (USC) at Clones Railway Station on 11 February 1922 which left four special constables dead and eight badly wounded.<sup>41</sup> The IRA assassination of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, MP for North Down and security adviser to the Northern Ireland Government at his home in London on 22 June 1922, and can be seen as one of the catalysts for the Irish Civil War as the British Government demanded action against the IRA.<sup>42</sup> Patrick Buckland has estimated that overall, between 21 June 1920 and 18 June 1922, 1,766 people were wounded and 428 killed as a result of political violence in the six counties which became Northern Ireland, with fatalities disproportionately high amongst the Roman Catholic population.<sup>43</sup> Robert Lynch notes that the IRA killed 81 members of the police, 43 of them Special Constables, in the six counties which became Northern Ireland during 1920-22.<sup>44</sup>

The British Government responded by expanding the police forces in Ireland. The RIC received recruits from Great Britain from January 1920 to bring it up to strength; the so-called 'Black and Tans' who received their name as insufficient stocks of police uniforms (rifle green) had to be eked out with army uniforms (khaki). A special 'Auxiliary Division' made up mainly of ex-officers of the British Army, demobilised in 1919, was formed as a 'special force' to take the war to the enemy in July 1920. This was the element of the Crown forces most responsible for atrocities, such as the sacking of Trim and burning of Cork.<sup>45</sup> In the six counties that became Northern Ireland, the USC started recruiting in November 1920, drawing a number of its members from the reformed UVF. It had three classes: 'A' which was a full-time force, largely organised as mobile platoons, ultimately 3,500 strong; 'B' which was a part-time force, with men doing duty two days per week, which reached a maximum strength of 20,000 men; and 'C' Division; an emergency reserve, which was never called out on duty but which seems to have had about 5,000 members enrolled. Historiography on the USC is very polarised. Sir Arthur Hezlet writing what was, effectively, the official history of the force, portrayed it as very similar to the Home Guard of the Second World War, suggesting it was composed of men who selflessly gave up their time to defend their neighbourhoods against the IRA. Michael Farrell has provided a more critical account, portraying the USC as a nakedly sectarian force and holding it responsible for some of the worst atrocities committed during the 'troubles' of the 1920s.<sup>46</sup> Christopher Magill, in his recent

---

40 Adrian Grant, **Derry: The Irish Revolution, 1912-23** (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2018), pp. 87-106, A. F. Parkinson, **Belfast's Unholy War: The Troubles of the 1920s** (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), Jim McDermott, **Northern Divisions: The Old IRA and the Belfast Pogroms 1920-22** (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications, 2001) and Okan Ozseker, **Forging the Border: Donegal and Derry in Times of Revolution, 1911-25** (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2019), pp. 138-59

41 Robert Lynch, **The Northern IRA and the Early Years of Partition 1920-1922** (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006).

42 Peter Hart, **The I.R.A. at War 1916-1923** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), pp. 194-222 and Keith Jeffery, **Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: A Political Soldier** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), pp. 281-285.

43 Patrick Buckland, **A History of Northern Ireland** (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981), p. 46.

44 Lynch, **The Northern IRA**, p. 67.

45 D. M. Leeson, **The Black & Tans: British police and auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence, 1920-21** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

46 Michael Farrell, **Arming the Protestants: The formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary 1920-27** (London: Pluto Press, 1983) and Sir Arthur Hezlet, **The 'B' Specials: A History of the Ulster Special Constabulary** (London: Tom Stacey, 1972).

---

study of the USC, based on the USC Archive at PRONI, concludes that the force was clearly very effective in countering the IRA campaign against Northern Ireland but had serious short-comings namely, institutionalised sectarianism, poor training and poor discipline. In considering the Cushendall shootings of June 1922, which are detailed below, Magill concludes that, 'it seems most likely that the A Specials carried out a triple punishment killing'.<sup>47</sup> Police were also clearly implicated in the murder of six members of the McMahon family in west Belfast on 24 March 1922.<sup>48</sup>

By 1925 the Irish Revolution can be seen to have ended. The worst of the political violence was over in Northern Ireland by the end of 1922, and in the Irish Free State by June 1923 with the end of the Irish Civil War. The agreement between the Governments of Britain, the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland over the extent of the border in 1925 can be seen as an end to the revolutionary period. Large elements of the USC were disbanded in 1925 and Northern Nationalists, if not reconciled to the new state, were at least prepared to recognise it by taking their seats in the Northern Ireland Parliament. It was to be 1972 before the constitutional arrangements established in 1920-22 broke down in the face of widespread opposition.

---

47 Christopher Magill, **Political Conflict in East Ulster, 1920-22: Revolution and Reprisal** (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2020), pp. 98- 111.

48 Tim Wilson, "The most terrible assassination that has yet stained the name of Belfast": the McMahon murders in context', **Irish Historical Studies**, 37, 145 (2010).

---

# General Election of 1918

**The outcome of the General Election held in December 1918 was a major watershed in Irish history. Women were able to vote in Parliamentary elections for the first time, if aged 30 or over, and all men over 21 could now vote. This increased the size of the electorate from less than 700,000 to almost two million.**

**Sinn Féin won 73 of the 105 seats with the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), which had formed an electoral pact with Sinn Féin in some areas, reduced to six. Joseph Devlin retained his seat in Belfast but John Dillon, the leader of the IPP lost to Éamon de Valera in Mayo. Unionists won 25 seats in Ulster, including three 'Labour Unionists' in Belfast. The Sinn Féin members did not take their seats at Westminster but established the first Dáil Éireann in Dublin in January 1919.**

**The Rev. James Brown Armour (1841–1928) was minister of Second Presbyterian Church, Ballymoney and a supporter of the IPP.**

**Source 40 - Letter from Rev. J B Armour, Ballymoney, to his son W S Armour, 17 December 1918. (PRONI Reference: D1792/A/3/9/29).**

We have got into the doldrums now that the election is over. The lot is cast into the lap and the disposing thereof depends on the ballot boxes which may in one way be regarded as at heart the possession of the Lord. No election in my memory was ever so quiet as was Saturday's. A considerable portion of the community — perhaps it might be called the respectable part, though others would call it the Home Rule party — did not vote. A few excited females — Mrs R. A. McElderry, the Boyds and Mrs Stewart and the Pattersons — a number of dafties were out haling men and women into the Tory camp. We got doubtless a good deal of private abuse for refusing to take part with the Pharisees but that did not hinder our sleep or interfere with our digestion. 'Eat and let the parties rave. They are filled with idle spleen. Rising, falling like the wave. For they know not what they mean' was the motto. Every old woman in the Roddenfoot was taken in motor cars to save the empire and keep out a Papish, though if they had been in South Derry they would have had, with their Orange brethren, to vote for Denis Henry — one of the Pope's brigade. It is a topsy-turvy world in truth.

...

The elections are a leap in the dark. Little interest was taken in it in most places but women were to the fore in some districts. Joe Devlin according to reports has been elected by a large majority [in the Falls division of Belfast]. Dillon according to Sinn Féin has been snowed under but his backers think differently....

The boat which carried the Carson crew has hidden rocks ahead of it and it may be wrecked between two seas. The Church of Ireland — one need not speak of the Presbyterian community — will not stand without a very strong protest about being cast over to the tender mercies of those Carson regards as wolves. The merchants of the north would not care to have as their field for merchandise

only some five counties. The banks will fight shy of a scheme which would practically close up the branches outside the five counties. The lawyers would hardly like to be closed out of the Irish courts and be compelled to take their cases to England and Scotland — that is in cases of appeal as quarter sessions courts run by Irish judges would have to be appointed for the work of these courts. One can understand the cry 'No Home Rule' for Ireland, but the cry for partition reaches the bottom of absurdity — that in my opinion cannot carry.

The Government of Ireland Act, which became law in December 1920, established separate parliaments for Northern and Southern Ireland. Three of the Ulster counties, Cavan, Donegal and Monaghan, were included in Southern Ireland. Many Unionists in these areas considered this to be a breaking of the Ulster Covenant of 1912. Unionists in Southern Ireland also opposed partition.

**Source 41 - Speech made in the House of Commons by Captain Charles Craig, Ulster Unionist MP for South Antrim, 29 March 1920. (Reference: Hansard (Commons) 5th series, CXXVII, cols 989-93, 29 March 1920).**

Captain CRAIG: ... When the Government made it known that a Bill was to be introduced giving separate treatment to Ulster, three problems of the gravest character faced the Ulster Members of Parliament and the Ulster people. The first of those was the attitude which we were to take towards the Bill, and that I have already dealt with; the second was as to the area of the excluded area; and thirdly we had to ask ourselves the question, Were we to ask for a Parliament of our own in Ulster, or were we to ask to be left as part of the United Kingdom, sending Members as at present to this House? We would much prefer to remain part and parcel of the United Kingdom. We have prospered, we have made our province prosperous under the Union, and under the laws passed by this House and administered by officers appointed by this House. We do not in any way desire to recede from a position which has been in every way satisfactory to us, but we have many enemies in this country, and we feel that an Ulster without a Parliament of its own would not be in nearly as strong a position as one in which a Parliament had been set up where the Executive had been appointed and where above all the paraphernalia of Government was already in existence. We believe that so long as we were without a Parliament of our own constant attacks would be made upon us, and constant attempts would be made by the Hon. Member opposite (Mr T. P. O'Connor) and his friends to draw us into a Dublin Parliament, and that is the last thing in the world that we desire to see happen... We see our safety, therefore, in having a Parliament of our own, for we believe that once a Parliament is set up and working well, as I have no doubt it would in Ulster, we should fear no one, and we feel that we would then be in a position of absolute security and that we could remain in that position until such time as we of our own volition and desire wished to join the Hon. member (Mr. T. P. O'Connor) opposite. That contingency, I repeat, is some considerable way off. We do not know how long, if we did not take a Parliament, our Unionist friends in this country could hold the fort against the forces which would be brought to bear upon them, and we know that the attempts on our liberty would be repeated time and again, and therefore I say that we prefer to have a Parliament, although we do not want one of our own. Our position under such a Parliament will not be as good as it is at the present moment, for we should be then, to a certain extent, separated from England, and our businesses would undoubtedly suffer, though I admit readily that on the other hand the removal of the menace of a Dublin Home Rule Parliament would do very much to stimulate trade and commerce, which has undoubtedly suffered from the fact that this sword of Damocles has been hanging over our heads for so many years.

I come now to the third and the most distressing of the problems we had to face, and I refer to that of the area. As Hon. members know, the area over which the North of Ireland Parliament is to have jurisdiction is the six counties of Antrim, Down, Armagh, Londonderry, Tyrone and Fermanagh. The three Ulster counties of Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal are to be handed over to the South of Ireland Parliament. How the position of affairs in a Parliament of nine counties and in a Parliament of six counties would be is shortly this. If we had a nine counties' Parliament, with 64 Members, the Unionist majority would be about three or four, but in a six counties' Parliament, with 52 Members, the Unionist majority would be about 10. The three excluded counties contain some 70,000 Unionists and 260,000 Sinn Feiners and Nationalists, and the addition of that large block of



Sinn Feiners and Nationalists would reduce our majority to such a level that no sane man would undertake to carry on a Parliament with it. That is the position with which we were faced when we had to take the decision a few days ago as to whether we should call upon the Government to include the nine counties in the Bill or be satisfied with the six...

Nothing—and I say this with all sincerity, and I am sure everybody will believe me—nothing was more heart-breaking to us than to take the decision which we felt we had to take a few days ago in Belfast when we decreed more or less that our Unionist fellow countrymen in the three counties of Monaghan, Cavan and Donegal should remain outside the Ulster Parliament; but in judging our action we must ask Hon. Members to try and place themselves in our position. They must remember that we are charged with the defence of the Ulster position, and surely that carries with it the duty of undertaking the Government and the defence of as much of Ulster as we can hold. We quite frankly admit that we cannot hold the nine counties...

I knew that the accusation would come sooner or later that we had broken the Covenant which we signed in 1912, when we bound ourselves—all the Unionists in all the counties of Ulster—to stand by one another in the crisis which then threatened. There has been a great deal said on this question of the breach of the Covenant by those of us who voted in favour of the six counties of Ulster, and I am quite prepared to admit a technical breach of that Covenant. But I say to those who charge me with that, that if I kept the Covenant in the letter as regards the excluded counties, I should be breaking it in the spirit, and true meaning, to the six counties. I see an Hon. Member opposite shake his head. I would like to ask him what was the first object of the Covenant? It was to prevent a Dublin Parliament being imposed upon Ulster, and I would like to ask him how we could carry out the intention of that Covenant by assuming the Government of such a large area in Ulster that we could not hold it, and in the course of a month or two, or possibly a few years, that area had to be handed over to the Dublin Parliament?



**Source 42 - Extracts from a memorandum by Lord Desart, an influential Southern Unionist, 22 November 1919. (TNA Reference: CAB/27/69/2/41).**

I send you a disquisition about the advertised policy of the Government regarding this country, more especially with regard to the question of Partition, which I personally should oppose in any form and in any circumstances which I can contemplate.

First politically Ulster or the six Counties (sometimes the claim is for the first, sometime for the second) do not wish for Partition but have lately categorically stated they would accept it in the last resort. In fact they did so when they accepted the Amending Bill in 1914.

Southern Unionists are all opposed to Partition but some are much influenced by the attitude of Ulster - others, like myself, regard the Ulster attitude as selfish, and to put it quite plainly as a betrayal of their old friends in the South. But I think it is certain that all Southern Unionists are opposed to partition. They would be lunatics were it not so. An Irish Parliament without Ulster would leave Southern Unionists without any representation at all while they would provide the larger part of all taxes and rates.

The Nationalists are bitterly opposed to it - and I do not believe that such of their leaders as remain in public life could make any compromise, which would be accepted by their followers. It would merely throw all these into the ranks of Sinn Féin.

Sinn Féin demands what I hope I may safely call the impossible - an independent republic - and to this the whole of Ireland is essential and any weakening of Nationalists on this point would add to their influence.

Lastly the R.C. Hierarchy - They cannot, if they would, abandon their people in the North and are therefore another force against partition.

I may say that in my opinion they are a force and very probably a deciding force against any form of Home Rule, which I am convinced they are determined to avert - mainly I think because they fear Education Rates which would lead to School Boards.

Thus, if my diagnosis is correct, you have as retards partition

An unwilling Ulster - or six counties

A hostile body of Southern Unionists

Bitter opposition from Nationalists

Scornful rejection by Sinn Féin

A Hierarchy which will make no concession.

I can myself conceive no possible workable solution of which partition in any shape would form a part.

# Establishment of Northern Ireland

**The Northern Ireland Government took office in June 1921 taking over functions formerly performed by the administration in Dublin. Some functions, such as Defence and Taxation, were reserved for the United Kingdom Government in London while some others were to be exercised jointly by both Irish administrations.**

**Source 43 - Extract from a memorandum setting out proposals for the new administration of Northern Ireland, 25 February 1921. (PRONI Reference: FIN/18/1/109).**

The Establishment of a Parliament for Northern Ireland presents a suitable opportunity for erecting the structure of the various new Ulster Government Departments in such a manner as will obviate the overlapping now existing in the Imperial Civil Service, will conduce to co-ordination in respect both to recruitment and organisation and will effect economies in the numbers employed, and in cost.

There are in Ireland some 30 different Departments ... responsible for the enforcement of the several functions of domestic Government, and based on methods of organisation common to the whole Civil Service: there are also in Ireland many resident officials of other Departments who are entrusted with duties directed from, and controlled by, their London Headquarters. As in Great Britain, the Irish Departments have exercised that autonomy of administration with, within wide limits, has been given, and they have set up such internal machinery as seemed most suited to the carrying out of the ends in view. The inevitable result has been the unnecessary multiplication of indoor officials and Inspectors in different Departments, many of whom are performing duties similar in kind and extent, and without any clearly-defined line of demarcation between them.

For a variety of obvious reasons it is highly desirable that the Departments which are intended to form the basis of Ulster Government should crystallise into a much more restricted number, and that each of the Departments so formed should discharge functions which, although now performed by two or more separate Boards, are capable of compression into one administrative unit, by reason of the inter-relation of the duties now segregated, thereby conducing to economy and efficiency.

The precise allocation of functions between the different new Departments is a question of great delicacy and importance, as upon the success of the co-ordination thus effected will depend the smooth working and efficiency of the Government machine; it is moreover a question which must be treated with a certain degree of circumspection and vision, so that the framework will be so flexible as to be capable of ready readjustment, to meet such demands as the development of administrative authority may necessitate.

**Source 44 - Extract from the first Belfast Gazette, 7 June 1921. (PRONI Reference: SO/1/G/1).**

Belfast,

7th June 1921.

**NOTIFICATIONS.**

The following Notices are published for general information.

(No. 1.) Establishment of Departments and Appointment of Ministers of Northern Ireland.

It is notified that His Excellency the Lord Lieutenant has been pleased, under the provisions of section eight of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, to establish the Departments of the Government of Northern Ireland, described in the first column of the Schedule hereto for the exercise, as respects Irish services, in Northern Ireland of any prerogative or other executive power of His Majesty, the exercise of which is delegated to the Lord Lieutenant by His Majesty, and also to determine that those Departments shall be the Departments, the heads whereof for the time being shall, subject to the provisions of the said Act, be Ministers of Northern Ireland under the respective titles set out in the second column of the said Schedule opposite to the descriptions of the respective Departments, and also to appoint the persons named in the third column of the said Schedule to be, during the Lord Lieutenant's pleasure, the heads of the respective Departments opposite to the descriptions of which their names respectively appear.

**Schedule**

Description of Department.	Title of Minister.	Name of Minister.
Department of the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland	Prime Minister of Northern Ireland	The Right Honourable Sir James Craig, Bart., M.P.
Ministry of Finance for Northern Ireland	Minister of Finance for Northern Ireland	The Right Honourable Hugh MacDowell Pollock, M.P.
Ministry of Home Affairs for Northern Ireland	Minister of Home Affairs for Northern Ireland	The Right Honourable Sir Richard Dawson Bates, M.P.
Ministry of Labour for Northern Ireland	Minister of Labour for Northern Ireland	The Right Honourable John Miller Andrews, M.P.
Ministry of Education for Northern Ireland	Minister of Education for Northern Ireland	The Right Honourable The Marquess of Londonderry, K.G.
Ministry of Agriculture for Northern Ireland	Minister of Agriculture for Northern Ireland	The Right Honourable Edward Mervyn Archdale, M.P.
Ministry of Commerce for Northern Ireland	Minister of Commerce for Northern Ireland	

# Opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament

The first elections to the Northern Ireland House of Commons were held in May 1921. Ulster Unionists won 40 seats, the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) and Sinn Féin 6 each. The first meetings of the new parliament, which were boycotted by Nationalists, were held in Belfast City Hall. King George V travelled to Belfast to formally open the parliament on 22 June 1921. His speech on this occasion, with its plea for peace and reconciliation, would have been drafted by the Cabinet in London.



**Image 9** - Opening of Northern Ireland Parliament, 1921. (PRONI Reference: D3480/22/1).

**Source 45 - The King's Message on the opening of the Northern Ireland Parliament, 22 June 1921. (Hansard N.I. (Commons), I, cols 19-22, 23 June 1921). (PRONI Reference: SO/1/H/1).**

For all who love Ireland, as I do with all my heart, this is a profoundly moving occasion in Irish history. My memories of the Irish people date back to the time when I spent many happy days in Ireland as a midshipman. My affection for the Irish people has been deepened by the successive visits since that time, and I have watched with constant sympathy the course of their affairs.

I could not have allowed myself to give Ireland by deputy alone. My earnest prayers and good wishes in the new era which opens with this ceremony, and I have therefore come in person, as the Head of the Empire, to inaugurate this Parliament on Irish soil.

I inaugurate it with deep-felt hope, and I feel assured that you will do your utmost to make it an instrument of happiness and good government for all parts of the community which you represent.

This is a great and critical occasion in the history of the Six Counties, but not for the Six Counties alone, for everything which interests them touches Ireland, and everything which touches Ireland finds an echo in the remotest parts of the Empire.

Few things are more earnestly desired throughout the English speaking world than a satisfactory solution of the age long Irish problems, which for generations embarrassed our forefathers, as they now weigh heavily upon us.

Most certainly there is no wish nearer My own heart than that every man of Irish birth, whatever be his creed and wherever be his home, should work in loyal co-operation with the free communities on which the British Empire is based.

I am confident that the important matters entrusted to the control and guidance of the Northern Parliament will be managed with wisdom and with moderation, with fairness and due regard to every faith and interest, and with no abatement of that patriotic devotion to the Empire which you proved so gallantly in the Great War.

Full partnership in the United Kingdom and religious freedom Ireland has long enjoyed. She now has conferred upon her the duty of dealing with all the essential tasks of domestic legislation and government; and I feel no misgiving as to the spirit in which you who stand here to-day will carry out the all-important functions entrusted to your care.

My hope is broader still. The eyes of the whole Empire are on Ireland today - that Empire in which so many nations and races have come together in spite of ancient feuds, and in which new nations have come to birth within the lifetime of the youngest in this Hall.

I am emboldened by that thought to look beyond the sorrow and the anxiety which have clouded of late My vision of Irish affairs. I speak from a full heart when I pray that My coming to Ireland today may prove to be the first step towards an end of strife amongst her people, whatever their race or creed. In that hope, I appeal to all Irishmen to pause, to stretch out the hand of forbearance and conciliation, to forgive and to forget, and to join in making for the land which they love a new era of peace, contentment, and goodwill.

It is My earnest desire that in Southern Ireland, too, there may ere long take place a parallel to what is now passing in this Hall; that there a similar occasion may present itself and a similar ceremony be performed.

For this the Parliament of the United Kingdom has in the fullest measure provided the powers; for this the Parliament of Ulster is pointing the way. The future lies in the hands of My Irish people themselves.

May this historic gathering be the prelude of a day in which the Irish people, North and South, under one Parliament or two, as those Parliaments may themselves decide, shall work together in common love for Ireland upon the sure foundations of mutual justice and respect.



# Violence

**There was widespread politically motivated violence across Ireland from January 1919. This includes the events now referred to as the Anglo-Irish War or Irish War of Independence and the Irish Civil War. This violence affected the area which became Northern Ireland, which saw fighting between Republicans and Crown forces as well as inter-communal violence. More than 550 people were killed between July 1920 and July 1922 in Northern Ireland and many more were displaced from their homes and places of employment. The Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC) was disbanded on 31 May 1922 and replaced by the Royal Ulster Constabulary (RUC).**

**Source 46 - Report by the Police Commissioner, RIC, on incidents in Belfast, 3 January 1922. (PRONI Reference: HA/5/149).**

I beg to report the following incidents as having occurred in the City on yesterday the 3rd inst:

'A' District.

About 10.30 p.m., some shots were fired in Carrick Hill and North St. A S/Const. fired a shot in the direction of the shooting but with what result is not known. About 11.15 p.m., some indiscriminate firing took place in Winetavern St., but no person is reported injured as a result.

'B' District.

At 7.55 p.m., two revolver shots and one rifle shot were discharged in the area of Cuper St, Kasimir Rd, and Springfield Rd (mixed locality). So far no person is reported as injured.

At 9.20 p.m., a revolver shot was fired up Conway St from a Unionist area and three rifle shots were fired in reply, believed by the military.

At 10.25 p.m. on 2/1/22, a Mills Bomb was thrown into the house of Teresa Christie, 98 Conway St. R.C. area. The bomb was thrown through the fan light, exploded on the stairs and done some damage to woodwork of stairs and plaster on adjoining wall.

'C' District.

At 4.20 p.m., three men entered the spirit grocery, of Daniel Rooney, 45 years, 273 Hillman St, R.C. and proceeded to go behind the counter. Rooney struck one of the raiders with an iron bar and they all decamped. Con. Killips who was on duty outside gave chase to the men and succeeded in capturing one named Thos. Fogg or Moreland 22 years, 35 Lawther St. Prot. and ex-soldier. The name of another of the raiders is procured also.



About 10 p.m., heavy firing broke out around Millfield and Upper Library St. The Police on duty replied to the firing, and a Lancia Car came on the scene and opened fire with Lewis Gun and soon quelled the outbreak. During the firing Maggie McVeigh, 17 years, 18 Peter Place received a bullet wound in the right cheek, but after treatment in Hospital was allowed home. So far as is known this was the only casualty in the area.

'D' District.

At 4.30 p.m., Bernard Burns, 25 years, R.C. 30 Little Gt. Georges St., was wounded in the lung by a shot alleged to have been fired from Michael St. – Prot. area.

At 8.45 p.m., fire was opened in Columbus St., Thomas St., Portland St and Union Place, The military replied to the fire and soon the District from Little Georges St. to Lancaster St., and from York St. to Nth. Queen St. was involved. Sniping at the Military occurred in Gt. Georges St., Lancaster St, and Thomas St. The military replied vigorously. The district affected is R. C. The firing lasted till Curfew hour, but so far no casualties are reported from this area.

From 8 p.m., till Curfew time single shots were fired from Hanover, Cavour, and Regent Streets – Prot. area, but no person appears to have been hit.

At 4 p.m., Joseph Scully, 20 years Prot. Labour, was assaulted in North Queen St. near Hardinge St – R.C. area.

About 11.25 p.m., John Gribbon, 29 years, R.C. Painter, 28 Arnon St., was found shot dead in Kildare St. It is not known how he met his death as heavy firing took place in the area.

'E' District.

About 11 p.m., a bomb was thrown, alleged to be from the top of an outgoing tram on Newtownards Rd. into the end of Foundry St. R.C. quarter. The bomb exploded but no injury was done.

About the same time 10 shots were fired at a military post stationed at St. Mathews Chapel Newtownards Rd. from various streets in the vicinity. The Military replied and as a result five persons received gunshot wounds. The area from which the shots are alleged to have been fired at the Military is Protestant and all the wounded are Protestants. None of these injuries have so far proved fatal.

**Source 47 - Report by Lieutenant Colonel Charles Wickham, Divisional Commissioner, Royal Irish Constabulary, on incidents in the six counties of Northern Ireland, 15 March 1922.  
(PRONI Reference: HA/5/152).**

BI -MONTHLY REPORT.

I beg to report that the state of this Division is still unsatisfactory, particularly in the City of Belfast, where during the period the condition of affairs has been very bad. This has eased off somewhat during the past few days, but since the visit of De Valera to the City on 7th inst. it is evident that there is an organised plan on foot to attack the Crown forces. On the 10th inst. two Constables were murdered in the Falls area for no apparent motive. This was followed by the shooting of Lieutenant Bruce, Seaforth Highlanders, in Alfred Street, on 10th inst., and Sergeant Clarke in the Falls area on 13th inst.

Owing to the release of kidnapped men the situation has eased somewhat on the Border. The five Special Constables taken at Clones, however, have not yet been released. It is known that there is a large number of I.R.A. fully armed and equipped in County Monaghan. A draft of 130 men is reported to have arrived at Clones from Beggar's Bush.

The Lifford Post has been removed, but there is still one retained at Clady Bridge. A report received states that the I.R.A. have taken possession of the Orange Hall at Carrigans, Co. Donegal. This place is only a short distance from the Derry Boundary, and controls the Railway line running into Derry. Reprisals have been threatened if members of the I.R.A. arrested in the Northern area are not released, but it is doubtful if any immediate action is intended.

CITY OF BELFAST:

During the fortnight the state of the City has been very unsatisfactory. Although no rioting on an organised scale took place there has been a considerable amount of sniping from vantage points by gunmen belonging to both political parties, resulting in considerable loss of life. These murders, and the reprisals arising there-from have aroused extremely bitter feeling amongst the rival sections of the community.

Military and Police during the last few days have held up and searched pedestrians in various places in the City, in some cases with a good deal of success. This should have the effect of driving large numbers of Gunmen from the streets. During the period 54 Political and 5 Sinn Féin outrages have been reported in the City.

On the 7th inst. delegates from the various Comhairle Ceantair in the six Counties attended a meeting in St. Mary's Hall, Belfast. De Valera arrived by motor car at 11 a.m. and shortly afterwards two members of the Provisional Government, named McGrath and Shiel, arrived also by Motor Car. De Valera presided at the meeting, which was held in private. Information has been received that the principal subject discussed had reference to Nationalist and Sinn Féin members of Parliament taking their seats in the Northern Parliament. It was unanimously decided that these men should not take

their seats or have anything to do with the administration of the Northern Parliament. The position of the expelled workers and the re-introduction of the Belfast Boycott were also discussed. The meeting came to the conclusion that Sir James Craig had not carried out his agreement with Michael Collins, and a resolution was passed calling upon the Provisional Government to again put the Boycott into operation.

An Advisory Committee for the six counties was then formed, which received instructions to keep constantly in touch with Dáil Éireann. The peace of the City was also discussed and strong statements were made regarding the Special Constabulary, who are alleged to have performed their duty in a partial and biased manner.

#### COUNTY ANTRIM:

The state of this County has been satisfactory during the period. No open activity apart from Sinn Féin has come under notice. The only outrage of a political nature taking place during the period occurred on the 11th inst. when rioting took place at the funeral of a Belfast victim at Whitehouse. As a result one man was killed and another wounded.

#### COUNTY DOWN:

In Newry district there is still some I. R. A. activity and a considerable amount of tension exists.

On the night of the 11th inst. some road blocking took place between Newry and Warrenpoint. The object of this is not quite clear but it is not improbable that some reprisal may be attempted on the police in consequence of the arrest on 14th ult. of James Monaghan, who is believed to be O.C., 4th Northern Division. At Down Assizes this man was sentenced to seven years Penal Servitude, and Patrick Murray, and Michael Murney, who accompanied Monaghan at the time of his arrest, were sentenced to six years Penal Servitude and one year's imprisonment respectively.

At the same Assizes Richard McVeigh, of Dunavon, Kilkeel, who was found in possession of explosives, &c. on 26th ult., was sentenced to 3 years' Penal Servitude. Some of the explosives found were stolen from Haulbowline Light-house some months ago.

At Down Assizes also, members of the I.R.A. who acted as Police in Warrenpoint some time ago, were sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

On 1st inst. a man named William McGreevy, of Castlewella, was arrested for having ammunition and seditious documents in his possession. This case is still under consideration.

The I.R.A. in Castlewella are believed to be active. It is strongly suspected that explosives are being manufactured in the remote mountainous districts, but so far the police have been unable to locate these places. A strike of Mineral Water employees at Newry took place during the period, and has been settled.

#### COUNTY ARMAGH:

Matters have been quiet in this County during the period. There has been a decrease of 8 specially reported outrages.

On the 2nd inst. a Cattle Dealer was robbed near the City of Armagh. Two men were subsequently arrested and the missing property found on them.

On the morning of the 3rd inst. a number of armed and masked men entered the dwelling houses of Joseph Devlin, Keegan, and Thos. McCann, near Loughgall. Two guns were taken from Devlin's house. The injured parties are Roman Catholics.

On the night of the 3rd inst. three men proceeding to Newry, were held up by armed and unknown men at Kernan. The men were ordered to return to their homes, and when some distance away a number of shots were fired, wounding two of their horses.

#### COUNTY TYRONE:

This County is still in an unsatisfactory condition. Feeling is very bad throughout the County and particularly in the districts of Aughnacloy, Cookstown and Strabane. The two Unionists kidnapped at Claudy some time ago were released on the 8th inst. This, to a certain extent, has improved the feeling between the rival political parties.

On the 4th inst. a bomb explosion took place at Caledon, as a result of which three men were seriously injured. These men, with some others, were standing at a street corner after leaving Chapel, when a bomb was thrown, which exploded beside them. It has not been established by whom the bomb was thrown.

On the 1st Inst. the house of Ethel Adams, Coalisland, was raided by four armed and disguised men for arms, but none were found.

On the same day the house of John Grew, Eskragh, Dungannon, was raided for arms; but none were found. £5 in cash was taken away.

On the 2nd inst. the house of Mary Jane McGurk, Sub-Postmistress at Mountjoy, was raided by armed and masked men who took away £6 of Old Age Pension money.

On the 4th inst. William Brunt, Trillick, received by post a threatening letter. This letter purports to have come from Fermanagh I.R.A. and the motive is to intimidate Brunt, who is a member of 'B' Special Constabulary.

On the 10th inst. Ellen Duff, Sub-Postmistress at Corland, Dungannon, had her house raided for Old Age Pension money. The sum of £3 belonging to the Sub-Postmistress and a few other articles were taken away.

On the 11th inst. a patrol of 'B' specials was ambushed at Drumcraw, Cookstown. Several shots were fired by both parties, but the patrol escaped uninjured.

#### COUNTY FERMANAGH:

The state of this County has been fairly satisfactory during the period. Feeling along the Border is strained, but no serious incident has been reported. Two Enniskillen motor cars, the property of Unionists when across the Border, at Swanlinbar and Belturbet, were commandeered by the I.R.A. It is believed this was done as a reprisal for the cars seized by police from a raiding party of I.R.A. on 8th ult. A motor car has also been stolen from a garage near Garrison on 8th inst.

Three police on patrol near Drumboccas on the evening of 4th. inst. were held up by five armed I.R.A. men, but were not molested.

On the 8th inst. a bridge on the road near blacken was destroyed. It is suspected that this was done by Sinn Féiners as a reprisal for roads blocked by Special Constabulary along the Border.

On the 5th inst. an I.R.A. Quarter Master from Ballyshannon was arrested at Enniskillen by the R.I.C. for being in possession of a round of 303 ammunition.

#### COUNTY LONDONDERRY:-

This County has been exceptionally free from political crime during the period. Only one political crime has been reported. A few days ago a Shopkeeper named Smith, in Bishop Street, in the City, received a threatening letter accusing him of inciting 'B' men to start a Pogrom in Derry City.

Special precautions have been taken to prevent anything in the nature of kidnapping from Co. Donegal. No undue activity has been noticed amongst the I.R.A.

# Cushendall Incident

**On the evening of 23 June 1922 three Roman Catholic youths were shot dead by a joint army and Ulster Special Constabulary patrol in the village of Cushendall, County Antrim. Many Nationalists regarded this as a reprisal for the killing the previous night of Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson, the Northern Ireland Government's Chief Security Advisor. The security forces claimed that they had come under attack and acted in self-defence. Separate inquiries were held by the United Kingdom and Northern Ireland Governments which contradicted one another on the legality of the killings.**

**Source 48 - Letter from Winston Churchill, Secretary of State for the Colonies, to the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, 12 October 1922. (PRONI Reference: CAB/6/91).**

Sir,

On behalf of His Majesty's Government I transmit herewith, for the official information of the Government of Northern Ireland, a printed copy of the report made by Barrington Ward, KC., to the Secretary of State for the Colonies as the result of the enquiry opened by him on August 25th into the circumstances in which John Gore, James McAlister and John Hill were killed at Cushendall on the 23rd of June last. Your Government will observe that Mr Barrington Ward has been lead to the conclusion that no one except the police and military ever fired at Cushendall on the night in question and that all three men were shot by members of the Ulster Constabulary.

Your Government will also observe that Mr Barrington Ward did not regard himself as 'either charged with the duty or possessed of sufficient powers or material to ascertain the responsibility of any individual'. On the other hand his report indicates that there were witnesses to each of the crimes in question. In this connection I am to enclose, as strictly confidential documents, copies of the summaries of the statements made to Mr Barrington Ward by a number of witnesses. These statements were made voluntarily in the course of a private investigation; and the witnesses by whom they were made, were in each ease assured by Mr Barrington Ward that, so far as it lay within his power to prevent it, their statements should not be used against them. In communicating them, therefore, to you His Majesty's Government feel bound to ask that they should be disclosed only under pledge of secrecy to those responsible for deciding upon the policy of your Government in the matter and those to whom any enquiries made necessary by the report may be confided. It will be observed that these summaries amplify the indications given by the Report of the existence of persons able to identify those guilty of all three crimes.

His Majesty's Government feel, that Mr Barrington Ward's report makes inevitable an immediate investigation by the competent authorities of the Northern Irish Government with a view to the identification and prosecution of the individual or individuals who are suspected to have shot these three men; and they have no doubt that the Government of Northern Ireland, certain of whose servants are most largely impugned by the findings, will, after examination of the report share their

view in this matter. They believe that it will be their duty ultimately to publish the report, but they will take no steps to this end until they have learned the intentions of the Northern Government upon it and until the danger has passed of prejudicing by its publication the case of any individual whose prosecution that Government may contemplate. I am, therefore, to ask that you will, after consideration of the report communicate to me as soon as possible, for the information of His Majesty's Government, the views and proposals of your Government upon it.



**Source 49 - Letter from Wilfrid Spender, Secretary to the Northern Ireland Cabinet, to Mr Toppin, Ministry of Home Affairs, Belfast, 1922 (PRONI Reference: CAB/6/91).**

Dear Toppin,

In addition to the official statement here is an unofficial addendum which I should be grateful if you will burn after it has been seen by those concerned. If you wish me to add to the official statement any particulars I will do so.

- 1) I was told by Burke that an official enquiry was inevitable either by us or by Imperial Govt in view of real facts of case.
- 2) I took steps to get into touch with old UVF about the affair and got back a very disquieting report. I then spoke to Wickham who replied 'I should not encourage an open enquiry if I were you let sleeping dogs lie.'

Burke told me he would try to get Devlin satisfied with a full local enquiry if possible, under our Government. I assured Burke that all his evidence could be given.

- 3) I wrote and spoke to the PM that in my opinion an enquiry by the Imperial Govt would have a very importune result and might bring the Govt of NI into disrepute and involve the Ministry of Home Affairs. I asked him to press the Minister to hold a full official Secret enquiry so as to prevent an Imperial Enquiry being held. The PM spoke to the Minister of Home Affairs who convinced him that everything was all right.
- 4) When Churchill wrote to him in England the PM was so convinced that there was nothing wrong that he wrote his letter accepting an Enquiry by the Imperial Govt in spite of my warnings.
- 5) I still pressed for a local Secret Enquiry at the Cabinet meeting, but Sir Dawson Bates opposed this, and the official reply accepting an Imperial enquiry was sent.

All through I have pressed the view that if we had nothing to hide a formal enquiry ordered by the Minister of Home Affairs was best. If on the other hand there were any grounds to suspect that all was not well, such an enquiry by the Govt of N Ireland was essential in the interests of Justice. It was due to the certainty of the Ministry of Home Affairs that all was well that the full investigation was not ordered by them, making inevitable the Imperial Enquiry which we could only protest against – in view of the presence of Imperial troops – if we could say that a full enquiry had already been held at which all available evidence had been accepted.

Yours sincerely

W B Spender

PS Perhaps after all, it would be better if you return this letter to me together with any remarks you wish me to add, if any, to my official reply.

**Source 50 - Report by the Attorney General to the Minister of Home Affairs on the Cushendall incident, 24 January 1923. (PRONI Reference: HA/20/A/2/7).**

MINISTER.

With reference to the shooting at CUSENDALL of JOHN GORE, JOHN HILL and JAMES McALLISTER on 23rd June last, I have read Mr Barrington-Ward's report and his notes on the statements made to him, also the statements made to the police officers who investigated the case. I have also read the reports of the Deputy Inspector-General of Royal Ulster Constabulary and of the Chief Crown Solicitor, and the statements taken by them in pursuance of your directions, given in consequence of Mr Barrington-Ward's report.

This subsequent investigation was undertaken with a view to ascertaining whether anyone could be made amenable for the deaths of the persons named above.

Mr Barrington-Ward's findings are largely based on the conclusion that no one except the police and military ever fired at all on the occasion in question, and his report throughout hinges on that conclusion.

With that conclusion I find myself wholly unable to agree.

I accept the evidence of the two British Military officers, Lieut. A.N. HAWKINS and Lieut. E.F.J. BULFIN, M.C. Lieut. Hawkins puts the matter beyond doubt as he states positively that he saw civilians, while taking cover in the houses, firing and that he himself, as he was standing in the middle of the road, was fired on by a civilian, a short distance up the road, whose fire he returned.

It is impossible to believe that this officer was either mistaken or stating what he knew to be false.

To anyone with experience of Irish witnesses there is nothing extraordinary in a number of civilians from a place like Cushendall dominated up to recently by the I.R.A. coming forward to testify falsely against the Crown forces, and when, as in this case, it was a question of testifying against the Ulster Special Constabulary, the main support of the Ulster Government in resisting the attacks of the I.R.A., any statements made by the people of Cushendall should be received with the greatest caution.

I can come to no other conclusion than that the Crown forces were attacked, and that they were justified in the steps they took to repel and overcome the attacks made on them.

The most careful investigation by the Deputy-Inspector-General and the Chief Crown Solicitor failed to elicit much evidence as would establish a prima facie case against any individual and justify me in directing a prosecution.

Richard Best

# Allegations of Discrimination

**There were numerous allegations of discrimination against Roman Catholics in Northern Ireland. In July 1920 Roman Catholic and socialist workers were forcibly expelled from the Belfast shipyards and other factories by Loyalists.**

**The Northern Ireland Civil Service was accused of discriminating against Roman Catholics in matters of employment. It was also criticised by some Unionists for employing potentially disloyal Roman Catholics in key positions.**

**Source 51 - Letter from Thomas George Baillie, Belfast, to the Prime Minister of Northern Ireland, alleging religious discrimination in the Belfast shipyards, 14 September 1922. (PRONI Reference: PM/2/2/12).**

Pardon the liberty in writing to you, but I feel that perhaps you would be thankful for the information I now pass along to you.

On different occasions you have publicly stated that there is not, or never was any 'Pogrom' against Roman Catholics in this City. I have not the least doubt that this statement was made by you Sir in good faith not knowing the actual facts. I am a 'Loyal Roman Catholic Ex-Serviceman' and have endeavoured to uphold and assist your 'Government' in every conceivable way. I even went and enrolled as a B Class Special Constable with the result that I had to vacate my residence temporary [sic] as I was threatened with 'Death' if I did not leave the City in 48 hours.

After being de-mobilised from His Majesty's Forces I found work in Harland & Wolff's East Yard and was working in perfect harmony with my fellow workmen until the disturbances started in July 1920. I need hardly state that I was absolutely compelled to clear out, as were all of my co-religionists. Very shortly afterwards I wrote to Mr Richers (Manager, Iron & Steel Dept.) asking if I could resume my work. He replied so far as he was concerned my position was still open for me. I went down to resume work the following morning, but had to report to a Mr John Crumlin who was head of the Vigilant Committee. I explained to him the hardship it would be on me if I was not allowed to resume work, as I was a widower with five young children and was quite prepared to sign any form of loyalty or allegiance. He ask[ed] me if I could get letters of recommendations from two prominent Protestants (if so) he would have my case considered. I went to our High Sheriff at that time as I was know[n] to him personal[ly] and he give me the necessary recommendation. I also got a very strong recommendation from a very respectable Protestant family in my own district, who I had assisted in every way when they were being evicted. I forwarded these recommendations to the manager of my Dept. and my case was talked over the Vigilant Com.

If you are personally interested I would be very pleased to tell you what transpired and at the same time hand you over the documents concerned. I need hardly tell you that 'The Catholic Protective Society' would have given a great deal to possess the information I was able to give. (As they were looking for someone who could give direct evidence on this question.) But realising the difficulties you had to contend with, I would not supply the necessary information as I had no wish to embarrass your Government in a matter of this kind. ...

**Source 52 - Letter from R S Thornley, Permanent Secretary, Ministry of Finance, to Lieutenant Colonel W B Spender, Cabinet Secretary, Belfast, concerning the government's policy on recruiting civil servants, 18 January 1924. (PRONI Reference: CAB/9/A/90/1).**

Dear Spender,

With reference to your letter of the 11th instant I have now succeeded in obtaining a copy of 'The Irish Protestant' to which you refer, and have examined the various allegations which appear to have been made by a more or less irresponsible person in the article to which you have called attention.

This Department has no concern with the appointments made in connection with the R.U.C. and I do not, therefore, propose to make any allusion to the respective charges in connection with that Force.

I am left, therefore, with only a small field of criticism and in response to your request furnish the following observations.

I am afraid the Ministry of Finance can supply very little information concerning the 'principles' or religious beliefs of the officers who constitute the Civil Service of Northern Ireland, for the simple reason that it has never been deemed either necessary or expedient to consider that particular aspect in relation to the permanent Civil Servants who have been transferred from the Imperial Civil Service, or to the 'new entrants' who have been recruited by the Northern Civil Service.

It may, I think, be conceded that there is a distinct difference between these two categories of officers, inasmuch as the inclusion in the Civil Service of Northern Ireland of the first mentioned was determined by the Government of Ireland Act, and the Authorities here would have had no valid ground for objecting to the transfer of any particular officer because of his religious belief in view of the specific provisions in the Act of 1920, (Sections 55-59). Moreover, Section 5 prohibits the Parliament of Northern Ireland from making any law which would give a preference, privilege or advantage, or impose any disability or disadvantage on account of religious belief; by inference, therefore, we should be precluded from allowing this question to enter into consideration when dealing with the matter of appointments.

As regards the second category of 'new entrants', the Northern Government was not of course bound by the same considerations; but, as a matter of fact, the Selection Board who have dealt with all such appointments have not, I think I can safely say, regarded the question of religious belief of essential importance in interviewing candidates and deciding upon appointments to the Service. The main considerations which have influenced them in making appointments have been the suitability and qualifications of the candidate and the satisfactory references as to character and loyalty which he could produce. I do not think any individual member of the Selection Board had any knowledge of the religious beliefs of, possibly 1% of the applicants who were interviewed.

That disposes of the general aspect of the case. As regards the concrete instances referred to in the letter under notice, we have no information - for the reasons I have mentioned above - of the proportion of officers in the Ministry of Agriculture who hold the different religious beliefs. We are well acquainted with the case of the Assistant Secretary of that Department because his appointment (or rather transfer) has been so stoutly defended by the Minister of Agriculture on the public platform and in the House of Commons.

In making this reference to the Government Printer of the Parliamentary Debates the writer of the letter has allowed himself to display lamentable ignorance. He does not appear to have grasped the significance of the name of Hr. W. R. Codling the Controller of H.M. Stationery Office which is primarily responsible for this work.

Without calling for a return of the number of Ulstermen holding 'High Executive' appointments in each Department - and this seems to be unnecessary - I could not say what is the approximate number of the transferred officers; many of them elected to come North because of their Ulster origin and association, and I feel sure that a detailed enquiry, if considered to be imperative, would disclose the fact that quite a fair number of such posts in the Northern Civil Service are held by Ulstermen.

The other matters referred to in the letter under notice fall outside the province of this Department, but before concluding I should perhaps mention that the writer is clearly out of his depth in stating that Ulster was not bound to take Civil Servants from the South. The Act of 1920 clearly decided this; the Civil Service Committee appointed under the provisions of that Act was deliberately set up, functioned for some time in allocating officers, and only ceased its activities when the impasse, with which you are familiar, occurred.

Yours sincerely,

R S Thornley

P.S. I have shown this letter to Mr Pollock [The Minister for Finance], and he desires me to say that, while he is in agreement with its terms, he considers that far too much importance is being attached to the representations of a negligible body of a more or less irresponsible character.

# Gerrymandering

**In 1922 the Northern Ireland Government abolished voting by Proportional Representation in local elections. Alterations were also made to the boundaries of electoral areas and to the qualifications required to vote in local elections. As a result of these changes a number of Nationalist controlled local authorities came under Unionist control, including Tyrone and Fermanagh County Councils and Londonderry City Council.**

**It should be noted that in the document below the number of people described as 'pro-Free State' in each area is actually the number of Roman Catholics as recorded in the 1911 Census of Ireland.**

**Source 53 - Leaflet issued by the North Eastern Boundary Bureau of the Irish Free State Government alleging gerrymandering of local government boundaries, January 1923. (PRONI Reference: CAB/9/Z/2/1).**

## GEBRYMANDERED ELECTIONS.

Over a century ago Governor Gerry contrived the famous map of Massachusetts which ensured at once the ascendancy of his party and his own immortality. If the recent elections for urban districts in North East Ulster are an index to future happenings, Governor Gerry's master-piece will have to yield pride of place to the map of North East Ulster as designed by the Belfast Parliament. For even Governor Gerry's skilful partisanship did not contemplate the complete disfranchisement of minorities, whereas the proceedings of the Belfast Parliament in connection with the recent municipal elections clearly proves that such was its direct aim.

When the Belfast Parliament came into control of the Six County area as a result of the 1920 Act it had to face two awkward facts. One was that it had within its jurisdiction a substantial minority of 34 per cent. Another was that this minority, in virtue of an Act passed by the British Parliament in the interests of Irish minorities generally had taken advantage of Proportional Representation to obtain a fair share of representation in the local councils. One of the first legislative acts of the Belfast Parliament was to abolish Proportional Representation for local elections. This was followed by a decree ordering that urban district elections should be held in January of this year, whilst the elections for Rural Districts were postponed until 1924. The word 'gerrymander' supplies the key to this discrimination between the two groups of local councils. Being fewer, smaller and more compact the urban areas could be more expeditiously 'prepared' than the rural districts. The precise manner in which the urban districts were made safe for ascendancy we shall see from the following concrete examples.

## DERRY CITY

According to the last Census the total population of Derry City is 40,780 of whom 22,923 or 56.2 per cent are pro-Free State. A fair system of representation would, therefore, give the Free Staters approximately 56 per cent of the council's membership. The Belfast Parliament had other views and ordered that for the purposes of the election Derry City should be divided into five wards so



drawn that the Free Staters had majorities only in two. Sixteen, representatives were allotted to the two Free State wards and twenty-four to the three Belfast parliament wards. The largest Belfast Parliament majority was 1934 in the Waterside ward compared with a Free State majority of 7346 in the West ward. The combined Free State majority in the West and South wards was 9533, whereas the combined Belfast Parliament majority in the other three wards was only 4467. The Free Staters had, therefore, in the whole city an ineffective surplus population of 5066 more than the supporters of the Belfast Parliament. In other words, the wards were so arranged that the Free State majority of 56.2 per cent could in no circumstances secure more than 40 per cent of the representation. At the previous election held under Proportional Representation the Free Staters secured 21 out of the 40 seats. Not satisfied with gerrymandering the wards, the Belfast Parliament made it a condition of election that all candidates should sign a declaration of allegiance to that Parliament. The unfairness of this test becomes manifest when it is remembered that Derry has the strongest possible case for inclusion in the Free State to which it hopes to give allegiance when the Boundary Commission has finished its work.

The outgoing Free State representatives have refused to subscribe to the declaration, with the result that the new corporation will probably be composed entirely of representatives of the minority.

#### ENNISKILLEN

Of a total population of 4847, 2688 or 55.4 per cent is pro Free State according to the last Census. At the recent election the town was divided into three wards - East, North, and South. There are Free State majorities of 113 and 712 inhabitants in the East and North wards respectively compared with a Belfast Parliament majority of 296 in the South Ward. A portion of the great Free State surplus in the North Ward might easily have been transferred to the South or East Ward in the interests of justice. Instead of this, the East Ward was captured for the Belfast Parliament mainly through the enfranchisement of non-residents at the last revision. In this way the Free State majority could at the most obtain only one-third of the representation, and even this was denied by the exaction from candidates of a declaration of allegiance to the Belfast Parliament. Enniskillen is not only itself predominantly Pro-Free State, but is the capital of Co. Fermanagh which with Tyrone, has so recently polled a large majority for inclusion in the Free State. At the previous election under proportional representation the Free Staters returned 11 out of the 21 members for the local Council.

#### OTHER COUNCILS

55.3 per cent of the people of Dungannon are Pro-Free-State. At the previous election under Proportional Representation they secured 11 out of the 21 seats but were deprived of control by a flagrant abuse of the casting-vote privilege possessed by the outgoing chairman. At the last election the town was divided into three wards in one of which the bulk of the Free State population was concentrated. As a result of dexterous ward-drawing and the imposition of the political test already referred to, Dungannon will now be governed by a wholly Belfast Parliament Council. By similar methods substantial Free State minorities will be deprived of representation in places like Cookstown, Lurgan and Aughnacloy. Even in Belfast reaction has triumphed for in the words of the 'Belfast News-Letter,' 'with the return of the, direct vote the Labour qua Labour faction finds itself out in the cold'.

# Craig-Collins Pact

In the early months of 1922, Sir James Craig, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland and Michael Collins, Chairman of the Provisional Government of Southern Ireland, attempted to reach an agreement which would end the violence in Northern Ireland and settle issues around the boundary between the two jurisdictions. The first agreement, made in London 23 January 1922, had little effect and after further meetings between the two leaders and representatives of the British Government, a second agreement was made on 30 March 1922. The agreements failed to resolve most of the outstanding issues and violence continued. Craig and Collins continued to discuss the outstanding issues until Collins was killed on 22 August 1922.

**Source 54 - Agreement between Sir James Craig and Michael Collins, 30 March 1922. (PRONI Reference: PM/11/2).**

Heads of agreement between the provisional government and the government of Northern Ireland.

London, 30 March 1922

Peace is today declared.

From today the two Governments undertake to co-operate in every way in their power with a view to the restoration of peaceful conditions in the unsettled areas.

The police in Belfast is to be organised in general in accordance with the following conditions:

Mixed Special Police.

Special police in mixed districts to be composed half of Catholics and half of Protestants, special arrangements to be made where Catholics or Protestants are living in other districts. All Specials not required for this force to be withdrawn to their homes and their arms handed in.

An Advisory Committee, composed of Catholics to be set up to assist in the selection of Catholic recruits for the Special Police.

All police on duty, except the usual secret service, to be in uniform and officially numbered.

All arms and ammunition issued to the police to be deposited in barracks in charge of a military or other competent officer when the policeman is not on duty, and an official record to be kept of all arms issued, and of all ammunition issued and used.

Any search for arms to be carried out by police forces composed half of Catholics and half of Protestants, the military rendering any necessary assistance.

### Trials Without Jury

A Court to be constituted for the trial without jury of persons charged with serious crime, the Court to consist of the Lord Chief Justice and one of the Lords Justices of Appeal of Northern Ireland. Any person committed for trial for a serious crime to be tried by that Court -

- a) If he so requests or
- b) If the Attorney-General for Northern Ireland so directs. Serious crime should be taken to mean any offence punishable with death, penal servitude or imprisonment for a term exceeding six months. The Government of Northern Ireland will take steps for passing the legislation necessary to give effect to this article.

### Joint Committee.

A Committee to be set up in Belfast of equal numbers Catholic and Protestant, with an independent Chairman, preferably Catholic and Protestant alternately in successive weeks, to hear and investigate complaints as to intimidation, outrages etc., such Committee to have direct access to the heads of the Government. The local Press to be approached with a view to inserting only such reports of disturbances, etc., as shall have been considered and communicated by this Committee.

I.R.A. activity to cease in the Six Counties, and thereupon the method of organising the Special Police in the Six Counties, outside Belfast shall proceed as speedily as possible upon lines similar to those agreed to for Belfast.

During the month immediately following the passing into law of the Bill confirming the Constitution of the Free State (being the month within which the Northern Parliament is to exercise its option) and before any address in accordance with Article 12 of the Treaty is presented, there shall be a further meeting between the signatories to this agreement with a view to ascertaining:

- a) whether means can be devised to secure the unity of Ireland.
- b) failing this, whether agreement can be arrived at on the Boundary question otherwise than by recourse to the Boundary Commission outlined in Article 12 of the Treaty.

The return to their homes of persons who have been expelled to be secured by the respective Governments, the advice of the Committee mentioned in Article 5 to be sought in cases of difficulty.

In view of the special conditions consequent on the political situation in Belfast and neighbourhood, the British Government will submit to Parliament a vote not exceeding £500,000 for the Ministry of Labour of Northern Ireland to be expended exclusively on relief work, one-third for the benefit of Roman Catholics and two-thirds for the benefit of Protestants. The Northern signatories agree to use every effort to secure the restoration of the expelled workers, and wherever this proves impracticable

at the moment owing to trade depression they will be afforded employment on the relief works referred to in this Article so far as the one-third limit will allow, Protestant ex-service men to be given first preference in respect to the two-thirds of the said fund.

The two Governments shall, in cases agreed upon between the signatories, arrange for the release of political prisoners in prison for offences before the date hereof. No offences committed after March 31st, 1922 shall be open to consideration.

The two Governments unite in appealing to all concerned to refrain from inflammatory speeches and to exercise restraint in the interests of peace.

Signed on behalf of the PROVISIONAL GOVERNMENT:

Mícheál O Coileáin

E.S. O Duggain

Caoimhgin O Huigin

Art O Gríobhtha

Signed on behalf of the GOVERNMENT OF NORTHERN IRELAND:

James Craig

Londonderry

E.M. Archdale

Countersigned on behalf of the BRITISH GOVERNMENT:

Winston S. Churchill

L. Worthington Evans

Hamar Greenwood

**Source 55 - Letter from Michael Collins to Sir James Craig, 11 April 1922. (PRONI Reference: PM/11/2).**

Dear Sir James Craig,

RELEASE OF POLITICAL PRISONERS.

I am very glad to be able to tell you that the prisoners who were captured at Clones were released last evening. Enquiries are being pursued regarding the other prisoners alleged to be detained in custody.

I enclose a list of political prisoners detained in Derry, Belfast and Peterhead prisons. The prisoners in the latter jail are penal servitude cases transferred from Derry and Belfast. I am not quite sure that the list is complete, but I am having enquiries made as to whether there are any names omitted, and will write you later on the matter. I shall be glad to hear that you have taken the necessary steps to secure the immediate release of these men.

I should like to lay stress on the urgency for the release of Bernard Sweeney about whom I wired you yesterday. I note your legal difficulty about release on parole but his case comes under Clause 10 of the Agreement and his release, in any event, would only be delayed until we had an opportunity of going in to the cases of the different men. Sweeney's father is dangerously ill and his release at this juncture would be a graceful act which would be much appreciated

Yours faithfully

Mícheál Ó Coileáin

**Source 56 - Letter from Sir James Craig to Michael Collins, 12 April 1922. (PRONI Reference: PM/11/2).**

Dear Mr Collins,

I have received your letter of the 10th instant and am very glad that you agree with me that it is essential that the agreement should be scrupulously observed by both parties in the spirit as well as in the letter.

It is important that there should be no possibility of misunderstanding between us, and I therefore write to make clear certain points.

First, the ordinary Law of the country, involving recognition of the usual Courts of Justice, and methods of judicial procedure are not altered by our Agreement except that the right of special trial by two Judges without jury is being brought into effect at your request. Legislation on this matter has already been introduced, and will, I hope, pass into law this week.

Secondly, in order that there should be no question of partiality on the part of juries in Belfast, of which you complain, although your complaint is in my opinion entirely unfounded, I have also arranged that in special cases inquests should be undertaken by the Coroner without a jury.

Thirdly, there can be no interference by any new Committee with the usual practice of investigating cases on which investigations legal action is based. I have every hope that the Joint Committee will have good results in effecting a conciliatory spirit and strengthening public confidence, but I am sure that you will agree with me that it would greatly militate against its success if it were encouraged to supplant the legal methods of enquiry on which alone judicial action can be taken and punishment inflicted. This safeguards to British citizens' privileges and rights intended to secure a just administration. For instance:

- a) In every case of death due to other than natural causes an inquest must be held, at which any evidence regarding the cause of death is admissible.
- b) Any person can make an information as to the facts within his or her knowledge concerning the circumstances in which any violent death has taken place, or in which it is alleged that serious crime has been committed, and on any such information the authorities responsible would be bound to take action.

As regards the case of Mrs Bradley, I am afraid that you have been seriously misinformed as to the facts. Charges of a very serious nature are being preferred against certain civilians found on the premises. They will be fully investigated in our Courts and every opportunity will be given to anyone to appear and tender evidence on the prisoners' behalf.

I am afraid it will cripple our Criminal Administration and defeat the object which both of us have in view if searches for arms were discontinued. In our agreement you recognise the necessity for such searches which are being carried out in areas irrespective of the political or religious tenets of the inhabitants. I am trying to arrange that members of the Roman Catholic religion shall be present when searches are carried out in Roman Catholic areas.

Many murders of a revolting character have recently been committed, which I am sure every right minded man deeply deplores. You have mentioned some of them in which unfortunately Roman Catholics have been the victims. I could mention quite as many in which Protestants (including members of the forces of the Crown) have been foully done to death, and you will appreciate the fact that in the investigations which are being carried out we cannot discriminate between these classes of cases.

These investigations will be carried out by ordinary legal methods, and you will remember that I informed you at our interview that we could not consent to any arrangement intended to interfere with or supersede the ordinary administration of the law. ...



# Boundary Commission and Tripartite Agreement of 1925

**The Anglo-Irish Treaty signed in December 1921 made provision for a Boundary Commission to determine the border between Northern and Southern Ireland. This became a source of contention as many Nationalists believed that the Commission would reduce the Northern area to an extent that would make Northern Ireland unviable. In the event, the Commission recommended only minor changes to the existing border. The Governments of the United Kingdom, the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland agreed to suppress the report and the border remained that established in 1921. Under Section 2 of the Agreement the Free State was released from obligations to pay a share of the British National Debt.**

## **Source 57 - Tripartite Agreement of 1925. (PRONI Reference: CAB/4/155).**

Agreement Amending and Supplementing the Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland to which the force of law was given by the Irish Free State (Agreement) Act, 1922, and by the Constitution of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Éireann) Act, 1922.

London, 3 December 1925.

WHEREAS on the 6th day of December, nineteen hundred and twenty-one, Articles of Agreement for a Treaty between Great Britain and Ireland were entered into:

AND WHEREAS the said Articles of Agreement were duly ratified and given the force of law by the Irish Free State (Agreement) Act, 1922, and by the Constitution of the Irish Free State (Saorstát Éireann) Act, 1922:

AND WHEREAS the progress of events and the improved relations now subsisting between the British Government, the Government of the Irish Free State and the Government of Northern Ireland and their respective peoples make it desirable to amend and supplement the said Articles of Agreement, so as to avoid any causes of friction which might mar or retard the further growth of friendly relations between the said Governments and peoples:

AND WHEREAS the British Government and the Government of the Irish Free State being united in amity in this undertaking with the Government of Northern Ireland, and being resolved mutually to aid one another in a spirit of neighbourly comradeship, hereby agree as follows:

- 1) The powers conferred by the proviso to Article 12 of the said Articles of Agreement on the Commission therein mentioned are hereby revoked, and the extent of Northern Ireland for the purposes of the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, and of the said Articles of Agreement shall be such as was fixed by sub-section (2) of section one of that Act.

- 2) The Irish Free State is hereby released from the obligation under Article 5 of the said Articles of Agreement to assume the liability therein mentioned.=
- 3) The Irish Free State hereby assumes all liability undertaken by the British Government in respect of malicious damage done since the Twenty-first day of January, Nineteen hundred and nineteen to property in the area now under the jurisdiction of the Parliament and Government of the Irish Free State, and the Government of the Irish Free State shall repay to the British Government at such time or times and in such manner as may be agreed upon moneys already paid by the British Government in respect of such damage or liable to be so paid under obligations already incurred.
- 4) The Government of the Irish Free State hereby agrees to promote legislation increasing by Ten per cent the measure of compensation under the Damage to Property (Compensation) Act, 1923, in respect of malicious damage to property done in the area now under the jurisdiction of the Parliament and Government of the Irish Free State between the Eleventh day of July, Nineteen hundred and twenty-one and the Twelfth day of May, Nineteen hundred and twenty-three, and providing for the payment of such additional compensation by the issue of Five per cent. Compensation Stock or Bonds.
- 5) The powers in relation to Northern Ireland which by the Government of Ireland Act, 1920, are made powers of the Council of Ireland shall be and are hereby transferred to and shall become powers of the Parliament and the Government of Northern Ireland; and the Governments of the Irish Free State and of Northern Ireland shall meet together as and when necessary for the purpose of considering matters of common interest arising out of or connected with the exercise and administration of the said powers.
- 6) This Agreement is subject to confirmation by the British Parliament and by the Oireachtas of the Irish Free State, and the Act of the British Parliament confirming this Agreement shall fix the date as from which the transfer of the powers of the Council of Ireland under this Agreement is to take effect.

Dated this 3rd day of December, 1925.

# Sample Questions and Answers

## Sample Exercise 1

Use Source A (adapted from Source 16, page 39) and your own knowledge of the period.

How valuable is Source A as evidence to an historian studying Unionist opposition to Home Rule in the period 1912-1914? (15 marks).

**Source A. Pamphlet containing an account, reprinted from the Belfast News Letter of 18 April 1914, of the 'Plot Against Ulster'. (PRONI Reference: D989/D/13).**

THE PLOT EXPOSED.

Important Statement by Unionist Council

THE GOVERNMENT'S PLANS DISCLOSED.

Startling Revelations.

INVADING FORCE OF 25,000 MEN

Blockade by Land and Sea.

POLICE TO PROVOKE HOSTILITIES.

Unionist Headquarters to be seized.

SEARCH FOR CONCEALED ARMS.

A meeting of the Standing Committee of the Ulster Unionist Council was held at the offices, Old Town Hall, Belfast, on 17th inst., for the purpose of conferring with Sir Edward Carson, who had returned to the city in the morning after his visit to County Derry. The Marquis of Londonderry, K.G. (president), occupied the chair. The proceedings were, of course, conducted in private, but the business transacted was of a most important character, and subsequently a statement was handed to the representatives of the Press concerning the recent attempted military operations against Ulster, which have been the theme of so much discussion in Parliament and elsewhere. This statement, which had been adopted by the Standing Committee, on the motion of Lord Londonderry, seconded by Sir Edward Carson, will be read with deep interest, not only throughout the Imperial Province, but also in every part of the United Kingdom, for it sets forth clearly and succinctly the startling facts which have come to the knowledge of the Council in regard to the Government's motives and methods, and amply justifies all that has been said by the Unionist leaders as to the dastardly nature of the plot to coerce Ulster loyalists — a plot that failed owing to the courageous stand taken by those Army officers who decided to hand in their resignations rather than allow themselves to be made the tools of unscrupulous Ministers.

## Answer for Exercise 1

Source A is of value as evidence in the study of Unionist opposition to Home Rule since it reveals the claims of the leaders of the Ulster Unionist Council to have exposed the plans of the British Government to deal with growing opposition to the threat of Home Rule in Ulster. This pamphlet was published based on an account published in a local newspaper and although we do not know who wrote it, we can infer from the content that it was supportive of Unionist opposition to Home Rule and was targeting an audience of like-minded Unionists. The source is of value as it implies that the leaders of Ulster Unionist opposition to Home Rule were preparing to deal with what they call "The Plot Exposed" and they also refer to "recent attempted military operations against Ulster". This is accurate as it also mentions Sir Edward Carson who was a key figure in leading Unionist opposition to Home Rule in Parliament as well as leading the public campaign against the Home Rule threat in Ulster in particular. Carson had been gaining support and funds from wealthy donors in Britain and Ulster since 1912 to finance Unionist propaganda and their threats to resist Home Rule by all means possible if Home Rule became law in 1914. The date of this source is very significant and of value since it comes after the formation of the Ulster Volunteer Force (UVF) in November 1913 which increased Unionist fears and the threat of a civil war in Ireland if Home Rule was passed in 1914. This is supported by the source which mentions that "recent military operations against Ulster, which have been the theme of much discussion in Parliament and elsewhere" as by April 1914 the Home Rule crisis was turning into a constitutional crisis. The date is also of value as it mentions "the courageous stand taken by those Army officers" which is referring to the Curragh Mutiny of March 1914 which boosted Unionist opposition to Home Rule and it also refers to the "search for concealed arms" just a week before the Larne gun running took place. The source is clearly intended to motivate and encourage fellow Unionists to unite against the claims that the British Government planned to act against Unionist opposition in Ulster in what are described as "startling revelations" and to resist "the dastardly nature of the plot to coerce Ulster loyalists". These were some of the key arguments used to encourage and mobilise public support for the Unionist campaign of resistance to the threat of Home Rule in Ulster such as the Ulster Covenant in September 1912 which threatened that "Ulster will Fight" and that "Ulster will be Right". Whilst the source has some value, we have to be aware that this is only one source intended to encourage the Unionist population of Ulster to support the campaign against Home Rule in Ulster led by Carson in particular. However, this source is a fairly accurate description of some of the events in March/April 1914 which created a political crisis for the British Government in how they were going to deal with Unionist resistance to Home Rule and their threats of armed resistance as well as their plans to form a Provisional Government. A key limitation of this source is that it fails to show what other options the British Government considered to deal with the Ulster Crisis, especially after the Curragh Mutiny in March 1914, as well as not mentioning how Carson and other leaders such as Craig were secretly involved with the purchase of weapons to arm the UVF which landed mainly in Larne just a week after this pamphlet was published. This source is also based upon an account from the News Letter which is a newspaper that is traditionally very supportive of Unionism which may affect the provenance of this source in the opinion of some students. This source is clearly of some value as evidence to an historian studying Unionist opposition to Home Rule in the period 1912-1914.

---

## Sample Exercise 2

Use Source B (adapted from Source 31, page 70) and Source C (adapted from Source 37, page 76) and other evidence you have studied.

How far do the sources support the view that the mistakes made by the Irish Parliamentary Party was the main cause of their political decline between April 1916 and December 1918? (20 marks).

**Source B. Letter from Captain Tom Kettle, academic, journalist and Irish Parliamentary Party politician, to Henry McLaughlin, Secretary of the Central Council for the Organization of Recruitment in Ireland, 7 August 1916. Despite his poor health Kettle had been commissioned into the 9th Battalion, Royal Dublin Fusiliers, part of the 16th (Irish) Division. He was killed during the Battle of Ginchy in September 1916. (PRONI Reference: D3809/1).**

About things in Ireland I agree [totally] with the whole drift of your letter. You may be entirely happy in the consciousness that you and I did the exactly right thing. The Sinn Féin nightmare upset me a little, but then if you tickle the ear of a short tempered elephant with a pop gun, and he walks on you that is a natural concatenation of events. We took the side of justice, we did the right thing, we helped to bring North and South together. You made your sacrifices and I mine, and our work remains. If I return I count in doing some little work in exactly the direction you have in mind. The superb work of the Ulster Division and the changed attitude of Sir Edward C[arson] fill me with cheerfulness. Does it not seem exactly as if the right thing happened at last, as if English statesmanship had thrown down its cards, and left the two great Irish parties to come to a settlement? Of course I must rebuke your strain of writing about yourself. Your brother's blood is heavy sacrifice enough, and I meet here at every turn men who would not be here but for the labours of you and the organisation you created. I myself am quite extraordinarily happy. If it should come my way to die I shall sleep well in the France I always loved, and shall know that I have done something towards bringing to birth the Ireland one has dreamed of. I must close now with the very sincerest thanks and good wishes.

**Source C. Letter from Harry Franks, a land owner in Queen's County (Laois) and in Cork, to J Mackay Wilson, 5 March 1917. Both Franks and Wilson were prominent members of the Irish Unionist Alliance. The letter discusses the rise of support for Sinn Féin in the Cork area at the expense of the Irish Parliamentary Party ('Redmondites') and the Ancient Order of Hibernians ('Mollies' or Molly Maguires). This is linked to the threat of conscription. (PRONI Reference: D989/A/9/7).**

I have chatted with chaps who at one time were Redmondites, but they have now become ardent supporters of Sinn Feiner policy. Hundreds of these have altogether left the 'Mollies' and are now as bitter against Redmond and his party as 'agin' the English Government. They complain Ireland has been sold by Redmond and Co., and all denounce his action which they say favoured recruiting, and his silence in the House of Commons when the Rebels were being shot. The sympathy to Sinn Feiners is growing rapidly, and I believe thousands of 'Mollies' would support a Sinn Fein candidate if an election took place in the morning. Indeed the enmity to the Irish Party is nearly as great as the hatred of England. The change has been created in this way. Among all parties ... there is and has been a terrible fear of being conscripted. For a time they lived in daily dread of it; and to prevent the Act applying to Ireland they would I believe sell body and soul. They believe the Nabest means of preventing it is to give help to the rebels, as they think if conscription is moved to be applied the Sinn Feiners will give trouble, and that that trouble will not be worth the big force of soldiers who will be employed in rounding up the conscripts, whose dream it is to flee to the mountains. Such trouble they say will prevent conscription. If conscription was out of the way, it is doubtful if so many would extend sympathy to Sinn Féin, but hatred of John Redmond for Imperial feelings re the war sent many of his followers to the extreme side. The danger at present is this: —the active Sinn Feiners are all young and intelligent men, generally teetotallers. Unlike the ordinary political fellows, they do not patronise public houses and talk there over matters. They are silent and know how to keep their mouths closed, but they think and plot the more. Perhaps if they had a little latitude to let off steam at say a public meeting, it would act as a safety-valve. But the fact is they are—a great many of them—'brainy' in well-to-do positions; they speak little in public, and as in all secret political gatherings, suffering as they think under great wrongs, there is a danger of an outburst. Of course you know in Cork we always talk and do not act—that may be the case, but this silence on a matter which is deep in the hearts of thousands of young fellows in the city is to say the least very ugly and portends something more than usual happening unless they are pulled up in time.

## Answer to Exercise 2

Source B clearly shows that mistakes made by the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) helped cause their political decline between April 1916 and December 1918. In Source B there are references to how the IPP had done the right thing by supporting World War I and how they had taken the side of justice and tried to bring North and South together during the War. This support by the IPP for the British war effort was a major mistake which was already damaging support for their party and its leader John Redmond before April 1916. Tom Kettle in his letter alludes to the events of the Easter Rising and the stance taken by the IPP over the Easter Rising which was already seen as a mistake by many within the IPP and its supporters by August 1916. Despite this Tom Kettle still seems optimistic of a positive outcome over the aim of the IPP to achieve Home Rule after the War ended.

Source C like Source B clearly shows that mistakes made by the IPP helped cause their political decline between April 1916 and December 1918. In Source C there are references at the start to how people who had supported John Redmond had turned against the IPP and were now supporters of Sinn Féin by March 1917. There are also references to Ireland being sold out by Redmond and some mistakes made by the IPP such as supporting recruitment for the war effort. Harry Franks refers in his letter to the silence of Redmond in the House of Commons when the rebels were being executed after the Easter Rising in May 1916. This was seen by 1917 as a major mistake by the IPP which contributed to their political decline by December 1918 when they lost nearly all their seats in the General Election held at the end of 1918.

Source B introduces some other factors that contributed to the political decline of the IPP between April 1916 and December 1918. There are references to the Sinn Féin nightmare. The British Government described the Easter Rising as the Sinn Féin Rising which Sinn Féin used to their advantage to win the political support of most Irish Nationalists by December 1918. Source B also refers to the heavy losses of World War 1 which had become unpopular with Nationalists even before April 1916 and the war issue was used by Sinn Féin to win mass public support by December 1918 and to discredit the IPP in particular. Source B also alludes to the impact of the Easter Rising and the reaction of the British Government whose handling of the aftermath of the Easter Rising was exploited by Sinn Féin to turn many Irish Nationalists against the British Government and the divided leadership of the out of date IPP by the December 1918 General Election.

Source C like Source B also introduces some other factors that helped lead to the political decline of the IPP between April 1916 and December 1918. There are frequent references to how Nationalists are already turning away from the IPP to Sinn Féin by March 1917 due to fears that the British Government was going to impose conscription upon Ireland. Sinn Féin were opposed to the war effort and this boosted support for a more radical form of Irish Nationalism. Only one month earlier in February 1917 the IPP had been defeated in the Roscommon by-election by a candidate endorsed by Sinn Féin. Source C warned Sinn Féin would benefit from the threat of conscription which was proved true by a series of by-election victories in 1917 and 1918. Sinn Féin would even lead the campaign to defeat conscription in 1918 supported by the IPP and the Catholic Church.

From my own knowledge Source B and Source C do not refer to the roles of key figures such as Collins and De Valera and the many mistakes made by the British Government such as the German plot which undermined the IPP in particular by December 1918. They also ignore the importance of the Sinn Féin Ard Fheis of October 1917 and the role of other IPP leaders such as John Dillon.



# Bibliography

Thomas Bartlett and Keith Jeffery (eds.), **A Military History of Ireland** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

Brian Barton and Michael Foy, **The Easter Rising** (Stroud: History Press, 2011).

I. F. W. Beckett (ed.), **The Army and the Curragh Incident, 1914** (London: The Bodley Head for the Army Records Society, 1986).

Paul Bew, **Ideology and the Irish Question: Ulster Unionism and Irish Nationalism, 1912-16** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

Paul Bew, 'Moderate Nationalism and the Irish Revolution, 1916-1923', **Historical Journal**, 42, 3 (1999).

Timothy Bowman, **Carson's Army: The Ulster Volunteer Force, 1910-22** (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

Timothy Bowman, William Butler and Michael Wheatley, **The Disparity of Sacrifice: Irish Recruitment to the British Armed Forces, 1914-1918** (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020).

D. G. Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds.), **The Ulster Crisis, 1885-1921** (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006).

Patrick Buckland, **The Factory of Grievances: Devolved Government in Northern Ireland 1921-39** (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1979).

Patrick Buckland, **A History of Northern Ireland** (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981).

Marie Coleman, **The Irish Revolution 1916-1923** (London: Routledge, 2014).

J. A. Cousins, **Without a Dog's Chance: The Nationalists of Northern Ireland and the Irish Boundary Commission, 1920-25** (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2020).

Terence Denman, **Ireland's Unknown Soldiers: The 16th (Irish) Division in the Great War, 1914-18** (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1992).

Caoimhe nic Dháibhéid and Colin Reid (eds.), **From Parnell to Paisley: Constitutional and revolutionary politics in modern Ireland** (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2010).

Ruth Dudley Edwards, **Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure** (New York: Taplinger Publishing, 1978).

Michael Farrell, **Arming the Protestants: The formation of the Ulster Special Constabulary and the Royal Ulster Constabulary 1920-27** (London: Pluto Press, 1983).

B. A. Follis, **A State Under Siege: The Establishment of Northern Ireland 1920-1925** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995).

Diarmaid Ferriter, **A Nation and not a Rabble: The Irish Revolution 1913-1923** (London: Profile Books, 2015).

Diarmaid Ferriter, **The Border: The Legacy of a Century of Anglo-Irish Politics** (London: Profile Books, 2019).

Andrew Gailey, **Ireland and the Death of Kindness: The Experience of Constructive Unionism, 1890-1905** (Cork: Cork University Press, 1987).

Adrian Grant, **Derry: The Irish Revolution, 1912-23** (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2018).

R. S. Grayson, **Belfast Boys: How Unionists and Nationalists Fought and Died Together in the First World War** (London: Continuum, 2010).

R. S. Grayson, **Dublin's Great Wars: The First World War, the Easter Rising and the Irish Revolution** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018).

Adrian Gregory and Senia Pa et al (eds.), **Ireland and the Great War: 'A war to unite us all'?** (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002).

David Harkness, **Northern Ireland since 1920** (Dublin: Helicon, 1983).

Peter Hart, **The I.R.A. at War, 1916-1923** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003).

Marnie Hay, **Na Fianna Éireann and the Irish Revolution, 1909-23** (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2019).

Thomas Hennessey, **A History of Northern Ireland, 1920-1996** (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1997).

A. C. Hepburn, **Catholic Belfast and Nationalist Ireland in the era of Joe Devlin, 1871-1934** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Sir Arthur Hezlet, **The 'B' Specials: A History of the Ulster Special Constabulary** (London: Tom Stacey, 1972).

Michael Hopkinson, 'The Craig-Collins Pacts of 1922: Two Attempted Reforms of the Northern Ireland Government', **Irish Historical Studies**, 27, 106 (1990).

Alvin Jackson, **The Ulster Party: Irish Unionists in the House of Commons, 1884-1911** (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989).

Alvin Jackson, **Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000** (London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2003).

Alvin Jackson (ed.), **The Oxford Handbook of Modern Irish History** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

Alvin Jackson, **Judging Redmond & Carson** (Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2018).

Patricia Jalland, **The Liberals and Ireland: The Ulster question in British politics to 1914** (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1980).

Keith Jeffery, **Ireland and the Great War** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000).

Keith Jeffery, **Field Marshal Sir Henry Wilson: A Political Soldier** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006).

M. J. Kelly, **The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916** (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2006).

D. M. Leeson, **The Black & Tans: British police and auxiliaries in the Irish War of Independence, 1920-21** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011).

Robert Lynch, **The Northern IRA and the Early Years of Partition 1920-1922** (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2006).

James McConnel, **The Irish Parliamentary Party and the Third Home Rule Crisis** (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2013).

Jim McDermott, **Northern Divisions: The Old IRA and the Belfast Pogroms 1920-22** (Belfast: Beyond the Pale Publications, 2001).

R. B. McDowell, **The Irish Convention 1917-18** (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1970).

Fearghal McGarry, **The Rising: Ireland: Easter 1916** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010).

Ronald McNeill, **Ulster's Stand for Union** (London: John Murray, 1922).

Christopher Magill, **Political Conflict in East Ulster, 1920-22: Revolution and Reprisal** (Woodbridge: The Boydell Press, 2020).

F. X. Martin (ed.), **The Irish Volunteers 1913-1915: Recollections and documents** (Dublin: James Duffy & Co., 1963).

Patrick Maume, **The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life, 1891-1918** (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1999).

Conor Mulvagh, **The Irish Parliamentary Party at Westminster, 1900-18** (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2016).

Paul Murray, **The Irish Boundary Commission and Its Origins 1886-1925** (Dublin: UCD Press, 2011).

Alan O'Day, **Irish Home Rule, 1867-1921** (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998).

Martin O'Donoghue, **The Legacy of the Irish Parliamentary Party in Independent Ireland, 1922-1949** (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2020).

Eunan O'Hallpin and Daithí Ó Corráin, **The Dead of the Irish Revolution** (London: Yale University Press, 2020).

Okan Ozseker, **Forging the Border: Donegal and Derry in Times of Revolution, 1911-25** (Newbridge: Irish Academic Press, 2019).

A. F. Parkinson, **Belfast's Unholy War: The Troubles of the 1920s** (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004).

Senia Pašeta, **Irish Nationalist women 1900-1918** (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

Eamon Phoenix, **Northern Nationalism: Nationalist politics, partition and the Catholic minority in Northern Ireland 1890-1940** (Belfast: Ulster Historical Foundation, 1994).

Charles Townshend, **Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion** (London: Allen Lane, 2005).

Charles Townshend, **The Republic: The Fight for Irish Independence, 1918-1923** (London: Allen Lane, 2013).

Michael Wheatley, **Nationalism and the Irish Party: Provincial Ireland 1910-1916** (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

Tim Wilson, "The most terrible assassination that has yet stained the name of Belfast": the McMahon murders in context', **Irish Historical Studies**, 37, 145 (2010).

# Acknowledgements

Deputy Keeper of the Records, Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI References: CAB/4/155; CAB/6/91; CAB/9/A/90/1; CAB/9/Z/2/1; D260/E/1; D627/434/141; D989/A/9/7; D989/A/9/10; D989/C/3/71; D989/D/13/A; D1295/2/7; D1295/4/11; D1415/E/23; D1357/1; D1422/B/14/86; D1496/2; D1496/8; D1507/A/4/18; D1507/A/4/19; D1507/A/5/18; D1507/A/5/22; D1507/A/11/5; D1507/A/27/6; D1518/3/3; D1540/3/14; D1686/2; D1792/A/3/9/29; D1973/10; D1988/3/3; D2004/4/75; D2023/17/2/1/1; D2203/6A; D2768/1; D3366/I/5; D3480/22/1; D3835/E/2/10; D3835/E/2/11; D3835/E/2/13 D3964/T/38; FIN/18/1/109; HA/5/149; HA/5/152; HA/20/A/2/7; INF/7/A/2/47; LA/20/50/GA/5; PM/2/2/12; PM/11/2; SO/1/G/1; SO/1/H/1; T2362/2).

Denis Mayne, grandson of Sir Henry McLaughlin (PRONI Reference: D3809/1).

Lord O'Neill of Shanes Castle (PRONI Reference: D1238/154).

National Museums Northern Ireland (Ulster Provisional Government Poster).

Sir Josslyn Gore-Booth (PRONI Reference: D4131/K/4/1/40).

The National Archives, UK (TNA Reference: CAB/27/69/2/41).

Ulster Unionist Council (PRONI References: D1327/1/9; D1327/3; D1327/20/3/1; D1327/21/11).

United Kingdom Parliament (Hansard (Commons) March 1920).

Viscount Dunluce (PRONI Reference: D4091/B/6/3).

**PRONI**  
Public Record Office  
of Northern Ireland



Department for  
**Communities**  
[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)

An Roinn  
**Pobal**

Department for  
**Commonities**

University of  
**Kent**

